



Provenance

by Carol Smilgin

iUniverse, 2011

Review by Katie O'Sullivan

Rebecca Lawler lost her husband Jeffrey three years prior, in a suspicious hit and run accident in Madrid. A former gallery manager, the beautiful Rebecca and her rich husband owned an extensive art collection. Rebecca fears that Jeffrey was killed because of some of their paintings, which may have been originally stolen during World War II.

As the book begins, Rebecca's sister Adelaide has also been widowed by mysterious circumstances and the American sisters are headed overseas to relax at Rebecca's home in Portugal. Rebecca hopes to investigate the provenance of several paintings while in Europe and enlists the help of Paris gallery owner Georges Lartigue, an expert in "confiscated" Nazi artworks. Georges is a man with his own secrets in the form of an ex-wife, long thought to be dead, who shows up in Lisbon to plague Georges' business as well as his new relationship.

While working with Georges, Rebecca is shocked to run into David Neville, an art dealer and gallery owner from New York, in Europe to act as best man for his brother's wedding. She first met David in Greece, when they were both fresh from college and spent one glorious night of passion under the Grecian sky. Sparks fly between them as their attraction rekindles, despite the shadows cast by both Jeffrey's suspicious death and the murky provenance that someone is desperately trying to keep secret.

Just as Georges finds the key to unlocking the puzzle, Rebecca realizes that the same people who killed her husband have now targeted her and David. Will she find the proof she needs before it's too late?

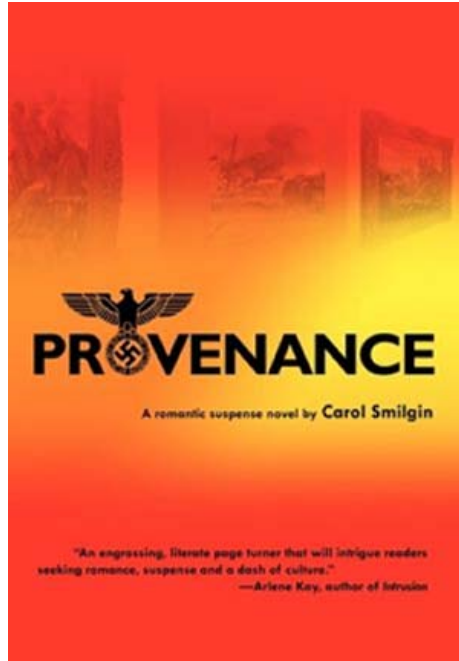
Provenance is an interesting and timely read, especially for students of art history and those interested in the provenance of art from the World War II era. Billed as romantic international suspense, this novel is filled with many interesting and well-researched facts about the European art world and the sordid legacy the Nazis left after World War II.

During the 1930s and 1940s, German soldiers confiscated modernist artwork that was deemed "immoral," as well as confiscating paintings from Jewish owners and others who were headed for concentration camps. While much of the artwork was burned, many paintings and statues survived on a black market, sold to enrich the Third Reich. With her extensive research into the subject, local author Smilgin has been scheduled to speak at both the Falmouth Jewish Congregation and the Chabad Jewish Center in Hyannis.

The Nazi confiscation of Jewish art has been in the news again several times this past winter, the latest being Nazi-looted Polish paintings went up for auction in Berlin, and were finally returned to the Warsaw museum in December. In January of this year, George Clooney announced he was working on a project titled "The Monuments Men," about the art experts who worked with the French Resistance during World War II to retrieve and preserve stolen art.

The novel's settings take us from Nevada and New York across the Atlantic, where we travel through Greece, Paris, Madrid, Lisbon and Berlin. The characters stay at the finest hotels and dine in exquisite restaurants, the author paying such close attention to the social details that we feel as if we are walking down the Boulevard St. Germain with Rebecca and her friends. Readers who enjoy rich descriptions of expensive meals and exotic locations will revel in the author's liberal accounting of food, wine, and atmosphere.





View the Book Trailer [here](#)

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[Katie O'Sullivan](#) is the editor of this magazine. She has been a voracious reader of suspense and romance since Nancy Drew first discovered **Secret of the Old Clock**. She has written two romantic suspense novels of her own, **Unfolding the Shadows** and **Perfect Strangers**, available on Amazon.com. For more information, visit her [website](#) or her [blog](#).