"Les Juifs et nos chefs-d'oeuvre": French Artistic Patrimony and the Jewish Art Collector 1840-1945

by

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INTRODUCTION

The Musée Nissim de Camondo in Paris, owned by the Musée des Arts Decoratifs, houses an exemplary collection of 18th century French furniture, and the rooms of the elegant townhouse near the Parc Monceau are full of the finest examples of objets d’art, tapestries, and decorative arts of the period. Moïse de Camondo, the Jewish banker, left his mansion, furniture collection, and part of his vast fortune to the Musée des Arts Decoratifs to create the Musée Nissim de Camondo, writing in his will that the gift was intended “to preserve in France, gathered in particularly appropriate surroundings, the finest examples I have been able to assemble of the decorative arts that were one of the glories of France, during the period that I have loved above all others.”

Though the preservation of the collection for the benefit of the French people remains the primary purpose of the Museum, it also serves as a memorial to the Camondo family and their life in Paris from the mid 19th century to 1943. In the house are the family’s private rooms, with photographs of them and their ancestors, family heirlooms, and a video depicting Moïse’s life. At the entrance to the museum, the first item a visitor sees is a plaque that states “This museum, an annex of the Musée des Arts Decoratifs, was bequeathed to France by Count Moïse de Camondo (1860-1935) Vice-President of the Union Centrale des Arts Decoratifs in memory of his son Nissim de Camondo (1892-1917) Lieutenant in the 2nd aviation group, fallen in aerial combat on September 5th 1917.” Below the first, a second plaque, added years later, reads

1 “La famille de Camondo ”, Les Arts Decoratifs
http://www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr/francais/nissim-de-camondo/
“Madame Léon Reinach, née Béatrice de Camondo, her children Fanny and Bertrand Reinach, the last descendants of the donor, and Monsieur Léon Reinach, were deported in 1943-1945 and died at Auschwitz.” The place of Moïse de Camondo as an important member of the Parisian art world, the vice-president of the Union Centrale des Arts Decoratifs and the donor of this unique collection, stands in stark contrast to the fate of his descendants less than ten years after his death. Though, today, the museum and its collections are inextricable from Camondo family’s tragic end, their Jewish identity during their lifetime became irreconcilable with their place as art collectors, members of society, and, even, French citizens. The two plaques, one installed as a testament to the life and achievements of Moïse de Camondo upon the opening of the museum and the second hung later as a memorial to the lives of his family who were killed by the country that Moïse had devoted his life to, demonstrate this contrast, as each invokes drastically conflicting stories about the same family. The first memorial at the museum commemorates the achievements of the Camondos as Frenchmen, the other their ultimate fate during the years of World War II. The two plaques reveal the paradox of the Jew in France, prompting us to consider the place of cultural identity within French Jewish communities and the subsequent rejection of these prominent collectors and citizens by the society that they believed had bestowed this cultural identity upon them.

The Camondos are only one of many Jewish families intimately involved with the Parisian art world who were stripped of their citizenship, property, affiliation with

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2 As is the case with most of the French passages in this thesis, this is my own translation. The original text can be located in the source referred to in the footnote.
their artwork, and lives during the course of World War II in France. Today, the focus of scholarly research and popular attention regarding French Jews and their art has been on this period, when both the occupying Nazi forces and the Vichy government appropriated, seized, and stole artwork from the Jews of France. During the late 1980’s and early 1990’s various academic analyses, investigative reports, and books concerning this historical moment were published. These studies include *Vichy France and the Jews*, the seminal work by Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton concerning Vichy policy towards Jews in France, *The Rape of Europa* by Lynn Nicholas, about Nazi art looting and political aesthetic policies, and *The Lost Museum* by Hector Feliciano, which investigates the stories of five Jewish families in Paris during the war and exposes the fact that the present day French museum establishment was still in possession of seemingly ownerless works taken from French Jews.³ In these studies, the impact of Vichy policy on Jews and their art and the nearly impossible bureaucracy of the restitution process are explored in detail. Intertwined with these stories are explanations of German attitudes towards modern art, or “degenerate” art, which seemingly informed the process of art seizures in France during the occupation. In addition, the French fight against German seizure of Jewish art, in a passionate defense of their national patrimony, is often cited as a major trend in the relationship between the Vichy government and the Nazis. Since the release of these books, the focus of

general interest has been on the recuperation process of these lost paintings, the drama between the heirs of Jewish collectors and the French government, and the “purgatory” of the paintings held in the Musées Nationaux.

The fraught relationship between Jews, their art, and the French state is not merely a product of the advent of the Vichy regime, as its origins lie far before the political turmoil of World War II. The evolution of the Camondo family’s social standing in France, from their arrival in the mid 1860’s until the outbreak of World War II, provides a metaphor for the larger relationship between French Jews and French cultural heritage. Families such as the Rothschilds, who arrived in Paris in 1812, and others such as the Péreire brothers Émile and Isaac, who moved to Paris in the mid 1820’s from Bordeaux, came to prominence in the void left by the demise of the nobility following the French Revolution. In 1830, the second restoration of the monarchy was known for the dramatic ascendency of the bourgeois, and even “Louis Philippe [the king] continued to look and act like a typical Parisian bourgeois.” Jewish families were largely accepted into Parisian society because of the changing norms of typical French cultural interactions precipitated by the French Revolution and the economic and social changes of the first half of the 19th century. Wealthy families, like the Rothschilds, helped shape the growing bourgeois class, and were intimately involved in its society, attending the same events and moving in the same social circles as their native French counterparts. The complete Jewish participation in the upper ranks of Parisian society extended to their relationship to art, and the Rothschilds and the Péreires amassed collections of paintings, furniture, sculptures, and objets d’art that

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rivaled the collections of the royal family. Art collecting was important to wealthy French families because it conferred prestige and taste; it represented an understanding of the evolution of European culture and maintained a connection to a history of French collecting and artistic production that dated back hundreds of years. French Jews such as the Rothschilds felt a deep connection to their adopted country, and participation in its artistic heritage heralded their arrival as true Frenchmen. The Camondo brothers Nissim and Abraham came to Paris from Istanbul as part of a newer class of Jewish arrivals that included the Ephrussi family, bankers from Poland. They easily established themselves as members of Paris’ elite society, following in the footsteps of the Rothschilds. Abraham and Nissim bought adjacent houses abutting the Parc de Monceau in the 8th arrondissement in Paris, and their neighbors included the Péreire brothers, the Rothschilds, the Ephrussis, and various French noble families and industrialists. Moïse and Isaac, his cousin who was an important collector of Impressionist artwork, were raised in this world of privilege and relative acceptance. Their extensive involvement in and love for Paris’s art stemmed in part from the precedent of Jewish cultural participation in France.

As this second generation of wealthy Jews came of age, however, the art world itself was dramatically changing. The government sponsored Salon, the major Parisian art exhibit of the year and the ultimate judgment in taste and style over decades, was being challenged by a new, modern, group of artists. The Impressionist movement, long rejected by the Salon governance for its departure from the exact realism of artists

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5 "La famille de Camondo".
such as David or Ingres, finally broke away in 1874.\(^6\) The First Impressionist Exhibit launched a new era in the way art was marketed, outside of the shadow of the Salon. However, the commercialization and privatization of the art market caused by the ascendancy of the Impressionists developed in tandem with the ascendency of the Jew in the art world, which led many critics to hurl age-old accusations of Jewish obsession with money as the cause of both. Critics such as the prominent Edmond de Goncourt, who frequented the same prestigious salons and soirees as families such as the Rothschilds or the Ephrussis, were quick to point out the Jewish involvement with money, banking, industry, and commercial transactions. In the eyes of Goncourt, Jews collected art in order to make a profit and used the artwork, which should be the pure expression of French national heritage, as a commodity.

Soon however, the anti-Semitism expressed in French society grew dramatically, as the Dreyfus affair, one of the greatest intellectual and political crises of Europe in the 19\(^{th}\) century, began in 1894. Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish member of the army, was accused of spying for the Germans, court-martialed, and sentenced to life imprisonment. Despite his spotless record and constant protestations of innocence, judgment was passed against him in large part because as a “Jew” he was seen to have foreign allegiances and no patriotism for France. The subsequent revelations of falsified evidence and faulty legal procedures on the part of the military and government further shocked the country, as the spotlight turned away from the presumed guilt of Dreyfus, 

as a Jew, towards the corruption of his accusers. However, these events were a vital moment in French history because they exposed an underlying anti-Semitism that existed in French society, violently dividing the country. Parisian society was split between the Dreyfusards, his supporters, and the anti-Dreyfusards, who believed in his guilt. These labels ruined friendships and divided families. Though Dreyfus was eventually pardoned, the anti-Semitism exacerbated by the affair grew and lived on in its own right. Furthermore, the Affair brought “the concomitant question of the importance of truth and justice over honor and national security,” to the forefront of public debate, and exposed “France’s numerous social and political ailments,” which many wanted to portray as “a small surface blemish.” Coming in the wake of the political turmoil of the earlier 19th century, this crisis of identity was a seminal moment in the creation of modern French sensibility, and the opinions and social trends expressed throughout the Dreyfus affair deeply affected the Parisian Jewish community through the next half century.

The beginning of the 20th century saw the emergence of a new class of anti-Semitic critics such as Charles Maurras, Lucien Rebatet, Robert Brasillach and Camille Mauclair, who were radically right wing and fervently nationalistic. Many of their attitudes towards French Jews were born from the rabidly xenophobic and anti-Semitic writings of Edouard Drumont, who authored La France Juive in 1886, and founded the anti-Semitic newspaper La Libre Parole soon afterwards. In La France Juive, Drumont “combined traditional, Christian-derived anti-Jewish prejudice, including the

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notion that Jews exuded a peculiar odor and were fundamentally evil, with an anticapitalist, antimodern, culturally reactionary nationalist sensibility,” to show the Jewish control over the French state and cry for their exile.” ⁹ Despite the absence of any particular “racial theory,” Drumont’s ranting was widely read in French society. Now, typical stereotypes of Jews as manipulative foreigners seemed vindicated, especially in the wake of a number of serious financial crises in the early 1880’s. Following his success, which opened the way for societally acceptable conceptions of the Jew as the “other” in the early 20th century, many thinkers and writers who based their critical foundation on proto-fascist authors, such as Charles Maurras, looked on the Jew as the basis of evil in society. Many of these thinkers, notably Camille Mauclair and Lucien Rebate, were also deeply concerned with the state of French aesthetics and society, combining both Drumont and Maurras’ ideologies to identify the invasion of the Jew into French art as one of the core problems of their contemporary society. These critics not only saw Jewish involvement with French society and art as undesirable, but as actively eroding the purity of French culture. They were no longer worried about the Jew as the outsider, but about the assimilated Jew attacking France from the inside, an unseen force degenerating French aesthetics through the commercialization of the art market and the advent of the avant-garde. If they could rid themselves of the Jewish influence exerted through monetary manipulation and the avant-garde, they reasoned, France could return to the purity of the early 19th century, thereby creating a more perfect society by dispelling the foreign and degenerate elements in their modern culture.

These critics were further incensed by the rise of the Jewish art dealer as a major player in the 20th century avant-garde. Though a part of the art world throughout the 19th century, art dealers became a vital part of the art market during the time of the Impressionists, when artists who broke away from the Salon needed a steady connection to clients. As new waves of modernism, from Cubism to Fauvism, appeared at the turn of the century, dealers such as David-Henri Kahnweiler and Paul Rosenberg, became intimately involved with the artists they represented, advising them on their painting, presenting them to the general public, and organizing exhibitions and publicity. These men gained prominence and respect for introducing innovative artists to Parisian society. The striking number of important Jewish art dealers, including Kahnweiler and Rosenberg, far exceeded those who were native Frenchmen and sparked continued criticism of the Jew as a corrupting and commercializing influence, responsible for ruining French artistic culture for monetary gain. Adding to the outcry against Jews in the art world was the growing prominence of the Jewish artists of the École de Paris, an avant-garde artistic community with members such as Soutine and Chagall. This group was hated by conservatives for its modern artistic style and relationship to Jews and immigrants living in Montparnasse. The perceived association between the École de Paris and Jewish art dealers furthered the idea that a Jewish conglomerate of collectors, dealers, and artists, was working to permanently change and corrupt French art.

The cultural atmosphere intensified after the outbreak of World War I, a military conflict that shook Europe, and in which France lost almost 5% of its
population. After the war’s tumult, two opposing ideologies emerged in post-war France, that of the “rappel d’ordre,” a desire to return to the supposed simplicity of 19th century life, and that of a left-leaning exploration of the modern world, expressed through the high living of the roaring 20’s, the Surrealist movement, and a political shift towards liberalism.10 Conservative critics were enamored by the dream of a naturalistic return to homeland and national identity, and even more vehemently opposed to the influence of the perceived Jewish outsider. Despite this growing hostility families such as the Camondos felt as strong an attachment to their native country as ever, and Moïse de Camondo’s son Nissim lost his life fighting for the country in which his family believed so fervently. They considered themselves, first and foremost, as Frenchmen, demonstrated by Moïse de Camondo’s unprecedented and exceedingly generous donation of his collection and mansion to the state in 1935.

As World War II broke out and the Nazi army conquered and occupied France, the confidence that Jewish families held in their position in France, and their unconditional love of their adopted heritage, was dramatically undermined. A dislike of Jews as the foreigner or the “other” escalated into a perception of the Jews as the source of many of the problems besetting modern France, and the new Vichy government began to legislate “the Jewish question” themselves, in response to but above and beyond the requests of the German occupiers. Right wing critics, such as Mauclair and Rebatet, identified with much of the cultural ideology of the Nazis, and saw their influence on French cultural affairs as a potentially positive force. For them, the ensuing dismissal of Jewish employees from cultural institutions, the censorship of

10 Wright, France in Modern Times.
Jewish artists, the confiscation of Jewish businesses, and the seizure of Jewish artwork, represented a purification of the French art establishment, which had so long been corrupted by modernism and commercialism. An elimination of the Jewish elements in the art world, which was comprised not just of real Jews but of foreigners in general, unusual artistic mediums or styles, or anything or anyone deemed unsavory, would allow French art, culture, and ultimately the nation, to return to the ideal of the early 19th century, before the arrival of the Jew in the art world and the rise of the avant-garde. The French Vichy government legitimized the beliefs of this right-wing contingent by declaring that the Jews were not French. Therefore, the Jews could have no connection to French art, despite their past participation in its development. This core belief, in turn, led to the mass art seizures from Jewish families during the remainder of the war, and the appropriation of this artwork by the Musées Nationaux establishment for their permanent collection.

This thesis will trace the Jewish involvement with the arts in France, from the establishment of wealthy Jewish families in the French bourgeois, such as the Rothschilds, Péreires, and Ephrussis, into the beginning of the 20th century, as art dealers like Paul Rosenberg fostered the growth of the avant-garde, to the outbreak and aftermath of the Second World War, when these French Jews were robbed of their property, citizenship, and, often, their lives. I hope to show the significant relationship between conceptions of nationalism and artistic heritage, and the paradoxical part played by the Jews in the French art world. The plaques that sit in the entrance of the Musée Nissim de Camondo, in their story of artistic glory and national pride, and the
tragic end of Moïse de Camondo’s daughter and her family, serve as the archetype of these themes and of this thesis. Their many contributions to the French state, including the death of Moïse de Camondo’s only son during the First World War, were forgotten as the family was taken to Drancy by the French authorities. The three chapters of this thesis will, therefore, move chronologically, using the Camondo’s experience in France in tandem with the modernization of the art market as the illustrations of these cultural themes.
CHAPTER ONE

“All that is there is for France, all!”: 1840-1900

In the fashionable Karakoy district in Istanbul, a winding set of Art-Nouveau stairs stand nestled on a hill between two streets, ending in what was once Istanbul’s primary banking district. The stairs were built by the Camondo family, Sephardic bankers originally from Italy who had constructed a financial empire in Turkey under the Sultan. The Camondos influenced state policy, acted as a voice for the strong Jewish community of Istanbul, and helped with state projects, from schools to urban developments, through their philanthropic ventures. The “Kamondo” stairs are a reminder of the power of the Camondo clan in Istanbul during the mid 19th century, when they were known as the “Rothschilds of the East.”

Istanbul stood at the edge of European society and culture, provincial in contrast to the scientific and artistic advances of London, Paris, and Berlin. Though Abraham Salomon Camondo, the patriarch of the family and founder of the Turkish bank, still wore traditional Eastern clothing, his grandsons, Abraham de Camondo and Nissim de Camondo, had adopted Western dress, looking to the fashions and ideas of Europe as their preeminent cultural influence. In the late 1860’s, this family, “former subjects of the Hapsburgs, born in Constantinople,” moved their entire banking industry to France where they “intended to keep their Italian nationality and their Jewish identity while adopting the way of life of the highest levels of Parisian society.”11

For a wealthy, cosmopolitan, and multinational Jewish family, Paris was a place of opportunity, high culture, and relative acceptance. In the wake of the French Revolution of 1789, French Jews were the first in Europe to be granted citizenship and offered full participation in the state as civil equals. This move ended the years of secondary citizenship and self-governance that had characterized the French Jewish communities. Prior to the Revolution, the Ashkenazi population of Alsace and the Sephardic population of Bordeaux received few rights from the government. As a result, they built largely independent societal and governmental systems, based on Jewish laws and customs, segregating themselves within the French cities in which they lived. As citizens, the Jews had to redefine themselves as members of French society, breaking down the boundaries between their autonomous communities and the French people. They began a process of acculturation while maintaining and balancing their own individual religious identities. Now, each French Jew was civically responsible to the French government, and membership in the Jewish community became a personal religious decision, outside of the realm of governmental authority. As such, Judaism was considered a private affair, allowing French Jews to reach a higher status within French society, outside the constraints of the marginalized Jewish community. This new generation of French Jews were patriotic, while still maintaining their Judaism; as Paula Hyman writes in *The Jews of Modern France*, “Through the power of the state and the Jewish institutions that would succeed the disbanded autonomous communities, that vision would be translated into methods of socialization designed to produce patriotic French Jewish citizens, fully at home in French culture and loyal to a
Judaism consonant with French citizenship.”12 Because of this balance between assimilation and the retention of Jewish community structures, the Camondo family arrived in Paris with the rights of full citizens and was able to advance in society without religious identity impeding their path.

The Camondos, with their Turkish banking fortune, were quickly accepted into Parisian life, moving easily into a society where wealthy Jews attended prominent salons, mingled with nobility, patronized museums and artistic institutions, and participated in all levels of the government and military. On their arrival in Paris, Abraham and Nissim de Camondo settled in the northeast of Paris in mansions bordering the prestigious Parc de Monceau in the eighth arrondissement. In the pre-revolutionary period the Parc Monceau belonged to the Duke of Orleans, who created an exquisitely designed public park in Paris. The land was seized for public use during the Revolution and then restored to the family upon the restitution of the French Monarchy, from whom the French government purchased a significant section in 1860. A year later, the Péreire brothers, Sephardic bankers and rivals of the Rothschild family, bought a large portion of the government land. Previously, “the bourgeoisie Parisian Jews were naturally concentrated throughout the 9th and 2nd arrondissements, as well as in the 10th, 3rd, 1st, 4th, and 11th,” as their common spaces, synagogues, kosher butchers, and schools were located in these areas.13 For the most part, among the Jews of these neighborhoods, “one heard spoken all other languages but French” and “one Jew out

12 Hyman, The Jews of Modern France 35.
13 Assouline, Le dernier des Camondo 22.
of five was born abroad.” With this large purchase of land, the Péreires created a Jewish neighborhood that defied this demographic. They hoped to create a community of wealthy, assimilated, Parisian Jews living in grand mansions on what was once royal land. The Camondo brothers purchased neighboring mansions from the Péreires, establishing themselves in the heart of Parisian high society. Their neighbors were “a mixture of nobles of the Ancien Régime and the empire, Jewish aristocrats, Protestants of high society, and grand bourgeois bankers and industrialists.”

Among the Camondo’s neighbors were Maurice and Alphonse de Rothschild, sons of James de Rothschild, the patriarch of the French branch of the great European banking family, who represent the quintessential story of Jewish commercial and social ascendance in France. James de Rothschild was the son of Mayor Amschel de Rothschild of Frankfurt who, after establishing a successful banking enterprise in Germany, sent each of his sons out to find their fortunes in a different major European city. The Rothschilds saw opportunity in a newly emancipated France, and their success was facilitated by the shifts of the traditional boundaries of the Jewish communities in tandem with the radical changes in French society during Napoleon’s reign and the subsequent restoration of a limited monarchy under Louis XVIII. Indeed, many Jews left the confines of their rural communities, “taking advantage of the economic opportunities available in an expanding capitalist economy [...] mobiliz[ing] their commercial skills and mov[ing] in large number to Paris and other cities that seemed more likely than their home towns and villages to offer the most favorable economic

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14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 25.
prospects for the future.” As a result James became part of, and helped shape, the newly prominent Parisian bourgeois class. Over 40,000 Jews, more than half the entire Jewish population of France, lived in Paris and many found employment in trade and commercial enterprises, such as manufacturing and banking. James opened up a branch of the family banking business and became a common face in the French court of Napoleon, making such a large fortune that he eventually became known as “the center of his adopted country’s political and economic life.”

It was France’s new capitalist economy that allowed some of those in the commercial industry, like James de Rothschild, to become fabulously wealthy, creating a new elite in the vacuum left by the demise of the nobility after the French Revolution. Many of these families, including the Rothschilds, were Jewish, and as the 19th century progressed many of them reached the upper echelons of Parisian social life. In this age of Baron Haussman’s major urban projects Paris was becoming a modernized capital city and these new Jewish industries and fortunes fell into the new social and political orders of the city. As the culture of the city developed, Jewish participation in the capital increased, “as one commentator noted ruefully in 1885 ‘Today the barons of Israel represent luxury... charity... the arts... the smart set... fashion’s latest style.’” This success, in a relatively short time span, engendered resentment and, “By the end of the century, when Jews were attacked it was no longer for being backward, poor, and self-segregated,” as they had been before the emancipation of the Revolution; “Now they

16 Hyman, The Jews of Modern France 53.
18 Hyman, The Jews of Modern France 93.
were portrayed as successful manipulators of the capitalist system, who were in the vanguard of change, eroders of France’s traditional institutions, and too strong a presence in French public life.”\textsuperscript{19} The Rothschild’s wealth and newfound prominence in French society spurred associations between these Jewish banking families and the rise of capitalism, equating Jews with their monetary success. This stereotype followed them even as the Rothschilds became members of society’s elite, participating in privileged cultural institutions such as art.

Art collecting had long been an important pursuit of the upper class and there was a significant level of prestige derived from the ownership of these beautiful and frivolous objects so prized by society. In European culture, art was always a matter of national pride and concern, and French artistic heritage was intimately tied with their perception of self and feelings of patriotism. In pre-revolutionary France, art collecting was a pursuit of the nobility, and they amassed collections of old masters and portraits in their luxurious chateaux. As with most aspects of French society following the breakup of the nobility, the world of art collecting was transformed at the end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century through the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Though the Salon des Beaux Arts was still the cornerstone of taste, collecting began to spread out among the wealthy industrialists and bankers coming to prominence in the beginning of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, many of them Jewish. Purchasing art was a form of acceptance into a society that placed a strong emphasis on aesthetic heritage. Collectors were, in a sense, buying into French national patrimony. In purchasing French art, Jews were financially sustaining the Parisian culture of art and demonstrating their patriotism through their patronage, while also

\textsuperscript{19} The Dreyfus Affair: Art, Truth, and Justice 29.
attaining a social status supported not just by their money but also by their taste.

Actively collecting implied knowledge and a level of acculturation that many wealthy Parisian Jews wanted to be associated with. This trend is demonstrated by the history and content of the art collections of the Rothschilds and the Péreire brothers, another important Jewish banking family.

When the Péreire brothers, who played a large part in the settlement of the Monceau district, lost their fortune, in the early 1870’s, they were forced to sell their entire art collection, of “181 pictures, 55 of which were of the modern French school, 20 of the French school of the eighteenth century, 15 of the Spanish school, 10 of the Italian school, 5 of the German, and 76 of the Flemish and Dutch,” at a specially prepared auction house on the boulevard des Italiens. The collection, according to a New York Times article from the period, was painstakingly put together as, “M. Péreire made his collection of pictures of all the schools, buying exclusively in the famous sales, such as that of the Baron de Mecklembourg, MM. Palavan, Rhoné, Piérand, Prince Demidoff, Lord Northwitch, the Count of Pemblock &c. To these purchases were added a certain number of paintings chosen one by one from collections of French and foreign amateurs.” Among the paintings were works by Delacroix, Ingres, Scheffer, Lorrain, Poussin, Valasquez, and, most strikingly, Vermeer. The Péreire art collection was a key part of their wealth and power, and “At the height of their success the Péreires held title to vast properties in Paris and owned luxurious villas, chalets and health spas in the south of France; they accumulated a superb art collection,

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21 Ibid.
hobnobbed with the great writers, artists, and public figures of their day, and rivaled the Rothschilds in wealth and influence.” To own such exquisite works, purchased “exclusively” from other famous collections was public evidence of their taste and participation in the Parisian art scene. For the purpose of demonstrating their social status, the Péreire’s art collection was as important as the magnificence of their villas, and the announcement of the sale in an American newspaper reveals the prominent place that they occupied in the world of collecting.

In their choice of paintings the Péreire family adhered to the conventions of the day with a balanced collection of Salon-sanctioned modern French artists and time-tested old masters. Purchases from established collections assured that the Péreires’ choices were valued artistically by society, and, as the New York Times article makes clear, all art acquired outside of these settings was meticulously chosen to complement the rest of their traditionalist selections. The same desire to align their taste with that of greater Parisian society is evident in the portraits of Isaac Péreire and his wife Fanny painted in the late 1870’s by Léon Bonnat. Bonnat, a prominent society portraitist and future professor at L’École des Beaux Arts, was known for his “photographically accurate draftsmanship and subdued coloring,” (Figure 1). Bonnat worked on portraits of many prominent Parisians of the day, including Victor Hugo, Louis Pasteur, and J.A.D Ingres. The portrait is an important testament to the importance of Péreire’s place in society and profession, and “Bonnat depicts Péreire in the context of[

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24 Ibid.
his profession, in his office [...] the right hand laying on a table where there is a clock ornamented by the allegorical figure of time. The interior gives an impression of order and luxury [...] inspired by the archetypal figure of the bourgeois capitalist of the 19th century, Monsieur Bertin by Ingres.”25 The portrait of Monsieur Bertin by Ingres, painted in 1832, was “pictorial paean to the tenacity of the newly empowered middle class,” showing the command of the bourgeois businessmen who had come into power in the wake of the 1830 revolution against the Bourbon kings.26 By referencing this early portrait, Bonnat is casting Péreire as the inheritor of this capitalist tradition and Péreire’s portrait is meant to be testament to his hard work and success, painted by a popular artist condoned and appreciated by those of the upper class.

In the case of the Rothschilds, James, in addition to his enormous wealth and political clout, had distinguished “himself as a man about town, patron of the arts,” amassing a collection of art to surpass those of the nobility with whom he dealt on a daily basis.27 For the Baron, “collecting was an obsession. Long after he had filled his houses in the Rue Laffite, at Ferrières and at Bologne-sur-Seine with old masters, French furniture of the finest eighteenth-century ébénistes and all manner of antiquities and objets d’art, he continued to buy- continuously and compulsively [...].”28 In fact, much of his art was acquired from the weakening nobility, and he bought from “the collections George IV, Christian VIII of Denmark, William I of the Netherlands

25 Barthélemy Jobert, “Isaac Pereire, créateur de la banque moderne “.
26 “Leon Bonnat “.
and several European nobles.”

Baron James’ taste, similarly to that of the Péreire brothers, “was catholic, almost indiscriminate. The reception room walls of his Paris house were hung with works by Rembrandt, Velasquez, Frans Hals, Van Eyck, Rubens, Murillo and Van Dyck; all recognized old masters approved by the nineteenth-century art establishment.”

The orthodoxy of his collection was important as “the point was, of course, that what was approved was also valuable. For as much as anything else, the collection represented a safe investment.”

Resentment of the Rothschilds’ wealth and power led to criticism of their association with the art world, with some questioning their motivations for collecting and their aesthetic decisions. The Rothschilds’ furniture and art were often portrayed as an overt demonstration of their wealth, so much so that the immense amount of gilding and gold thought to be found in the Rothschild residences lead to the widespread use of the phrase “Le goût Rothschild,” to mean ostentation. Edmond de Goncourt, the writer and critic who frequented the great salons of Parisian society observing the relationships between people and their art, was among those who deeply resented the new Jewish influence on art, the art world, and artists themselves, seeing them as a nouveau-riche intrusion caring only for prestige and money. He describes a visit to the Rothschild mansion at Ferrières writing,

It is not a house, it is a store of curiosities, and the masters resemble its keepers. In the middle of an overwhelming library, a very charming little girl, with heavy eyelids, the eyelids of a Turkish marine, responds to infantile questions with a the sullen air of a penitent pensionnaire, a bored young Rothschild, bored like only millionaires know how to be

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29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
bored. The masters have had pride in the historic past since they acquired their chateau, and before the interview at Ferrières the old Madame Rothschild kept us in the salon for a long time. The conversation was held in a room full of Boucher tapestries. It is the first time that French furniture from the 18th century has sat in such disgrace.32

This description embodies the friction between Goncourt’s awe of and distaste for the Rothschilds, and wealthy Jews in general, that appears in his writings. Referring to Ferrières as “a store” and the Rothschilds as merely the keepers of the art emphasizes the connection between money and art that Goncourt felt typified the Jewish relationship with aesthetics and culture. In Goncourt’s mind, these Jewish families own the art, but they could never truly appreciate it as Frenchmen would. In the middle of this beauty, this daughter of the Rothschild family sits in extreme boredom, ignoring the centuries of history hanging around her. Goncourt is discussing the lack of connection between the Rothschilds and their collection. Though they have pride in the past, it is only because they have bought history, purchasing the chateau at Ferrières and their enormous art collection. It is not their past. The room in which Goncourt sits is hung full of Boucher tapestries, once more representing the supposedly excessive Rothschild taste. Most damningly, Goncourt states that this is the first time these beautiful examples of French furniture were ashamed of their surroundings. For Goncourt, it is as if the Rothschilds have taken French culture hostage by manipulating the beauty they bought to suit their overriding ambition.

In addition to the richly hung walls of his house on the Place de la Concorde, where “a succession of drawing rooms [...] became as many art galleries,” Baron James

signaled his family’s arrival in the upper ranks of Parisian society by commissioning
Ingres to paint the portrait of the Baroness Betty de Rothschild, his young wife (Figure 2). Ingres, though he believed that his true art and calling was to be found in the
historical genre, was a sought after portraitist, and his rendition of Betty de Rothschild
is one of his most striking. The Baroness sits in her receiving room on the Rue de
Lafitte, leaning forward as if in the midst of a conversation. She wears a bright pink
dress with her shoulders exposed and her head slightly tilted to one side. Ingres’
depiction of the Baroness demonstrates her high social status and her husband’s wealth.
At the same time, however, as Carol Ockman suggests in “Ethnic Stereotyping in
Ingres’s Baronne de Rothschild,” Ingres creates an air of sexuality around his noble
subject, as “The Baroness’s Jewishness, with all that it implied in contemporary
consciousness, enabled Ingres to push sensuality further than he could in any other
society portrait.”33 Despite her high social stature, the Baroness remained a Jew, and
her portraits reveal a stereotypical orientalism found in representations of Jewish
women, in stark contrast to the demure “marmoreal” society women typically depicted
by Ingres. Ockman argues that, though “most representations of Betty de Rothschild,
like those of her non-Jewish peers, follow the virtuous model appropriate for a married
woman and an aristocrat,” her exotically tinged beauty in Ingres’ portrait sets her apart
from her peers. “The issue is not,” Ockman writes, “that the Baroness is a Jewish
woman, but that she is the quintessential Jewish woman. What family in France,

33 Carol Ockman, “Two Eyebrows à l’orientale’: Ethnic Stereotyping in Ingres’ Baronne de
indeed, in all of Europe, could represent ‘the Jew,’ more than the Rothschilds?"34 Even when making clearly conservative choices, such as the portrait by Ingres, the Rothschilds were still held as the archetype of the other, as the idealized foreigner, and the Jew.

Despite the serious involvement of these prominent Jewish families in the world of art in the pre-Dreyfus era, the fact of their Jewishness was never forgotten, even as their collections rivaled and surpassed those of the nobility and royalty. For Goncourt, Jewish money could never buy entrée into the art world. “Rich people [...] can become art lovers,” he writes upon a visit to the Rothschild mansion, but “they will always be poor art-lovers.”35 Despite this belief, however, Goncourt was taken aback by the rush of the art community to feed into the family’s collecting as he writes, “It’s certain that if the Rothschilds are not intimidated and fail to restrict their purchases in the face of whispered grumbling about their pillaging, this family will soon own everything beautiful that is still to be sold [...] For there isn’t an art object of any kind in any corner of the earth whose owner or dealer isn’t trying to offer it to the Rue Lafitte.”36 It was the idea of the Jews, who Goncourt felt had no true appreciation of art, owning all of this beauty that was disturbing for him. It troubled him that art dealers did not realize the travesty that they were enacting by selling French art to this Jewish family. “Truly, it is in these dens of wealth that one touches the depths to which money can sink,” Goncourt writes in describing a visit to Edmond de Rothschild, son of

34 Ibid., 523.
35 Lottman, The French Rothschilds: The Great Banking Dynasty Through Two Turbulent Centuries 94.
36 Ibid., 95.
Baron James de Rothschild, “the young baron, with the air of a victor, had us inspect some twenty gouaches not one of which was authentic. At bottom, these people can reach beauty only in the industrial arts.” Goncourt is again emphasizing the connection between Jews and money, as their involvement in art is portrayed as purely financial. Stereotypically, as moneylenders Jews were completely barred from the upper class world of the aesthetic. Appreciation of art required understanding, acculturation, and sense of Western history that was an anathema to typical perceptions of the Jews, who were seen as outsiders in the development of high culture. To Goncourt, Edmond de Rothschild, with his inability to differentiate intuitively between real and fake art, is a paradigm of the Jew in the art world, forcing his acceptance into a community of collectors using his huge fortune, while never attaining an aesthetic understanding of his purchases. They were, instead, “pillaging” French art.

Some of Goncourt’s criticism of the Rothschilds emerged from what he saw as an elemental shift in the discipline of art caused by the intrusion of nouveau-riche outsiders, exemplified for him by the Jewish Rothschilds. “As the painting market began to be perceived as revolving around the nouveau-riche collector,” Robert Jensen writes, “the critical habitus would hold in opposition the paradigm of the aristocratic patron, supposedly defined by his innate qualities as a connoisseur, and the crass – usually American, and often portrayed as Jewish – businessman. Art critics increasingly saw the fundamental alteration – and lowering – of the art profession in their servitude

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37 Ibid., 79.
to their new clientele.”\textsuperscript{38} The commercialization of art materialized during the same period that the Rothschilds and the Péreires, among others, became prominent collectors, and their involvement in, and supposed manipulation of, art’s purity became a suitable scapegoat for the wider changes in the art industry. Jewish foreignness and their association with uncouth Americans were continuing themes. Though some of the wealthiest men in France, these Jewish families were still definitively not French, and certainly not aristocratic. This prejudice applied equally to the idea of taste as, “The new men of business and industry were understood to be dependent upon public approbation to certify the quality of the art they purchased. Since the aristocratic domain of connoisseurship was unobtainable to them, they were said to pursue the most sensational and the most decorated artists of the Salon.”\textsuperscript{39} The idea that these nouveau-riche businessmen only purchased art that would impress those around them, thereby elevating their own public image, lead to such stereotypes as “Le goût Rothschild.” For many in the art world, the Rothschilds represented the devaluation of true art in favor of “the most sentimental narrative and the most photographic styles of depiction possible.”\textsuperscript{40} However, the Rothschilds themselves, of aristocratic bent and conservative taste, were in reality more aligned with the conventional French collectors who Goncourt praised than the tasteless outsiders that he perceived them as.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
Charles Ephrussi, the son of a Jewish Russian banker who sent his sons, as had the Rothschilds before him, to the European capitals to expand Ephrussi & Cie, embodied a completely different kind of art collector than the largely conventional Rothschilds. He was an important force in the modernization of taste and collecting that occurred in the latter half of the 19th century. A younger son, Charles was free to be a man of leisure, and came back from a tour of Italy with his first artistic purchases in 1872, decorating his rooms in the family house on the Rue de Monceau with Italian sculptures, tapestries, and drawings. Charles had a true sense of the aesthetic, as Edmund de Waal, a descendent of the Ephrussi family and author of The Hare with the Amber Eyes writes of Charles’s rooms,

> It is, of course, a stage-set. All these things that Charles collected are objects that need a connoisseur’s eye, all are things that speak of knowledge, history, lineage, of collecting itself. Unpick this list of treasures – tapestries woven after Raphael cartoons, sculpture after Donatello – and you can feel that Charles has begun to internalize how art unfolds through history. Back in Paris he donates a rare fifteenth-century medallion of Hippolytus torn apart by wild horses to the Louvre [...] you sense the notebook, not just the money.\(^{41}\)

Charles’s discernment and pride in his art, demonstrated by his donation to the Louvre, show him to be a different kind of collector from the aristocrats of the early 19th century. He he looked at art for its historic, not social, value, and strove to be part of the classical tradition of art valued by French museums and French society. He joined the Gazette des Beaux Arts, of which he would later be the chief editor, and

As a young writer on art, he goes to the offices of the Gazette des beaux-arts in the rue Favart each day [...] Here at the office are other writers and artists, and the best art library in Paris, full of periodicals from all

over Europe and catalogues of exhibitions. It is an exclusive arts club, a place to share news and gossip about which painter is working on which commission, who is out of favor with the collectors or with the jurists for the Salon.\footnote{Ibid., 41.}

The Gazette, in a sense, was a center of the art world, where opinions and perspectives were synthesized to produce an accepted set of artists, ideas, and art forms. His involvement with this hub of artistic opinion gave him access to artists and critics. In this way, Charles was immersed in a different part of the art world from the wealthy collectors of his upper-class social milieu.

Charles became increasingly involved in the art world. He joined the Gazette des Beaux Arts in 1876, at a time when the Parisian art world was changing significantly. The Salon, a yearly juried art exhibit run by the French government, had been a mainstay of French artistic culture since its modern inception in 1748, which was preceded by intermittent years of government sponsored exhibits since 1664. The jury of the Salon determined what was suitable for the institution of French art. Historical genre painting, exemplified by, among others, the work of Jean-Jacques David, Eugene Delacroix, and Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, was the primary form accepted. The elected officials of the Salon were “half Academicians and half government appointees,” and almost always made “a conservative choice,” in their decisions regarding which paintings to accept into the exhibition.\footnote{Mainardi, \textit{The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic} 94.} As a result of the strict aesthetic imposed by the Salon jurists and the government, tension arose between the expected idealized art form and the artistic license and desires of the artists themselves. In 1863, the protests grew so much that Napoleon III declared the
beginning of a Salon des Refusés, which exhibited much of the art deemed unfit for
the conventional Salon, including pieces by Whistler and Cezanne. This gave rise to
the avant-garde movement in the coming years as,

The Salon leadership’s resistance to change, especially in aesthetic
matters, exacerbated the inevitable tensions within the art community,
and, in the greatest of ironies, endowed the opposition with the cachet
of being both artistic and political reformers if not revolutionaries. The
rise of aesthetic modernism, with its ideological and yet paradoxical
stand against commercialism, had its origins in the transformed
practices of the professional artist, in which modernist artists and art
played, at least at first, largely a passive role.44

Modern artists were protesting the anachronistic government standards and
definition of French art, while attempting to create a socially accepted artistic
community far removed from the perceived commercialization of the art business.

The position of the modern artists who stood against the Salon as a symbol of
corruption and monetization was paradoxical in that much of the industrialization of
the art world was caused by the decreased involvement of the government. Previously,
the government and nobility purchased such a large quantity of work that artists
needed to have few independent commercial dealings in order to survive. “The
European academics,” tried to “preserve many of the features of traditional patronage
in the face of a growing market economy. They attempted to ennoble and distance art
from craft and to repress the commercial aspects of an artist’s enterprise,” writes Robert
Jensen in _Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe_.45 However,

With the decline of history painting, the appearance of the mass
spectacle of the Salon, and the bitter disappointments of the refuses, it
became increasingly clear that the academic system no longer worked,

44 Jensen, _Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe_ 36.
either from the perspective of producing major works of art or as a professional organization that could ensure the economic livelihood of all its membership.\textsuperscript{46}

To counter this, and provide an “economic livelihood” for artists, a new “developing market [...] operated across a range of institutions, the art magazine as well as the dealer gallery/shop or the auction house. Arguably, it was the last which from the 1850’s became the fulcrum of the system and the site, if not the sole source, of an emergent speculative strategy.”\textsuperscript{47} Though private auctions occurred before the 1850’s, it was in 1852 that

The powerful Parisian [auction] association was concentrated at one impressive base, the Hôtel Drouot, which hosted a wide diversity of auctions. Physical proximity to the stock exchange now linked it both literally and metaphorically to the fortunes of finance capitalism. As Philippe Burty put it: “Its success corresponded to that financial surge which for ten years made the Bourse a speculator’s paradise.”\textsuperscript{48}

The growing relationship between art and capitalism exemplified by the Hôtel Drouot also produced a growing class of independent art dealers who would take on emerging artists, boosting their reputations through small exhibitions and scholarly publications. Despite the desire for the “suppression of commerce in the appreciation of ‘true’ art,” artists were forced to adapt to the new system as “they came to rely exclusively on the market for their presence in the art world.”\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{49} Jensen, \textit{Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe} 19.
At the same time, however, this climate gave rise to a new type of involvement with art, that of the cultivated “amateur,” those with enough leisure time and money to informally educate themselves in art. It was not impossible to move from the position of an uncivilized financier purchasing art for its social currency to a respected participant in the field as “the invitation was there for those with money to come and buy and with their purchases achieve a new kind of cultural capital, that lay not in the objects, but in the association, the fetish gloss, ownership conferred on the buyer – marking the passage from the ‘rich man’ to the amateur.”\textsuperscript{50} Charles Ephrussi was of this ilk, separated from the commercialism of art because “As an extremely rich Jewish mondain, it would have been contrary to social practice to be seen at work. He was an amateur d’art, an art lover, and his phrase is carefully self-deprecating.”\textsuperscript{51} His donations to the Louvre, his carefully cultivated relationships with artists, and participation in the salons of Parisian high society marked him as drastically different from the stereotype of the Jewish collector who was thought to view art and money interchangeably.

Private salon culture of the day was another vital part of Jewish participation in the world of aesthetics. In the introduction to the catalog for the exhibition \textit{The Power of Conversation: Jewish Women and Their Salons} Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun write, “Salons were among the first institutions of modern culture. From the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries they fostered the decline of aristocratic castes and the rise of a new egalitarian elite.”\textsuperscript{52} The salon, a weekly gathering of like-

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{51} Waal, \textit{The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance}: 72.
\textsuperscript{52} Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, eds., \textit{Jewish Women and Their Salons: the Power of Conversation} (The Jewish Museum 2005), 1.
minded intellectuals in the home of a cultured host who was often a woman, was at the forefront of social change and intellectual innovation. These were an attractive venue for Jews of the later 19th century. In fact by the 1850’s,

Jewish women form[ed] a disproportionately large number of the most influential and discussed salonnières [...] Assimilated Jewish women who had negotiated many boundaries readily embraced the role of social arbiter and cultural catalyst [...] Symbols of highly contested difference and eventual success, Jewish salonnières symbolized the ultimate outsiders on the inside.\(^5\)

The role of the salons as “the center of an information network [that] distributed and absorbed new ideas,” made them vital to Paris’ cultural life, influencing taste in literature, art, and music. Often, these Jewish salonnières “gained unusual prominence as artists, writers, and impresarios of modernism and the avant-garde, since they could not lay claim to the classical European heritage.”\(^5\) As outsiders, these women were able to give support and legitimacy to the modern movements rejected by the conservative French Académie, government, and art institutions. To that end, even Edmond de Goncourt noted in his diary that, “The Jewish women of society are, at the moment, the great readers, and they alone read – as they dare to admit – those young talents held in contempt by the Academy.”\(^5\) Mme Geneviève Straus, the widow of Georges Bizet, was one of the most renowned salonnières of the last quarter of the 19th century, and hosted many of these modernists and luminaries, including Degas, Proust, Ludovic Halévy, the “leading librettist,” Princesse Mathilde, a descendent of the Bonaparte family, and Colette, the well-known author. Charles Ephrussi was a regular in the salon

\(^53\) Ibid., 3.  
\(^54\) Ibid., 17.  
\(^55\) Ibid., 61.
world, appearing in homes of the Jews and the nobility equally. Goncourt, ever resentful of Jewish presence in the art world wrote, “the salons had become ‘infested with Jews and Jewesses.’” Goncourt could not stand the fact that the foreign Jews he so disliked were becoming part of an old French institution and that they were running some of the most successful salons of the day. For Goncourt, Charles was a representative of this perceived invasion of his traditionalist world.

Though he was a member of this upper class social milieu, dining with the Rothschilds and appearing at various prominent salons also attended by Goncourt, Charles was also part of an extended group of artists, critics, and patrons that defined avant-garde artistic movements of the late 1870’s. Deeply invested in modernism, Charles became one of the first, and most extensive, collectors of Impressionism, a genre still considered too progressive for the majority of conventional taste. “In three years,” De Waal writes, “he put together a collection of forty impressionist works […] He bought paintings and pastels by Morisot, Cassatt, Degas, Manet, Monet, Sisley, Pissarro and Renoir.” Interacting with these living artists, who were struggling to make a living outside of the realm of the Salon, Charles became a patron and friend, socializing with and financially supporting many of the artists that he purchased art from, and for this

He needed audacity. The Impressionists had their passionate supporters, but were still assailed in the press and by the Academy as charlatans. His advocacy was significant; he has the gravitas of a prominent critic and editor. He also had straightforward utility as a patron for painters who

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57 Ibid., 74.
were struggling: it was ‘in the mansion of an American or of a young Israelite banker’ that you would find these paintings.58

Charles served as an aesthetic consultant for his artist friends, giving them the benefit of his taste as well as of his wealth. “He and Renoir talked at length about which paintings might be best to send to the Salon, Whistler asked him to check one of his pictures for damage,” De Waal writes, “‘It was due to him,’ wrote Proust in a later character sketch of Charles as ‘un amateur de peinture’, ‘that many paintings, which had been left at a half-way stage, were actually completed.’”59 This intimacy with the art he was buying is striking as, so distinctly from conventional collectors of the first half of the 19th century, Charles was part of the world of the Impressionists. He helped them grow as a movement at a time when they were viewed as revolutionary charlatans. He was far removed from the ordinary collector who bought a finished product to simply hang on his wall as a testament to his wealth and power.

Charles would also connect his artist friends with families of his acquaintance, persuading them to purchase art. Geneviève Straus obtained one of Monet’s water lily paintings and Louise Cahen D’Anvers, a wealthy Jewish society figure and Charles’ lover, commissioned Renoir to paint her three daughters. Auguste Renoir, one of the greatest Impressionist painters, was still a relatively obscure artist at the time, and throughout Charles’s social sphere “there was a certain pleasure in seeing the rustic Renoir, whose table manners were the despair of his mother, taken up by ‘wealthy Jewish financiers’ who hung his paintings ‘next to a Ricard, a Bonnat, a Baudry’ and were ‘rather proud of their audaciousness,’ even if the portraits they commissioned

58 Ibid., 75.
59 Ibid.
‘ended up in the laundry room or were given away to former governesses.”\textsuperscript{60} Compared to the portraits of Bonnat, who had painted Isaac Péreire and from whom Charles had commissioned a drawing of Louise herself, Renoir’s work was viewed as a mediocre alternative. It seems that Charles’s friends and family, who “provided Renoir with more sitters than any but the artist’s own,” were convinced to commission a portrait more by Charles’s persuasion than their appreciation of Renoir.\textsuperscript{61}

Renoir’s portraits were often, for him, a product of his need to make a living. Because of the high demand from the bourgeois class, he “was the only Impressionist to achieve financial security through the practice of portraiture.”\textsuperscript{62} He disliked painting portraits but engaged in the practice when his other paintings, nude models, still lifes, or landscapes, were not meeting commercial success. As a member of the Impressionist movement, perceived as an avant-garde departure from the artistic expectations of the era, Renoir’s portraits are a paradox. Colin Bailey writes in his introduction to Renoir’s Portraits, “Nowhere is the precarious relationship between the conventional and the progressive, between the (largely) conservative expectations of a bourgeois clientele and the (largely) destabilizing ambitions of an Impressionist figure painter, of such importance.”\textsuperscript{63} As with many upper class French families the Cahen D’Anvers were conservative in their taste, preferring painters of the academic style, including Bonnat, to the innovation of the Impressionists. In the portraits of Irene Cahen D’Anvers, the eldest daughter of the family, and of her little sisters Alice and Elisabeth, Renoir

\textsuperscript{60} Colin B. Bailey, Renoir’s Portraits: Impressions of an Age (Yale University Press, 1997). 11.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
acknowledges this traditionalism, stylistically mirroring court and society painters such as Velasquez and Gainsborough in his work and “appropriating a Baroque, formal structure that was calculated to appeal to their more conventional tastes.”

Irene Cahen D’Anvers sits straight up in profile her reddish hair cascading down her back and looking demurely off to the left (Figure 3). Her face is pale with perfectly formed feminine features and blue eyes that match her frilly dress and hair bow. The portrait, which invokes courtly paintings, is, despite the indistinctly soft lines that betray Renoir’s Impressionist style, a depiction of a reserved wealthy French girl with no hint as to her family’s Jewish heritage. The portrait was displayed in the Salon of 1881 to largely positive reviews showing the extent to which, even as an avant-garde work, it conformed to portrait standards of the day. Without his work with these society portraits Renoir would have had far fewer works accepted by the Salon and may not have been able to support himself as an artist.

Renoir’s adherence to bourgeois expectations and involvement with his wealthy Jewish clients brought him work and relative acceptance but also drew criticism from some of his colleagues. “All this commissioned work for Renoir made some of Charles’s other painter friends mistrustful,” De Waal writes, “Degas was especially severe: ‘Monsieur Renoir, you have no integrity. It is unacceptable that you paint to order. I gather that you now work for financiers, that you do the rounds with Monsieur Charles Ephrussi, next you’ll be exhibiting at the Mirlitons with Monsieur Bourguereau!”

A comparison with William Bourguereau, the traditionalist academic

64 Ibid., 121.
painter whose crisp lines and slick surfaces gained him ridicule among the
Impressionists, was a grave insult for a painter who prided himself on his innovation
and independence from convention. Degas is reprimanding Renoir for his betrayal of
Impressionist ideals in succumbing to conservative forces and suggesting that his Jewish
patrons had led him there. By ascribing conservatism to these wealthy Jews, Degas is
articulating the feeling that the Jews could not appreciate the beauty of Impressionist
art, and only wanted the soulless conventionality of artists like Bourguereau. In
addition, Degas is implying that Renoir is as corrupt and beholden to money as the old
Salon with which the Impressionists were trying to break, making art into a commercial
transaction by turning the painting into a material product. The manipulation of art
through money was typically associated with Jews and Degas’ anti-Semitism and
displeasure at his colleague’s involvement with the Jewish élite could very likely have
influenced his criticisms. Regardless, this letter demonstrates the duality of criticism
and stereotypes suffered by the Jews, who were either seen as corrupting modernizers or
greedy, tasteless, followers of conventional taste.

Degas was an open anti-Semite, despite his involvement with Pissarro, the
Impressionist painter, Geneviève Straus the salonnière, Charles Ephrussi, and the
circle of friends that surrounded them. Linda Nochlin suggests that, for Degas, “Anti-
Semitism served not only as a shield against threatening downward social mobility but
as a mechanism of denial, firmly differentiating Degas’s fragile haut bourgeois status
from that of the newly wealthy, recently cultivated upper-class Jews whose position was,
to his chagrin, almost indistinguishable from his own.” 66 This did not stop Degas from working closely with Charles Ephrussi, however, and the collector purchased many of his works, including a double portrait of the Chief Rabbi of Paris and a General in the French army. Charles was attracted to Degas’s depictions of “his Paris life: a scene by Degas of the start of the races at Longchamp, where Charles would go to see his uncle Maurice Ephrussi’s famous racehorses [...] And images of the demi-monde, of dancers and a scene at the milliner’s [...] and one of a solitary woman in a café nursing a glass of absinthe.” 67 Charles was drawn to the Frenchness of Degas’s work just as Degas was repulsed by the foreignness of Charles as a Jew. However Degas’s anti-Semitism never stood in the way of his involvement in Jewish social circles, and before the Dreyfus affair his antipathy towards Jews seemed to be a personal view that he did not allow to affect his social relationships. These art lovers and painters could work together, even with the shadow of prejudice hanging over them, mirroring the earlier relationship between Goncourt and the Rothschilds.

Renoir himself, despite his social and economic connections to the Parisian Jews, began to show similarly anti-Semitic views. When the Cahen D’Anvers family was late in their payment for the portrait of Alice and Elisabeth, Renoir wrote to a friend “As for the Cahens, 1,500 francs, I think I can tell you that I find that pretty stiff. How mean can you get? I really give up with the Jews.” 68 Renoir even turned on Charles

67 Waal, The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance: 77.
Ephrussi when the collector seemed to be moving away from Renoir’s work, instead purchasing two Moreau paintings for his apartments. “It is ‘Jew Art,’” Renoir wrote, referring to the gilded mythological Moreau paintings, he was “galled to find his patron, the editor of the Gazette, with this goût Rothschild stuff on the walls, jeweled and mythic, contaminatingly close to his own paintings.” Renoir apparently believed that even one whose taste had so helped the Impressionist movement could transform into a money loving foreign Jew. Renoir’s reaction is a testament to the way in which the stereotypes associated with Charles’ Jewish identity were impossible to escape. Though in all his interactions with the artists around him Charles had demonstrated an individualistic and innovative taste, Renoir was ready to ascribe every negative quality he connected with Jews and art to Charles himself at the slightest provocation. In reality, Charles’ interest in Moreau was a sign of his growing conservatism. As Charles’ taste changed, he moved away from the avant-garde and closer to classic French art, interpreted by Renoir as an irresistible Jewish desire for gold. Renoir’s reaction, similarly to Degas’ feeling that Renoir was giving in to the Jews, shows the impossible position of the French Jew in the art market, where conservatism and an inclination towards modernism were both attacked as evidence of the corrupting influence of the Jew. When Charles moved away from the Rue de Monceau in 1891 to the Avenue d’Iéna, in the even more fashionable 16th arrondissement, his new apartments were filled with

All this porcelain, the Savonnerie carpets, the paintings by Boucher, the boiseries and the tapestries [which] speak of the need of the Ephrussi family to settle seamlessly into society [...] Charles’s new taste for Empire

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69 Waal, The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Hidden Inheritance: 85.
paintings and furniture as he approached his mid-forties was more than just a way of creating an ensemble in which to live. It was also a claim on an essential Frenchness, on belonging somewhere properly. And perhaps a way of putting more space between those first, jostlingly heterodox rooms and his authoritative life as an arbiter of taste. Empire is not le goût Rothschild, not Jewish, it is patrician, French.70

Charles’ newfound conventionality was not just a product of age, however. In the art world of the 1880’s, similarly to all of French society, the currents of anti-Semitism that bubbled under the surface of many social interactions manifested themselves in the open. This growing hostility demanded conservative identification with French taste from the Jews more than ever.

During the 1880’s, the seemingly secure place of the Jews in French intellectual, artistic and financial establishments began to crack. Notably, in 1886 Edouard Drumont, the editor of the anti-Semitic newspaper La Libre Parole, published a two-volume attack on the Jews entitled La France Juive. In his analysis of Jewish involvement in art, Drumont offers a typical observation as to the complete lack of Jewish creativity and achievement, writing,

The Jews have no genius of the level of Dante, Shakespeare, Boussuet, Victor Hugo, Raphael, Michael-Angelo, Newton, and they do not understand what these artists did. The genius, nearly always misunderstood and persecuted, is a superior being who gives to society, and yet the essence of a Jew has nothing to give. It is not surprising that they hold onto a talent for easy sales. Their Corneille is Adolphe d’Ennery, and their Raphael is Worm. In art, they have created no powerful or touching original figure, no masterpiece, they do not admit that among the things that they sell, they needed the sublime, the fake sublime of course, but they prefer the vulgar, which permits them at the same time to enrich themselves and encourage the enormous appetites of the multitudes and to serve their cause by turning to derision the

70 Ibid., 99.
enthusiasms, the pious memories, the august traditions of the people at whose expense they live.\textsuperscript{71}

Dumont is echoing many beliefs concerning the role of the Jew in the art trade where, without creating any art of their own, they manipulate the taste and desires of the French. They sell them vulgarity for a huge profit, eschewing beauty in order to make money. According to Drumont, the Jew has no place in the history of art because no Jew can attain the level of aesthetic genius required to take part in it.

Anti-Semitism in France in the wake of Drumont’s book continued to rise until 1894, the beginning of the infamous Dreyfus affair, when it exploded to the surface of French consciousness. The issue was so gravely contentious in part because it played on both the fears of the French, who in the face of modernity were nostalgic for their past and who viewed with trepidation the influx of foreigners and Jews into their country, and the fears of the Jews, who realized how quickly their comfortable way of life could be destroyed. Even the families who had lived in Paris for decades, like the Rothschilds, saw that they were not, and might never be, accepted as truly French. The acculturation, and in some cases assimilation, of Jewish families was now seen as a negative force, even by the right wing thinkers who had so advocated for it. Now, the Frenchness of Jewish families allowed them to supposedly blend into French life and corrupt it from the inside, just as Dreyfus had been thought to corrupt the military from a place of privilege within it.

The Dreyfus affair also “established for the first time in history a new role of social and political activism for writers, artists, and academicians,” which involved the

\textsuperscript{71} Édouard Drumont, \textit{La France Juive} (Paris 1886).
growing intellectual and artistic communities of the salons in the political climate.\textsuperscript{72}

Friends, colleagues, patrons, and family members became estranged as opposing factions fell into new social circles around their political beliefs. This atmosphere was true especially for the salons of the day which also divided between the Dreyfusards, who gathered around Geneviève Straus, and the anti-Dreyfusards, who were centered at the Comtesse de Loynes. Madame Straus’ salon became the center of the intellectual Dreyfusard movement, and “it was at her summer house in Trouville in August 1897 that the lawyer Joseph Reinach (another admirer) revealed that Captain Alfred Dreyfus had been framed,” and at her house in Paris where such political luminaries as Léon Blum, Georges Clemenceau, and the Natanson brothers of La Revue Blanche gathered to debate and plan. Emily Bilski writes, “The history of the Straus salon and its habitués demonstrates the barriers still existing in public affairs between groups seemingly ‘at home’ together.”\textsuperscript{73} The social strata in which the Jewish upper class felt the most accepted was falling apart. They were now torn between their religion, which many of them observed little if at all, and a country that they loved. “Straus may have had ‘too little religion’ to change it,’ Bilski writes, “but she was also too French to sit back and watch her country – and that of her forebears – shame itself.”\textsuperscript{74}

The Camondo brothers who arrived in Paris in 1869, Nissim and Abraham, lived through the decades before the Dreyfus affair in comfort, becoming prominent members of high society. Their sons, cousins, Isaac de Camondo and Moïse de Camondo, arrived in Paris as children and grew to adulthood as dedicated French

\textsuperscript{72} The Dreyfus Affair: Art, Truth, and Justice 1.
\textsuperscript{73} Bilski and Braun, Jewish Women and Their Salons: the Power of Conversation, 75.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
citizens, enmeshed with their Jewish neighbors and part of larger Parisian society. The cousins represent the generation after the first emergence of Jews, such as the Rothschilds and the Périeres, in Parisian society, and matured as Jewish assimilation into French culture strengthened. As first generation Frenchmen the cousins were eager to be part of French society and became two of the foremost art collectors of the late 19th century, living through, and responding to, the dramatic changes in France over the turn of the century. In the last decade of the 19th century, Moïse became obsessed with 18th century furniture and decorations, avidly collecting neoclassical pieces from the reign of Louis XV. He consulted with Carle Dreyfus, a curator of the Louvre and Louis Metmann, a curator of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, to build his collection, constantly visiting art and antique dealers and relentlessly pursuing the pieces that he especially desired. These objects came together on the Rue de Monceau, where Moïse created a gilded, shimmering, and opulent collection that perfectly invoked the pre-Revolutionary period that he was attempting to emulate. The provenance of his collection was exquisite, he had Sevres porcelain, a Gobelin tapestry with a royal coat of arms from a noble family, a damask screen from Versailles, and a dinner setting that had belonged to Catherine the Great. The dissolution of the nobility that had allowed French Jews political freedom also flooded the market with furniture and art from closed chateaux, allowing a dissemination of goods that brought objects onto the market that would never have otherwise reached the public. Moïse was able to assemble his collections, creating a new incarnation of the salons and luxurious

75 “La famille de Camondo “.
76 Assouline, Le dernier des Camondo 51.
hôtel particuliers of the monarchical period, only as a result of the fall of this very society.

In his choices, Moïse reveals an orthodox and conventional taste as well as a preoccupation with the French past. Despite his foreign origins, Moïse’s collection demonstrates a nostalgia echoed in the conservatism of French taste. Moïse’s art and furniture was carefully curated and deeply understood, he collected it for its beauty, its relationship to the past, and its cohesion, not for its social capital. In fact, Moïse avoided the salon culture that typified the artistic life of so many of his contemporaries, as Pierre Assouline writes, “One is immediately aware that he was not a frequent visitor to literary and artistic salons. Unlike other collectors, that world was not his.”

However, Moïse was still very much a member of the Parisian Jewish social milieu, and in October of 1891 he married Irene Cahen D’Anvers, the daughter of Louise Cahen D’Anvers and the subject of the Renoir portrait painted on the advice of Charles Ephrussi, Louise’s lover. The marriage was an alliance of two of the most important Jewish banking families, creating stability in the midst of the social unrest of the Dreyfus Affair. The couple had two children, Nissim, born in 1892, and Béatrice, born in 1894. In their house on the Rue de Monceau, inherited from Moïse’s father Nissim de Camondo, the family lived a traditional French patrician lifestyle and Nissim and Béatrice were brought up with all the privileges given to children of their class. Moïse and Irene chose Giovanni Boldini, a prominent society painter, to paint a portrait of the infant Béatrice. Though Boldini’s style was influenced by the Impressionists, his portraits were traditional and widely accepted in French society, demonstrating the continued conservatism of Moïse de Camondo.

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77 Ibid., 57.
Moïse’s cousin, Isaac de Camondo, in contrast to Moïse’s fascination with the court of Louis XV, was an avid collector of the Impressionists during the same time period as Charles Ephrussi, before they were widely accepted in French culture. Isaac was a lifelong bachelor, an amateur composer who admired Wagner and wrote his own opera entitled “Le Clown” in 1906, and the head of the Camondo banking enterprises in Paris. Isaac’s tastes changed drastically over time and “From 1880, during the sale of the Baron Double, a prominent amateur of 18th century art, he became the purchaser most remarked for buying tables, commodes, and chairs in great quantity [...] Later, advised by his curator friends, he collected sculptures of the Middle Age and Renaissance as well.”  

Eventually, Isaac turned to the Impressionists, beginning a collection that included over thirty works by Degas, over twenty of Monet, and many Manets, Cezannes, Renoirs, and Pissaros. Richard Cohen, in his review of the exhibit “Le Splendeur des Camondos” at the Musée d’art et d’histoire Judaïsme, hypothesizes that, “Perhaps the fact that he was a Turkish immigrant helped Isaac ignore the conservative taste of the leading French art collectors.” It could also have been his longstanding preoccupation with Japanese prints and drawings that led him to the Japanese inspired work of the French Impressionists. Whatever the case, Isaac was drawn to the movement, filling his house and work spaces with Degas’s dancers and Monet’s water lilies. Though he did not have a special relationship with Degas, Isaac became close friends with Monet, and travelled to his house at Giverny to observe his work and Japanese gardens. Isaac also became intimately involved with the French

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78 “La famille de Camondo ”.
80 Assouline, Le dernier des Camondo 162.
museum establishment. Pierre Assouline, the biographer of the Camondo family writes that Isaac, “Played an active role in the creation of the Society of the Friends of the Louvre, founded in order to keep works part of the French patrimony in France and subsidize the new Salon of the National Society of Beaux-Arts,”\textsuperscript{81} Isaac felt that he was French, but was aware of his foreignness, and he believed that his collection, “enriched the patrimony of his adopted country, so that he could pay his entrance fare to this civilization that wasn’t originally his.”\textsuperscript{82} He collected French art knowing that he was adding to the artistic heritage of his country. This desire was widely acknowledged in the art world and Isaac was, in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century, unanimously voted to be the president of the Société des Amis du Louvre. However, Isaac did not accept and wrote to a friend

\begin{quote}
The President of the Society of the Friends of the Louvre has the right to be part of the Council of the National Museums. And yet, because I am a foreigner, I cannot, it seems, be part of this council. I do not want to diminish the function of the president of the Friends of the Louvre. I cannot accept the position unless the government finds a way to give me access [...] I am not French in the legal sense of the word, that is evident. I will become French in this sense, but in my own time.\textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

Despite his extensive involvement with the museum community, his art collection, and his prominence in French society, Isaac was, in the terms of the Museés Nationaux, still a foreigner. This categorical refusal to accept those who were not French into the governing body of the museums is a telling sign of the nationalism and fear of outside influence that typified the French museum organization. The influence of one who was not French was seen as an erosion of the pure place of art in French heritage, especially

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 165.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 166.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 246.
in an organization that was originally founded to keep French patrimony in the hands of French museums. In the same letter, Isaac discusses the paradox between the position of the Musées Nationaux and his intention to donate his entire collection to the French state, writing "But could I do a better act as a Frenchman than to donate my collection (all of it!) to France for the Louvre? My intentions are known by all interested parties. What else am I to say of my intention? The deeds that assure the fate of the works of art that make up my property are straightforward. All that is there is for France, all!" Isaac believed in French culture and also believed that he has a right to be part of it, as he loved his adopted country and was willing to strengthen its patrimony through the significant donation of his estate. He registers shock and dismay that these gestures are not enough to overcome the fact of his “otherness” and rejection from the establishment itself.

As Paris moved into the last decade of the 19th century, this feeling of innate and strongly felt Frenchness combined with a continuing sense of strangeness in French society was the great paradox of wealthy Parisian Jewry. As members of the army and government, art collectors, music aficionados, and salonnières it seemed that in many ways these French Jews had assimilated into Parisian society, echoing its cultural values. Within the Jewish community there was widespread conventionality, especially in their art collections, that shows an appreciation for and understanding of French society. At the same time, however, disproportionate Jewish involvement in the Impressionist and budding avant-garde movements demonstrates the connection between modernity and the Jews. As relative newcomers, without hundreds of years of

84 Ibid.
French tradition behind them, they were in a place to understand, appreciate, and support these innovations in French art. In fact, as the 20th century began, Jews became even more involved in the ideas of the avant-garde, leading to a lasting association between these two strange and foreign entities. However, the anti-Semitism that had provided a subtext for many social interactions in the mid-1800’s became even more virulent in the post-Dreyfus era, and Jewish families faced the ire and condemnation of a new generation of anti-Semitic thinkers and authors. The French Jews continued to struggle with constant accusations of greed, obsession with money, and manipulation of people, movements, and culture in order to make a profit. These themes of exceptionalism and assimilation, conservatism and innovation, and money and art, were carried into the new century, following the shifts in French society, the art world, and the changing place of the Jewish community within them.
CHAPTER TWO

“This hemorrhage of artworks”: 1900-1935

In March of 1936, the Parisian newspaper “Je Suis Partout,” published a glowing review of the newly opened Musée Nissim de Camondo, donated to the state controlled l’Union Centrale des Arts Decoratifs by Moïse de Camondo upon his death in 1935. “What we find assembled here, positioned with much taste,” the reporter writes, “are admirable specimens of the decorative arts of the 17th century, an incomparable array of furniture, tapestries, porcelains, etc.”\(^{85}\) He continues to praise the Comte de Camondo’s good taste and connoisseurship, heralding the museum as an homage to the beauty of 18th century France.

In 1911, Moïse de Camondo, who began to purchase furniture and objets d’art at the fin de siècle, decided to demolish his father’s hôtel particulier at 63 rue Monceau and build a new mansion to house his collection in the grand style of the 18th century. Moïse hired Réne Sargent, a noted French architect and 18th century enthusiast, to design the new house. This decision is notable for several reasons, especially in its demonstration of Moïse’s commitment to his art and to France as his adopted country. Referencing the new hôtel particulier, Pierre Assouline writes, “One can see the most spectacular expression of a thirst for the recognition of the aristocrats of fortune by the aristocrats of birth. [...] At the birth of the new century, 63 rue de Monceau became a symbol to the Ottoman world that the descendants of the Camondos had definitively

changed continents.”\textsuperscript{86} In his construction of a mansion mimicking the Petit Trianon at Versailles, in which he could display his collection in an aesthetically pleasing and historically appropriate venue, Moïse was signaling his entrance into the world of the French aristocracy, his passion showing that he privileged art over the money that was stereotypically desired by Jews and the nouveau-riche. Moïse’s new house was a modern incarnation of 18\textsuperscript{th} century luxury with decadent fabrics, beautifully appointed receiving rooms, and an exclusive view onto the Parc de Monceau. It was built as both a showpiece for his collection and as a home for his family, incorporating art into the very fabric of their Parisian lifestyle.

As Moïse’s new mansion was under construction, his cousin Isaac died in April of 1911. The obituary in the newspaper “Le Petit Parisien,” enumerates Isaac’s many business and artistic accomplishments, including that he was “Known well throughout the entire art world,” as a “musician and a composer, he created the Society of Artists and Friends of the Opera, of which he was President. Later, he was elected the President of the Society of the Friends of the Louvre and named a member of the Council of National Museums.”\textsuperscript{87} Isaac’s love of, and prominence in, the art world is evident in the legacy that he left behind. He donated his entire art collection, including Japanese objets d’art, a Donatello bronze, and an enormous number of Impressionist masterpieces, to the Louvre, as he had always intended. However, despite his involvement in all the major associations of the Parisian art establishment, Isaac’s collection represented a shift in the types of art acceptable in the French museum

\textsuperscript{86} Assouline, \textit{Le dernier des Camondo} 39.
\textsuperscript{87} “Nerologie- Isaac de Camondo “, \textit{Le Petit Parisien}, April 8th 1911.
establishment as a whole. Throughout the 19th century the Louvre did not accept works by artists until ten years after their death, keeping art purchased from living artists at the Musée de Luxembourg until it was deemed appropriate to incorporate them into the Louvre’s collection. Monet and Degas, among others, were still alive when Isaac willed their paintings to the Musées Nationaux, and “That they were Impressionists did not settle anything, as they were still very far from being accepted by general opinion.”

The only reason that the Impressionist parts of the legacy were accepted into the Louvre, instead of the Musée de Luxembourg, was because Isaac had specified that the museum would have to take all of this collection or none at all, meaning that in their refusal of Cézanne and Manet, the museum would also be sacrificing an important collection of furniture and objets d’art. Isaac also stipulated that his art should be shown in full in a room dedicated to “Le collection Camondo,” paid for with an additional sum outlined in his will. Given the nature of his legacy, this room was not created until 1920, nine years after Isaac’s death and after the First World War when, according to “Le Petit Parisien” “The President of the Republic inaugurated, on the second floor, the Camondo collection, a magnificent gift given to the Louvre.”

The fact that Isaac de Camondo’s legacy was part of a larger movement to drastically change the policies of the Louvre is significant. It represents a major moment in the history of the acceptance of modern art forms into French national consciousness. Indeed, Assouline comments on this change, “All this was because, from beyond the grave, Count Isaac de Camondo, a Jewish aristocrat, who so wanted to become French, in his

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time forced open the gates of the palace.”\textsuperscript{90} Even as Isaac de Camondo initially declined the presidency of the Société des Amis de Louvre, worried by the refusal of the committee of the Musées Nationaux to accept foreigners, donating his collection to the state was an assertive act of belonging, incorporating his taste, and his name, into the fabric of the most important museum in Paris.

In addition to representing a radical change in the types of artwork accepted as a legitimate part of French national patrimony, Isaac’s legacy was also emblematic of the major changes in the interaction between museums and the public that occurred at the turn of the century. At the beginning of their existence, the Louvre and national museums were comprised of the works in the royal collection confiscated from the monarchy at the time of the French Revolution. As the 19\textsuperscript{th} century progressed, the holdings were significantly increased by the Emperor Napoleon’s campaigns in Europe.\textsuperscript{91} The state also received first refusal of the paintings hung at the Salon, purchasing the most prominent pieces for the Musée de Luxembourg or museums in the provinces. If, ten years after the artist’s death, the painting was deemed appropriate, it was moved into the Louvre.\textsuperscript{92} This method provided a steady stream of approved artwork that mirrored the conservative taste of the state and Salon judges. However, as the Impressionists broke away from the Salon and the government sponsored Salon disbanded, this system collapsed. As a repository for the art that constituted French national heritage, the Musées Nationaux was still determined to have the preeminent

\textsuperscript{90} Assouline, \textit{Le dernier des Camondo} 248.
display of French art. To expand their holdings the museum administration began to solicit donations from major collectors in a way that it never had before. Whereas in the past the French aristocracy had kept their collections in their families as a sign of prestige, many modern collectors were bequeathing their art to the state. This action engendered a different sort of stature, as the donor and their family were seen as important contributors to French heritage as a whole, members of a nationalism that was tied closely to art. The state actively encouraged these donations, as they expanded their own holdings. In *Worthy Monuments*, Daniel Sherman discusses the relationship between donors and the state, writing

> Late in the nineteenth century [...] the state began to devote valiant efforts to reclaiming the work of artists it had previously passed over, from the realists to the impressionists. This effort took three principal forms: encouraging gifts and bequests of private collections to the state, such as those of Etienne Moreau-Nélaton in 1907 and of Isaac de Camondo in 1911, supporting public subscription campaigns to acquire major works for the nation, notably Manet’s Olympia in 1890 and Courbet’s Studio in 1919, and, of course, purchases.\(^93\)

In the case of Isaac de Camondo, the act of donating is a testament to his love of his adopted country. Even as he felt that he was in some ways a foreigner, he wanted his life’s passion, which was indebted to France, to enrich French culture. Despite the fact that he was Jewish he could still make a significant cultural contribution to the state. In including his extensive group of Impressionist works Isaac de Camondo was also showing his faith in their importance to French art history, desiring them to be incorporated into the Louvre with the rest of his collection. His ardent support of this

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\(^93\) Ibid., 52.
modern art was largely vindicated by public opinion and the newspaper article describing “Le collection Camondo” gushed that,

Monsieur Camondo has assembled around thirty modern canvases, among them the most significant of Degas, Claude Monet, Sisley, Cezanne, and Manet’s Lola and the Fife. This ensemble does not present itself merely for the enjoyment of the eyes. It calls for reflection on the necessary steps for the understanding of the most honest efforts and on the struggle to endure these masters, today incontestable.  

Today, these masterpieces make up a significant part of the foundation of the Impressionist museum, the Musée D’Orsay.

After his cousin’s death, Moïse de Camondo continued to build his new mansion on the Rue de Monceau. The project was completed in 1914, and Moïse de Camondo and his two children Béatrice and Nissim moved in the same year. Irene de Camondo, née Cahen D’Anvers, Moïse’s wife and the little girl in the Renoir portrait, had caused a scandal in 1901 when she divorced Moïse to marry the couple’s Italian Catholic horse trainer. Irene was disinherited by the Cahen D’Anvers family and Moïse retained custody of their two children. Béatrice and Nissim grew up with their father, and Moïse was grooming Nissim to take over the Camondo banking business, as Isaac de Camondo had died childless. However the same year that the new mansion was completed World War I broke out and Nissim enlisted in the French army at age 22, one of 40,000 Jewish soldiers to join. Trained as a pilot, Nissim was killed when his plane went down over Agincourt, France during a reconnaissance mission. As the last male descendent of the Camondos his death marked the end of their lineage, and

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94 Ginisty, “Le collection Camondo.”
95 “La famille de Camondo.”
96 Assouline, Le dernier des Camondo 261.
Moïse was devastated by his loss. Soon after, in 1919, Béatrice married, leaving her father alone at 63 Rue de Monceau. Léon Reinach, Béatrice’s new husband, was a musician and composer, and the son of another prominent Jewish family. His uncle, Joseph Reinach, a lawyer, was an ardent Dreyfusard who worked tirelessly to secure Alfred Dreyfus’ release, and his father, Theodore Reinach, was an important archaeologist and scholar. Léon’s mother, Fanny Kann, was the daughter of Maximilian Kann and Betty Ephrussi, Charles Ephrussi’s niece to whom he left his art collection. Léon and Béatrice, in turn, inherited many of Charles Ephrussi’s objects.

With his son dead and Béatrice having little interest in his collection, Moïse decided to bequeath all of his furniture and art, along with the mansion at 63 Rue de Monceau to the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs, of which he was vice-president. He left detailed instructions as to how the state should turn his property into a museum of 18th century decoration, stipulating that it be called the “Musée Nissim de Camondo” in honor of his son. His will states,

Desirous of perpetuating the memory of my father, Count Nissim de Camondo and that of my unfortunate son, air force pilot Nissim de Camondo, fallen in aerial combat on the 5th of September 1917, I bequeath to the Musée des Arts Décoratifs my town-house as it stands at the moment of my death. My town-house will bear the name of Nissim de Camondo, my son to whom the house and its collections had been destined. In bequeathing my town-house and the collections it contains to the State, my purpose is to preserve in its entirety the work to which I have devoted myself, the reconstruction of an artistic dwelling of the eighteenth century. This reconstruction is intended, in my mind, to preserve in France, gathered in particularly appropriate surroundings, the finest examples I have been able to assemble of the decorative art which was one of the glories of France, during the period that I have loved above all others.  

97 “La famille de Camondo ”.
Dedicated to Moïse’s father, the Turkish Jew who originally settled in Paris, and his son, who died for their new country, Moïse’s legacy mirrors his family’s evolution as French citizens. The text of his will shows his love of and dedication to France’s artistic history. Even more than Isaac’s wish to have a room at the Louvre, Moïse’s legacy was a claim to his family’s belonging in French society and its artistic establishment. The Musée Nissim de Camondo is unique in that it is a private collection owned by the French state, demonstrating the high esteem afforded to Moïse’s possessions in the context of French art history. In naming it after Nissim Moïse was also honoring his son’s sacrifice for the French state. By establishing this legacy Moïse de Camondo declared the Frenchness of the Camondo family in the 20th century, a claim substantiated by the fact that after his death in 1935 Moïse’s home was immediately incorporated into the state controlled organization of the Musée Nationaux. The complimentary reviews in the Parisian newspapers, and a visit from Albert Lebrun, the President of the Republic, in 1937 accompanied by Béatrice de Camondo and Léon Reinach, show the importance of the legacy for the French State. None of the reports of the donation in 1935 mention the fact that the Camondo family was Jewish.

The fact that the two Camondo artistic legacies were, for the most part, so well received by the government and the public is remarkable given the negative feelings towards Jews in the art market that carried over from the 19th century. Je Suis Partout, which carried an extremely positive review of the newly opened Musée Nissim de Camondo, was a right-wing publication, founded in 1930. It was known for its intense
anti-Semitism and eventually for its collaboration with the occupying Nazi forces.\footnote{David Carroll, \textit{French Literary Fascism} (Princeton University Press 1998). 11.}

Lucien Rebatet, who was originally a member of the Action Française, a right-wing organization founded in response to the left-wing groups of the Dreyfus era, became a prominent writer and art-critic for this new newspaper. Throughout the 1930’s, Rebatet devoted considerable energy attacking the Jewish art establishment. He criticized everyone from the ubiquitous Rothschilds and wealthy collectors, to the prominent Jewish art dealers of the avant-garde, to the foreign-born Jewish artists of the modernist École de Paris. His vitriolic articles drew from arguments made by the previous generation of anti-Semitic aesthists, including the Goncourt brothers, claiming that Jews had no artistic understanding and citing the ways in which all Jews in the art market were manipulating French patrimony through art. “There has not been any substantive Jewish art, not a single Jewish monument,” he wrote in an article entitled “La peinture française et les Juifs,” echoing Drumont’s theories concerning Jews and artistic genius in \textit{La France Juive}.\footnote{Lucien Rebatet, “La peinture française et les Juifs ” \textit{Je Suis Partout}.} Rebatet also believed that the degradation of French art, typified by the avant-garde movement that appeared at the turn of the century, was caused by the poisonous influence of the Jews. “Unfortunately,” he writes in the same article,

the Jews in their turn exerted a racial influence. French painting seemed, for twenty years, to be in regression. The causes of this decline are not simple. The decadence of official teachings, the taste of large clients, the state and the church on the first level had their part of the responsibility. But, one can not forget the full development, French painting, that magnificent tree of energy and of fruits, started to wither since the Jewish weevil attacked it.\footnote{Ibid.}
According to Rebatet, the bastion of French tradition had been attacked and conquered. Institutionalized modernist corruption had infiltrated even the institutions, such as the state and the church, that should have kept it pure. However, the “Jewish weevils,” that caused this breakdown of French conservatism were not just the collectors of the mid 19th century so derided by Goncourt. In the period between Goncourt’s time in the salons of the Rothschilds and Rebatet’s articles in Je Suis Partout, two new forces in the art world, each seemingly dominated by Jews, had emerged, that of the professional art dealer and that of the foreign born bohemian artist. These two groups created and enforced the association between French Jews and the avant-garde, forever changing the face of French art and spurring the caustic attacks of the 1930’s.

The Impressionist movement represented, for French art, both a dramatic departure from stylistic norms and a major change in the relationship between the artist and the commercial art market. The official government Salon of the mid 1800’s had divorced artists from the sale of their work, therefore, according to the French state, increasing the purity of the art produced. Direct involvement between money and art was seen to cheapen the aesthetic value of the work itself. However, as the Impressionists broke away from the Salon infrastructure, they needed to reach buyers in different ways, independently of the State, in which the artists themselves were involved. In his book Making Modernism, Michael Fitzgerald writes of the Impressionists and the art market, “By coupling their new aesthetic with the new establishment of a commercial and critical system to support their art, they not only
created the movement of Impressionism but also laid the foundation for the succession of modern movements that would dominate art through the twentieth century.”\textsuperscript{101} In the past art dealing was a trade, and many art suppliers would give artists paintbrushes and canvases in exchange for their work, which they would then sell out of their shop front.\textsuperscript{102} Serious entrepreneurship in the art world, which created the modern dealer, “a man with sound business sense, flair, and intuition, who was capable of artistic judgment,” is often thought to have started with Paul Durand-Ruel. Durand-Ruel was born in 1831 and “had often been hailed - and indeed he represented himself - as a knightly crusader for the modern tradition in art, first with the so-called Barbizon school of 1830 and then with the Impressionist generation.”\textsuperscript{103} Durand-Ruel enacted various economic strategies that “have been widely recognized as effectively initiating norms of dealer operations still familiar today,” including monopolization over the entire oeuvre of an artist, concern with “the historical importance of the artists he handled,” use of the popular press, and speculation into the commercial potential of artistic movements.\textsuperscript{104} In the late 1860’s, Durand-Ruel began “to invest enormous sums in the Barbizon painters. [He] risked the use of outside backers for the capital necessary to maintain business operations while, in effect, sitting on their stock, waiting for prices to rise at Drouot’s. This also meant that they had repeatedly to defend and, if


\textsuperscript{103} Greene, "Dealing in Temperaments: Economic Transormation of the Artistic Field in France during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century " 32.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 39; Jensen, Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe 51.
possible, to elevate the prices of their artists at auction.” Durand-Ruel was the first “dealer-critic,” as he combined the finesse of aesthetic understanding and artistic criticism with the economic sensibility that was before limited to the auctions rooms at the Hôtel Druout. His taste was respected, and he employed “his own journal devoted to contemporary art [...] auction and exhibition catalogues and [...] biographical monographs,” to influence public opinion concerning artists that he patronized.

Unlike the collectors of the 19th century, whose taste was a representation of social standing, Durand-Ruel’s viability as an art dealer depended on the positive outcome of his investments and their acceptance into the art establishment.

Durand-Ruel applied these techniques to the Impressionist movement, organizing private gallery showings for them and championing their work to newly prominent groups of wealthy Americans interested in purchasing European art. In this venture he enjoyed great success. He is often credited with generating common acceptance of the major Impressionists in the art market. Soon, a new generation of dealers employing similar techniques emerged as, “in the 1890’s a host of new Parisian galleries started up, many aspiring to the kind of public attention heretofore reserved for Petit, Durand-Ruel, and Sedelmeyer. These new galleries identified with a younger generation of artists outside the domain of the Salons, such as the Nabis, and rediscovered older artists such as Cézanne.” The symbiotic relationship between these new art dealers and the modern artists that they represented increased the power and prestige of both, making each a substantial force in the art market as the new

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105 Jensen, Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe 52.
106 Ibid., 51.
107 Ibid., 66.
century began. Of the major art dealers who established themselves in Paris over the following twenty five years including D.H. Kahnweiler, Ambroise Vollard, George Wildenstein, Léonce and Paul Rosenberg, the Bernheim-Jeune brothers, George Petit, and Joseph Duveen the vast majority, all but two from this list, were Jewish. In his biography of Kahnweiler, Pierre Assouline writes,

in 1907 Paris was the place to be if you wanted to be an artist or an art dealer. There were only a dozen reputable dealers, although their numbers were increasing slowly. Among the newcomers to the field were numerous foreigners, notably German Jews of wealthy bourgeois families. When attempts were made to stereotype this new generation of art dealers, Kahnweiler would cite the example of two of the greatest men in the field, who were neither German nor Jewish: Ambroise Vollard and Paul Durand-Ruel.108

It is striking, however, that these two men were virtually the only examples of influential modern art dealers who were not Jewish.

In many ways the numbers of Jews emerging as major players in the art world played into the stereotypes of Jews as greedy moneylenders, especially as right wing authors began to question the purity of modern art and the commercialization of French culture. However, similarly to art collectors such as Charles Ephrussi, the Jewish art dealers of the avant-garde, in their role as friends and patrons of the artists they represented, demonstrated taste for and historical knowledge of the art. This in turn showed the extent to which they defied the stereotypes imposed on them. The German Jewish art dealer of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, D.H. Kahnweiler reflects this supremacy of taste as, “He replaced the traditional patron of the arts with the arts dealer, a friend and advisor, ever ready to help and give advice.

without trying to influence the artist’s work.”

Unlike the collectors that they supplanted, however, these art dealers had a vested interest in advocating for the artists and movements they supported, engaging with the public through art journals and exhibits. Their livelihood depended on their taste, and their ability to convince others of the aesthetic value of particular works. Kahnweiler,

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\text{did not want to answer to the collector’s taste and needs; on the contrary, he wanted to shape and direct it. When he took up the cause of the unpopular impressionists, he was in extremely difficult economic circumstances [...] It took time, but eventually he saw himself vindicated and his taste became consecrated in the eyes of the public.} \]

Though the dealer’s role necessitated a dependence on finances that would be condemned by the typical Salon establishment the modern structure created by Durand-Ruel and the Impressionists allowed for radical changes in art that, within the context of the mid-19th century, would have been nearly impossible. It also provided an entrée for those without an extensive fortune, like that of the Rothschilds, Camondos, or Ephrussis, to participate in the art world, liberalizing the social structure of the art world and allowing poor artists to make a living.

The care taken by these art dealers in relation to their artists is evident in the association between Paul Rosenberg, an art dealer, and Pablo Picasso, the great modern artist. Paul Rosenberg was the son of the art dealer Alexandre Rosenberg who began his career as a merchant and then transitioned from “eighteenth century decorative arts to the newly established market for Impressionist paintings,” like many Jewish art

\[109\] Ibid., 41.

\[110\] Ibid.
dealers of the period. Paul and his brother Léonce inherited their father’s gallery in 1906, with Paul dealing primarily in the Impressionists and Léonce with Cubism and 19th century art. This changed, however, as Paul Rosenberg’s success propelled him into the avant-garde market, signing Picasso after the latter’s break with Kahnweiler in the wake of World War I. Paul was a talented salesman, and his gallery at 21 rue de la Boétie was opulent with, “a façade entirely of marble, a vestibule of marble, a staircase of onyx […] vast rooms hung with watered silk receiving torrents of light thanks to ingenious lozenge-shaped ceiling fixtures in which a dozen bulbs cluster like grapes on the vine.” This gallery represented a marriage between the luxury of historical France and the modernity of the new century, with gilded details and fabric framing the paintings of the Impressionists. In fact,

one of his most prestigious early events was an exhibition of nineteenth-century French art that he held in 1917 to benefit wounded veterans. This patriotic display included seventy-eight paintings ranging from Mary Cassatt to Vincent van Gogh (clearly, French taste, not citizenship, was the necessary qualification) and drew from prominent private collections, as well as from all the major galleries, including Durand-Ruel, Bernheim, Vollard, and Georges Petit.

Rosenberg was so successful, in part, because he embodied so many juxtapositions, of the classical and the modern, of French and foreign, and of commercial and aesthetic. This 1917 exhibit showed Rosenberg’s commitment to France yet in his fundraising he used the work primarily of foreign artists. He also ascribed to Durand-Ruel’s paradigm of the dealer-critic, as he borrowed from the collections of conservative French

\[\text{\cite{Fitzgerald, Making Modernism: Picasso and the Creation of the Market for Twentieth-Century Art: 77.}}\]

\[\text{\cite{Ibid., 78.}}\]

\[\text{\cite{Ibid.}}\]
collectors as well as his fellow art dealers in a melding of the realm of taste and profit. He curated an exhibit that, nominally, wasn’t concerned with sales.

Rosenberg displayed the same ability to negotiate between worlds in his involvement with Picasso, a Spaniard from Barcelona who began his career in the traditionalist realism of the 19th century and had since evolved to the forefront of the modern Cubist movement. Though Picasso had gained recognition before 1914, World War I threw the art market into crisis, and he was struggling to survive without any buyers for his art. Four years later, in 1918, when Picasso signed with Rosenberg, it was an intense collaboration that stimulated Picasso’s art and contributed greatly to his growing reputation. Living next door to the building that housed Paul’s residence and gallery on the elegant rue de la Boétie, Picasso was surrounded by the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings that had long been Rosenberg’s specialty; they became inspirations for Picasso’s art and measures of his stature among the modern masters.  

By installing Picasso next door to him on the rue de la Boétie Rosenberg was proclaiming his relationship with the artist and imbuing Picasso, as a foreign modern artist, with the same tension of classic and modern that Rosenberg himself embodied. On the rue de la Boétie Picasso lived a bourgeois existence. As one reporter visiting his house noticed, there was a “calculated contrast between the central table, ‘unpretentiously Louis-Philippe,’ and the walls hung with ‘very cubist little pictures in very classic frames.’” In contrast to many modern artists of his generation Picasso, for a time, lived in luxury and was relatively accepted by the French artistic establishment, in no small part thanks to Paul Rosenberg’s championing of his work. Their

\[114\] Ibid., 12.  
\[115\] Ibid., 84.
relationship, in some senses, was a modern equivalent to that of Renoir and his patrons in that Rosenberg provided a steady income for Picasso, who also painted portraits of the Rosenberg family (Figure 4). Painted in 1918 a double portrait of Madame Rosenberg and her daughter Micheline, “confirmed his ties to the gallery, its nearly academic style exhibited his new eclecticism.”

Completed in the year that Picasso joined the gallery, it is a gesture of goodwill, a public display of their relationship. However, Picasso was self-conscious concerning this nod to the portrait commissions of the 19th century. In jest, he drew a sketch of the portrait in which Madame Rosenberg wears an elaborate dress and jewelry and is portrayed with an impossibly long and graceful neck, and signed it “Boldini,” the name of the society portraitist who painted Béatrice de Camondo as a child. Picasso’s portrait of Rosenberg, completed in 1919, depicts the dealer in a formal suit in a wood paneled room smoking a cigarette (Figure 5). In contrast to the portrait of Isaac Péreire as a successful businessman by Leon Bonnet, however, Picasso renders Rosenberg in quick pencil lines and Rosenberg sits perched on the edge of the chair with his art flung casually around the back. This portrait is a testament to Rosenberg’s intimacy with Picasso and his place as a modern businessman, comfortable with the formality of his surroundings while exuding an air of nonchalance.

The problem of French identity, so well finessed by Paul Rosenberg, was very present throughout the early 20th century in the life of Picasso, his fellow artists, and the dealers who represented them. In tandem with the modernizations of the art market France’s demographics were changing as, in reaction to economic instability in

\[116 \text{ Ibid., 85.} \]
Eastern Europe, immigrants began to move to the West en masse, many of them Jewish and many settling in France. These newcomers, in contrast to the French Jews who had settled in Paris in the 19th century, were largely uneducated, religious, and spoke primarily Yiddish. Communities of these Eastern European Jews established themselves in urban centers, and the noticeable increase in population was distressing for many Parisians. However, it was equally worrying for the wealthy Jews who had been living in Paris for over half a century. The influx of Eastern European immigrants after 1905, “represented immigrant Jews in French public opinion. They challenged the financial resources as well as the ideological presuppositions of native French Jewry.”

The assimilated French Jews of the 19th century, the educated, secular, primarily wealthy, French citizens involved in the government, the army, and the arts felt more allied with their French counterparts than the new Jewish immigrants who were appearing in their city. Though largely distinguished semantically with French Jewry referred to as “Israelites” and new immigrants as the pejorative “Juif” the French associated the two groups because of their religion. Resentment against Jewish immigrants on the part of the French, and even on the part of the French Jews, grew in the years before World War I. This was exacerbated by the fact that, “the immigrants, for their part, did not seek wholesale assimilation either in the native French Jewish community or within the larger society. Conscious of the social, economic, and ideological gap that divided them from native Jewry, they rejected the premise that their own culture was inferior to that of French Jews.”

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118 Ibid., 128.
These tensions manifested themselves in the art world in two controversial trends, the globalization of the art trade and the increase of foreign-born modernist artists active in the newly prominent École de Paris. The majority of Jewish dealers were part of an old French family businesses, like the Rosenberg brothers and the Bernheim brothers, but most had extensive foreign connections and experience that contributed to their characterization as outsiders penetrating the French cultural establishment. In his analysis of D.H. Kahnweiler and Léonce Rosenberg, Malcolm Gee writes,

D.H. Kahnweiler had received a financial training in Germany, London and Paris. Léonce Rosenberg had learnt to trade in commodities in Paris, London and Antwerp. When they became art dealers, therefore, both of them were well acquainted with the world of business and investment, and had an international outlook and connections. This background was reflected in various ways in their attitudes toward dealing. Both realized the importance of the foreign market for the kind of painting they sold and tried to develop.\(^{119}\)

Kahnweiler, though born and raised in Germany, opened his first gallery in Paris in 1907 at the age of 23. As he built up his business, he expanded to selling his paintings in New York, Dusseldorf, and London. Similarly, Paul Rosenberg, Léonce’s brother, “organized a series of exhibitions [for Picasso] that stretched from his gallery in Paris across Europe to the United States,” promoting an image of Picasso as an artist of the world.\(^{120}\)

One of the primary reasons for the greater movement of art and expansion of the art trade beyond its epicenter in Paris was the growing prominence of Americans


with interest in the European art market. “At the end of the nineteenth century,” Rebecca Rabinow writes in her article “Discovering Modern Art: The Steins’ Early Years in Paris,” “it seemed as if every wealthy American in France was hunting for art treasures. The Potter Palmers of Chicago, the H.O. Havermeyers of New York, and many others arrived in Paris with deep pockets, willing and able to purchase whatever caught their eye.”121 Without the longstanding conservatism associated with French taste for paintings, the American market accepted the innovations of the Impressionists, post-Impressionists, and Cubists more readily. Consequently, wealthy families back in the United States were purchasing these works at an increasing rate. However, some American expatriates living in Paris with an interest in the arts, notably Gertrude Stein and her brother Leo, “did not whisk the canvases back to America but instead chose to reside in Paris,” and became intimately involved with the development of the market for modernist art.122 Gertrude Stein, a Jewish lesbian from San Francisco who moved to Paris in 1903, started a salon in the fashion of the gatherings of the 19th century when she began to invite friends to view her extensive collection of modernist art in 1906.123 Gradually, her salon became one of the intellectual centers of the avant-garde movement. However, Stein’s success was also a testament to the strange identity of these painters, from Picasso, to Matisse, to Vallatton, to Bonnard, in French thought. Stein, as an American, a Jew, and a woman, was able to be an influential part of this group because the avant-garde movement was already seen as foreign to traditional

122 Ibid.
123 Bilski and Braun, Jewish Women and Their Salons: the Power of Conversation, 115.
notions of “Frenchness.” The increased involvement of Americans with these art forms was seen as evidence of their dissociation with the French art establishment. However, not all Americans were buying modernist art, and some, to the disgruntlement of conservatives, were attempting to buy pieces that were thought of as important parts of the French national heritage. Americans were perceived as the ultimate example of nouveau riche. As men who made their fortune in business, like Albert Barnes or Henry Clay Frick, looked to the French market for their art collections, the use of their money to buy into the history of French artistic tradition, which echoed the stereotypes of the Rothschilds or Camondos, was condemned by right wing members of the art world.

Similar feelings are evidenced in the article “‘Les Juifs et nos chefs-d’oeuvre” published in 1941 in the newspaper ‘L’Appel’ by Camille Mauclair, a right wing art critic. He discusses a law proposed to “give the state the right to forbid the exportation of any object that presents a national interest for history or art.” Mauclair believes that “this hemorrhage” of artworks, “is terrifying by virtue of the impunity given to Jews.” He cites David David-Weill, a banker and collector who served as a member of the Academie des Beaux Arts and President of le Conseil des Musées Nationaux, as an example of a typical Jewish member of the art world who used his large fortune, amassed through his insider knowledge of the stock market from his Jewish allies, to gain access to these bastions of the French cultural establishment. His collection of “artworks from our school of the 17th century has a value surpassing 100 million [francs]” and represents an important part of French patrimony yet, “he sells, or

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simulates a sale, to the Jewish merchant Wildenstein, the great bandit and one of the big shots of ‘l’art vivant’ who then passes everything to the United States [...] or he speculates the entire ensemble on old art and the worst fauvism, having also bought the classic Gazette des Beaux Arts for respectability.” Mauclair is hinting at a larger conspiracy, in which Jewish art dealers and collectors are working together to influence the art market through such estimable institutions as the Gazette de Beaux-Arts. Further, he believes that they are speculating on artwork just as they did with the stock market. These Jews do not differentiate between schools or periods, they will make money on the Fauves or on classical art. Mauclair is emphasizing the supposed predominance of money in Jewish interactions with art, and capitalizing on the idea of Jews as foreign entities in France. With their contacts with Americans, seen as invading forces concerned wholly with making a profit, dealers such as Rosenberg and Kahnweiler were seen as citizens of “Israel,” and not citizens of the country in which they live. The transference of art between nations that Mauclair protests in this article is caused, in his view, by a worldwide network of Jews who help each other make money to the detriment of their home country. In Mauclair’s opinion, David David-Weill and Wildenstein are not truly French, which is why they have no compunction about France’s most beautiful works being taken out of the country. These feelings were emblematic of a larger movement in French political thought at the beginning of the century to return to the provincial nationalist roots of French culture. As one writer, “Maurice Barrès writes in 1902, ‘what we need are men solidly rooted [racinés] in our soil, in our history, in our national conscience and adapted to the French

125 Ibid.
necessities of this moment.”\textsuperscript{126} The comparison between the rootedness of native Frenchmen and the Jews as “déracinés,” those without country or roots, was a telling one in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century as this language continued to marginalize and categorize the Jews. Without the moral basis derived from identity, the Jews were seen as dangerous enemies attacking the state from within. The prejudice against Jews increased as “the discourse of rootedness becomes central to the ideology of nationalism and to the nascent movement of fascism. The Jews, as the instantiation of foreignness, are figured as the antithesis of a rooted French nationality, as the race without roots.”\textsuperscript{127}

This virulent xenophobia in the art world that found its ultimate expression during the Nazi occupation of Paris had its roots in the prejudice against foreigners, Jews or otherwise, engendered by World War I and its aftermath. At the start of WWI, citizenship and essential Frenchness became an important factor as battle lines were drawn around Europe. Furthermore, the global nature of the art market in the pre-war period was challenged by the hostilities between two major centers of the art trade, France and Germany. During the upheaval of the war the emphasis placed on art in French society waned, as many artists, including Braque and Derain, were called to the front. Those still in Paris, like Picasso, often lost their dealers and clientele.\textsuperscript{128} Association with foreign entities caused suspicion and allegiance to France was valued above all. In the case of D.H. Kahnweiler, who at the eve of WWI was one of the most

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{128} Assouline, \textit{An Artful Life a Biography of D.H. Kahnweiler}. 
prominent dealers in Paris representing Picasso, Braque, Vlaminck, Léger, and Derain, his German citizenship forced him to flee Paris as war was declared. The French authorities confiscated his gallery and holdings and sold his paintings at the Hôtel Druout at five auctions held between 1921 and 1923 to raise money for the war effort.\textsuperscript{129} For conservative critics at the time, Kahnweiler’s German citizenship represented a conspiracy in the Cubist movement in general, that the Germans were employing modern art to undermine French culture and tradition. They believed that “the avant-garde was a weapon in this campaign by virtue of its opposition to the academic tradition in France and its inclusions of foreigners.”\textsuperscript{130} The touchstone for these beliefs was an auction of modern art by the organization “La Peau de l’Ours,” on March 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 1914, only months before the start of WWI, which represented “the first time that the art of the Fauves and the Cubists had really been tested in the public market-place.”\textsuperscript{131} The runaway success of the auction, which raised 116,545 francs, more than four time the paintings’ collective initial value, was, for many, a signal of the depths to which the art establishment had fallen.\textsuperscript{132}

Maurice Delcourt, a journalist unsympathetic to avant-garde art, wrote about the auction under the title ‘Avant l’invassion.’ As a preface to his remarks about the sale itself, he called attention to the belief that French culture had already been subverted by German influence before the onset of military action: ‘It appears to superficial observers and the half-informed that the Germans have, in art, already succeeded among us in their task of disorganization which affects all aspects of our activity [...] the ‘great prices’ were attained there by the grotesque and crude

\textsuperscript{129} Gee, \textit{Dealers, Critics, and Collectors of Modern Painting: Aspects of the Parisian Art Market Between 1910 and 1930}: 24.
\textsuperscript{130} Fitzgerald, \textit{Making Modernism: Picasso and the Creation of the Market for Twentieth-Century Art}: 41.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 40.
work of undesirable foreigners, and it was the Germans who paid or pushed up these prices.\textsuperscript{133}

Critics claimed that the fact that a German, the art dealer Heinrich Thannhauser, a colleague of Kahnweiler’s, paid 11,500 francs for a Picasso painting, an extraordinary amount at the time, served to prove their fears. After all, “Why would a man such as Thannhauser invest such a large sum of money in the daubings of a Picasso if it were not for the purpose of sowing discord and doubt into the French art market?”\textsuperscript{134} These beliefs demonstrate the continued skepticism of the French concerning the avant-garde movements of the pre-war period, and the vital place of art in public consciousness.

Even in this time of upheaval, it was crucial to defend France’s artistic patrimony from the encroachment of outsiders.

In the context of WWI the ultimate enemy was the invading German and right wing critics were focused on the attack of German forces on French tradition. However, prejudice against Jews in the art market did not wane during the war, and many critics, ironically, linked the threat of the Germans and the threat of the Jews. According to one lecture, entitled, “On the Influence of the Jewish-German corporation of Paris Art Dealers on French Art,” given by the artist Tony Tollet at the Academy of Sciences, Literature, and Arts in Lyon in 1915,

Things first went wrong in French art with the impressionists, a school that was launched by and owed its fame to those dealers who knew how to profit from it. These dealers quickly prospered by cultivating wealthy collectors, by buying all of the works of an artist in order to speculate with full control over the stock, and by falsely inflating the prices.’ He blamed them for having influenced and bribed critics and having started art magazines in order to better control the market: ‘These are

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 41.
\textsuperscript{134} Assouline, \textit{An Artful Life a Biography of D.H. Kahnweiler}: 112.
standard business practices, and Jewish art dealers are only doing their work, we might say. If in addition to all this they happen to be German, then it becomes apparent that they are methodically undermining French culture and exerting an influence on French taste.\textsuperscript{135}

This piece posits that all of the changes in French art since the first Impressionist exhibit in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century were imposed on France from malicious outside forces. This belief allows the French establishment to remain unchanged and blameless, still enamored of the realism of the mid 1800’s. The commercialization of the art market, though engaged in by many native French dealers, such as Durand-Ruel who is arguably responsible for the practices cited by Tollet, is cast as the ultimate evil. They not only sullied aesthetics with economic pressures but also controlled public opinion and allowed impure art forms, like Cubism, to enjoy acceptance in France. The scapegoat for all of these maligned changes, the break from the Salon, the move towards Symbolism and abstraction, the globalization of the market, and the involvement of foreign artists and dealers, is the Jews. Nostalgia for a simpler time is the right wing critic’s most potent weapon and Tollet is attempting to convince those he addresses that their taste has been duped by the machinations of the Jewish-German conspiracy. He encouraged them to instead remember the beauty, accessibility, and innate Frenchness of art from the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.

In the aftermath of World War I, two opposing movements emerged in the artistic community, one a “rappel d’ordre,” which echoed the nostalgia for the 19\textsuperscript{th} century by embracing realism and naturalism in response to the chaos of the war, and the second an emergence of foreign born artists in the Montparnasse based “École de

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 128.
Paris,” who painted largely avant-garde and post-Impressionist works. While, in the past, foreign artists had come to France to study art and then, for the most part, returned to their home country, the flood of refugees after the war “increased in the 1920s when France began to accept even more immigrants in order to meet its need for manpower after the population loss of World War I,” and included many Jewish artists who settled in Paris permanently.136 “The spectacular ascendancy of artists like Marc Chagall, Moïse Kisling, Amedeo Modigliani, Chana Orloff, Jules Pascin, Chaim Soutine, Ossip Zadkine, and many others,” speaks to this trend, as their art was sold in prominent right-bank galleries, shown in exclusive solo exhibitions, and promoted by major critics.137 Conservative critics balked at this influx of Jewish artists and called for greater distinctions to be made in the government sponsored art establishments. As a result, More concrete measures were taken by curators in order to separate things French from things foreign. In 1922 an annex of the Musée du Luxembourg was established in the Musée du Jeu de Paume in the Tuileries Gardens to show foreign art exclusively. The following year the painter Paul Signac, then president of the Salon des Independents, decided to exhibit works according to nationalities.138

Now, artists such as André Derain and Maurice de Vlaminck, who were previously members of the pre-war modernist movement and then gravitated towards naturalism in the aftermath of the war, were lauded as the bearers of French tradition into the post-war age. It was these new traditionalists and naturalists who “in the xenophobic climate that inevitably accompanies the phenomenon of retrenchment, would be cast by art critics as the paragons of the École Francaise, to be emulated by foreign artists of

the so-called École de Paris working in France.”\textsuperscript{139} The dramatic shift of these artists away from the hated modernist styles of Cubism and post-Impressionism was a symbol for the right-wing art critics that classicism, and Frenchness, would prevail in the end. It also emphasized the association between Jews and foreigners and modern art. They purported to show that the avant-garde was in reality not French at all and the French artists involved with it had been mistaken. In fact, Lucien Rebatet, the art critic of Je Suis Partout, believed that modern art should not be part of French art history at all, as “Rebatet’s derogatory rhetoric was founded upon a deliberate refusal to recognize the avant-gardes as a tradition worth emulating or reprising in contemporary terms.”\textsuperscript{140} He believed that the Jews could not have taste because they were not part of the European development of artistic tradition, so the avant-garde movement to which they were intimately connected was a perversion of French culture.

For many critics, the École de Paris and the avant-garde represented the death of French painting. Camille Mauclair, the author of the article “Les Juifs et nos chefs d’oeuvre,” responded in particular to the work of a German critic Wilhelm Udhe who argued that, “the paintings of races, terroirs, and motherlands had had its day, and [...] welcomed the emergence of a truly European Painting. In terms of international art, Udhe considered the presence of the Jews [...] an indispensable element in binding the separate nations of Europe together and in providing some degree of transcultural

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., x.

homogeneity.”

The emergence of artists such as Chaim Soutine, who “in an attempt to make a foreign world his own [...] recast Paris through the memories of his small hometown or shtetl, back in Lithuania,” through twisted, colorful, and abstract depictions of French villages, café workers, or cathedrals, provided many examples of this amalgamation of nationalities and styles. However, it was this departure from singularly French art that spurred critics like Mauclair to call “for a defense of French art – in his articles and in an exhibition titled Contre le Sabbat de la peinture [...] Mauclair denounced the deceitfulness of the term École de Paris to describe a school that was in fact composed of foreigners who had the nerve to pretend to teach the French how to paint.”

In fact, many right-wing authors considered Jewish artists, like the dealers and collectors before them, devoid of talent or aesthetic sense. In one article Fritz Vanderpyl, another critic, asked “Existe-il une peinture juive?” concluding that there was no Jewish style of painting, and that the emergence of Jews in the art world was “both [a] symptom and [a] result of a general decline of the French pictorial tradition since the impressionists.” In addition, “It was to Jewish greed [...] a greed that was gratified that art had become such a speculative venture, that he would mostly ascribe this state of affairs.” It was the contamination and commercialization of the art market resulting from the greed of Jewish collectors, they reasoned, that had corrupted the art establishment and allowed Jewish artists to enjoy this level of success,

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141 Golan, Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France Between the Wars: 152.
142 Ibid., 146.
143 Ibid., 152.
144 Ibid., 139.
145 Ibid.
when, as Drumont and Goncourt maintained, Jews could not produce valuable artwork.

The themes propagated by these critics, from Rebatet, to Mauclair, to Vanderpyl, created a narrative of degeneration that ascribed all modernization in art, the end of government sponsored art, a liberalization of art criticism, a movement away from classicism and realism, the globalization of the art market, and the dissipation of the French aesthetic ideal, to the influence of the Jews. For these critics it was the Jews, as outsiders in the artistic tradition, stereotypically and historically associated with money, and prominent in the art market itself, who provided the perfect scapegoat in their efforts to return French art to its mid 19th century nostalgic perfection. Each critic attempted to create a narrative in which, without the influence of Jews, the art establishment could return to the state of purity and innocence found in the government sponsored Salon of the past where painters, from Delacroix to David, remained loyal to their nationality and artistic heritage. Lucien Rebatet, in the article “Entre le Juif et le Pompier,” published in Je Suis Partout in 1941, writes “It is necessary to arymanize the fine arts. It is an essential task, that which must precede all others [...] Jews, painters or sculptors propagating the most pernicious example, Jewish dealers with their hideous speculation, critics praising with unstoppable enthusiasm the mores and works from this vast ghetto, their presence must be forbidden.”146 In comparing the Jewish influence on art to a disease, Rebatet is implying that there is a cure, and that by eradicating of Jewish elements in the art world, the French would see

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a blossoming of purely French modernism, unscathed by the commercial influence of
the Jewish dealers. Camille Mauclair wrote a series of articles collected in the volume
“Les Métèques contre l’art Française,” in which he codifies what he believes was the
violent take-over of the French art world by the Jews in the past fifty years. Sneeringly
dedicating the book to “Lévy-Tripp,” and “Rosenschwein,” imaginary, outwardly
Semitic, dealers of the “quarter Saint-Honoré,” Mauclair proceeds to describe their
influence on art and how he believes the art market developed. He demonstrated the
way in which all members of the modern art world, critics, artists, and dealers have
been complicit in ruining French art for the sake of profit. However, Mauclair also
writes, “At the feet of the giant Delacroix, however, some dwarves struggle to make
crumbs. But I hope that many young men, in silence, understand and pray.”147 It is
vital for Mauclair that under the outward layer of degeneracy represented by the
modern art market, there is a possibility for rebirth and the continuation of the French
tradition that, to that point, was ended at the dissolution of the Salon. This messianic
vision of French art is logical, as “Mauclair believed in such vintage fin-de-siècle
concepts as art for arts sake, the quasi religious function of art, and the image of the
artist genius sheltered in an ivory tower.”148 In a country with a changing demographic
in a new century Mauclair held on to the idea of salvation of French identity through a
cleansing of art.

147 Camille Mauclair, Les métèques contre l’art français (Edition de la Nouvelle revue critique
1930). 211.
148 Romy Golan, “From Fin de Siècle to Vichy: The Cultural Hygienics of Camille (Faust)
Mauclair ” in The Jew in the Text ed. Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb (Thames and Hudson
1995), 158.
Though modernism continued to develop in the interwar period, the conservatism represented by Mauclair and his fellow right wing critics also increased and radicalized, building on this search for essential Frenchness through art. Charles Maurras, a contemporary of Mauclair’s and founder of the newspaper L’Action Francaise, cast art and beauty as the core of French nationalism, as “neither race nor place (neither blood nor soil) is the essence of the French nation, but as a work (of art) it is rather its beauty and vitality that should make one ‘hasten to it,’ defend it, judge it to be superior to all other nations, and see it as the true, modern embodiment of the classical ‘beautiful nation.’”¹⁴⁹ This aesthetization of politics and identity provided a strong link between artistic production and the development of French identity, and Maurras similarly believed that “modernity, in the form of democracy, had forgotten what reason and beauty were,” and that “it was up to the art of politics to negate this divisiveness and fragmentation and transform them once again into the ordered work of the integral nation.”¹⁵⁰ Robert Brasillach, who also wrote for Je Suis Partout, emphasized the link between art and politics, as “he admired the way in which aesthetic unity served as a model for political unity, and the will to unity of the artist served as the model for the will to unity of the political theorist […] The search for the poetic or aesthetic unity of the artwork thus leads to the search for an analogous unity in the sociopolitical universe.”¹⁵¹ Because of the intimate relationship between art and French cultural identity the idea of the Jew corrupting the expression of French collective ideals of beauty was disturbing. Political salvation of the French state, therefore, could

¹⁴⁹ Carroll, French Literary Fascism 85.
¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 86.
¹⁵¹ Ibid., 104.
be achieved through the purity of French aesthetics and a cleansing of the art world of foreign and tainted elements. These right wing thinkers also advocated for union between art and politics through a deeper relationship between art and the government, as a proxy for the French people. The ideas put forth by these critics, though relatively obscure, set the state for the drastic movement against the Jews on the part of French society during the Nazi occupation.
CHAPTER THREE

“It is our paintings that we hold onto so passionately”: 1935-1945

In their vision for the future of French politics, culture, and aesthetics proto-fascist thinkers such as Camille Mauclair, Robert Brasillach, and Lucien Rebatet felt an affinity towards increasingly powerful fascist political cults of Germany. Fascism, as a political movement incorporating nationalistic sentiment of superiority, a totalitarian government, and the organization of the nation into a collective mass, emerged in Italy and Germany as partisan groups in the upheaval of the inter-war period. However, some of its ideological basis can be attributed to French right wing thinkers of the 19th century such as Charles Maurras. Maurras, in his “formulation of a specifically French aesthetics of politics that is rooted in a reinvigorated classical tradition,” served as the touchstone for many strains of Fascist thought, particularly in his reinterpretations of nationalist sentiment in the political context.152 Although Maurras was later violently opposed to the German occupying forces his writings demonstrate that Nazi ideology was not far removed from the sentiments he expressed half a century before their rise to power. Therefore, though there are varying schools of thought concerning the interaction of French and Fascist though, here I take David Carroll’s perspective that “Rather than being considered a totally alien ideology imposed on a victimized country, French anti-Semitism and fascism in this and other studies, then, are treated as phenomena with specifically French characteristics and roots.”153 As the German forces

152 Ibid., 10.
153 Ibid., 5.
invaded Paris in 1940, the Nazi iteration of Fascism was put in direct dialogue with the intellectual heirs of Maurras, such as Mauclair, Brasillach, and Rebatet.

Adolf Hitler’s radically nationalistic Nazi party in Germany called for a return to the roots of German culture, expelling the foreign elements that had been allowed to infiltrate and corrupt their modern culture. Aesthetic sensibility played a large part in their political agenda, and Hitler especially was obsessed with the artistic integrity of his perfect nation. As Hitler’s Nazi party began to attain prominence in the 1930’s, Walter Benjamin famously wrote that, “the logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life,” a process that synthesized historical art movements with the desires of the party to create a feeling of shared visual history and nationalist sentiment. According to Lutz Peter Koepnick in his book *Walter Benjamin and the Aesthetics of Power*, Fascist aesthetics marshal the tools of post autonomous art and image making in the hope of removing former standards of valorization and legitimation and of glorifying expressions of power as auratic presences. In analogy to turn-of-the-century art-for-art’s-sake which reveled in radical formulations of aesthetic autonomy, fascism conceives of the political as a self-enclosed system of existential relevance.

Fascist doctrine reinterpreted and repurposed the classical artistic tradition of the 19th century for the purpose of creating a continuous cultural history, and the Nazis saw their political organization as the rightful heir to these artistic movements. Their political system, like the aesthetic ideal of art-for-art’s-sake, was held up as a higher order, unrelated to the aberrations and innovations of history. By identifying

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themselves as the aesthetic descendants of venerated cultural symbols such as Wagner and Cranach the Nazi party turned their political agenda into a higher mode of being, not governing as elected officials but as the saviors of the German nation.

Charles Maurras, foreshadowing these Fascist perceptions of art and culture, held similar desires for France, and he desperately wanted to see, “the full power of the state restored and political chaos abolished,” so that “literature and the arts would flourish under the protection of the monarchy.”156 Maurras believed that

France had undergone a long and profound identity crisis since the Revolution, experiencing only limited moments of what he called rationality, lucidity, and sanity in which the disintegration of the nation was countered and the only ‘real’ resolution to the long crisis repeatedly indicated. Even more than in the actual restoration of the king, these antirevolutionary values were most fully realized in the work of those rare thinkers and writers who kept alive traditional rationality and classical poetic values.157

His theories concerning the cultural and political development of 19th century France demonstrates his belief in an essential French spirit, represented for him by the monarchy. He thought that 20th century Frenchmen could return the country to this ideal through “classic poetic values.” Brasillach, who had worked closely with Maurras, agreed to some extent but also maintained that it was through the fascism expressed in Germany and Italy, and not Maurras’ monarchism, that France would find its way back to the purity of its history. “It was not to be denied, wrote Brasillach, that Mussolini was a great poet when he evoked the immorality of Rome [...] And Hitler’s genius lay in his ability to invent a poetry suited to the German temperament [...] It was in the

157 Carroll, French Literary Fascism 74.
mystical imagery abroad that [Brasillach] discovered the beauty of fascism." Brasillach saw fascism as the means with which to attain Maurras’ pre-revolutionary cultural and political ideals, by establishing a French iteration of the poetry of Hitler’s and Mussolini’s regimes.

Brasillach and his fellow right wing French critics also identified with Hitler’s attempts to eradicate aspects of German culture that contradicted the bond between classic modes of artistic thinking and Nazi doctrine. Parts of German history, political or aesthetic, that detracted from the Nazi claim to power were cast as impure. Thereby, they could be effectively expelled from public consciousness. Hitler defined anything that flouted his pure vision of German history, culture, or art as degenerate, or an erosion of the edifice of the German race. Degeneracy, implying a decline of culture and a level of primitivism, could be applied to any artistic movement deemed unacceptable by the Nazi party and doing so effectively erased it from German history, instead casting it as a foreign entity that was obscuring and obstructing true artistic development. This reinterpretation of the growth of artistic vision over the previous century was important for the Nazi party’s unity and strength. The prominent association between Jews and the avant-garde present in France was also the case in Germany, and Hitler often labeled any work that he found offensive as “Jewish,” or “Communist” allying specific racial ideology with the abstract movements of the inter-war period. Therefore, Nazi doctrine defined classical German art as a product of the superior Aryan race, allowing the rejection of much of modernism as an invasive presence that did not deserve a place in the development of German nationalism or art.

history. One Nazi cultural official declared in a 1933 speech, “It is a mistake to think that the national revolution is only political and economic. It is above all cultural. [The revolution has uncovered] the awareness that all the expressions of life spring from a specific blood ... a specific race!... Art is not international.”159 French critics, like Lucien Rebatet, propagated a similar division, highlighting the value of natural French art while decrying the tenants of modernism as a Jewish violation of French culture. Degeneracy, on a racial basis, could account for the major shifts in the French art world, while allowing for the continual presence of a “true” French art that could be attained by the elimination of the modernist, and by extension the Jewish, presence.

However, Lucien Rebatet also demonstrated a clear dislike for “pompier” art, defined as the most conservative strains of Salon-sanctioned French art. In Rebatet’s ideology,

pompier art embodied the worst traits of democracy and of bourgeois capitalism. Speaking of the Salon de la Societe des Artistes Français, whose ‘daubs’ could be seen yearly, he wrote [...] ‘It is the perfect expression of a bourgeoisie that has reached the last degree of decadence, is petrified in its foolishness and bad taste, but still pretends to occupy a place of which it is no longer worthy.’ In other words, the yearly Salon simultaneously manifested an unwillingness and an inability to eradicate deadwood from its midst; it mirrored the functioning of Third Republic governments and the mentality of the bourgeoisie it had served.160

Rebatet believed that French modernism was trapped “Between the Jew and the Pompier,” embodying both degeneracy and conservatism. This duality is foreshadowed in Degas’ criticism of Renoir’s relationship with Charles Ephrussi. Either Ephrussi

159 Nicholas, The Rape of Europa: the Fate of Europe’s Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War. 6.
160 Cone, French Modernisms: Perspectives on Art Before, During, and After Vichy 22.
represented a conservative impediment to the Impressionist movement or, to critics such as the Goncourt brothers, Ephrussi, as a Jew, was responsible for the disintegration of the French artistic tradition. The definition of degenerate art in the late 1930’s was a means by which Fascist critics of modern politics and culture could redefine the history of French art, erasing the influence of so-called foreigners and reconstructing the story of artistic development in the 19th century to suit their own ideological needs. Moreover, as evidenced by Degas and Goncourt, the French had long held ideals of pure French art and the impurity of all foreign iterations of it. Importing German ideas of degeneracy gave an ideological framework to this decades-old feeling. It also made the distinction more virulent. Not only was foreign art an impure presence, but it also was actively attacking French culture, infiltrating and tarnishing it from the inside. To combat this, ascribing to the German perspective on degeneracy was seen as a way to attain the glory of classical France and Rebatet’s widow stated that “her husband ‘thought France might have to be conquered before it could pull it self up.”

This sentiment foreshadows the unprecedented level of acceptance of the German occupation by these Fascist thinkers who believed that far from threatening the autonomy of French culture, the German forces would help reestablish French national artistic and cultural values.

When Nazi troops marched into Paris unopposed on June 14th 1940 some, such as Rebatet, welcomed the occupying forces as agents of positive change in a France besieged by cultural corruption, foreigners, and degeneracy. Others were thrown into a state of panic, fleeing Paris for the supposed safety of the south, often leaving most of

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161 Ibid., 21.
their possessions behind. Dealers, collectors, and museum officials, even before the start of the occupation, were forced to decide how to best protect their valuable artwork from the destruction of enemy troops or allied bombing. Paul Rosenberg sent his nineteenth century paintings to England for safekeeping and the twentieth century works to Tours. He then moved to the coast near Bordeaux with his wife to facilitate an easy escape if the need arose. In the process, he was forced to give up contracts with many of his artists, most importantly Picasso, and leave his gallery on the Rue de la Boétie with all his personal files, gallery papers, and the photographic records of his business. As the Germans marched into Paris, Rosenberg fled to America, leaving many of his most valuable modern paintings in Bordeaux. Once in New York, he was able to assemble enough stock to open a new gallery, using the network of American connections he had built up through his dealings.

David David-Weill, a banker, collector, and president of the Board of the Directors of National Museums from 1931 until he lost his citizenship during the Vichy regime because of his Jewish heritage, also sent a great number of works to the United States. However, Jacques Jaujard, the director of the Musées Nationaux, encouraged David-Weill to leave the majority of his paintings in the care of the Musées Nationaux and promised that he would mark the collection as a donation to the state made before the start of the war. Because of this, David-Weill sent one hundred and thirty crates of art to be stored with the collections of the Musées Nationaux at a

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château in the countryside. Soon after he went into hiding in another remote château with his family. Jaujard offered the same protection to the art collection of Léon Reinach and Béatrice de Camondo. They were in possession of a variety of decorative objects inherited from Moïse de Camondo and Charles Ephrussi, through Léon’s mother Therese Kann, as well as the Renoir painting of Béatrice’s mother Irene Cahen d’Anvers. Béatrice de Camondo, unlike Rosenberg and David-Weill, decided to stay in her house at Neuilly, believing that her family’s connections and wealth would exempt her from the rumored attacks against Jews. Three years later her assumptions, founded on her brother’s sacrifice for the French army and her father’s prominence in French society, were proved baseless when she, her husband, and their two children Fanny and Bertrand were taken to Drancy and then sent to their deaths at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Meanwhile, the Musées Nationaux were preparing to remove their own collections from the danger posed in Paris. According to Lynn Nicholas, the author of The Rape of Europa, “Lists were drawn up of all important works in the museums of Paris and the provinces. Each French department was surveyed for chateaux, abbeys, and churches suitable for storage [...] chosen [for] [...] their proximity to England, to which the collections could be quickly evacuated in case of total disaster.” Despite limited facilities and means of transportation “these initial storage sites also housed works from outside the national museum collections that museum personnel considered part of the French patrimony,” including David-Weill’s collection in

164 Assouline, Le dernier des Camondo 314.
165 Nicholas, The Rape of Europa: the Fate of Europe’s Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War. 51.
addition to 400 “cases of art from private collections, which carried the names of the most prominent Jewish collectors in France.”

By incorporating these Jewish owned works into the collections of the Musées Nationaux, museum officials believed that they would be spared from any potential seizure by the Germans. The Musées Nationaux were protecting these valuable French works from being taken out of the country by the Germans but also from being brought to the safety of America by their Jewish owners. This fear of transferal was present in French consciousness for decades, as evidenced by Camille Mauclair’s article calling for the sealing of France’s borders to the art trade and violently attacking Jews for taking French art out of the country. As the Germans became stronger, defeating the French military, occupying Paris, and driving the French government from the city, this fear also intensified. The French government was powerless to control the movement of artwork.

Paris now faced the exodus of many of the artists, dealers, and collectors who had made it the center of the art world for two hundred years. The Vichy regime, the French government established to oversee the unoccupied zone in the south, held little political power, as they were dominated by the German forces based in Paris. To compensate, Vichy, lead by Phillipe Pétain, a World War I hero, used the idea of culture in an attempt to unite the French people and rebuild France with a pure, nationalistic vision centered on Travail, Famille, Patrie (Work, Family, Country).

Elizabeth Karlsgodt writes in her analysis of cultural affairs under Vichy,

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As Pétain and his cohorts called for national renewal in the wake of defeat, numerous cultural officials and journalists emphasized the need for increased protection of French cultural heritage. Letters, reports, and articles repeatedly refer to the notion that the military defeat did not destroy French culture – the country’s only remaining comparative advantage. French authorities believed they needed to take immediate measures to ensure that Paris would be the world’s cultural capital after the war. It was a vision stemming from the fear that New York already held this position, as art collectors and patrons had helped established world-renowned private museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA).168

New York grew to become a larger threat to Paris as the war continued. Dealers such as Rosenberg moved their operations from Paris, bringing with them the loyalty of buyers and artists, as well as large numbers of French paintings. In addition, the French still saw the American collector as one of the examples of the materialistic and uneducated nouveau riche man so despised in early 20th century Paris. That this nation of businessmen who, like the Jews, had no part in European history could suddenly amass such a quantity of paintings and sculptures was disturbing. But the fact that these objects made up a significant part of France’s national heritage, and that these collections threatened to surpass those in Paris, was even more alarming. That some French Jews were relocating to New York only strengthened the association between the Americans and the Jews, both of whom were outsiders to European art history and unworthy of the artistic status which they had reached. As a result, the Vichy regime channeled money and energy into the Fine Arts Administration and Pétain “assured his compatriots that despite the military defeat, ‘France will remain...the fatherland of the arts, of high culture, and of objective research.’ The new regime, he declared, ‘will

maintain its Greek and Latin Heritage’ and its cultural ‘rayonnement throughout the world.”\(^{169}\)

The Vichy regime, however, did not want to merely return France to the state preceding the German invasion. Instead, Pétain and his administration wanted to create a new iteration of French culture, built on its “Greek and Latin Heritage,” and embracing the conservatism of its past. This new French culture was based not in big cities such as Paris but in the innocence of the countryside. It glorified Pétain as the nation’s savior and father and peasants as the backbone of French society in a sharp departure from the industrialized urbanism of the Popular Front. The artists most respected by the Vichy regime such as,

André Derain, Donoyer de Segonzac, Maurice Vlaminck, and Othon Freisz [were] ex-Fauves or ex-satellite Cubists – had been members of the avant-garde at the edges of the mainstream Parisian art scene during the pre-war years. Yet, by the 1920’s, they had turned to a conservative style which [...] can be described as a form of Regional Naturalism.\(^{170}\)

Their landscapes, portraits of peasants, and naturalist scenes echoed the nostalgia for the 19\(^{th}\) century expressed by both the Vichy government and Fascist critics such as Mauclair and Rebatet. This naturalism, defined by purity and realism, opposed what they believed the art world had turned into, an institution only concerned with commerce that produced ugly and incomprehensible abstraction. This bucolic vision of French culture also called for a return to essential Frenchness, as opposed to the foreign contamination of Paris, allowing for the exclusion of all foreign elements, especially the Jews. Now works such as Derain’s tapestry entitled “The

\(^{169}\) Ibid., 29.

Golden Age or Terrestrial Paradise, the Hunt,” were held up as exemplars of French art, especially as “Derain’s tapestry evokes the mythology of a restored totality, the ‘organic regroupment of French society’ to use Pétain’s own words: the perfect harmonized Gestalt, fundamentally sought by all brands of fascism.”171

Though the Vichy regime strove to define their own French culture outside of the control of the German occupiers, the Nazi party saw France as a future annex of the Third Reich, a vacation spot for the Aryan citizens of Germany. Therefore the occupiers wanted to glorify the aspects of French culture that ascribed to the aesthetic discipline of Nazi doctrine, demonstrating the continuity of their beliefs and the ultimate supremacy of the German state.172 In the winter of 1941, the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda invited a group of French artists on a tour of Germany, to establish an artistic bond between the two countries.173 The artists who agreed to go, including Derain, Vlaminck, and van Dongen, all of whom had worked closely with D.H. Kahnweiler, were “held up as exemplifying French excellence,” with their naturalist scenes, despite the fact that they often had “their early paintings sold off as ‘degenerate art.’”174 Though in later years, after accusations of collaboration had been leveled against the participants, many claimed that they had gone only in an attempt to help French prisoners of war, whereas truthfully many artists went to promote the status of French art under the new German regime.

171 Golan, Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France Between the Wars: 162.
174 Ibid., 86.
Louis Hautecoeur, the director of les Beaux-Arts administration, urged sculptor Paul Landowski to accept the invitation, advice echoed by the committee of French artists who “endorsed the tour ‘not only for the sake of the prisoners but also for the prestige of French art.’” 175 Hautecoeur replaced George Huisman, who fled to Morocco when he registered staunch opposition to Vichy, as Director of the Fine Arts in 1940 after serving previously as “the curator of contemporary art at the Musée du Luxembourg, director of art projects for the 1937 Universal Exposition, and founding director of the National Museum of Modern Art from 1937 to 1940.” 176 Though his career trajectory and involvement with modern art may seem surprising as,

a political traditionalist, Hautecoeur embraced the classicist aesthetic as the French national style. He believed that a return to classical principles in artistic and architectural policy, beyond mere aesthetic value, could help reshape the French spirit and promote renewal within the broader framework of the National Revolution;

in fact Hautecoeur was expressing a vision of French modernism consistent with that of many Fascist thinkers. 177 Given “his fundamental aesthetic disdain for modernism,” his work with contemporary art collections stemmed from the belief “that he could help shape the modern aesthetic in France, promoting the moderation and rationality found in neoclassicism over abstraction, surrealism, and expressionism.” 178 Hautecoeur held the belief, shared by the more radical Mauclair, that by creating an aesthetic discipline based in classicism, instead of the modernist bent of contemporary art, French society as a whole would benefit, cleansing itself through art. The trip to Germany, in his eyes,

175 Ibid., 85.
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid.
was a way in which to present this new form of French modernism to the world, promoting the École Francaise as the foundation of contemporary French art.

Though administrators, such as Hautecoeur, were deeply concerned with reforming the state of French art, Hitler himself wanted to demonstrate the supremacy of German culture in contrast to the French. His sentiments about German cultural superiority were heard when, for example, “About the Salon d’Automne that Speer described to him as filled with ‘degenerate art,’ Hitler simply remarked that ‘the intellectual soundness of the French people’ was of no importance to Germans and that it was in Germany’s interest to let France ‘degenerate.’”179 The artist’s trip was successful because, “Upon returning to France many of them praised the importance bestowed on the arts by the Nazi regime, and the high status enjoyed by official artists of the Reich whose studios they visited.”180 Hitler welcomed this adherence to German conceptions of aestheticism, supported by art reviews in collaborationist newspapers and exhibitions glorifying art forms endorsed by the German state. However, he was not interested in building a parallel notion of inherently French art, which was completely unimportant for the new German empire. The degeneration of French culture would only strengthen that of Germany. Therefore, over the course of the occupation, the Parisian art world was left, for the most part, to censor itself, with the Nazi administration legislating only “infringements of the exclusion law or to anti-German symbols,” ensuring that communists, Jews, and Freemasons could not work or exhibit.

179 Dorleac, Art of the Defeat, France 1940-1944: 11.
180 Golan, Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France Between the Wars: 158.
These policies meant that Vichy was left to enact its own cultural agenda, and officials like Hautecoeur could impose their aesthetic ideology on the French museum administration. Consequently, a new definition of French modernism, expressed by purely French institutions without the interference of the Nazi party, can be seen in the wake of the German occupation. At the opening of the Musée National d’Art Moderne, a new museum meant to exemplify the traditions of the most recent decades of French artistic innovation, on August 6th 1942

There were no Picassos and no paintings by Pascin, Soutine, Modigliani, and other École de Paris Jewish artists; there was no abstract art to be seen either. Although Neoimpressionism, symbolism, French-style Cubism, and particularly Fauvism were well represented [...] the untutored person might be led to believe these movements had been accidents, aberrations in a history of modern art still looking to the nineteenth century for guidance.¹⁸¹

Hautecoeur, who gave a speech on behalf of the Vichy Ministry of Education and Youth, and others in the Vichy government, had succeeded in the redefinition of the trajectory of French art history that had been promoted by Fascist critics in the interwar period. In the exaltation of the 19th century as the wellspring of inspiration for modern art, Vichy was able to cut out the foreign influence and aesthetic innovations of the previous fifty years.

This recasting of art history was supported by the exclusionary policies of the Vichy regime, which stripped Jews and other undesirable foreigners of their position in the arts administration and stopped Jewish artists from exhibiting their work. The Germans did not order these legal actions and the new laws were seen as a way to help the French, not to cater to the demands of their occupiers. Hautecoeur’s writings show

¹⁸¹ Cone, French Modernisms: Perspectives on Art Before, During, and After Vichy 35.
his support for the policies, as “he feared that French artists, commonly referred to as the French School, would be corrupted by foreign, and implicitly Jewish, influence.”

He wrote that “For the past twenty years, the Parisian salons and magazines might have given the wrong impression because the French were mingled with many foreigners, often Jews from Russian, Lithuania, Poland, and the Balkans who, eager to be noticed or subject to ancestral forces, practiced an art very different from our own.”

Like Mauclair and Rebatet, Hautecoeur equated the rise of modernism with the influence of the Jews, whose corrupt ideals reached to the highest levels of Parisian salons and publications. Hautecoeur expressed his belief in a future of French art by cleansing the fine arts administration of Jews. His vision of this aesthetic discipline was displayed in the new Musée d’Art Moderne and was heavily indebted to 19th century Salon culture and classicism.

The growing rejection of the art of the École de Paris and abstraction as foreign or Jewish intrusions into the history of French art is further demonstrated by the content of the now infamous exhibit at the Palais Berlitz in the fall of 1941, “Le Juif et la France”. This special exhibition, organized by Vichy’s L’Institut d’Étude des Questions Juives, was meant to demonstrate “the physical and moral inferiority of Jews in comparison with Aryans and their nefarious influence on French society.”

A floor plan of the building shows sections devoted to the Rothschilds, Jewish art, Jewish “professions,” including commerce, medicine, and politics, Jewish perversions in

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182 Karlgodt, Defending National Treasures: French Art and Heritage Under Vichy: 45.
183 Ibid.
184 Cone, French Modernisms: Perspectives on Art Before, During, and After Vichy 155.
movies, the Jew in Paris, and the Jew across the history of France.\textsuperscript{185} The wall concerning “Jewish art,” contains a collage of reproductions of various abstract works, including Picasso-like nudes, and what seem to be works by Braque and Dali (Figure 6). Across the collage is written “Démence? NON art Juif,” (Demented? No, Jewish art).\textsuperscript{186} In this statement, the French organizers of the exhibit defined the abstraction so common in the avant-garde as a completely irrational removal from normality. Abstraction, an artistic reaction to the realism of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, exemplified by Cubist and Expressionist artists such as Picasso or Kandinsky, was a non-representational art form, which employed seemingly random shapes and colors. As in the German degenerate art exhibit, abstraction became part of the Jewish conspiracy to undermine French culture, whether or not the artist was Jewish. Therefore, the categorization of “Jewish art” was a departure from the definition of the Jews as a religion or a people and anything produced by the avant-garde outside the realm of acceptable French aesthetics was considered Jewish by default. This binary between pure French art and lunatic Jewish art allowed Vichy to create its own, seemingly logical, iteration of France’s art history and blame all aberrations on the interference of the Jews as a parasitic influence. By removing “Jewish art” from the purview of French art Vichy was, in essence, denying the avant-garde and encouraging French aesthetics to

\textsuperscript{185} Photograph, Le Juif et La France. CDJC X19-118. Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Paris 

Note: The majority of the archival sources used can be found at the Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine (CDJC), the library of the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris, France. Detailed records, and some scanned documents, can be located in their online catalog at http://www.memorialdelaschoah.org.

\textsuperscript{186} Photograph, Le Juif et La France. CDJC CIII_57. Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Paris
return to the innocence, purity, and realism of the Salon. This movement was mirrored and supported by the swift renunciation of abstraction by artists of the École Française such as Vlaminck and Derain. By returning to the roots of French culture, defined by Vichy as the peasant culture of the country, these artists moved back in time and adjusted their art to the standards of the mid 19th century, as if the previous years of artistic innovation had never happened.

While the dissemination of this propaganda was an important part of Vichy’s campaign to reinterpret France in the image they desired, the administrators were also deeply concerned with the logistics of the legal and political issues surrounding the place of the Jew in France. The German forces were often content to allow the French government to enact their own laws, as one military communiqué stated the Nazi agenda in regards to the Jews, “will be realized only if the French People themselves decide to liberate themselves from Judaism.”\footnote{Marrus and Paxton, \textit{Vichy France and the Jews}: 80.} The Vichy government, who felt marginalized in the context of the German administration and were eager to gain control over legislation realized this and set about establishing their own laws regarding Jewish property, employment, and citizenship. The 1941 Statut des Juifs, spearheaded by Xavier Vallat, the Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives from 1941 to 1942, consisted of three statutes, the exclusion of Jews from a vast number of professions, a detailed census of Jews in the Unoccupied Zone, and the aryанизation of Jewish property in the Unoccupied Zone.\footnote{Ibid., 100.} The aryанизation of Jewish property was a process first enacted by the Germans in the occupied zone. It stated any Jewish property should
be confiscated and put under the control of an “administrateur provisionaire,” who
had the power to sell, disband, or continue the business. The goal of Vichy’s Statut des
Juifs was to replace German aryization practices in the Occupied Zone with French
administrated policies, putting control over Jewish assets into French hands and
allowing the Vichy government to benefit financially from the confiscation of Jewish
property. For the most part, the Germans were happy with this situation as otherwise
they would have to use their own resources to deal with the “Jewish problem” in France.
Indeed, the head of the economic branch of German operations in Paris wrote, “the
aim, in principle, is to replace Jews by French in order to have the French population
themselves take part this way in the elimination of Jews.”189 The one exception to this
arrangement, however, arose when the Germans felt that the Jewish property in
question was useful to the Nazi organization. This was the case in the confiscation of
the priceless art collections of France’s Jews, which included the opulent chateaux and
hôtel particuliers of the Rothschilds, in which hung such masterpieces as Vermeer’s
“Astronomer,” the 20th century masterpieces of the Rosenberg gallery hidden in the
countryside, and the 130 crates of the David-Weill collection hidden with the works of
the Musées Nationaux at the chateau at Sourches. The Germans were well aware of the
value of this art and set about locating each collection in order to take the works for
themselves. They looked to bar the French from incorporating the art into their own
museum collections or selling it to benefit the Secours Nationale. As the extent of the
seizures became known,

189 Ibid., 101.
a wide range of French interests joined in the ensuing protests: museum officials, the scholarly community, the Secours Nationale (the state-run charity, which the French government intended to fund from the sale of property belonging to the émigrés of 1940, such as the Rothschilds), the Direction Générale de l’Enregistrement des Domaines et du Timbre (the state property administration, whose director insisted on the right of his service to liquidate property and take charge of it), the CGQJ (which defended its priority in Jewish matters), and the secretary of state for the economy and finance (because the art was supposed to be sold for public benefit). ¹⁹⁰

Though there was a strong political response to the German seizures of Jewish art, yet among the many interest groups represented there was no protest on the behalf of the Jews whose property had been taken. The complaints from this extensive list of French interest groups centered on the idea that the art taken by the Germans was the property of the French state, not that the seizure of Jewish was in itself immoral.

The national museum organization became involved in the Vichy battle against German art confiscation when the Germans raided the museum safe houses at the châteaux at Sourches and Chambord, demanding the surrender of the Jewish cases stored there. In a frantic letter sent on June 3rd 1941 to Francois Darlan, Pétain’s deputy, Jerome Carcopino, the Vichy Minister of Education and Youth, describes the scene at Sourches,

Since I had the honor of writing to you on this subject on March 22nd, new facts were produced on April 8th, when the Administration of the Musées Nationaux was informed over the phone by the German service for the protection of artwork in France that the delegates of the Commission charged with the seizure of Jewish goods went to the Chateau at Sources on April 11th in order to preside over the numeric inventory of the cases stored by the Jews with the Musées Nationaux and subsequently evacuated to this depot. In accordance with my permanent delegate in Paris, the Director of the Musées Nationaux sent my assistant to help the head of the depot. On April 11th, the German

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 102.
representatives, after having drawn up an inventory, took control of the one hundred and thirty cases that make up the collection of David-Weill and transported them to an unknown destination, perhaps the Jeu de Paume at the Tuileries.\textsuperscript{191}

In the face of the German demand the guards at Sourches could do nothing and, despite Jaujard’s promise to David-Weill, his collection was taken to Paris to be distributed among German officers and possibly sent to German museums. Carcopino was gravely concerned, and wrote, “The question is even more serious as these Jewish collections constitute a considerable portion of France’s artistic patrimony.” In confiscating the Jewish art held at Sourches, the Germans were robbing the French of what they perceived as rightfully theirs, art that was an integral part of the history of French artistic development. Carcopino’s letter is a testament to the general feeling among the French museum community that the art found in Jewish collections was ultimately the property of the French people. The Vichy government was prepared to fight the Germans to retain what they saw as an important part of their national patrimony even though, in the process, they stole paintings using the same justifications and methods as the German forces.

Moreover, when referring to the Jews who had entrusted their art to the Musées Nationaux, namely David-Weill, Carcopino write, “And yet, the largest part of the works of art belongs to the Jews whose French citizenship has been revoked, and therefore the goods confiscated by the French State must be sold for the profit of the Secours National.”\textsuperscript{192} These art collectors had been important enough to the French

\textsuperscript{191} Jerome Carcopino, letter to François Darlan, 3 June 1941, XXI-31, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Memorial de la Shoah, (Paris, France).
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.
state that Jaujard offered to protect their art. However, Carcopino is worried about movement of the artworks themselves and does not bring the initial seizures into question. The fight is about the art itself, as sequestration of Jewish art was perceived as the logical result of the revocation of Jewish citizenship. He is only concerned with allowing the Secours Nationale to have access to the art and ensuring that any valuable pieces are absorbed into the national collection instead of being removed to Germany. In another letter from Carcopino concerning the situation at Sourches written on the same day, Carcopino states “After this operation, Charles Gervais, the provisional administrator of the property of M. David-Weill informed me that [...] he finds himself prevented from bearing the responsibility of an administrator that he was appointed to in the framework of the mission given to him by the President of the Civil Tribunal of the Seine.” Here he is worried about the ability of the administrator, appointed under the aryranization policies of Vichy, to retain control over David-Weill’s property. In each of these letters, concern is raised only over the rights of the French museums and the administrator, thereby disregarding David-Weill’s rights of ownership to his collection.

When Jewish families, including the Reinachs, wrote to government officials in a vain attempt to regain their stolen property they were met by bureaucratic stalling and open antagonism. Because of Vichy’s policies concerning Jews their legal right to their property had been revoked and they had to depend on the sympathy of French officials for any assistance. In their letters, collectors sent descriptions of their loyalty to the

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193 Jerome Carcopino, letter to Fernand de Brinon, 3 June 1941. XXI-33, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Memorial de la Shoah, (Paris, France).
French state to substantiate their claims. They mentioned their donations to the state, involvement with the French military, and membership in elite cultural organization organizations in an attempt to convince the authorities of the legitimacy of their French identity. Mademoiselle Leonore Wassermann, in a letter written to Xavier Vallat, the Commissaire General aux Questions Juives on May 4th, 1941 after the Germans had raided her apartment and taken over 70 paintings to the Jeu de Paume, cites “the extreme urgency of an intervention to avoid the departure of our paintings to Germany.” She shows that she is on the side of French and she believes that they are on her side. Given this, she assumed that the French would support her in wanting the paintings to be kept in the country and returned to her family. However, the authorities are only concerned about her paintings, and not the Wasserman family’s loss of their property or their plight as individuals. Her statements are ones of belonging, as she is French and her paintings, though many are Dutch, are an important part of French art history. Therefore, she believes that the French should help her in retaining her personal property in the face of the Nazi threat. She goes on, “When speaking of spoliation, it is not the question of blame that I would like to settle. You know well, Minister, that it is our paintings that we hold onto so passionately, and the artistic patrimony of France that we would like to get back, and not just money.” Here, she makes clear the connection that she feels between her family’s art collection and the French state. Her reference to, above all, her desire to see the return of her paintings for the greatly glory of French heritage, and not simply for their market value,

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194 Leonore Wassermann, letter to Xavier Vallat, 4 May 1941. XXI-28, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Memorial de la Shoah, (Paris, France).
195 Ibid.
is an important statement given the longstanding stereotypes of Jews in the art market. An important argument in Mme Wassermann’s letters is her family’s true love for their art which, she reiterates, is an essential reason for its return. This justification, in light of the family’s Jewish identity, is a significant part of their claim to the art, as the 19th century stereotype that that Jews purchased art for a higher social standing and monetary gain permeated popular opinion. Mme Wassermann is appealing to French cultural sensibility by emphasizing her ultimate loyalty to the cultural value of the paintings and dismissing the idea that the family could be given mere money in return for them.

In 1941, Léon Reinach, Béatrice de Camondo’s husband and heir of the Camondo family, wrote a similar letter to the administration of the Musées Nationaux. During another raid on a storage depot of the Musées Nationaux the Germans confiscated crates of objets d’art and paintings belonging to Léon Reinach and Béatrice de Camondo who, like David-Weill, had given their possessions to Jaujard at the beginning of the occupation. Upon hearing this news, Reinach appealed to Jaujard to intervene, writing a letter enumerating the many contributions to the French state from the Reinach and Camondo families. First of all, he writes, please “Remark that my family and that of my wife have been in France for a very long time, and have considerably enriched the artistic patrimony of their adopted homeland.” He then proceeds to list the donations of the Camondo and Reinach families, beginning with the legacy of Count Isaac de Camondo to the Louvre, “a collection of such importance

196 Léon Reinach, letter to Jacques Jaujard, 3 June 1941. XXI-10a, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Memorial de la Shoah, (Paris, France).
that a special room had to be created to hold it.” In addition, Théodore Reinach, Léon’s father, deeded his chateaux on the Mediterranean, the Villa Kérylos, to the Institut de France with all of its period decoration and furniture. Lastly, and most importantly, is the donation of the Musée Nissim de Camondo by Moïse de Camondo, Béatrice’s father.

This sumptuous legacy represents a considerable value of which my wife could have contested the validity, as it exceeded the quota available of the fortune of the testator. But understand that she didn’t do anything out of respect for her brother and for the wishes of her father, who conceived of this work of art, labored to build it, became completely subsumed by the project, and allowed the nation to profit from all of it.

Reinach closes with a plea,

These signs of truly exceptional generosity, that you well know of, are without a doubt not the objects of ‘The German commission charged with the seizure of Jewish property.’ If this commission was informed, maybe they would think it would be fair to return to the descendants of these generous donors the objets d’art that they now have in their possession.197

Reinach believed that the intimate involvement of the Reinach and Camondo families with French national patrimony, through their donations and dedication to the ideals of French art, should be a clear testimony to the right of his family to regain their art.

In addition, Reinach writes that above all his family wants “a family portrait, which has a particular significance completely independent of its artistic or monetary value,” returned.198 Reinach is referring to the portrait of Irene Cahen d’Anvers, Béatrice’s mother, painted by Renoir and given to the couple when they moved out of Moïse de Camondo’s house on the rue de Monceau. Mirroring Leonore Wassermann’s

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197 Ibid.
198 Ibid.
assertion of complete devotion to her art collection, regardless of its worth, Reinach maintains that the importance of his family’s art isn’t tied to their ability to sell it for great gain. They do not even care for the prestige its authorship bestows on them. Each of these letters is casting the family’s relationship to art as a pure expression of cultural understanding and affiliation, equivalent to the bond between the native French and their art.

When David-Weill complained to the Musées Nationaux about his seized artwork they, despite his long personal relationship with the Administration des Beaux Arts, were more concerned with retaining his one hundred and thirty cases of art for the Louvre than returning them to their original owner. In the case of Léon Reinach, however, the members of the Musées Nationaux were willing to listen to his claims and plead his case to higher members of the Vichy government. For Reinach, Jaujard took immediate action, writing to Xavier Vallat on August 12th 1941 and urging Carcopino to write to Vallat again on August 27th. In addition to Reinach’s descriptions of the Camondo contributions to the Musées Nationaux, Jaujard adds that the Musée Nissim de Camondo is “incontestably the most important collection of 18th century furniture and objets d’art ever created,” and that Isaac’s legacy “represents one of the largest enrichments of the Louvre’s collection over the past thirty years.”

Similarly Carcopino writes to Vallat, “In particular, I call your attention to the request of M. Léon Reinach whose family has made donations of considerable importance to the Musées Nationaux [...] I would be very obliged if you would intervene with the German

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199 Jacques Jaujard, letter to Xavier Vallat, 12 August 1941. XXI-11, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Memorial de la Shoah, (Paris, France).
authorities so that a favorable outcome can be found for M. Léon Reinach’s demand.” In addition to Vallat, Carcopino forwarded copies of the same letter to the French Ambassador in the occupied territories. Both Jaujard and Carcopino are asking for an exception to be made on behalf of the Reinach and Camondo families, citing their contributions to the state without mentioning their Jewish heritage. These letters demonstrate an inclination on the part of the Musées Nationaux to protect those they feel have made a significant contribution to the French patrimony. However, the letters on behalf of the Reinachs still show unwillingness to acknowledge the role of Jewish patrons in the service of the state. The Camondos are redeemed by their unfailing loyalty to and love of the French state, despite their Judaism. In the eyes of Jaujard and Carcopino, it is this dedication that turns the family into Frenchmen, allowing them to leave behind their Jewish heritage and be completely assimilated into the narrative of French art that glorifies the contributions of only the French themselves. The Camondos are associated with their collections not as proud Jewish citizens of the French republic but as loyal Frenchmen dedicated to the idea of preserving France’s national patrimony.

Despite the intervention of Jaujard and Carcopino, however, Vallat wrote back merely stating that these actions were admissible under the Statut des Juifs, and the Reinach’s collections remained in German hands. No exception was made because, though Jaujard and Carcopino perceived the Camondo’s contributions to the French state as a justification to help them, Vallat and higher officials in the Vichy regime still

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200 Léon Reinach, letter to Jacques Jaujard, 3 June 1941. XXI-10a, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Memorial de la Shoah, (Paris, France).
saw the family as Jewish foreigners. Though the collections donated to the state were important, the family who donated them was never, and could never be, truly French. Vichy logic dictated that these collections were, as in the accusations of the Goncourt brothers, bought from native French sources with the Jews’ vast banking fortunes, and that those transactions took French heritage away from the French. In donating these collections to the Louvre, the Camondos were merely returning the cultural property of the French state, to which they had never truly had a right. Therefore, the identity of the donor, once the collections were safely incorporated in the Musées Nationaux to hold a permanent place in French heritage, was irrelevant.

This attitude on the part of the Vichy government, and the Musées Nationaux administration, is further demonstrated in their negotiations with the Germans concerning the paintings stolen from private Jewish collections in both the occupied and free zones. As museum officials wrote to each other, Vichy officials, and German officers, they continually refer to the Jewish artwork as a potentially important part of the Louvre’s collections, permanently. “Certain paintings among them present an interest of the first order,” wrote one Vichy representative in a report on German art looting for Xavier Vallat, “and will be dignified enough to be part of the national collection.”201 The author continues, “It would therefore be good to look over the matter anew, demonstrating in a complete manner that it is desirable that the collections seized by the occupying forces could be put at the disposal of the French

state.” Similarly, a Vichy official in charge of the registration of property in the south writes in a report concerning the Rothschild collections taken by the Germans, “The objects that are of great value were meant to be displayed at the Louvre with the other collections and ultimately put at the disposal of the French State.” In addition, throughout this collection of letters, each French official points out the great danger to French national patrimony if the Germans successfully transport these collections out of the country. If they do not act, insists the first report, taking, buying, or bartering the paintings away from the Germans to put in the safety of the Louvre, “The French state itself will find itself wounded, and our artistic patrimony itself will be damaged.”

In addition to their dealings with the Germans, “French officials themselves were able to appropriate works from prestigious Jewish art collections in the southern occupied zone,” as a result of the Vichy Statut des Juifs. Elizabeth Karlsgodt describes a situation in which Xavier Vallat and museum officials such as Jaujard, Carcopino, and Hautecoeur worked to ensure that the Louvre would have first pick of the paintings taken from Jewish collections, demonstrating autonomy from the Germans and a passionate defense of French patrimony. The Vichy government was able to establish a right of first refusal, giving the Musées Nationaux the opportunity to purchase artwork before it was offered at public auction. In response, “the fine arts

202 Letter, 26 June 1941. XXI-37, Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Memorial de la Shoah, (Paris, France).
budget increased significantly in 1941 and 1942," so that the museums could buy the
art for the French before Germans bought it at auction. Karlsgodt maintains

Although one might argue that these sums were a fictional creation of
public accounting, they represent a widespread consensus among high-
level officials – from committed collaborationists to active Resistance
members – that the art was worth protecting through acquisition. Quiet
protection of art would not necessarily require the direct intervention of
various ministries and advisory councils; purchasing them does, and one
can trace this cooperation in letters produced by the fine arts office, the
finance ministry, and advisers to the national museum
administration.205

Though the permanent acquisition of artwork by the Musées Nationaux on behalf of
the state was seemingly legal in the context of Vichy legislation these curators had full
knowledge of the provenance of these paintings, consciously enriching their collections
through the spoliation of Jewish artwork.

French museum officials were equally as concerned with the art works being
taken across the Atlantic, where they were faced with the expanding power of the New
York museum world, bolstered by the arrival of Jewish refugees from France, such as
Rosenberg. Because of this, Camille Mauclair’s suggestion the government should
impose laws restricting the movement of artwork came to fruition and Vichy passed a
law on June 23rd 1941 that controlled the exportation of artwork.206 Therefore, by
purchasing the most important artworks from confiscated Jewish collections the
Musées Nationaux were not only protecting them from the Germans but from
exportation out of France by their Jewish owners. They were declaring that private
ownership of the paintings was less important than the value of the French national

205 Ibid., 213.
206 Ibid., 229.
patrimony. Above all, the paintings belonged to the French state and the Musées Nationaux was prepared to do anything to retain them. The question of ownership then becomes important as, in the case of the Camondos, their right to their artwork, though it was their private property, was forfeited when Vichy revoked their citizenship. Their role in the art market, already suspect because Jewish ownership of French art was not acknowledged as valid in the intellectual development of French nationalist aesthetics, was further delegitimized when the Jews were officially labeled as outsiders. The Camondos donations did not matter, as they were no longer valued as French citizens. As when Goncourt decried the Rothschild’s appropriation of French furniture in the mid 19th century, the Musées Nationaux, through its actions in acquiring the art, demonstrated the belief that the art was not the property of the Jews because the Jews were inherently foreign. The fact that private individuals could take the art away from the country strengthened support for state control because the Louvre could protect the art on behalf of the French state forever. One curator, when evaluating a collection of seized Rothschild property, spoke to the importance of this collection to the Musées Nationaux, as

> If the Direction des musées were able to obtain the sequestered works, the acquisition would not only substantially enrich museum collections but also provide a much-needed ‘moral benefit’ to the French people: ‘The state’s ability to maintain a growth policy for the Louvre museum would be a sign that the defeat did not lead to French laxity and that our country considers itself faithful to its civilizing mission.’

Adding to the Louvre’s collection from Jewish property, as curators fought over pieces for their various departments and identified gaps in their collections that they wanted

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207 Ibid., 216.
the Jewish art to fill, would be a French victory against the Germans and prove to all that French culture was still the foremost in the world. As a result of this French desire to redefine their state as a pure, independent, and resiliently nationalistic entity resting on a specific aesthetic foundation, the French state legitimized the revocation of the French Jews’ rights to their citizenship, property, and, ultimately, their lives. The “moral benefit” to the French national entity derived by denying the Jewish role in the French state, from the importance of their cultural contributions, to the legitimacy of their private property, to their claims to be lawful French citizens, was founded on a thoroughly immoral basis, of which the incorporation of Jewish artwork in the Louvre’s collection plays a significant role. In this act, the Musées Nationaux codified the erasure of the Jewish presence in the art world into the fabric of their institution.
CONCLUSION

The hundred years between 1840, as the new French Republic was growing out of the ideological, political, and cultural upheavals of the Revolution, and the early 1940’s, as it was trying to remake itself under occupation in a changing, industrialized, and politically unstable world were formative in determining modern French identity. Integral to this development was the redefinition of French cultural identity, as an expression of France’s ideological place in Europe, and the greater Western World. This was also a testament to evolving French notions of self represented by changing interpretations of its history. In many respects, France was witnessing an internal struggle between the political monarchism of the 18th century and the democratic Republicanism of the late 19th and early 20th. The “Jew” as the idealized “other” of Western Tradition, exemplified, for many individuals, the worst of whatever they were fighting against, variably becoming the archetype for the monarchical conservative, the communist revolutionary, the evil industrialist, the backward peasant, the tasteless traditionalist, and the degenerate propagator of the avant-garde. From this position, as the persistent enemy, French Jews were framed as agents of turmoil in French identity and deemed responsible for either holding the country back because of their outdated traditionalism or catapulting it into an uncertain modernity.

In his book, Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition, David Nirenberg suggests that the reason for the Jew’s place throughout Europe as the ultimate cause of
political, economic, or cultural upheaval was the use of the “Jew” as a theoretical entity to make sense of European history. In a reading of Marx, Nirenberg writes, the ‘Jewish question’ is as much about the basic tools and concepts through which individuals in a society relate to the world and to each other, as it is about the presence of ‘real’ Judaism and living Jews in that society. […] some of these basic tools - such as money and property - were thought of in Christian culture as ‘Jewish,’ and that these tools therefore could potentially produce the ‘Jewishness’ of those who used them, whether those users were Jewish or not. ‘Judaism,’ then, is not only the religion of specific people with specific beliefs, but also a category, a set of ideas and attributes with which non-Jews can make sense of and criticize their world.208

He further theorizes that, “These systems of thought generate so much Judaism out of their own entrails that by the twentieth century any domain of human activity could be thought of and criticized in terms of Judaism.”209 This trend manifested itself in mid 19th to early 20th century France, as, casting the Jews as any conceivable evil, French critics sought to protect French culture from the encroaching “Judaizing” of any and all aspects of French heritage.

These associations colored the perception of the Jew in the art world, which faced a struggle between modernization and tradition, mirrored in the way that economic conservatives decried the modernizing influence of the Rothschild banking establishment while advocates of modernization pointed to their relationship with pre-Revolutionary monarchy. As the Rothschilds, Périeres, Camondos, and Ephrussis began to collect art, the existing art establishment leveled accusations of decadency, vulgarity, and consumerism against them. Critics, looking to break away from the Salon, perceived the Rothschilds as the epitome of the tasteless traditional collector,

209 Ibid., 6.
purchasing things because they were endorsed by the Salon and not for their true aesthetic value. Those wary of the new Impressionist movement looked at the involvement of patrons such as Charles Ephrussi and Isaac de Camondo and used modern art as evidence of the corruption of conventional expressions of French art. Those who censured these Jewish collectors, for traditionalism or for modernization, did so because denunciation of the Jewish influence on culture formed the foundation of their critical approach. It was this preconception of the Jewish role in culture, and not the development of the Jewish collector as an individual, that informed the criticisms thrown at the Rothschilds and the Camondos. This attitude is exemplified by the complicated relationship between Renoir and Charles Ephrussi detailed in the first chapter. Despite Ephrussi’s place as one of the most innovative patrons of Impressionism, it was easy for Renoir to turn on him, calling him a tasteless traditionalist, only concerned with the gold of “Jew art.” This reaction was, evidently, not predicated on Ephrussi’s actions. It grew, instead, from the blame accorded to the Jew as a figural entity for any societal deviation from an individual’s worldview. It was easier for Renoir to criticize Ephrussi through the lens of Jewish manipulation of art than to analyze his own changeable and precarious place in the French art establishment. When Ephrussi moved on to other artists, Renoir perceived it as the stereotypical Jew assaulting French aesthetics, rather than through the lens of an individual relationship, which he might have held had Ephrussi not been Jewish.

In addition to this duality of blame, ascribing to the Jews the sins of both modernity and traditionalism, 19th century critics were also afraid of the encroachment of the “Jew” into French identity. The larger the Jewish influence, they believed, the more French history and heritage would be sublimated to the
domination of the other. This fear stemmed from the reality of immigration into France, which included a large number of Eastern European Jews who settled in Paris. There was also, however, an existential struggle to maintain a static French identity in the face of a modernizing world. In many ways, the art world, which required wealth, education, and refinement, was the last bastion of perceived French purity. As families such as the Rothschilds and Camondos became involved with French art, they were perceived as the “other.” They did not have a right to the things that they purchased and were a negative force in the newly emerging art market. This perception did not originate from their actions, taste, or bearing, as these families had more in common with the French upper class than with the feared Jewish immigrants of the Marais quarter. In fact, there is nothing remarkable about the French Jewish collector in the 19th century, as their trajectory and taste was often identical to that of their French Christian counterparts. What is striking is what their purchases represented to themselves as individuals and to French culture as a whole. For these families, paintings were a means of expressing belonging to and support for French patrimony. Ownership of French art seemed to confer confirmation of French taste and patriotism. However, others saw these same actions as an aggressive attack on French heritage, and an appropriation of French values instead of allegiance to them. It was in this spirit that Goncourt worried that the Rothschilds “will soon own everything beautiful that is still to be sold.” With the Jews indiscriminately buying French art, there would soon be none left for the truly French. French culture itself would collapse. This same logic applied to Jewish involvement with the avant-garde, as the perceived Jewish influence on modernism further alienated these movements from French heritage, turning them into an expression of Jewish, and thus foreign, culture.
The difference between the Jew as the individual and the perceived power of the Jew in popular thought is further demonstrated in the relationship between the Camondo family and the Musées Nationaux. Jacques Jaujard’s defense of the Camondo family’s contributions to the French state, as evidence of their patriotism, demonstrates the high level of regard in the museum community for the Camondo family following Isaac de Camondo’s legacy to the Louvre and Moïse de Camondo’s donation to the Musée des Arts Decoratifs. In newspaper articles, letters to important government officials, and personal correspondence the Camondos are portrayed as exemplary Frenchmen and prominent members of the artistic community. Paradoxically, however, Isaac de Camondo could not initially serve as the president of the Society for the Friends of the Louvre because, as a foreigner, he was not allowed to serve on the general council of the Musées Nationaux. Though this bureaucratic distinction was eventually overcome, it stemmed from that same fear of surrendering French heritage to the encroachment of the “other,” represented, if not in the language of the Musées Nationaux, then in popular thought, as the Jew. The Camondos, in the context of the art world, could only be separated from their Jewish identity when they themselves sublimated it, and embraced the conventions of the paradigmatic French collector. The Camondos could not exist as Jewish patrons of art. To be truly accepted in the French artistic community their Judaism, which was viewed as an invading force, had to be repressed. In contrast, the Rothschilds, as the archetype of the wealthy Jewish family, could not escape their identity and were never accepted into the museum world in the same way. Ingres’ portrait of Betty de Rothschild shows the impossibility of removing their Jewish identity from the minds of French society, as the Baroness appears, despite her finery and beauty, as a seductive
oriental woman. This insistent foreignness, as well as the ubiquitous, “goût Rothschild,” was never far from the minds of French critics, artists, and administrators in their interactions with the Rothschild family.

The Camondos, through they were universally respected for their taste, occupied a precarious position, as evidenced by the response of Xavier Vallat to the pleas from Jacques Jaujard to spare the Reinach’s possessions from the Germans. For Vallat, the Camondos were, above all else, Jews. Therefore it didn’t matter what contributions they had made to the state, as they were, innately, enemies. The Vichy regime, in constructing their vision for the collective French future, and collective French history, ascribed to ideals of traditionalism in the economic, political, cultural, and artistic spheres. They cast the Jew as an industrializing, modernizing, and ultimately corrupting influence. Supported by Fascist critics such as Rebatet and Brasillach, who, in the tradition of Drumont, saw the Jew as the cause of modern France’s problem, the “weevil” in the beautiful tree, Vichy established an oppositional foundation for their regime, rallying their people against the foreigner, or the Jew, instead of the occupying Germans. In this political decision, Vichy ascribed all of France’s problems to the “Judaizing” forces of the other. In doing so, they dissociated the innovations of the avant-garde from French citizens, allowing them to return to the perceived purity of the mid 19th century. In this manner the Vichy government could build a new vision for their future.

The establishment of the Musées Nationaux, comprised of prominent members of the French resistance, such as Jaujard, alongside staunch supporters of Vichy, like Hautecoeur, did not necessarily abide by this same ideological framework. Their primary concern was bolstering the holdings of French museums in the face of
the American ascendency in art collecting over the beginning of the 20th century. They strove to keep art that was seen as integral to France’s national patrimony in the country, and out of the hands of both the Germans and the Jews. As evidenced in Chapter Three, however, the treatment of artwork previously owned by Jewish collectors and families is indicative of a larger cultural attitude towards the place of the Jew in the French art world. As curators fought over the placement of Jewish owned artworks, there was no discussion of the role of the museums as trustees for the art until the return of their owners, only plans for the permanent acquisition of the work for the Musées Nationaux. Just as Xavier Vallat dismissed the right of the Camondos to invoke their family’s relationship to the state, the Musées Nationaux saw no inherent right of the Jewish owners to their artwork. While the French hated American nouveau-riche collectors, such as Henry Clary Frick, for purchasing French art and taking it out of the country, they also saw Jewish ownership of art as an violation. In the eyes of the Musées Nationaux, when the French Jews purchased art, it was as if it had been bought by a foreign national who, with no loyalty to the state, could whisk it away to sell in another country, never to be seen in France again. Therefore, by incorporating the seized Jewish artwork into their collections, the French museums believed that they were saving the art from leaving the country, even though the Jews who originally bought it often did so out of a love of and desire to be part of this very same French patrimony.

The administrators of the Musées Nationaux felt that important artwork should be owned by the state because its vital place in French history. Art was a public, not private, resource. This perspective was codified in a law passed in 1968 by Charles de Gaulle and his minister of culture André Malraux. This law was for “the
conservation of national artistic patrimony,” and stipulated that a buyer, an inheritor, or a legatee of an artwork […] of a high artistic or historic value are exonerated from the taxes of the transference […] of these goods, if they donate the object to the state.” Because of France’s high estate taxes, this option, known as the “droit de succession” or “dation” was often the only one for inheritors of valuable works of art. Today, many works at the Musées Nationaux in France bear these labels. This modern law, instituted almost thirty years after the end of the war, demonstrates the French government’s belief that all artwork should be part of the public collection, preserved for the glory of the French patrimony. Though French authorities preferred artwork to be in the possession of the state, ownership by French families for a generation, with a subsequent donation to the state, was an acceptable legal institution because French families would retain the art in the country. Though these French collectors owned art as individuals, they were also part of the French state as a whole and were therefore seen as legitimately responsible owners. The Jews, in the eyes of the Vichy government, could not be trusted to maintain these priceless objects, and therefore the appropriation of their art on the part of the Musées Nationaux was a legitimate expression of French patriotism. Jewish families returning to France after the war from hiding, America, or the concentration camps of Eastern Europe faced a complicated legal battle with the French state, which was loth to give up the artwork that they considered to be permanently theirs.

Despite the attempts of the Vichy government to wipe any Jewish contribution from the story of French art history, they survive today in the vital importance of

Impressionism and the avant-garde to French artistic patrimony. The Jewish role in these movements, which are now considered to be the paradigm of artistic innovation in the 20th century, is imbedded in the very artwork so despised by Vichy. Vichy’s legislation and concern over the Jews and French artwork demonstrates the importance of art as more than the value of a particular object. Artwork represented for its collectors such as Moïse de Camondo, a chosen aspect of their identity, as they defined themselves by the objects that they “loved above all others,” as Moïse wrote in his will. Jewish collectors were declaring themselves as members of French culture while also creating a role for themselves in the development of this same culture. They were shaped, as citizens and connoisseurs, by their artwork, but also conferred their own identities and personalities onto their collections, in their contributions to the French state, their interactions with artists and museums, and their role in the development of significant artistic movements. The French cultural identity of the Jewish collector was inexorably tied to their artwork. At the same time, however, the collectors brought their own identity, taste, and passions to their interactions with art, thereby also influencing the character and location of their possessions. The objects in the Musée Nissim de Camondo and the Impressionist art owned by Charles Ephrussi conferred French identity onto their possessors. In stripping the art objects from their Jewish owners, or undermining the Jewish connection with these artworks, the Vichy government attempted to erase the deep relationship between the Jewish collectors and their French art. The legislation and seizures went beyond the physical manifestation of the artwork and attacked the premise of Jewish ownership of art and the whole idea of Jewish citizenship in France.
The Musée Nissim de Camondo, still preserved in all its beauty, is a living testament to the prominence of the Jewish collector of the belle époque and a memorial to a family whose lives were tragically intertwined with conflicting and shifting conceptions of cultural, political and religious identity in 19th and 20th century France. Despite the exquisite Frenchness of the objets d’art and furniture displayed within, the Camondos’ Jewish identity and the poignant knowledge of their ultimate fate permeates the entire museum. The plaques at the front entrance confirm the significance and identity of this important French family while also serving as a testament to the prejudice in France that accounted for the Camondo’s loss of French citizenship and standing, and eventually of their lives. Notwithstanding the repeated attempts of the Vichy government to undo and erase the affiliation between French art and Jewish identity, the Musée Nissim de Camondo continues to bear the name of the son who died for France, though it is also France that shoulders the heavy responsibility for the death of his sister. The Camondo museum stands to mark the significant role the Jewish art collector played in French history and to remind us of the deep cultural bond these remarkable French Jewish families forged with the artworks they collected and the artistic movements they inspired.
FIGURES

Figure 1:


Figure 2:

Baronne de Rothschild, J.A.D Ingres, 1848. 141.9 cm x 101 cm. Rothschild Collection, Paris.
Figure 3:

Mlle Irene Cahen d’Anvers, Auguste Renoir 1880. E.G Buhrle Collection, Zurich. www.buehrle.ch

Figure 4:

Figure 5: Portrait of Paul Rosenberg, Pablo Picasso, 1919 [PR III.3; III.2]. MOMA. moma.org

Figure 6: Photograph, Le Juif et La France. CDJC X19-118. Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, Paris
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