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GRATIA DEI SUM QUI SUM

William S. Heckscher

Interviewed by Richard Cándida Smith

Art History Oral Documentation Project

Compiled under the auspices
of the
Getty Center for the History of
Art and the Humanities

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Frontispiece: William Heckscher (standing) and Erwin Panofsky at Princeton, New Jersey, circa 1950s. Photograph by H. W. Janson, courtesy of William Heckscher.

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W.S.H.

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Richard Cándida Smith, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Michigan, interviewed William Heckscher at his home in Princeton, New Jersey. A total of 11.1 hours were recorded. The transcript was edited by Katherine P. Smith.

CURRICULUM VITAE*

William S. Heckscher

Born December 14, 1904, Hamburg, Germany

Citizen of Canada

Educated in the Netherlands — Ph.D. Hamburg University (1935)

Trained as an artist; studied old-master techniques; worked mainly as a portrait painter

Instructor and assistant professor at Canadian universities (1942–1946); associate professor and professor at the University of Iowa (1947–1955)

Professor and director of the Institute of Iconology, University of Utrecht, the Netherlands (1955–1966)

Benjamin N. Duke professor at Duke University (1966) acting director and director of the Duke University Art Museum (1970)

Member of a Committee on "Surviving Traces of Classical Antiquity in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance" (1950) at London University

Member of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, N. J. (1936–1940; 1947–1948; 1951–1953; 1960–1961)

Charter Member and Corresponding Member of the Society of Indexers (London)

Benjamin Franklin Fellow and Member of The Royal Society of Arts (London)

Member of the Advisory Council of the Minister of Education, The Hague, the Netherlands

* Information compiled from William Heckscher's curriculum vitae and the bibliography that appears on pp. 22–30 of the latest edition of *Art and Literature: Studies in Relationship* (1994).

Andrew Mellon Professor, Pittsburgh (1963–1964)

Recipient of a festschrift (1964)

Editor-in-Chief of the *Netherlands Yearbook for Art History* (issues 1959 and 1960)

Listed in *Who's Who in Europe* (in French); *Who's Who in America*; the *Blue Book: Leaders of the English-Speaking World*; Udo Kultermann's *History of Art History*, and in several other publications.

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SESSION ONE: 16 SEPTEMBER, 1993

[Tape I, Side One]

HECKSCHER: I am very much interested in forgeries. My greatest dream would be to forge something famous, you know? I had a friend who was a church organist, and he was working with the best organ in the world, a baroque organ. I said, "Let's fake a lost Passion by Johann Sebastian Bach. I'll write it in brown ink on old paper, and we'll deposit it with a lawyer and say that we are committing a fraud just to see how people fall for it." My friend wrote heavenly compositions. Did you know I was a church organist?

SMITH: No, I didn't.

HECKSCHER: Yes. Every Friday I went to Lübeck from Hamburg and gave a recital. Thousands of people came to hear me. Then my deafness of course cut this short.

SMITH: When was this?

HECKSCHER: That was in the 1930s—Hitler time. Music was my escape. I was working on a Ph.D. and I had the best teachers, who were all communists.

SMITH: You weren't a communist, were you?

HECKSCHER: No, oh God no. I hate extremes. My mother [Hulda Foerster Heckscher] was a bitch. She made the rounds in Hitler times and said, "My son has now become a communist." She wanted me to die in a concentration camp

so she could play the weeping willow mother. My mother died in my arms. Both my parents died in my arms. I was a nurse. I nursed my father [Siegfried Heckscher] and it helped a great deal. I'm glad I'm not a doctor, which means I'm not a fraud. American physicians invented stress. Stress is another way of saying "life," you know. The opposite of stress is death. Instead of working on AIDS, the pharmacists and doctors invented stress, made over two billion dollars a year out of it, and it doesn't exist.

I'm a radical in the sense that I don't like to be fooled by authorities. Of course the worst fooling outfits are universities, as you know, the ridiculous, ridiculous clowns. If you ask a dean, a chancellor, or a president, "Can you define a university?" he doesn't have the answer. He has never thought about the history of universities, what a university should do—the community of scholars and students. At Duke University, I went every week to the dean to adjust my budget and every week I got hell. He would say to me, "Bill, not only do you overdraw your accounts every time, you also tell me dirty stories and I'm a Puritan." I said, "I'm an Im-Puritan." Then he looked at his watch and said, "My God, it's time for lunch," so we had lunch and we were the best of friends.

This is my compressed short story about what makes America such a nice country. People are tolerant. Take Clinton. The insults were flung at him by George Bush and he says the nicest things about Bush—not as a Jesuit, but

because he is an American. This I think is a quality which you do not find in Europe. I'm still a member of the senate of Utrecht University, which means I can be called at any time to preside over a Ph.D. oral. That is a great formality in Holland, with scepters and so on. When I do this, and I've done it in past times at my own expense, I find that everything is rubbing against everything. I get nostalgic for the United States, where you don't have these frictions. Of course you have them once in a while; you have Europeans behaving in a European fashion, but otherwise I've found this an unbelievable country. To have guns, to go hunting, to go fishing for fun, to kill for fun, to have schoolboys killing each other and killing innocent people for fun, everything for fun.

Texas and Virginia are among the states which execute somebody every five minutes, and the governors always say, "Let's go." Clinton is a criminal this way. He had an insane man who, when he was in the execution chamber, said, "My God, after the execution I want to go back to my cell. I didn't finish my breakfast." He was insane, you know. To murder somebody who has murdered; that is a crime. To me, one of the basic rules of life is Thou shalt not kill. Incest, fine. Look at the Pharaohs—brother and sister ruling Egypt. That's okay, but Thou shalt not kill is to me a perpetual law. In Lambaréné, in Africa, Albert Schweitzer told the natives, "Do not by mistake step with your feet on

ants; they are holy, like everything living." If we have a spider in the house I say, "My God, don't kill it, don't kill it." To kill an innocent beast— Of course self-defense is *une autre chose*. But then my whole trouble in Nazi Germany was not with my Jewish ancestry but with my Prussian ancestors on my mother's side, who were all pacifists. I told you that, maybe?

SMITH: Yes, but we should start from the beginning.

HECKSCHER: I wasn't there when I was engendered, but I remember my birth.

SMITH: You remember your birth?

HECKSCHER: Oh yes, of course I do. My first distinct memory is graphic. I was in a train, sitting in a *Steckkissen*, a little baby carrier which the governess held, and I was looking at the city of Koblenz. Koblenz in Latin is *confluentia*, the confluence of two rivers. I saw the two rivers and a bridge. This I remember, and I told someone who was there, who said, "My God, this is true. You were held in the *Steckkissen*, you looked out of the window, and you may have seen it." This was my first clear memory and I was not yet a year old—nine months let's say.

When I was born, I was born like children in 1904 were born, at home. You were engendered and born in the same bed. You had a midwife and the midwife did her job, but our doctor, Doctor Niemeyer, came. He was a nice man who looked like Bismarck. He looked at me, shook his head, and said to

my parents, "That boy doesn't have long to live." This was his verdict. *He* died, of course. I had a sister, two years older than I, Lottie, who was born in 1902. I was born in 1904. Lottie and I were in amazing harmony. So much so, that I can say for my whole life, until she was a very old lady, I was under her custody and under her direction. I never made any vital decisions, like switching from portrait painting to art history, without Lottie's advice. It was Lottie who said, "You are not a very good artist."

Sometimes I have to jump when I am trying to be biographical about myself. In 1921 I was thrown out of school [Nederlandsch Lyceum]. My father was summoned by the head of the school, who pointed with two fingers at his skull and said, "Willem,"—this was my Dutch name—"something is lacking here." My father had a laughing fit, and he said to this man, who was a terribly nice and clever Greek professor, "What do we do with him?" The professor said, "He has to learn to use his hands." So I never graduated from high school. At the age of sixteen I was sent to an art school to learn ceramics, which I flunked because my chemistry didn't work. You need chemistry for the glazes in pottery. At that time I made a very important discovery: nude female models. I said, "This is it." You know, I was sixteen and to have a variety of naked girls— Then I made another discovery. I was a very good draftsman.

SMITH: Yes, I've seen some of your drawings.

HECKSCHER: I'll give you a recent self-portrait, which is photographically good. The moment I put my pencil or charcoal to paper, I was an artist, and all erotic associations evaporated. I was just an artist, and I think this is not just me, but everybody. I'm working now on a book with a woman, Helen Ashmore, who is an admirable American prose writer. She publishes novels and so on, and I advise her art historically. She made a very nice, simple discovery. She said, "Look at art history of recent times, including the nineteenth century, and you see lots and lots of pictures of nude women done by men. Do you ever see nude men done by women?" I said yes, and I had a few examples, so we are building up a book which deals with this topic of the female artist. There are a number of quite important female artists who draw naked men. I am very much interested in this topic, and I and another art historian are advisers on the project. It's a very slow, creeping book, but Ashmore is very inventive and very gifted.

SMITH: Do you have what the psychologists call an eidetic memory?

HECKSCHER: Yes, image, *eidōs*, yes. My Greek is terrible, my Latin is fantastically good but terrible still, you know? I work on it every night for never less than two hours, usually from ten to twelve or from twelve to two o'clock in the morning. I'm working on a Latin dictionary. I have made my first draft.

SMITH: Which period of Latin are you working on?

HECKSCHER: My own. When I was expelled, or expelled myself, from

Germany, I went first to America, and I hated it so much. I couldn't take it. I went back to England and I said, "I must learn decent English." As a schoolboy I was really naughty and I didn't pay attention to anything. I did endless drawings and went to the Royal Library in The Hague—you know I was educated in Holland—and studied art history. I read books on art. Well, I don't want to drift.

SMITH: It depends where you're drifting.

HECKSCHER: I mentioned my mother, who was a fierce woman, but I have made one discovery. If I find somebody heavily critical, from my point of view, I can at the same time admire this person, and my mother had this twofold aspect. She was totally fearless. She and I were in a gestapo prison and we were tortured. She survived much better than I did. She had a Jewish girlfriend who was the daughter of a colleague—she was a teacher, my mother—and this woman had a husband who was the leader of the communists in Schleswig-Holstein, which was a province between Hamburg and Denmark. He fled to Denmark and saved his life, but his wife was caught distributing anti-Nazi literature. She was in prison and she escaped—how, I don't know—and sent a message to my mother that she was hiding in a city park of Hamburg. So a little blonde Aryan girl went every day and carried a basket of hot water bottles and soup to this woman, and all the time a gestapo man in civvies followed the little

girl. Then my mother was arrested and the woman was of course caught, and she was one of eleven communists who were tried. My mother was called as a witness and was so brutally frank that they said, "She doesn't make a good witness. She's embarrassing, she says anti-Nazi things." So my mother got a beating, her passport was taken away, and the eleven communists were beheaded, including my mother's friend, who was pregnant.

My mother said, "Okay, revenge." She became a spy for the Allies during the war. She fought in the war against Hitler very efficiently by working with a Norwegian journalist who was really an Allied spy planted in Hamburg. She furnished information about the BBC, and to listen to the BBC meant the death penalty. The BBC preannounced bombing raids, and these announcements were very specific—not just saying they would bomb Hamburg, but Barmbeck, which was a working-class district. If the people knew it, they got into a panic. I said to my mother, "What did you do when the bombing raid actually came?" She said, "I took a taxi and I left town." She was so calm, she said, "Oh, when I came home at night the whole city was on fire—wonderful view." She had no sentiments, but she survived.

Luckily my father died in 1928. He was in his fifties and he suffered from Parkinson's disease. This is why I became a nurse. He was a politician, incredibly rich—a millionaire. He had a law degree and his greatest dream in life

was to be a professor of social economy, a dream which was never fulfilled—that was his special field. He spent a whole year in London with Sidney Webb and George Bernard Shaw, and all these people, and learned everything about trade unions. My father was the first to introduce serious trade unions into Germany. He was the director of a shipping firm, Hamburg-America Line [HAPAG], and he stopped a strike and got a medal, which I still wear when I want to look silly—red eagles order of the fourth class. He was a member of the Reichstag, which was the German parliament, and he was the only member of foreign affairs, so he was also an adviser to the German Emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II, whom he saw regularly in Berlin. Kaiser Wilhelm wrote to my father from his exile in Doorn, Holland, after the war. It was a handwritten letter, which I still have, in which he said, "I always wanted to make you my minister of foreign affairs."

SMITH: Was your father a radical?

HECKSCHER: He was not a radical, but he was in the left wing of the Center Party. He was called *der rote Heckscher* because he had red hair and he was liberal. In England he learned the Anglo-Saxon tradition which I like so much of getting along with everyone; so he had very good friends who were communists. You see, the German parliament had Polish members. Rosa Luxemburg was a member of the German Reichstag. She was in her fifties then, and she was very

handsome. My father took me on a vacation trip from Holland to Berlin and introduced me to her on a bridge over a canal. She and I talked, that is to say I listened, really, and she said, "How wonderful, a German child who goes to a school with a different language in a country away from Germany. This is what every civilized German should do—see their country from the outside." Three days later she was assassinated. She was cornered at the same bridge where she and I had been talking, by Hitler's predecessors, who were disgruntled military people. They took her and threw her over the bridge into the water, which was icy cold, and she clung onto an ice floe. Then a lieutenant came with his pistol and shot her in the head and she drowned and vanished. The following spring, her cadaver was seen and a policeman went into the water, fished it out and got five marks. I have the receipt signed by that policeman for the five marks he got to salvage this corpse, which ended up on the lawn of Professor [Felix] Gilbert, who was a little boy at the time—he was my wife's [Roxanne Sanossian Heckscher] boss at the Institute for Advanced Study. He was my age.

The name of the officer who had shot Rosa Luxemburg was Vogel. In 1942 I was in a prison camp in Canada, and one day, when we were getting our soup ladled, somebody pushed me from behind and I spilled part of my soup. I put my soup bowl down and grabbed the man, who was old, and I said, "If you ever touch me again I'll kill you." He turned deadly pale and I said, "Your

name?" He said, "Vogel." I said, "Are you by any chance the murderer of Rosa Luxemburg?" He said, "Yes sir." Isn't that amazing? So I immediately asked to be admitted to the commandant of the camp, and I said to him, "There is a man in the camp whose life is in danger. Get him out." So they took Vogel out and sent him to a camp for Nazi prisoners. That is my Vogel story. I think it is amazing how these things happen.

Rosa Luxemburg was very beautiful. There is a group of Germans now, to whom I told my story, and they are doing research on her under my impulse, and I'm of course very curious to see what will come of it. She was, in contrast to the belligerent communists, a peaceful person. She didn't believe in murder; she was very special. But my father spent all week in Berlin and came for weekends home, so he was a stranger, in a sense. I didn't see too much of him.

SMITH: Did you get along well with him?

HECKSCHER: Extremely well, because when he was sick he turned into my child. He was totally dependent on me. I fed him, I put him on his potty, I massaged him, I shaved him and so on. Then I decided winters in Hamburg were too harsh, so I took him to the West Indies. You see, since he was director of the Hamburg-America Line, I can still travel gratis, first class. All I pay is \$2.75 a day for meals—that I have to pay—and I can be in a luxury cabin. As a young man, I crossed the Atlantic Ocean fifty times; often on the Hamburg-

America Line, for fun. But when I took my father on this trip, I had never been on the ocean, and it was a tiny ship, a few thousand tons. The ship had one little screw which came out and the whole damn thing shook. We had passed Dover, and we were eating Dover sole, and I had a potato in butter, which made a figure eight. The ship was leaving Land's End, which is of course the beginning of the Atlantic Ocean, and I said to the potato, "If you continue this figure eight, we are deadly enemies." I just made it to the ladies' toilet and got seasick. Some passengers heard me and sent for the ship's doctor. When he came I said, "Can you do me one favor?" He said, "What is it?" I said, "Finish my life." Have you ever been seasick? It is not funny. Well, I cleaned up and I said to myself, "Oh God, my father." He couldn't eat by himself. I had been feeding him like a baby, and the first-class passengers got accustomed to seeing this. I came back trembling. There was my father, beaming, and a little Spanish girl was feeding him; she had seen me do it and she took over, so I thanked her. She and her sister had a governess, and I said to the governess, "Do you like my father?" She said, "I love him." I said, "Would you sleep with him?" She said, "If he doesn't mind." So I yielded my bed, and what happened, I don't know. I slept on a couch outside. I was a young man, twenty or so, and I knew what he needed.

My father and I made three trips. On the second trip there was no

governess, so I got him a monkey. The monkey always sat on his shoulder and scratched, and my father was happy. He had a wonderful affinity with animals. He was a very amazing person who had this horrible trembling disease. To the last day of his life he dictated his memoirs to me—in German of course—and I have started translating them into English because they are politically very interesting. I did this with my youngest daughter [Charlotte], who is a very good computer typist. I want to finish it but I need an enormous amount of time—God knows where I'll get it—for my commentaries, because he mentions endless personalities. Through my father I got an interest in politics. I met [Konrad] Adenauer. I phoned him every week from The Hague. He called me Wilhelm and we spoke in German. I knew [Friedrich] Ebert, the president, and I knew [Philipp] Scheidemann. I was introduced to the Kaiser when I was twelve years old you know, and we talked. I could make an enormous list of famous people I met.

Toward the end of World War I a new party was founded in Hamburg at the house of a banker—the Fatherland Party—*die Vaterlands Partei*. My father—he was always very nice—said, "You must see this, even though you are a child." I stood like Polonius behind a curtain and watched. There were all the high and mighty right-wing Germans. It was a patriotic party which went on the wrong assumption that Germany might win the war and incorporate Belgium and

the Netherlands and make them provinces of Germany. All this was shocking to my father. The great powerful personage who was expected was Admiral [Alfred] von Tirpitz, who was the all-over admiral of the German navy in World War I, and an officer announced him. Then came a general who almost touched the ceiling, and a not much smaller admiral, flanking a dwarf. [laughter] I had never known his size. You see, this was a time when you didn't get many pictures of people, but he was just less than five feet, a little thing in an admiral's uniform. So this, for a child, was a remarkable lesson. I had this advantage of a father who wanted me to be a lawyer and a politician. He was shocked when I turned into an artist.

SMITH: Was he a stern person?

HECKSCHER: No, thank God, no. He was a gentleman. He was a rare personality for Germany. When I was small, I washed myself with Pear's soap, you know, those black spheres which only England knew. No, my father was very gentlemanly, in the English style. He was not a pacifist, but at the height of World War I he went to Norway and talked to Fritjof Nansen, the North Pole explorer who was a political figure, and he made secret proposals from the German government to make peace, and the Allies said, "To hell with the Germans. They are losing the war and we'll beat them." So this mission wasn't successful.

We were in very hungry times, you know, because of the blockade of Germany, and when I was twelve years old people thought I was six. I didn't grow, I was a little skeleton. We were all little skeletons. I wish somebody had made a movie of children in 1917 going to school and being unable to walk unaided. They all had canes or hung onto walls. We were all trembling with weakness. My sister and I had visions of food. When my younger brother [Henry Heckscher] came to Holland, we were in a boarding house and we had breakfast there. For the first time he saw boiled eggs. He nudged me and said, "Wilhelm, they are made in a factory. They are all the same size." He had no idea about chickens, you know? Where could he learn it? People were unaware of food and vitamins didn't exist. There were no eggs, there were only turnips. Everything was made of turnips: coffee was made of turnips, butter was made of turnips, bread was made of turnips, which are 99 percent water, so I got worms. The doctor said, "This boy has a whole menagerie of worms." They came from every cavity of my body, even out of my nostrils. I was a little skeleton. I was sent to a hospital on a hill facing the Elbe River, and I got horrible medicine. I don't know how it worked, but I was almost killed by it.

Once, at dawn, in the fog of Hamburg, I heard the hooting of torpedo boats down on the Elbe River. I stood in my nightshirt on a balcony and looked down and saw German battleships. All the masts were broken down and trailed

in the water, and the decks were filled with dead and wounded sailors. It was the Battle of Jutland, so I learned history. It was kept quite secret in Germany, but I saw it with my own childish eyes. Of course it was a very amazing lesson.

I got very skeptical in life when I was twelve years old, which was 1916. My parents sent me to a university town called Greifswald, at the Baltic sea, and I was totally on my own. I rented a very elegant apartment in a boarding house and I enrolled in the school. My father wanted me to be confirmed as an evangelical Lutheran Protestant, and this confirmation meant I had to learn Martin Luther's catechism by heart. I sat with a friend under a fruit tree and I came to the salt of the earth passage, and there Luther had an impudent way of saying, "Was ist das?"—What is that? Then comes Luther's explanation, which I also had to memorize. I had begun to hate authority, so I threw my catechism down and said, "*Finito!* I will not be a Lutheran." I also discovered that God didn't exist. God was just a baboon invented by stupid people. I realized that the wearing of uniforms was conducive to uniform thinking, which I wanted to avoid. Then a German aviator who had been shot down came and for some reason assembled us schoolboys and talked to us about pacifism. He was a convinced pacifist.

SMITH: This was during the war?

HECKSCHER: This was 1916. So I was totally convinced that God didn't exist

and the church was worthless. I still think so, you know. To me, religion is for the lowest classes. The lowermost class, the proletariat, has three things: religion, sports, and TV—that's for them, you know, not for us. We should never look at TV, and we should never engage in sports or watch sports. When I'm dictator of the United States, which can still happen, a little boy found holding a ball will lose one. This would be my strict rule. Here, children are always doing things, but you never see a child holding a book.

Now comes one observation I must make about myself. At the age of sixteen I was kicked out of school. I was twenty-eight when I decided to study art history, and in those years between I never held a book in my hand. I think this was a tremendous advantage. My brain was totally rested. I did read a little bit. I painted, I studied old masters, but I had a sort of inner hostility to knowledge. And then came [Erwin] Panofsky and the great turning point in my life.

SMITH: Let's wait for that until tomorrow.

HECKSCHER: Did you ever meet Betsy [Elizabeth] Sears?

SMITH: I haven't met her yet, no.

HECKSCHER: She will visit me on Saturday and this will be a good chance for you to meet her. She is to me really one of the most wonderful women. Both my parents were born in 1870. That was some time ago, which means they were

old-fashioned, and of course to them a woman was something you put on a pedestal and left alone in search of girlfriends. When you married a woman, you worshipped her. When you were a son to a mother you kowtowed to her, and women were really ridiculous creatures in this male vision of the world. But now I look at Betsy Sears and I see what I can only define as a genius. I think she is a genius in her field, in her publications, in her speech, in her mentality—and she is not the only one. I have a whole list. There is Virginia Callahan in Massachusetts, my Greek teacher, who is also my teacher for translating Latin into English. She is a wonderful person. I met her in Rome at the American Academy. I ran into one of my former students there who said, "I'm on my Harley Davidson on the way to Hamburg. Will you look after my girlfriend?" So he zoomed off to Hamburg and I went down to see Virginia Callahan, and we were instant friends. I said, "Virginia, tell me, what do you do?" She said, "Well, I am an assistant of Werner Jaeger, who is the greatest in Greek scholarship and one of the great German scholars anywhere." He lived in America and taught at Harvard. I said, "But what do you do?" She said she translated St. Basilus, a Greek text, into English and wrote commentaries. I asked her what the text dealt with and she said, "Virginité." I said, "Oh God, forget it. Take on emblems." I explained emblems to her and I said, "You will be the only emblem scholar in the United States who is perfect in Greek and

Latin."

In her late forties she made this great egogenetic turn in her life, and she is now considered the greatest emblem scholar in the United States, maybe in the world. Isn't that nice? She is just remarkable, and she taught me how to translate. I had translated over two hundred emblem texts into fairly good English, but she said, "You must avoid transliteration. You must avoid your own fantasy. You must render in beautiful English exactly what the Latin text tells you." I had never clarified this in my mind so much. And then I said to her, "Okay, Virginia, I am the president of the emblem association. At the next meeting you will lecture on the art of translation." And so it happened, and this lecture will be published. I don't want to go on with women but it's strange that it took so much time for me to discover that women are not something funny at the horizon.

SMITH: Was this because of your relationship with your mother and your sister?

HECKSCHER: I think it was mostly what my father said—the voice of authority, you know?

[Tape I, Side Two]

HECKSCHER: You can't escape the atmosphere of your home. My mother was very intelligent. She was a teacher in a school in Paris and she taught French, English, Italian, and German. Her students were mostly American girls who



came to Paris to learn. She wrote the most beautiful poetry in Italian—a German woman—so she was not stupid. My parents were very different, which is a good thing. I'm glad my father died before Hitler came. He would have been executed. How old are you?

SMITH: Forty-six.

HECKSCHER: That's quite old. I will be eighty-nine this year and ninety next year, if I make it. That doesn't excite me terribly much but . . . I always think the most important thing is that you function. I have enormous pain all the time from sciatica. I do exercises for my heart, which is very beneficial. Are you a sportsman? Jogging and so on? Yes. Well, that would save you. I was sedentary to the extreme. I hated motion. But now, even in my eighties, I exercise and I've got muscles I didn't know existed. I go twice a week to a hospital where I am under strict supervision and I exercise for an hour and forty minutes, which is exhausting. You see, if I had had a heart attack ten years ago, they would have said, "To bed and rest." Now they say, "Be active like hell," and this is much better. I see many people surviving. I had my first attack in 1958, in Rome, then two more in 1990.

SMITH: Where did your mother get her fierceness? Was she always like that?

HECKSCHER: Yes. She was cheeky, she was tough, she was subtle, and she was fearless, so that when the gestapo and SS troops marched down our street

and goose-stepped with their swastika, she came out of our house with her umbrella and pierced a swastika flag and tore it into shreds. She was arrested, beaten up, and sent home. She had no fear, which was quite amazing. This saved her life . . . it is so interesting. Trembling, fearful people invite killing. I mean, it's not a rule, but at least in Nazi times that was often the case.

My mother was a thinking person, and she was politically very much interested in a united Europe. She had amazing friends. There was a count, [Richard N. von] Coudenhove-Kalergi, who was a great spokesman for a united Europe, and this was one of her ideas. But it wasn't to be patriotic. I think patriotism is one of the greatest diseases next to AIDS. Especially if it leads to My country right or wrong as a motto. Then you get the Americans in Somalia killing everybody in sight—now that is patriotism. I am very impressed by Clinton making these people [Yasir Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin] shake hands, but I'm not very optimistic. Most human beings prefer war to peace. Most people are vulgar—three meals a day. That means you are allowed to kill. You get a special order *Pour le Mérite* if you kill lots and lots of people. War fulfills all the dreams of vulgar people. Their comrades die in their arms, but they don't die—they feel they are safe. You know, I had the same silly feeling when my life was in danger. I was in a convoy where a ship was torpedoed and 439 people drowned. I said, "Not me." The ship's doctor was on his knees praying.

I tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Forget about it. There is no God. Just go to the toilet and comb your hair a little bit." I mean, after all, I spent two years in prison, and every day my life was in danger.

SMITH: Why is that?

HECKSCHER: Well, I had deadly enemies. I taught school and there were about eighty communists who wanted the souls I saved for Latin and Shakespeare to learn the Marxist catechism. I was summoned before the chief communist who sat in a throne flanked by his bodyguards and he said, "I was in the German Reichstag with your father, and I will tell you one thing. I will treat you well if you stop your school. If you go on with your school I'll have you maimed and killed. Good-bye." So my bodyguard and the communist bodyguard had a fight and one of my men lost an eye. There was tremendous tension all the time.

SMITH: This was in Canada?

HECKSCHER: Yes. I was beaten up in a police prison in London because I had said something negative about Hitler. I had offended Herr Hitler, according to the police chief. You see, England was totally fascist and pro-Hitler. America was also totally fascist and pro-Hitler. Look at TV. We have two thousand channels, and there's always Hitler, Hitler, Hitler orating, and all the Americans just masturbate with joy at seeing *der Führer*, at seeing those Jews shuffling to *Arbeit Macht Frei*. I know Americans, and I could give you a little talk about the

U.S. Take a scoundrel like Reagan. Reagan said, and it's printed in the *Times*, "We Americans were always on the side of Franco." Well, he was speaking for himself. It was Reagan at Bitburg, who wanted us to forget the Holocaust, and he was two feet away from the tomb of an SS soldier, of which he was aware.

Can you imagine an American politician who can speak without a manuscript? I look at TV once in a while and shudder. Bush never spoke a free word which came from his own brain. Reagan was fluent, but the fluency came from his writers. But Clinton to my mind is amazingly gifted. I'm full of admiration for him, but he's shocking when it comes to the death penalty.

SMITH: When you were in Holland, going to high school, you had the nickname of *Spitsmuis*. How did you get that?

HECKSCHER: A *Spitsmuis* is a— What is this animal which has a long pointed nose?

SMITH: A shrew?

HECKSCHER: A shrew, that's right. I've had lots of nicknames: *der Bube*, which meant a German boy, and Willem—everyone called me Willem. In Canada everybody called me Dick, and I never knew why. People still write to me as "Dear Dick." I wrote all these nicknames on a piece of paper and gave it to Roxanne and said, "On my tombstone." She threw it away and said, "Too expensive!" [laughter] When my brother died, we got his tomb inscription gratis

because the army wrote his inscription. I got a letter from George Bush saying that a great American had died. My brother was Bush's adviser on Middle-Eastern affairs.

SMITH: Your brother, Henry Heckscher?

HECKSCHER: Yes. You see, he was in the CIA and Bush was head of the CIA, and he worshipped Bush. I have endless letters: "Dear Henry . . . Sincerely, George," thanking him for advice. They're \$7.50 apiece. [laughter] I haven't even looked at them yet. Henry was Mighty Mouse, in a way, which of course was opposed to my own philosophy. He fought secret wars in Laos. He was Dispensable Heckscher because he wasn't married; that was his nickname. He fought in the jungle of Laos and he fought Laotians with Laotians. Laotian communists were the enemy. He sat at night at the Mekong River with his sergeant, with a legal sheet: left was ours, right was theirs. As the corpses came drifting down the river, they made little signs left or right, or a question mark if they couldn't identify who owned the cadaver. Finally the king of Laos declared Henry *persona non grata* and he was told to leave in three days. He had a cocktail party in his villa. You see, the CIA always had him disguised as first secretary of the embassy; he was that in Tokyo, he was that in Java, he was that in Laos. So he invited members of the various embassies for a cocktail party that night. Being stupid, he didn't realize it was a full moon, which I could have

warned him about—fertility night. When they were all toasting each other, suddenly there was music on the Mekong River, and floats came drifting along, with naked maidens holding huge phalloi, and little boys playing stringed instruments. When I heard about it, I said, "Henry, this is the funniest story I've heard. Divine." He said, "Bill, it was so disappointing and shocking." So that was Henry. We were so different. He was six years younger and I educated him, I must say. I read Shakespeare with him. He had brains, he was very clever, and when I started studying, he taught me how to study.

SMITH: Why do you think you had trouble in high school?

HECKSCHER: Well, I can say only the following, which jumps ahead of time. I was made a full professor in Holland, which is so high that you can't believe it as an American—you are appointed by the queen. There are two groups of civil servants which are appointed by the queen—mayors of cities and professors. There are very few professors, and as a professor you are beyond any criticism; the result being that all Dutch professors at the seven Dutch universities get the same salary. There is no merit raise because there is nobody above you except God. Queen Juliana and I went to the same school, so she knew me.

SMITH: You both went to the Nederlandsch Lyceum?

HECKSCHER: Yes. When I was in Canada after my prison term I had a girlfriend, a senator, a wonderful woman, and she invited me to a gathering and

there was Princess Juliana, pregnant, and of course she knew me, and we spoke in Dutch. She said, "Let's speak English. It sounds silly if we speak Dutch," because Lady Athlone and all the potentates were around us. Then when Beatrix was here in Princeton she asked for me. I was summoned to the university and we talked, and I'd never met her before. Beatrix was terribly nice. We talked like two old friends and she knew of course that I had been Mighty Mouse in Holland. I'd taught her sister, Irene.

SMITH: At Utrecht?

HECKSCHER: Yes. She was in art history and she was lazy. I always summoned her. She sat in a kitchen chair while I sat in a very elegant, plush chair, and I scolded her like a little schoolgirl. She was in love with a Spanish grandee whom she married, so she put all her eggs into the Spanish basket and neglected art history. That was Irene.

As a professor, in Utrecht, if you walk down the street and a policeman sees you, he will click his heels and salute. If he doesn't, you stand in front of him and say, "Do you have trouble with your eyes?" I milked this cow, you know. I just played the game.

SMITH: How would the policeman know you're a professor?

HECKSCHER: Because there are so few. When a university has a president—*rector magnificus*—that's one of us. He's not above us, and his

successor is his secretary. A dean is also one of us. I was in a council of seven, representing each university, and we made new academic laws, which we proposed to the Minister of Education. So I was in a very interesting position there, to the fury of my colleagues. I had two departments and I had three libraries, which were old, seventeenth-century, heavenly libraries. I started a new library on iconology, I rearranged my books, and I was in charge of the Utrecht Psalter, which is the most valuable medieval manuscript on earth. So I was Mighty Mouse in library work, too. Here, in the U.S., a librarian can tell you things. There, if the librarian came to my office I didn't offer him a seat; he had to stand while I talked to him or scolded him. So I was head of the library. No, you were so powerful that people walking with you went to the left two paces behind you, which was also very funny.

We had a so-called *tentamina*, an oral exam, with just professor and student, alone. You could take them at home or you could sit in a library. One young professor held the tests in a room, and when the student was a girl, he would open her blouse and finger her breasts. One girl had a nervous breakdown and her father went to the *rector magnificus*, the head of the university, and complained. The *rector magnificus* found a retired professor with a white beard and sent him to the young professor asking, "Is it true that you opened blouses?" The young professor said, "Yes, and I enjoy doing it." The

elder said, "Will you promise me to stop doing it?" The young professor said, "Why should I?" So the elder went back and said to the president, "No dice." The president summoned the father and said, "Nothing can be done. It's his right, he is just too high." You can't tell a professor anything. So this is Holland. I was appointed, and there was an announcement which was pasted on every gate in every city. I will show it to you: "By appointment of the queen of Holland." If I wanted to teach, I taught; if I didn't want to teach, I stopped teaching. It was totally in my hands. One of my colleagues always lay in bed in pajamas and had his students come to his bedroom.

SMITH: So what was your high school education like, the Lyceum?

HECKSCHER: Well, the man who had said, "There is something lacking here. He must learn to use his hands," was an assistant professor when I was a full professor. I wrote him a note and said, "Dear colleague, I would love to see you." Then we met and it was a weeping meeting. He was Jewish, and he had survived Theresienstadt, which was a concentration camp. Poor man.

Life in Holland was very interesting of course. I realized when I came I had to relearn Dutch, you know—not high-school level. I found a very clever Dutchman who knew Chinese, and every language on earth, and he helped me. I came in the spring and in the fall I took over. If you are appointed a professor, there is a ceremony in which you give a lecture, the title of which is kept secret,

but it is already printed as a book. I was in a fourteenth-century chapel with hundreds of people, giving my lecture on the history of museums, in Dutch [*Sixtus IIII Aeneas Insignes Statuas Romano Populo Restituendas Censuit*]. I learned the Dutch of the time before the reformation of spelling, so my Dutch is old-fashioned, but I think just as nice as can be.

So I spent eleven years really speaking Dutch, except I had an English-speaking Scottish wife from Canada. My father-in-law was the Earl of Perth; it's a Scottish title. My wife was the honorable Mary Dixon Leitch—nobility. The family was deeply shocked when she married me, of course. You can imagine. They sent her brother to interview me and find out what kind of person I was and he discovered that I was very intelligent and quite nice. So we got married and had two children, who are good friends of mine, my oldest daughters Diana and Katherine. Diana was a ballet dancer—the Royal Ballet Company in London. The family idiot, my middle daughter Katherine, who only knows seven languages, is in Holland. She is an interpreter at Amsterdam University. She has two nationalities. She was born in Canada, but she's also a Dutch citizen; that is the family. Diana, the oldest, is forty-seven. She has wonderful children. One boy is a professional ballet dancer, but not gay, and he is now in Iceland, dancing. Diana is a psychological counselor now. She is very busy and treats patients. Her husband is a Shakespearean actor whom I'm very fond of, a

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wonderful man. He was here recently visiting us and he has a gift which everybody should envy—a perfect memory. When he gets a new part he reads it once and it's forever there. He doesn't have to cram it. I'm very fond of him. He's very nice and witty, a Cockney with a law degree. So that is my family. I have no relatives left except a cousin who is insane in Hamburg. I can't even correspond with her. I had a divine cousin who was a countess. She married the Count of Schwerin and she died. She was undernourished during World War II. I sent all the care parcels I could send. She was my darling, you know, I loved her and she had a very nice husband. But all these people have vanished.

SMITH: What happened to your sister?

HECKSCHER: She died.

SMITH: How did her life proceed?

HECKSCHER: Her life proceeded wonderfully the moment she was away from her mother. She first was a nurse to an insane woman who went to the same asylum where Aby Warburg was, at the same time.

SMITH: Did she know Aby Warburg?

HECKSCHER: Well, she met him there, but there's nothing much to mention about it. Then she went to a friend of my mother's in Ireland, in Dublin, and she got a job as a barmaid in a normal Irish pub. Then she went to London and went into Woburn House, which was a center for refugees, and they realized she

was a genius. She got a job immediately and was put in charge of all the Jewish refugee women from any nation who were in need of jobs. There was only one type of job available: domestics. So she did that.

In a typical Home Office situation, a woman would come from Cologne, and somebody would say she was a prostitute there, so the Home Office would send her back and she would be beheaded by the Germans. England, my England. My sister fell in love with a German man in London, who had been in the Richthofen squadron, which was the most famous German squadron in World War I. He shot down sixty-seven British planes, so he was a hero in Germany. Otto Boll was his name. He had a Jewish grandmother. He had to leave Germany to save his life, so he went to Spain, where he was a printer. Then Spain turned anti-Semitic and he had to go to London, which luckily he could. He started a printing firm in London, and Lottie and he shacked up and were lovers living together until he died. Lottie was very influential and she got the queen to knight Otto Boll, so he was Sir Otto Boll before he died. He was in the British army and killed many a German. Otto and I became friends and I said, "Although I'm a pacifist I'll join the British army. I don't want to walk and march. I'm not a foot soldier." He said, "Nor am I." So we went to the Elephant and Castle, which is a part of London, where we took a course in motor mechanics. Our great test took two hours. We had a blueprint of an engine and

the parts of the engine were lying on the floor of the garage. In two hours we had to have it on a block, ready, and it had to run. It was an old-fashioned motor, of course. When I was in prison I got a furious letter from the British army saying I had failed to turn up for my health test. I was in prison. I couldn't do anything about it.

Otto was more lucky. He was a wonderful man, but when he died and the war had ended, it turned out he had been married in Germany with a Nazi wife. She came to England and my sister—this illustrates what a wonderful person she was—took care of this woman, who was unhappy in England. My sister made it financially possible for her to inherit Otto's money. Lottie had a job in Otto's firm, as his chief secretary, and when he died she was summoned and she thought, "I hope I get a wristwatch or something nice." She was made director of the firm. Then she had six more years in which she turned it into a smashing success because she knew how to deal with trade unions. She was very successful. It was one of the big printing firms in London. When I visited her she was very majestic; I had to make an appointment to see her. I teased her of course all the time, but we were good friends. She made Earl Grey tea much too strong and I hated it, but I didn't dare to say anything. So that was Lottie.

Panofsky, when he was rejected from Hamburg, came to the U.S. and said, "I was sent into Paradise"—you know, compared to Hamburg. I think that

this happened to quite a few people. It was a blessing not to be there. To me, it was always a foreign country. I spent a few years in Germany, a few years in Holland, and fifty-seven years in English-speaking countries, in spite of my bad English. Fifty-seven years is a long time.

SMITH: Did you have a sense of German identity?

HECKSCHER: No, never. My only nostalgia is for Essex, in England, where I had my happiest time. I stayed in Essex on a farm, Great Braxted Hall—Elizabethan. I had a seventeenth-century room, which I still have there, and wonderful friends. The landscape was heavenly, and when I stayed there, I bicycled every day to a castle with a drawbridge, a Queen Anne castle which belonged to an aunt of the family that owned the farm. She adopted me as her child and taught me English. I went for high tea and she supervised my English reading. I told her what I liked in German literature and she said, "Well, you're a Charles Lamb person." So I read Charles Lamb. In London I went to Berlitz and I realized, "This is shit, this is just awful. This turns you into a parrot." So I went to London University and I took a course in phonetics from a crazy man whose name was Roger Kingdon. He mastered fourteen languages, which is no joke. He was a superspy during the war; this was of course before World War II. I could read Arabic, Hungarian, also a little English, but I also learned the physiology of speech and sound making, and this helped me very greatly when I

was teaching only German during the war, in Canada. I taught Middle High German, I taught High German, and I wrote a book on German phonetics for English-speaking people, which was very useful and should be republished at some point. I have a friend I correspond with in phonetics, and that's wonderful. We make funny sounds at each other. So phonetics is one of my hobby horses. I have a huge library of phonetics texts, of French phonetics and so on. But now with my deafness I don't hear my own voice; it's a distorted sound. I was walking up and down our living room talking to myself, when my mother-in-law, who lived with us, said, "William, what are you saying?" I said, "I'm not wearing my hearing aid, so I've no idea." [laughter] So that is life. I'm interested in several things and linguistics is really one of my hobbies. I am now studying the sources of German words which come from Arabic, and, my God, it highlights things which I never knew.

SMITH: I wanted to ask you more about your parents. Were they cultured people? Were art and literature and music a big part of their lives?

HECKSCHER: My father was a cultured man. He wrote poetry, which I disliked, and he wrote a drama called *König Karl der Erste*, about the beheaded king of England. He hoped he would be considered the German Shakespeare. He wrote endless newspaper articles. When my father came home from work, he played Bach, a prelude, before a meal, which was served by servants in uniform,

and at the end of the meal he played a fugue.

SMITH: On the piano?

HECKSCHER: Yes. I was called Sebastian because he was in a Bach mood when my mother was pregnant with me. When he died, a minister whom I liked immensely came to the funeral. He was a friend of mine. He made a little sermon and said, "Siegfried Heckscher never came to my church unless there was music. I would say he was a Bach Christian."

When he died my father talked about Jesus, and I totally agreed with him. I want to write a Jesus festschrift, to honor him. My festschrift would be very interesting, because I've asked myself, "Has anyone ever studied all the elements in Jesus' life and sayings which are not Jewish, but are Mediterranean?" For example, Jesus says that the Kingdom of Heaven is like a *margarita preciosa*—in the Vulgate, "like a precious pearl." The old testament doesn't have the word *margarita* or pearl. The pearls came under the patronage of Venus. This interests me. Jesus holds a coin and says, "Pay onto Caesar what is Caesar's." I have a whole list of things [like this] which are Mediterranean and typically non-Jewish in Jesus. I thought all this would add to his personality a little bit, I mean his biographical image. I also know that he probably carried a sword, which would now be a submachine gun in terms of power politics. I found out—I read the Bible every evening—that all the twelve apostles had swords. Christ was

obsessed with the idea of *gladius*, the sword. So all this I would mention and work into my little honorary festschrift. I gave a sermon on Christmas Eve in Canada during the war, which I have somewhere. It deals with Christ as a redeemer of his people and simply an imitator of all kinds of redeemers before him. One of the typical things is that Christ the redeemer has to have an obscure youth. Well, the obscurity comes when Jesus and his parents go to Egypt and the idols fall; that is very nebulous. Also, he has to be born in some unconventional receptacle, *casu quo*, in a manger. All these elements mounted up and I said to my wife at the time, "My God. I gave this sermon on the radio and millions of people in Canada heard it. I may lose my job, you know." A few days later I got a letter from a seminary inviting me to be a professor of theology on the basis of this sermon. [laughter]

SMITH: Was your family religious?

HECKSCHER: My father was deeply religious. My mother said proudly to me, "I've never opened a Bible." Have you heard of the Society for Ethical Culture?

SMITH: Vaguely.

HECKSCHER: It's in New York, and my grandfather [Wilhelm Julius Foerster], who was born in 1832, founded a branch in Berlin which he called *die Gesellschaft für Ethische Kultur*. He was a pacifist, although he had once been an officer of the Prussian army. He was an astronomer and he was the first in

Berlin University to lecture on the history of astronomy. He was a very civilized, terribly nice man. I have somewhere here his telescope, which is eighteenth century. When I was twelve years old I made a drawing of the moon through this telescope for him. My uncle [Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster], who was the most famous German pacifist, issued a publication of the Ethical Culture Society, and young Einstein was a member when he was a student. It was absolutely unreligious, no racial distinctions, and the organization is now in New York and flourishes there . . . not much. When I was in prison, the head of the Society for Ethical Culture [John Lovejoy Elliott] came all the way to Canada to interview me, and the commandant said, "Prisoners cannot see guests or visitors," so the man went to New York and died of exhaustion—that was my deed. I heard about it years after the war.

[Tape II, Side One]

HECKSCHER: My uncle, Friedrich Wilhelm, was banished forever from Germany in 1914.

SMITH: He never returned?

HECKSCHER: He once came secretly to our house. He went to Switzerland, where he was a professor of pedagogics, and he wrote a book on Jesus and the Christian life, which elicited a handwritten letter from the pope, which made him embrace Catholicism. He thought that was the only polite answer, so he was a

Roman Catholic. He was in France lecturing when the German army broke through the Maginot Line. He was not Jewish but he was a pacifist, which was worse than being a communist. He went to Vichy and from Vichy, where Pétain turned up, he fled to Marseilles, and there he hid in a brothel. I know this story not from him but from an American girl who was wonderful. Her name is Miriam Davenport Burke Ebel. She married my best and first American friend, Bill [William] Burke, who was head of the Index of Christian Art here at Princeton. As a young girl, Miriam studied French at the Sorbonne. When the French army broke down and the Germans invaded France, she simply pretended to be a French student and she joined the French underground, risking her life. In the basement of this brothel in Marseilles, she and other Sorbonne students found space for Jewish refugees, and also my uncle. They took them at night and marched them in small groups through the Pyrenees to the border of Portugal, and then Portuguese idealistic students received them, took them to the American consul general, who, when he was in a good mood, gave them visas for America. Unfortunately he was a Nazi sympathizer, like so many Americans during the war, and he sent many Jews back to Germany, to their deaths. But there was a Czechoslovakian consul general in Marseilles who gave fake documents to Germans and made them Czechoslovakian citizens; they were all lucky and got into New York because the stupid ass at the consulate in Lisbon

didn't realize that. So he was a holy man.

Miriam has been mentioned in dispatches as a great patriotic American and she's still alive. I love her. I met Bill Burke in Hamburg before I had set foot on American soil. I came here in 1932 for the first time, just to see this funny country. I was a rich young man, so I could afford it. But Miriam described my uncle to me and he died in Switzerland long after all these upheavals.

SMITH: You said you were a rich young man, but I thought your family lost its fortune during the inflation.

HECKSCHER: Well, I had enough money; I earned an enormous amount with my portrait painting. I saved. I did not master the art of spending money, so I had enormous savings, which meant, at the time when there were no fellowships and such things, I could pay for my own studies and I could pay for a trip to New York. Of course, the moment I fled from Germany I was poverty stricken.

SMITH: As a young man, what were the books you were reading?

HECKSCHER: When I was sixteen I read everything by Sigmund Freud which appeared. I read everything by Strindberg because his things appeared in German. I read Otto Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter*—Sex and Character—three hundred pages. We worshipped him as Dutch schoolboys, because Otto Weininger at the age of twenty-one committed suicide and wrote

this still very important book. It was very antifeminine. I did know Ovid very well, and I illustrated Ovid. I read *Don Quixote* and I was so overcome with admiration I locked myself in an attic and had a maid bring food up to me. I didn't want to see any human beings, I just wanted to be with Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, in Spain. But I probably read it in a German translation. I did read an enormous amount of Shakespeare, I'm sorry to say in German; my English wasn't good enough. I didn't read light literature. I can read French as if it were English, especially Rabelais, and I learned Spanish when I was in the West Indies.

SMITH: In Cuba?

HECKSCHER: Never in Cuba, but Venezuela, Colombia, Trinidad, Curaçao—the whole coast, up and down. I was there three times, each trip for three months.

SMITH: Were you thinking of an academic career?

HECKSCHER: Oh no, no. I wanted to be an artist. Lottie, my sister, persuaded me to study art history. I wanted to study it to be a restorer of pictures.

SMITH: When you went to Hamburg?

HECKSCHER: Yes.

SMITH: Before we get there, let's talk about you being an artist.

HECKSCHER: Well, I still think I'm a very good artist, but nobody agrees. Nothing worries me. I never had a teacher teaching me style or any such thing; I refused that. If somebody came and made gestures, I said, "No, this is obscene. I know what I'm doing." The exception was a professor at the Berlin academy whose name was Otto Bartning. He was a wonderful man who taught me old-master techniques. He sent me to the beautiful Kaiser-Friedrich Museum, and there I copied old masters. The average time I spent in front of a picture was three months. I got money mostly through portrait painting. There was a woman in Holland who bought everything I painted and gave me enormous amounts of money. She lived in a house in The Hague which was hit by a British bomb, one of the few damaged, and all my paintings she had were burned or smashed. It was a fire bomb . . . so that was very sad.

Until I became deaf the most important thing in my life was music. I told you about being an organist, and my sister was immensely musical. She would sing Bach Passion arias for me and play on the piano just to soothe my mind in Hitler days. That was a frightful, fearful time and I saw such awful things happening; it was a nervous time for many people. We were twenty-five Panofsky students. Two committed suicide, one lost his mind, and one girl lost her speech completely—she was suddenly literally dumbfounded. That was super trauma. Among the twenty-five there was only one Nazi, but he was very

obvious so there was no great danger. There were non-Jewish people who were anti-Hitler, so you met very, very decent people.

I wrote a dissertation on the ruins of Rome ["Die Romruinen: Die geistigen Voraussetzungen ihrer Wertung im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance"], which got high praise, but a secret report was made to the faculty with the advice not to give me a Ph.D. because I was obviously not in harmony with the worldview of Hitler. This secret report reached me recently; somebody found it in Hamburg and I can't find it now, but it's very nice. It is of course in German, and the man who denounced me was the man who evaluated my dissertation and whose signature was vital. He deferred his signature for a whole year, which was the most dangerous year in my whole life, 1936, and then he finally signed and committed suicide. I thank God he didn't reverse the procedure. [laughter] His name was [Werner] Burmeister and he was very ugly. He had been a soldier in the First World War when he was sixteen years old. He went, as it was called, "over the top" in an attack from a trench, and his face was shot off. This was before you had cosmetic operations, so he had two little nostrils here, he had one eye there, he had no nose, and he was so ugly that the Hamburgian prostitutes refused service to him. Students didn't go to his lectures because they couldn't take looking at him. Panofsky treated him very badly, and after he left, suddenly Burmeister was Mighty Mouse. He became head of the department,

and the time for revenge had come. I was a favorite of Panofsky's, so of course he took it out on me, but I befriended him because I thought this was too awful, you know? I psychoanalyzed him. He talked and talked and I heard this horrible thing about the prostitutes not servicing him when he needed it. There was another man who was holy, [Karl-Ludwig] Heydenreich, and he was a stinking Nazi. Panofsky worshipped him and I could never make it clear to Panofsky that he was a Nazi. He threatened me with the concentration camp because I collected money for a Jewish girl. Anybody could send you to a concentration camp if you didn't watch your step.

SMITH: Were you involved with the [Stefan] George *Kreis*?

HECKSCHER: I met him. I met Stefan George when I was a child. I lived in my grandfather's house in Berlin, and the next door neighbor was a wonderful sculptor, Reinhold, who was Jewish. He was married to a woman whose name was Lepsius. The two houses were detached, but there was a little bridge leading from attic to attic, and as a child I always used that bridge and felt at home in Reinhold's house. I had never seen a woman smoking a cigarette, but there was Lepsius, lying on her couch, smoking a cigarette with a long holder. There was a person sitting on a kitchen chair, and I didn't know if it was a man or a woman—it was Stefan George.

SMITH: You couldn't tell?

HECKSCHER: I couldn't tell. He wore a wrinkly peasant type of shirt. I was fascinated by what he said. I was of course tiny, but not stupid. I met him on two occasions and listened, listened, listened to him. One of my best Princeton friends was a *Georgeast*, as we called them. What was his name? [Ernst] Kantorowicz. He was a professor at the Institute for Advanced Study.

Kantorowicz and I were close friends and I liked him immensely. He gave me everything, he invited me to his meals—he was a very good cook. He was shocked that I didn't drink alcohol. I'm a teetotaler. Goebbels, Hitler's *Kultur* minister, was a student of George, you know. He was also a friend of my uncle [Karl August Foerster], who was a gardener. My uncle was a scoundrel. I mean, he befriended everybody: communists, fascists, whoever was around.

SMITH: Which uncle was this?

HECKSCHER: This was my mother's brother. He was one of my great teachers for style. He wrote one smash hit book after another on philosophy and gardening. I learned writing from him, at least German writing. He had the biggest landscaping firm in Germany and I was the destined heir, but at sixty he found a girlfriend and married her, so I was left out, thank God. But I was trained as a gardener, unfortunately. Then I spent three and a half years in the steelworks, stoking kettles, which was tough . . . such tremendous heat. I was undernourished. We were so hungry, the workmen and I, after one year we

finally caught a dog and made a soup out of it. It was the best meal I've ever had in my life. We vomited like mad and said nothing could meet this dog soup. That was hunger, you know?

SMITH: When was that?

HECKSCHER: That was after I had collapsed in the 1920s. For three and a half years I stoked kettles. I am still good at it. I had awful colleagues. I mean, the workmen were a raping, murdering bunch, but I had a Czechoslovakian foreman who was very nice, and on payday, which was Friday, we would lie drunk in ditches. The French foreign legion sent powerful trucks with searchlights from Czechoslovakia, which is next to Saxony, in quest of recruits. They felt my muscles and said, "*Merde!*" So I was checked out. But I wanted to join the French foreign legion. We sang little French songs in preparation: "*Vive la mort, vive la guerre, vive la légion étrangère!*" Long live death! It was wonderful. So that was a very tough, masculine time. Then I finally got a job in a gardening firm stoking kettles in Potsdam, which was the gardening place belonging to Frederick the Great. I slept in his bowling alley, which had no windows and was icy cold, and there were rats. So we slept, a colleague and I, fully dressed with our boots on, because we didn't want the rats to nibble our toes. But I finally befriended a rat, made it tame and gave it food, and I could sit there without the rat being hostile.

I took flowers to a market in Berlin and I traveled fourth class, which was standing room only for peasants and people who went to market. There were nice peasant women who gave me sandwiches with lard and salt, and that was heaven. There was never any food, so I went to the market and sold the flowers I carried on my back and in my arms. If I couldn't sell everything I went house to house ringing doorbells, offering my flowers. Sometimes they slammed doors because I looked suspicious. I wasn't elegant, of course, but sometimes they bought, and then they tipped me and I blushed. But very soon I changed and I blushed when they didn't tip me. [laughter] Sometimes I was offered a cup of coffee, which was heaven. So at that time for me there were no books, there was no reading, just working. Then my boss, who was a horrible man, was murdered. I was arrested and taken to the police and they asked me if I knew that he had been murdered. I said, "Wonderful news! I am happy. He deserved it." This saved my life, you know. You see, when you shut the furnace off at night, there's always a danger that if you leave it a little bit open there will be escaping poison gases. Somebody had opened the furnace after I had shut it off, and the boss was sitting there reading a newspaper and he was poisoned. I forget who it was, but they finally caught him, nailed him down. So I've had a funny existence. It wasn't easy.

SMITH: This was during the inflation?

HECKSCHER: This was inflation time. If you were paid on Friday and didn't spend the money on Friday, it was worthless on Saturday. You had not just a thousand mark note, you had a million mark note, and a million mark note was just paper. It was so worthless that people used it for papering walls and as toilet paper—a million marks, can you imagine?

SMITH: Then you became a painter?

HECKSCHER: I was of course always a painter and I had an atelier in The Hague. I was adopted, not formally, by a Dutch family. [Arnout] van Stipriaan [Luisius Bungenberg de Jong], a simple Dutch name. He was a doctor, and his wife was half Javanese. They also had black ancestry and my friend looked like a Negro. When the Germans invaded Holland he knew better; he committed suicide. He was a psychoanalyst. He was really my best Dutch friend, and a wonderful man. Panofsky met him and was overcome with admiration. He was a very good actor, he was a good musician, and he was a very indiscreet psychoanalyst who told me about all his cases—people I knew very well. So I learned a great deal about psychoanalysis. As I said, I was a voracious reader and student of Freud. I was very fond of van Stipriaan.

SMITH: What were your ideas about painting, about visual art?

HECKSCHER: I was totally sold on people like Vermeer van Delft. I didn't greatly admire Rembrandt as a technician, or Goya, in Spain. I copied a Jan van

Eyck painting [*Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini*]. I was really obsessed with old masters, and when I was a high school student in The Hague, Lottie and I went to the museum and looked at Rembrandt's *Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp*. Lottie and I puzzled over it, and then I wrote a book on it, which you may have seen. I have no copies left, which is awful, but in 1995 it will be republished. Isn't that nice?

SMITH: Very nice, yes.

HECKSCHER: I said, "Leave it. Leave it with all its mistakes, it's okay, it's okay." My essays on art and literature will also be published this year in a new edition. [The first edition of *Art and Literature: Studies in Relationship* appeared in 1985.] There will be quite a bit added. There will be a beautiful, long article on Dürer's *Melencolia*.

SMITH: Who's putting that out?

HECKSCHER: A German publisher [Verlag Valentin Koerner] at Baden-Baden. Dieter Wuttke, the great German Warburg and Panofsky specialist, is very fond of me [Dieter Wuttke edited the series *Saecula Spiritalia*, of which *Art and Literature* is volume 17].

On the third of October there will be a Panofsky symposium. I have been "ex-vited," you know: "Please don't come and spoil things." But I do have to go to one lecture and one dinner. I don't care. On Monday a woman from the

Institute for Advanced Study will come to interview me about Panofsky; she has to write an article about him. Quite a few people write about Panofsky and ask me about him, and then they get angry at me if I say something. I like Dieter Wuttke. He's an interesting man and a very gifted professor, in Bamberg. He's perfect in English, and he was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study.

SMITH: You said your painting was old-master style. Does that mean you were not interested in expressionism?

HECKSCHER: Oh no, I was interested in modern art. I still remember seeing the first modern exhibition in Berlin, which astonished me, you know; it left a deep impression. But I never felt I was an expressionist. When everybody was an expressionist I suppose I was manneristic. I liked mannerism.

SMITH: You mean, like Caravaggio?

HECKSCHER: Heavenly, heavenly. He was a bugger of course, you know, very homosexual, but who wasn't? Donatello was terribly homosexual, and also Michelangelo. It's funny, so many of my male friends are gay. If you read the obituaries, you see, "aged forty" or "thirty-five," and it's always AIDS, AIDS, AIDS. They are all living with other men. I have one friend, a homosexual, who writes to me almost every day. He's an interesting man and I profit by his letters.

I have none of the feelings about race, ethnic belonging, or sexual

appetites that other people have. I'm not in this world to improve it, except for the question of sports. Sports should be banished. [laughter] I once attended an American football game and I was so bored I started reading a book that I had with me. People said, "Get out, or we'll give you a beating." So I left. As a boy, I was on a football team in Holland and I appeared in a public football game and shot the ball into my own goal. I was summoned afterwards by the powerful people, and I said, "Does it really make much difference? I got a goal! Shouldn't you be proud of me?" They said, "Fuck off!" [laughter] To me, these things are so unholy and so ridiculous. Now, tennis or boxing—yes, if it is very good. It has to be on a very high level. I see wrestling simply because this is the world. When I was in America, in 1932, there was Belle da Costa Greene. Have you heard of her? She was the head of the Pierpont Morgan Library. She and I became very close friends, and she said, "I'm going to Trenton [New Jersey] to see a wrestling match. Will you come along?" I said, "Why do I have to come along?" She said, "It's the only way to understand Michelangelo." So I went with her.

I wrote letters to my sister Lottie, in German of course, describing [my life in] New York, and she typed up my letters and gave them to somebody who gave them to somebody else, and before you knew it they were printed as an article in a Swiss magazine under my name, with all the horribly indiscreet things

I should never have said.

SMITH: Such as?

HECKSCHER: I mentioned my landlady by name. She came drunk into my bedroom, gave me a volume of John Donne's poetry and said, "Read this." I had never known about John Donne, and of course I got hooked immediately. But I shouldn't have mentioned her name and said she was drunk.

First I stayed with Mr. Wolfe, who was an aide to my favorite president, Herbert Hoover. I worshipped Hoover. He was the only American president of those times who was deeply cultured. He was a mining engineer and a Latinist. He translated [Georgius] Agricola's *De re metallica*, a book on sixteenth-century mining, from Latin into English. His wife participated, but I don't know what she contributed, since he was the mining specialist and the Latinist. I've tried to buy the book, but it's thousands of dollars, you know; it's a rare book now. It should be facsimiled; it's beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. Americans should wake up and realize that Hoover was unlucky during his presidency—it was the times. He was a Quaker, like Nixon, but in contrast to Nixon, who has millions of Cambodian lives on his conscience—along with Kissinger, the horrible creature—Hoover saved lives.

My father worked with Hoover. He was the ambassador of the Weimar Republic, the first one sent, and this is the way I got to Holland. We moved to

Holland because he was in the embassy there. My father's main job was to get food into parts of Germany where people were dying of undernourishment, like the industrial districts of Hamburg. Hoover also did this in Belgium and saved thousands of lives. He sent food train after food train to Russia and made Soviet communism stable and safe, but he saved lives, you know, for heaven's sake—valuable lives.

So Mr. Wolfe was a terribly nice man. He had been rich at one time, but he lost his money. He ran an inventing office, and there I worked with him and invented press buttons for bags in vacuum cleaners. The man who took it away from me—it was my invention—was a billionaire. I was too unknowing about these things, but I did invent many things. I invented special sleeves you could see through for typists to wear so they wouldn't befoul their wrists. That was before plastic of course; I forget what it was called. I'm always inventing things. I have a tea kettle which boils in seconds instead of this long waiting. It's simply pyrex within pyrex. It has a closed valve which heats up. If you have a kettle, the cold air of the kitchen delays the boiling, but here not only does it boil, you see it boiling. So, instead of metal, my kettle is pyrex and transparent. I also invented an electrical automobile. It has a flywheel and zooms along with very little electricity. And, I'm sorry to say, I invented the steam engine. My father was so stingy, he said, "I can't afford a book on steam engines," so I invented

my own. I had an uncle who was an engineer. He took my drawing and said, "Shit, rubbish, throw it away." I said, "Why?" I was just a little child. He said, "It's not economical." But it was working, you know, my steam engine. He was the only belligerent member of my mother's family. He was a U-boat commander and a tough guy—a horrible man. The rest were nice.

My father was a civilized man. He was fluent in French, fluent in English. Bismarck was fluent in Russian and French. Can you imagine, in Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, there wasn't a single person in the American embassy who knew Russian, even though it was in Russian hands. A Russian soldier took refuge in the American embassy and nobody could understand what he was saying, which is scandalous, you know? You hardly ever find an American diplomat who is linguistically capable; it's just rich people who've given money to a presidential election and then they get the job—incompetents. No, my father was a civilized, gentlemanly German, which was unusual. He was interested in things and of course he was a wonderful educator, politically, because he had this mistaken idea that I would be like him, but there was no pressure exerted, you know.

I buy books like insane. I buy books all the time. It's my immobility; I can't go into libraries, and I hate to sit with lots of people around. I like to sit here and study and read, but my most important work now is my Latin

dictionary. I had a marvelous set of teachers in Holland. I wish I'd been more attentive. There was [Jacob Johannes] Hondius, a Dutchman who taught me Latin. He was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study at some point. All my teachers were university professors. It was a funny kind of school. They came and lectured as if we were college students. There were no disciplinary problems. Classroom disturbance and all this kind of rubbish didn't exist. We had a brilliant historian teaching us a survey of history. He only taught the French Revolution. He said, "The rest, you read. I'm not giving you a bibliography. You can find the books and you'll be responsible." That kind of approach.

I belonged to a circle of boys—we were five, of which I'm the only survivor—and we went camping. We had a short, four-week vacation, not like this insane American summer where students have jobs and are waiters and so on. We went camping and took whole libraries along on our bicycles, and we read and read and read. We read together and disputed, and it was like a little academy moving across the scene. There was no pleasing a teacher, because the teacher didn't care a damn what we did as long as we answered questions and wrote good essays. I was misguided and lazy . . . not lazy, that's not true. I had Lottie [to guide me] and she was very inspiring. As I said, she was a schoolteacher.

SMITH: Was she the one who told you to become an artist?

HECKSCHER: Yes, she guided my life. I've been pushed around mostly by women, but also by my uncle. Can you imagine, it was seventy years ago that I went to school in Holland, and I still correspond almost weekly with one of my former schoolmates, who is a retired professor at Leiden University. Isn't that amazing?

[Tape II, Side Two]

HECKSCHER: We kept in contact all the time. He wrote a novel about incest, which is totally taboo. It is unpublishable, but he told Roxanne and me the entire novel during lunch at The Hague. His letters are divine, they are in Dutch of course. My Dutch is as good as my English, maybe a little bit better. No language is perfect in me. My German has weaknesses now because nobody speaks German to me. My brother and I spoke English. My older daughters and I speak Dutch when we see each other; they were born in Winnipeg, Canada, but they went to school in Holland. My first wife and I are very good friends, so we correspond heavily in English. I was very lucky with my father-in-law; he was a wonderful man, self-taught. He built Liberty ships during the war, which of course brought him money. He was a billionaire, and in all my life I got only two things from him. One was a second-hand Ford, which he took away after I'd used it for a while, and the other was book which cost him \$75.30. That is

all, so I cannot say that I got millions out of it. But my ex-wife is very comfortable. She lives in Holland. She hates North America, although it's home sweet home.

For years I rented a house in Sicily, in Taormina, on a rock—heavenly! This house belonged to an Englishwoman who, after generations, had become totally Italianized. When my wife and I separated, I went to America and she stayed in Holland, but she spent a lot of time in our house in Sicily, and that was just divine. Can you imagine, it was on a rock, and there was a sixteenth-century swimming pool . . . everything so old and gnarled and beautiful. So Sicily is like home for me. I loved the island. Have you ever been in Sicily?

SMITH: No, not Sicily.

HECKSCHER: Sicilians are different from Italians, and my wife could speak Sicilian dialect. She studied Italian as a student in Toronto. Italian was unfashionable during the war, so she was fluent in high Italian and Sicilian Italian, and she's of course fluent in Dutch too. So I'm always nestled in a sort of multilingual situation. Of course I have correspondence with German-speaking people, in German, and I make funny, embarrassing mistakes. When I'm in Germany, which is rarely, people say, "You speak wonderful German." I say, "Easy. I was born here." And then they say, "Phooey! You should be ashamed!" [laughter] Someone said to Roxanne, "Your husband speaks late

nineteenth-century German." You see, in Hitler's time, German was completely changed and Germanized. Instead of TV, they say *Fernsehen*, "distance-looking," and all these terms. I just don't know these terms because I wasn't there. I couldn't ask for gasoline in German because I've forgotten what they call it. You see these old books? There is one German author who is my favorite and no German knows him. His name is Jean Paul Friedrich Richter. He is called Jean Paul. The moment I came out of prison I gave a lecture on Jean Paul and a professor said, "We don't really know who he is."

SMITH: Why do you like Jean Paul so much?

HECKSCHER: Well, I'll tell you. He is like Charles Lamb. Jean Paul was an exact contemporary to Schiller and Goethe. He flourished during the classical time: twenty-five years before 1800 and twenty-five years after 1800. He was despised by the great writers. Goethe couldn't write one sentence of prose, and as for his lyrical poetry, I say, "Okay, okay. This is for schoolgirls." Schiller is just awful, but he did write a good historical thing on the Thirty-Years War. I've written on Goethe. I wrote a very good article about a fly that dies in a glass of wine; it loses its balance and so on ["Goethe's 'Inebriated Fly,'" in *Tribute to Lotte Brand Philip: Art Historian and Detective* (1985), 77-81]. But Jean Paul is wonderful and I think I've read almost everything by him and about him. There's a book on him which I read once a year just to refresh my mind. Once

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in a while I meet a German who says, "Yes, Jean Paul means something to me." Panofsky discovered Jean Paul and quoted him verbatim. His landscape descriptions are unbelievably beautiful. Panofsky was a man with whom I could talk about literature endlessly, and I learned from him, although he had an enthusiasm for Goethe which I didn't share.

SMITH: Could you tell me how you came to meet Panofsky.

HECKSCHER: Well, I was a painter and I was always limping behind with commissions because I took too long, usually two months on one portrait. I was commissioned to paint the portrait of the director of the Kunsthalle museum in Hamburg, Gustav Pauli. He was the man who got young Panofsky into Hamburg University. Pauli and I became very good friends, and I learned a great deal from him. He was an excellent art historian, who had written a very beautiful book on Dürer. Once, while I was painting Pauli's portrait, a Jewish man with huge eyes came into the room. He took no notice of me, except that he looked with disgust at my easel and what I was painting there, and he and Pauli talked about art history. I said to myself, "This is religion. This is heavenly." When Panofsky left the office I said, "Who was that," and Pauli said, "Der grosse Panofsky." I said, "I've never heard his name. Where does he hang out?" Pauli said, "In the basement of the museum." So I said, "Forgive me if I leave."

I went to the basement and there was Professor Erwin Panofsky. I

University and he is a Jew." Well, Panofsky himself was Jewish, but he could be very anti-Semitic. He said, "This dean hates communists, so he may block you. I have made an appointment for you to see him this evening at ten o'clock."

Well, it was a rainy Hamburgian night and I went at ten o'clock and rang the doorbell. The dean himself opened the door and said, "Keine Hoffnung"—No hope. I put my foot in the door, and he went back to his office. I stood in the vestibule, which was dark, and I could see him writing notices and things. Then God intervened and the doorbell rang. Fuming, he said, "Why don't you open the door?" I opened the door and there was a bedraggled man who was completely rained through—drip, drip, drip. He had no raincoat. He was delivering a parcel with a note. I gave the note to the dean and he said, "Give him ten marks." Luckily I had ten marks in my raincoat. The dean said, "Why don't you put the box on my table?" When I lifted it, water came running out. He said, "Spread newspapers!" So I spread newspapers. He said, "Get it out." In the box was a dead baby. A little naked dead child. He said, "Explain it to me." I explained the anatomy in Latin, because he didn't know that the second in command used me to illustrate an anatomical atlas he prepared. I was working with corpses all the time and drawing them. I could eat my lunch looking at all these parts of bodies lying there and smelling a little bit. So the baby was fine,

and as I told him about every detail with the right Latin term. I said to myself, "He is signing my document." So the fact that the baby appeared on the scene is why you and I are sitting at this table. If the baby hadn't been there he would have said, "No chance." Isn't that interesting?

So I went jubilant to Panofsky. Panofsky was young and acerbic, you know, he could be very sharp. He said, "Well, what do we do with you now?" I asked if he would allow me to attend his seminar, and he said, "No. Impossible." I told him I would sit in the last row and say nothing, and he said, "Maul halten!"—Keep your snout shut. Very crude German. I said, "Would you allow me to give a report?" He said, "You heard me say shut up. I don't want you to talk." I said, "Ten minutes." He said, "Eight." I fought a great victory.

I prepared myself in four weeks with the help of my sister. I had made a discovery. A painting from Dürer's time showed the painter from behind, sitting at an easel, and on his easel is a tabula rasa. On the tabula rasa is the sketch of a dog wearing a crown and a stole, holding a scepter. I found this picture in a Renaissance book on hieroglyphics, and I could explain the painting by saying the dog was the emperor. I could quote a Latin text, which I then translated into German. Behind the artist stands the emperor, Maximilian I, putting his hand on the shoulder of the artist, which of course is a sign of great benevolence. I rehearsed it and rehearsed it with Lottie: "Do not make it seven minutes, do not

make it nine minutes. Make it eight minutes." The room in which I gave my report was dark of course, and I had my flashlight on this one picture and then the text of Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica*, which was the source I used. After eight minutes I stopped. Then Panofsky said, "Is that all?" This was typical Panofsky. So I wrote an article—the German title is "Ist das Alles?"—which describes [this scene]. Panofsky began to like me and said, "I'm going to New York and I wish you could come along as my assistant." Now an assistant was something tremendous. Everybody was younger than I was, but longer in art history, and here a novice was assisting. So I went at my own expense in 1932.

SMITH: Oh, when he was at the Institute for Advanced Study?

HECKSCHER: No, this was before Hitler. At this time Panofsky was still a tenured professor in Hamburg and everything was fine, but while we were in New York 1933 came and he was dismissed telegraphically, at Easter. He and I had a wonderful time together. We spent weekends walking on the off side of the Hudson River and we were translating Shakespeare's sonnets into German. We didn't even have the text. Panofsky knew them by heart, every sonnet.

SMITH: He knew the English by heart?

HECKSCHER: Yes. Then he fell in love with a beautiful German girl, whom I didn't like, but we went as three. We took the ferry to Staten Island, and on the ferry there was an Italian harp player. He sang Italian songs badly, so Panofsky

probably seen. I didn't draw him with his eyeglasses, so he said, "I look like Erasmus." This pleased him endlessly.

SMITH: You said that listening to him and Pauli talk about art history was like listening to religion. Why was that?

HECKSCHER: It sounded like religion to me, like something on a very high spiritual level.

SMITH: Were they talking about Dürer, or does it matter what they were talking about?

HECKSCHER: It didn't really matter. No, I couldn't say with certainty what they were talking about. Panofsky then had to examine me, and he told me exactly what questions he would ask me. I had weeks of preparation, which didn't make it much easier. But in this one year I learned to read. My brother was a law student and had a legal degree. He was a judge before he left Germany—something a little bit better than in America. You are appointed by judges; you are not appointed politically. Here, a judge in the Supreme Court is somebody who is appointed by a president. Shameless. It's unbelievable to me, a scandal. This country should have a chancellor. It should have a chancellor who is above the president and under guarantee, unpolitical. It should be a gentleman, a cultured man. At present, Germany has [Richard] Weizsäcker as a chancellor. [Helmut] Kohl is a nonentity, a horrible man, and Weizsäcker is this

civilized man who is not politically left or right or anything.

Are you Catholic? No. This horrible Cardinal O'Connor. O'Connor was sick in the hospital and I wrote him a letter. I said, "Dear Cardinal O'Connor, It is with great grief that I hear that you are ill. I wish you a quick recovery and a time where you will look at your own sinful existence for which the good Lord has put you into this hospital." I wrote him the letter he would have written to me. He is a criminal . . . this shooting at abortion doctors. I am against abortion as a philosophical attitude. A Princeton student came to me, a pregnant girl, and said, "What do I do?" I said, "Carry your baby and be happy ever after. You have enough money and you have a lover who is okay." But it is not the pope's business. What has the pope to do with abortion and pregnancy? The scoundrel. This Cardinal O'Connor eggs people on. A priest had the impudence to say, "Kill an abortion doctor and you'll save a million lives." The pope knows nothing about Scholasticism, and he doesn't know the first thing about abortion.

Thomas Aquinas defines a fetus as *homo in posse*—potentially a human being. The pope doesn't know these things. He kisses the tarmac, which is filthy anyway, and he doesn't know that his foot, with which he touches the earth, is the most sinful of all the parts of the human body. When Adam and Eve are expelled from paradise they step with their bare feet on thorns and thistles—*spinae et tribuli* in the Vulgate—and that is their punishment. This is

why, throughout the Middle Ages, the little thorn-pulling boy sat on a high column outside the window of the pope's Lateran palace, and the pope leaned out of the window and said, "Beloved pilgrims, look at this sinful creature who is punished for his fleshly sins." I heard this not from the pope, but from a 1200 A.D. description of Rome where Master Gregory from Canterbury writes to the Canterbury colleagues and gives a report where he says, "I also saw this utterly sinful boy who looks at a wound in his foot, but if you look closer it is his genitals, which are of enormous size." It is interesting that the Middle Ages saw the thorn as this sinful thing. I can contrast this with reports when the statues shifted to the Capitoline Museum, and suddenly it is the most beautiful thing on earth. This is the difference between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in looking at classical art.

So the pope knows nothing and is a terrible scoundrel. I was sad when he was hit by a crazy man. I wish everybody well, but I think so much devilish stuff comes from the Vatican, which had slaves long after slavery was abolished in America. They had slave girls who were Russian and they were all called *margarita*—my pearl, you know. The Vatican carried out executions of the most cruel kind. A man whose name I now forget stole relics. His arms were cut off and nailed against a door of the Lateran palace of the pope to teach people a lesson; this was Vatican policy. A priest was on his way to the Vatican and

somebody came with a dagger and pushed it into his heart. As he lay dying, people from a village came to help him in his bleeding misery. He got the dagger out of his wound, looked at it and his last words were, "Agnosco stilum Curiae Romanae." This is a pun. He could see that this was a dagger from the Curia of Rome—the Vatican—but he also recognized in it the style in which the Vatican kills people. I know the Vatican in and out because I was in touch with the Dutch diplomats in Rome and I met some of the horrible people there—financial scoundrels. Why should I not say what I think at times? I don't want to be tortured again, you know, for observing things.

SMITH: For observing things?

HECKSCHER: Well, I have a feeling that religion is for the mentally poor, but theology is holy to me. If I see a Gothic church, hear a medieval hymn, or I read Thomas Aquinas, I'm full of admiration. There's nothing more beautiful or elevating than these things, but I don't like this kind of fiendish, political religion—fundamentalists who misuse their religion to influence people, and to murder. No.

I am interested in many things, which is not tearing me into shreds. I think everybody should be aware of what's going on, but in my mind I'm really more at home in the sixteenth century than in this century. If you read about the sixteenth century, you find that life was just as hellish as it is now. With the

split between Protestants and Catholics and so on, life was forever endangered.

But in contrast to the sixteenth century, this century has no great personalities, no great artists. We have nothing to compare with Raphael or Michelangelo.

SMITH: I thought you didn't like Raphael.

HECKSCHER: I can't worship him, but he is a phenomenon worth looking at.

There are other people of course, mannerists in the second half of the sixteenth century. Let's look at politics. At the beginning of the twentieth century you had Rockefeller, you had Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, who was a civilized man who wrote beautiful poetry in French. You got interesting phenomena all the time, but now, the second half of the century is just dry as dust.

SMITH: But you can be a great poet like Ezra Pound and be an evil man.

HECKSCHER: Yes. There is a great German poetess, [Margot] Scharpenberg, and no German knows her. She comes here to visit me in Princeton and reads her poetry to me and Roxanne, who knows a little bit of German. She has a house in Cologne and an apartment in New York and whenever she comes here she invites herself to Princeton and reads her poetry to me. I'm writing an article on her now. She writes a very strange kind of poetry on works of art. She wrote a wonderful poem on Dürer's *Melencolia*. A friend of mine, a former coprisoner, Ulrich Goldsmith, is translating it into English—he's a wonderful man—and I want him to publish it jointly with me. I'll write a commentary to it,

describing her and the place she holds in German poetry. Ulrich Goldsmith is a comparative history of literature person. He knows Greek and Latin, but his special field is French and German, and Stefan George. He is not a George disciple but he has published on George. He is younger than me—everybody is younger than me—but he is rich. He has a herd of fifty llamas in Colorado—just for fun. All this is quite a help, isn't it? It's a little bit confusing, maybe. It makes sense to me. I mean, why shouldn't I be open to the world as is? I'm not an idealist.

SMITH: You're not?

HECKSCHER: No, no, that is cheap.

SMITH: Do you mean that philosophically?

HECKSCHER: Yes, philosophically. I don't want to see the world improved, I am a watchdog; I want to analyze and describe it. I look at whatever happens now. If Clinton opens his mouth I say, "This is history in the making." Another coprisoner, Martin Ostwald, is probably one of the best American Greek scholars, and one of his special fields is Greek history. I said to him, "In Greek history you are so lucky. In contrast to the present time, history as it happened then wasn't faked immediately. Today, whatever happens is fraudulent; whatever pronouncement you hear from the White House you can under guarantee say, 'It ain't quite so.'" But Martin said, "That's what *you* think. It has never been

different; there's always somebody who doctors history as it happens." You know, it's human nature. My Greek is awful, but he helps me.

SMITH: And your Hebrew?

HECKSCHER: I am deeply ashamed. I could have taken Hebrew in Holland, you know. All my friends had Hebrew. In other words, they were *homines trilingues*, which means, in the Renaissance, in the sixteenth century, if you wanted to account for anything you had to know Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; this trinity was holy. I missed it, but I have an assistant who is at home in French and Hebrew, so that helps me a great deal. No, I would love to know Hebrew, and I would love to know Aramaic.

SMITH: Aramaic?

HECKSCHER: Yes, the language of Jesus. I've seen examples of his sayings turned into Aramaic and suddenly they look quite different. *[Christ at the cross exclaims, "Oh my Lord, why hast Thou forsaken me?" In Aramaic: "Oh my Lord, is this what Thou hast destined for me?"] I'm rewriting Genesis. Did you know that?

SMITH: No, I didn't.

HECKSCHER: God creates Eve first, of course. Genesis is nonsense, but God creates Eve, and admittedly he does a beautiful job—even you must admit. Then

*Heckscher added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

he's terribly exhausted and he creates out of the rib of Eve, Adam, and everything goes wrong. The clitoris turns a little larger and has a double function; it's the urethra also. He puts nipples on a man—why nipples, you might ask. God in his stupidity hadn't thought of this; it's pointless. I can go on and on and on redoing Genesis. But I am on my knees worshipping the book of Job. That is heavenly, heavenly writing. In the speeches of his advisers and friends, and his own, you realize one thing: God has one companion and that is Satan. He summons Satan into heaven and he says, "Give Job all kinds of illnesses, but don't kill him; I want to go on torturing him." This is a typical divine decision, you know? The book of Job is incredible, incredible; it's as good as Shakespeare. That is the highest praise. It is like late Shakespeare—*The Tempest*, or something like that.

I've only once set foot in a synagogue, when I was sightseeing. I've never gone to a church voluntarily except once in a while to hear music and once when a very nice friend of ours died. She was very religious, so Roxanne and I went hand in hand to the church service. It was a horrible sermon, but her husband talked beautifully and unexpectedly, you know, and it was then that I sort of discovered him. But she died, like everybody, in my arms. I visited her at the hospital, and she was in the last stage—she still recognized me but she was going. I'm against death, you know. I've no patience with it, it's a horrible

invention. Anita Schorsch is a woman who is starting a whole group on death, —death and the human soul. I wish you could meet her someday.

SMITH: She's the woman with the Museum of Mourning?

HECKSCHER: Yes, the Museum of Mourning. She's madly gifted, madly gifted. She's young and she has a very clever husband. She is affluent, and she uses her money in such a wonderful way. Who thinks of starting a museum? This group, which is now shaping up a little bit, consists of very clever people who want to do something about this death business. I said I would keep out of it, but I will be an adviser. You know, the whole tradition of dying changes of course, historically. Is that a cat sound?

SMITH: No, it sounds like somebody is walking around.

HECKSCHER: I hear that, yes, but she makes funny sounds, the cat. She hates men. If there's a male voice she ducks away—she hates me. Is it time to go to bed?

SMITH: I think so.

HECKSCHER: Oh, it is after midnight!

SESSION TWO: 17 SEPTEMBER, 1993

[Tape III, Side One]

HECKSCHER: Can I say one thing about myself?

SMITH: Yes.

HECKSCHER: My first wife [Mary Dixon Leitch] said, "William will always speak the truth and almost always succeed in making it sound like a lie," and that applies to our interviews, you know? You may say, "Ooh, can that be true?" I may make mistakes, but I try not to alter. I try to embellish what I say of course. But do start, please.

SMITH: Okay. I wanted to get into a discussion of Panofsky in Germany, and what he was like as a teacher, as a person. Hugo Buchthal presented a rather stern, forbidding kind of portrait.

HECKSCHER: Well, you see Buchthal and I are, as you know, very different people. He is very solemn, and he had a limited sense of humor, if I may say so without being critical or condemning. He was very stifled and he took things extremely seriously. I always made it a point to offend him whenever I could, and I must have said terrible things to him, but our friendship was not too much shaken by it.

The young Panofsky was of course very different from the old Panofsky. He was acerbic; he could be very biting. I mentioned his anti-Semitic remarks,

and his fury at any non-Jew who made an anti-Semitic remark. He was a complicated human being. At an early stage I had a sort of awareness of egogenesis, you know, somebody who suddenly crystallizes past the age of twenty-five. Panofsky didn't fit into this pattern; he was a wise child in the uterus. As a schoolboy in the Joachimsthalsche Gymnasium in Berlin, he studied Italian just for fun. He knew Dante's *Divine Comedy* by heart, and he never exaggerated these things because I could test him and it was absolutely true. Panofsky was a genius and his development was personal, of course. He had a kind of legend he created about himself, about which Roxanne can tell you quite a bit, that he came from a very distinguished rich family in Silesia and that his ancestors had installed the first steam engine on German soil; this may be true. He had money, and of course like every German he lost his money in the inflation. He had planned never to teach but maybe to be attached to a university or to a university library. When the inflation hit him, like everybody else he had to get a job.

Panofsky came to Hamburg around 1920, when the university was founded. Hamburg had no university before then. In 1920 the senate of Hamburg consulted various people, among them Aby Warburg, who was asked to give a verdict on the need of Hamburg to have a university. He used only three words and then clammed up. He said, "Bildung schadet nichts"—Culture does no

harm. That was all, but very impressive of course—who could coin such a wonderful saying? Gustav Pauli of the Kunsthalle museum in Hamburg, whom I mentioned yesterday, was asked who he thought would be suitable as a professor and he said, "There's Erwin Panofsky, who is a genius." So Panofsky was made a *Privatdozent*, which is a very lowly thing, but they somehow managed to pay him. Normally a *Privatdozent* is simply a well-to-do young person, male or female, who teaches, but who doesn't have professorial status or tenure.

Panofsky was there at this early stage when Edgar Wind came into the picture. Edgar Wind already had a degree in something and came to Hamburg to get a Ph.D. He and Panofsky were good friends, and they went hand in hand to the Hamburg University for Wind's oral Ph.D. examination. They said good-bye to each other at the door and went in separately, to symbolize that they had absolutely no contact with each other. Wind was very paranoid. He possessed a persecution mania to the extreme, but he was brilliant, and an incredibly wonderful man . . . these towering giants. As a student, it was very interesting to see them confronting each other. To get an impression of young Panofsky, in his forties I would say, you would have to see him against Wind, against Charles de Tolnay, and [Werner] Burmeister. He was extremely sensitive of his rank and his position. He wanted to be on the mount of Olympus, you know, looking down on everyone. Wind puzzled him throughout his life. I worshipped Wind

and I made no secret of it.

The Warburg house was for tax reasons associated with Hamburg University, so we could study there and read there and use Warburg's incredible, hundred-thousand-volume library of just the right iconological works. Wind gave a lecture there, and his lecture was extremely learned. He didn't have very many quotations, but he had a little piece of white paper from which he read when he did quote. After his lecture I rushed to his lectern and got hold of that piece of paper; it was blank. I went up to Wind and said, "What the hell is this?" He said, "Look, if I didn't pretend I was reading it I would detract the attention of the audience." He was perfect. He didn't need notes; everything was in his brain. I don't know that universities have such professors any more.

Panofsky could be very bitter, he could be very cutting, and he was very unsure of himself in many ways, and yet we worshipped him. After he gave a lecture, he had a special exit from his podium. He didn't go out with the ugly crowd, but he had this special exit, and there stood all his students, who immediately engaged him in discussions and asked questions. He was wonderful. If we went on talking, talking, and listening, listening, he would check his watch and say, "I have to go home." And we would say, "We'll come along!" So we invaded his home and Dora [Panofsky] had a meal for twenty ready. We simply stayed with them and then after dinner we went out to an amusement place.

Hamburg has a section called St. Pauli, which is near the harbor, cobblestoned and very old, adjacent to Altona. We went to a hippodrome, where there were horses. We would sit, elevated, drinking coffee or having a beer or something like that, and the horses had prostitutes riding them, without underpants, doing strange things. The horses begged for beer, and people had little bowls specially made for the horses and they drank the beer. So the horses were drunk—teetering, tottering. It was very funny.

Dora Panofsky always made a beeline for prostitutes and had philosophical discussions about life with them, and Panofsky and we students talked about iconology. It simply went on and on and on. We were insatiable. There was none of this professorial attitude, "My God, I have no time!" Panofsky always said, "Come along, come along," so we were all on a level of inspiration which was shared by everybody. Then he would go home, let's say at two or three o'clock in the morning, and we would take a swim in the river, go to a little restaurant which was still open, then we would go home, take a shower, and rush for the first lecture again. I'm not exaggerating this image.

We were about fifty-fifty male and female—wonderful, intelligent females. There was Lotte Brand Philip, who survived Panofsky's presence and who was very Jewish. She got into a fight with [Eugen] von Mercklin, who was an archaeologist and a nasty Nazi. Even in pre-Hitler times you would define him

as a nasty bit of work, and Lotte made a horrible mistake. She wanted to see him, so she went to his office and knocked on the door. He didn't say, "Come in," or anything, but she went in anyway, and he was lying naked with his assistant on a table, working away. When he saw Lotte, he summoned her and said, "You have to leave Hamburg University." He was a Nazi, and this was under Hitler, you know, so this meant of course that her career in Hamburg was ended. So we had a meeting, student friends of hers, and we said, "You simply have to go to him and apologize humbly and say, 'Please let me stay.'" She went in and found the same scene! [laughter] So she went to Freiburg, in southern Germany, where there was a professor [Kurt] Bauch in art history, and Bauch was a Nazi before anybody else. I said to myself, "Oh my God, the stupid girl!" It turned out that Bauch gave her a Ph.D. and protected her. You know, history does not operate according to common sense; this is one of my profound pearls of wisdom. If you approach history with common sense, you are bound to make horrible blunders and overlook very interesting things.

Bauch arranged it in such a way that Lotte could live in Altona, which was in Prussia at the time, next to Hamburg. One day, she was arrested by a high officer in the gestapo and taken to a station and put in a first-class compartment of a train which took her to Russia. A member of the staff of the German embassy in Moscow guided her into a posh hotel and paid all her bills

and then put her on a train with first-class sleeping quarters, which went to Vladivostok. There she had enough money to cross over to Japan, and from Japan she went to America and was safe. You know, these things are very interesting to me. I met her at an art history meeting in New York and I said, "Lotte, my God, where have you been?" She told me this incredible story. She was an art designer in a fake jewelry shop and desperately wanted an art history job, which she got. She turned into one of the great art historians in the iconological style.

So Panofsky produced a variety of students, but he never dictated to them, "Do this, do that." We were left free, which could have meant great tension and anxieties, but of course we handed him a manuscript and said, "Would you please read this. Is it maybe possible to turn this into a dissertation?" He would look at you with his huge eyes and say, "Ist es interessant?" That was a steady phrase. This impressed everybody. In other words, art history writing had to be *interessant*, otherwise it was worthless. It couldn't be dry scholarship, no.

SMITH: But interesting to whom?

HECKSCHER: Well, to Panofsky himself of course, which meant on a very high level.

SMITH: Who was the public for iconological study?

HECKSCHER: It was of course a wave which increased tremendously in his

own time, and when he hit America he was Mr. Iconology. Since I was his assistant in 1932, when he was still a full professor and head of the department in Hamburg, I enrolled in NYU [New York University] when he was a guest professor there. He exerted immense influence on younger and older generations of Americans. What struck Panofsky and affected him deeply was that he had to lecture in English. He said, "Wir werden nicht Deutsch sprechen. Let's not speak German because then I get confused." So we conversed in English. My English was not terribly fluent, but I could understand his motive for it.

We discovered, just looking at the art history staff of NYU, that there were people who did enormously important intelligent work of which nobody in Europe knew anything, because the Americans didn't have this feeling that they had to advertise their knowledge. There was Elizabeth Sunderland, who excavated Gothic churches in France and found Romanesque remains underneath. She had "rue Sunderland" in one place named after her. She got a high order from the French government, and she was on my staff when I was head of the art department at Duke. She was treated badly because she was a habitual drinker. She came at times drunk, tottering, into her classes, and students came to me to complain. I said, "Don't criticize her, but be happy you are in the presence of a great scholar. Get her vibrations when she is a little sober." She was demoted and she never got a rank, and then it turned out she was one of the richest

women in America—United Fruit Lines. The idiots in the university didn't see this. I talked to the dean and said, "Use your brain for once." [He said,] "Bill, you are offensive." [laughter]

Panofsky had close personal relationships to all his students, but he was difficult to reach emotionally or personally. He fell in love with a Hungarian girl, and we admired this greatly. Of course we worshipped his wife, Dora, and she became one of my closest friends. She was quite beautiful and she had been a close friend of my aunt Martha. The two had been doing social work in Berlin, with its poverty-stricken households and people. Pan was a great connoisseur of food, and being with him—and this I think never changed—was always *interessant*. He was always scintillating with ideas. When he was older and when we were in his home and he had guests, if there was a word or a concept or a problem for which one didn't have an answer, he left and went to his reference library—he had a very good, yet astonishingly small reference library. Panofsky never purchased books, as far as I know; he got them from authors. I gave him a few books, which Gerda [Panofsky] now has of course. Do you know her?

SMITH: No, no I don't.

HECKSCHER: You should probably meet her. Dora died when she was eighty-two. She was very ill with heart trouble since she was fifty-nine. That is very

important to know because it kept Panofsky at home, and he was a wonderful husband. He was maybe adulterous but, *pourquoi pas?* But in every crisis he was there and looked after her and did the right thing. Until the age of fifty-nine she was a spoiled, Jewish, Berlinian brat. Her father was the publisher of the biggest newspaper, on the level of [Rupert] Murdoch in the United States. Dora had an operation for high blood pressure—which is no longer done—in Boston. The operation misfired and she was totally destroyed, physically. She lost sight in one eye. When she came back to Princeton she was in a profound, understandable depression and destroyed all her poetry, which was excellent. Luckily I kept a few copies of her poems.

She wrote an article which appeared when she was sixty. I walked down a street in London and ran into [E. H.] Gombrich, and I said, "I have just read the most important article of this century in art history." He said, "I know, I agree." That was Dora Panofsky's first article, written at fifty-nine, published when she was sixty. From sixty till eighty-two—and this is important for Panofsky—there wasn't a year where she didn't publish either an article or book which shook the art-historical world. She wrote a book jointly with Panofsky, but she was totally independent of him in her method, approach, and interests. So this speaks for him too, you know? Of course he overshadowed her and in this shadow she often had a poisonous tongue. She would always criticize him in

the presence of guests—she was right and he was wrong—and it was wonderful to see how he winced and finally yielded to her arguments. But in those fifty-nine years of her life she had developed a tremendous art-historical knowledge, and suddenly the sluice gates opened through the trauma of this operation, and Boom! there came this proliferation of things. Gerda came into the picture very shortly after Dora died. She came to Panofsky with a bunch of flowers and they sealed their love and got quickly married. She was very wonderful.

I nursed Panofsky when he was dying; I gave him enemas and did everything. My trick when I am with a dying person is I make them drunk with champagne. I did this to Panofsky. He loved caviar and I had very beautiful toast and caviar and champagne, so he was *in dulci júbilo*. He asked for certain things he wanted to read, one was a German Luther Bible. It had nothing to do with religion, it was simply that he wanted to look up certain things. The Luther Bible is so important for the German language because it is the founding of High German. Luther and maybe Dürer in his writing developed a German which you can say was the birth of High German. Panofsky also wanted the Grimm fairy tales. Gerda said to me, "Wilhelm, promise you will never divulge this fact." I said I would tell everybody. It is too important, because the Grimm fairy tales are laden with iconology. He had a stroke when I phoned him. I had come to Princeton to see him and I phoned from a hotel, and suddenly he stopped talking

and then Gerda came to the phone and said, "He just crashed down." So I rushed to his home, and the misery began. He had a heart attack when he was in New York and was very ill on the train to Princeton, and then the stroke came later, but his mind was still reasonable clear. I made him laugh, I told him funny stories, which he enjoyed. I knew his taste.

I could see a line in his biography from a very acerbic, very self-asserting man, which is probably a sign of being insecure, to a philosophical and a profoundly human man, you know, almost the opposite of acerbic. He was warmhearted, a concerned citizen about everything and everybody, and helpful and thoughtful. He had a black servant, Emma Green [later Emma Epps], a Princetonian, who was my great friend. When I came with my very young little daughters from Canada to Princeton, she looked after them. They screamed with fear and she said, "They've never seen a black face." Which was true! She was terribly nice. She was a wonderful *chef de cuisine*, which made her dear to Panofsky, and she sort of ruled the Panofsky household. Emma was one of the great personalities of Princeton.

It was so interesting how Panofsky constantly came in touch with members of the Institute for Advanced Study whom he nominated. The Institute changed so much; it is now bureaucratic and completely boring, and the professors are with few exceptions mediocre. There are always a few interesting

invitees, but they have a bureaucratic system of voting and negotiating on whom to invite. Panofsky simply said to me, "Come." Then [Abraham] Flexner, who was the founder of the Institute wrote to me and asked me if so many thousands of dollars would be enough to keep me afloat. Panofsky said to me when he left Germany, "If you get a Ph.D., I will guarantee you a job in the United States."

On September 21, 1936, I arrived in New York, and I had sixty-two books with me. The immigration officer said, "You have to sign this form twice." I said, "Mark twain?" But nobody laughed because the joke was lost—my first American joke! [laughter] Then a horrible individual came. He had spied on me and knew a greenhorn when he saw one, you know, and he said, "Do you need a car?" I said I would love to have a car. He said, "I'll sell you a Buick." I asked how much, and he said, "Nine dollars." I said to myself, "If America is so expensive, how can I ever hope to live here?" So I spent nine dollars and got a car. I put my sixty-two books in it and drove to Prospect Avenue in Princeton, where I was Panofsky's guest. He put me up for the first few nights and said, "No job." But I was made a member of the Institute. I was the first member in the historical school. Einstein had been there before and then Panofsky's sons were there, and they had been the first Jewish students accepted by Princeton University, which had excluded women and Jews. Negroes of course were out of the question. The boys were Panofsky's pride. Wolf

[Wolfgang] is still I think one of the greatest theoretical physicists. He was invited by Princeton University, and he said, "Hell, no. I have better jobs in California." Hans was a meteorologist and he made a terrible mistake. He married a beautiful girl who was deaf, or had hearing difficulties, and Pan hated ugly people and cripples. So he didn't accept her as a daughter-in-law.

SMITH: Simply because she was deaf?

HECKSCHER: Only because she was deaf, yes. She was beautiful, she was witty, she was enchanting, and Hans was one of my nicest friends. We were much in contact and I learned a great deal from him. But Pan could be very intolerant of ugliness and imperfections.

SMITH: Going back to Germany in '31, when you started as a student, do you know what Panofsky's ambitions were? Did he have an idea of establishing Hamburg as the center of art history and did he have clearly thought-out ideas about what he wanted to accomplish with his career?

HECKSCHER: In Germany you chose a professor, and Panofsky was one of the most desirable of the German professors at that time. He knew that, and it was obvious to everybody. People came, and he could not accept everybody of course, so it was a great honor to be his student. In America it doesn't work like that. You don't go to be a student of Professor so-and-so, you go because they have good cuisine or good this or good that or good foundation money. But we

paid for our education. It took Panofsky a long time before he got interested in the problems students had, but in America he was just divine in his openness to questions beleaguering people. So you get this amazing biographical change, and I think the contact with America was the great event. In Panofsky biography and criticism, there are people who say that the German Panofsky was the greater man. I just don't know. While he was in Germany he had incredible ideas, and he initiated iconology. The whole generation of iconology was muted during World War I, and then after World War I, suddenly, explosions took place. Emile Mâle in France wrote a study of iconology [*Iconologie*], and a Dutchman, [Jan H.] Hoogewerff, in Oslo, gave a lecture in French in which he defined the difference between *iconographie* and *iconologie*, and he did a beautiful job. I was his successor in Utrecht, so I had a great predecessor.

SMITH: Buchthal had mentioned that Panofsky guided him towards Byzantine studies, and he seemed to indicate that Panofsky was pushing his students into different directions.

HECKSCHER: I came to him as a student of old-master techniques, and I wanted to have a Ph.D. so I could be Mighty Mouse in a museum, restoring pictures. Then I came under his influence, and in art history I took on Terbrugghen, a Dutch Caravaggist. I spent a lot of money and I went to Copenhagen, which has Terbrugghens. I did quite a bit of research before I

found there was a rich young German who was also working on Terbrugghen, so I decided instead to study medieval and Renaissance aesthetic responses to Roman ruins.

SMITH: Was that topic your idea, or did it develop out of seminar discussions?

HECKSCHER: It was my idea, but of course it had to be approved by Panofsky. When Panofsky had left Germany, I had written to him and said, "I forbid you to enter German soil again." I knew too much about the dangers. He invited me to meet him in South Devon, and we lay at the seashore playing chess and reading my dissertation manuscript. He did an enormous amount of criticizing and changing and so on. So I had his blessings, in a way. Then, in 1936, he got an honorary doctoral degree at Utrecht—the first of endless honorary doctoral degrees—and he invited me, which meant that he paid for my trip, because one wasn't allowed to take German marks out of Germany. I stayed with a wonderful psychologist, a professor at Utrecht University. He was my host and he was a direct descendant of Charlemagne, if you can imagine that. He was married to a Jewish woman who was terribly nice, and they had nice children. I went to the Art Historical Institute at Utrecht University and I talked to [Willem] Vogelsang, a German-Dutch professor who was totally admirable until he turned into a Nazi. I said to Vogelsang, "I wish I'd studied here, too." I was very humble about it, but a few years later I was a professor there. So Panofsky got

his honorary degree and made a short but very beautiful speech. A man from Hamburg came, Baron von Uexküll, and he made an anti-Hitler speech, which was terribly risky, because he had to go back to Germany, but for some reason he survived. I sat in the train on the way back, first class of course, beside a German Hamburgian merchant, and I tried to find out what he thought about Jews. He said, "We all hate Jews, you too of course." I didn't nod, I didn't sigh, I was just a listener. Then he said, "But I don't allow anybody to criticize my Mosaic friends," which is like saying Jews, you know. There was this illogicality.

Then we arrived at the main station in Hamburg and the station was empty. There was porter number thirteen, who was a family porter. My father traveled every week to Berlin, and this porter was a friend, so I said to him, "What's happening?" He said, "Look to platform fifteen." I looked, and there was Hitler, stamping his feet in fury, surrounded by SS men. I found out that the Hamburgians had distributed leaflets saying, "Don't let this filthy dog enter your clean city." Hitler wanted to have a triumphant entry from the main station to the city hall, but he was whisked away, went up river by boat, and went through the back entrance, which was very humiliating. The North Germans were not like the Bavarians, who licked his heels. But Panofsky luckily was safe and I saw him there and I saw him in South Devon where I was his and Dora's guest.

When we played chess Panofsky could commit suicide if he lost, and I was very careful not to win. [laughter]

SMITH: How many seminars did you take from him in Germany?

HECKSCHER: Well, there was a seminar which he taught jointly with Fritz Saxl, which was an amazing thing. I remember a passage where I translated a Latin text into German and used the word *Schönheit*, beauty, and Saxl had a different interpretation. Panofsky said, "Heckscher is right, you, Saxl, are wrong." So Saxl and I were enemies, you know, because in Germany these things count. Instead of having just different views; this was very funny. I gave a beautiful report on Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, and then came a woman whose name I will not mention, who took my manuscript and borrowed it and copied it verbatim, including all my mistakes, and handed that in as a doctoral dissertation and got a Ph.D. under Saxl, which was revenge, for beauty, you know. So that was quite interesting, and it was interesting to see Panofsky with a colleague on the same level, disputing and evaluating, responding to reports; that was very interesting and rewarding to me.

SMITH: What was the focus of that seminar?

HECKSCHER: I can't remember. Probably iconology. It was a variety of topics from which we were free, more or less, to choose.

SMITH: And how did you come to choose Cesare Ripa?

HECKSCHER: Because the word *iconologia* of course was crucial, you know.

SMITH: Was it your idea?

HECKSCHER: Yes, this was my own idea. I submitted it to Panofsky and Saxl, the two giants. Saxl was a terribly interesting man. He was a specialist in Arabic and such things.

[Tape III, Side Two]

HECKSCHER: Gertrud Bing, who was director of the Warburg Institute in London, followed Saxl; she was his girlfriend, his mistress. They lived together and I visited them in their home. She had been the mistress of Aby Warburg first, so she was handed on. She was a wonderful woman. She and I spoke the same German. We came from North Germany, from Hamburg, so there was a sort of unity between us. You hear a certain melody in the intonation, and you know this is Hamburgian. Panofsky, when you asked him, "Where do you really come from?" would say of course, "Hannover, where the best German is spoken." But his German was Berlinian German. It couldn't be worse, and since I had Berlinian ancestors, I knew exactly what it sounded like.

SMITH: Could you talk a little bit about his work methods?

HECKSCHER: I watched him through the years and I was fascinated by everything he did and how he did it. He said, "I work like mad for four weeks, and then I have one little idea." This may have been mock humility, but he did

an enormous amount of work. He slept in the afternoon, after lunch, and when I was his assistant at the Institute for Advanced Study, I would report to his house and we would go into the woods behind the Institute and he would talk to me. He talked about whatever came to his mind, and I had three-by-five cards, and I wrote. Sometimes I fell down over roots of trees, you know, because you can't look where you're walking and write at the same time, and then he just stood there and waited impatiently for me to get up and go on with him. But he never made any remark about my note taking. Whenever I was at his house I wrote down every word he said.

SMITH: Did you keep those cards?

HECKSCHER: Yes, yes. I kept my notes and of course they were very useful when I wrote his biography for Princeton. Maybe I exaggerated, but I thought everything he said was of profound significance and importance; even his jokes were scholastic and significant.

SMITH: He wrote movie criticism and he was a fan of detective novels; were these subjects that he would discuss on a daily basis?

HECKSCHER: Well, when he wrote his article on movies, which was really a remarkable thing, I went with him on trips to show films. We hired a musician who played the piano—it was early movies, black and white naturally, but also without sound—and we had nice audiences. After the movie, Panofsky gave his

lecture. He had his favorite actors. He worshipped Harpo Marx. He said, "As a Jew, to me, Harpo Marx is one of the greatest." You know this kind of thing, half mockery and half sincerely felt.

He worshipped Einstein. I was Einstein's taxi driver when I was here in Princeton. I saw him often and wrote my article on him in Dutch, unfortunately ["Albert Einstein: Herinnering aan gesprekken." *Hollands Weekblad Tijdschrift voor Litteratuur en Politiek* 3, no. 127 (1961): 5-7; no. 128 (1961): 5-7], but I want to translate it.

Panofsky could tell beautiful jokes. I remember standing in front of the Institute for Advanced Study, and he told me a joke about Marius from Marseilles. Panofsky said, "Marseille has always been a Greek colony: phallic worship." I said, "What does that mean?" And he said, "Well, modern Marseilles has a hero who's called Marius and he's the incorporation of virility. Marius was sent to Paris for an endurance swim down the Seine, and of course he knew he would win, and lots of elderly Marseilles gentlemen with little pointed gray beards came—the committee to receive him at the end—and all the competitors. Marius swam naked down the Seine, and he was the last to arrive. One of the gentlemen said, 'What has happened Marius?' He said, 'Well, as you know it was a sunny day and it was a windy, and there were lots of girls on the banks of the Seine who didn't wear underpants and the wind raised their skirts. I

was slowed down.’ Another gentleman said, ‘Why didn’t you swim on your back?’ And Marius said, ‘Mais les ponts, monsieur, les ponts!’—The bridges, gentlemen, the bridges!" When I heard this I fell down in a flower bed laughing. Einstein was looking out of a window of the Institute and he said, "Heckscher has had an epileptic fit!" [laughter]

Panofsky and Kantorowicz greeted me when I came back from Holland at some point, and I said, "What is new?" They said there was a new development in psychoanalysis. You dream a dream, and if you are lucky you wake up with one word. I said, "Could you give me an example of such a psychoanalytical dream?" Panofsky said, "Well, you see in your dream a brick wall. You are in Paris, and there is a sign in French, ‘Ne pas uriner le long de cet mur’—Urinating along this wall is forbidden. There is a man urinating against the wall. I wake up and the word on my lips is pee king." Peking, the city in China, you know? Suddenly I knew my leg was being pulled. Kantorowicz had similar stories, which were very amusing.

So I mention these things only because there was this levity and this sense of fun, especially if it was linguistic. I’m raging mad that the stupid people now say Beijing. Why? It’s Peking. The whole joke collapses. Panofsky had a very fine linguistic feeling. He was a scholar of Greek. He did not know Russian, but Dora was fluent in Russian and she translated Russian texts on

iconology and iconography for him. Panofsky and I corresponded in English, and in 1960 he got a festschrift, and Millard Meiss and I were the editors. I was asked, since I was there, to take the first copy to Panofsky. You know this festschrift?

SMITH: I've seen it, yes.

HECKSCHER: I took it to Panofsky, and he talked about endless things and just looked at it once in a while without touching it. Then he walked away. He took the two volumes and I followed him to the kitchen and he put the volumes on the kitchen scale and weighed them—this was typical Panofsky, a sense of humor but also a strange curiosity. [laughter] Then he looked at the list of contributors and said, "Edgar Wind?" He thought they were deadly enemies and here was something in his honor by Edgar Wind. Then he offered me whiskey with milk. Have you ever drunk that? It's a marvelous drink. I don't drink, but I couldn't say no because we wanted to celebrate this and clink glasses over this festschrift. Of course he was profoundly touched, but he didn't like to show his emotions, so he did this weighing on the kitchen scales and such things. Then he came to the conclusion that the best article was by Rosalie Green. I had a heavy job; I translated a Dutch article which was rotten into much better English, and I contributed a beautiful article on the Grimm fairy tales, which I still like.

I think Panofsky had a profound feeling about the importance of truth.

Even if truth was painful, he would not withhold it. My resolution last year was never to lie unless it was unnecessary. [laughter] But this was Panofsky's great objection to Edgar Wind. He said, "He always lies." Now Edgar Wind wrote an article in German about truth and lying, which was anti-Plato. Plato of course was the first Nazi, as we all know—the interference of the state in the consciousness of citizens. It is a heavenly thing, this article. It contains a quotation from Oscar Wilde about the decay of lying. The decay of lying is one of the most profound philosophical discussions you will ever find between two homosexuals sitting in a garden in London, smoking cigarettes and talking about truth and Plato, and how important it is to lie. It is so beautifully formulated that I wrote about it in this article which has a German title but is written in English—"Ist das Alles?" [*Art Bulletin of Victoria* 28 (1987): 9–15] This was Panofsky's exclamation after my eight-minute report. I describe the decay of truth and the decay of lying, and I based myself on Edgar Wind. I think Panofsky was hypersensitive to the idea that Wind played with these concepts, you know, that there are honorable ways of being dishonest. * [Wind might refer to the beautiful Yiddish saying: "Ehrlich ist beschwerlich."]

Edgar Wind was the only Warburgian who was fluent in English. He had spent a long time in America, and he married a woman from Salem,

*Heckscher added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

Massachusetts, who was terribly nice. He divorced her, God knows why, and he married a very beautiful girl whom I only met once—a chance meeting in a museum in England—who is still alive. She and Betsy Sears are working on the *Nachlass* of Edgar Wind. You know that, maybe?

SMITH: You mentioned that off tape, yes.

HECKSCHER: Did I mention that? I'm sorry if I repeat myself, but you encouraged me not to be terrified of the possibility. It shows that I am honest.

[laughter]

SMITH: Did Panofsky involve his students in his work? Did he ask you to do research for him?

HECKSCHER: Oh, and how. And, my God, if I made a mistake I got hell, because he could copy it and his perfection would go to hell. I was his main assistant most of the time, I would say. Of course we became friends, and we *tutoyer*'ed each other in German and so on, but I still treated him as a German professor.

SMITH: In public, or only when you two were alone together?

HECKSCHER: In public he said, "Call me Pan." Pan-ofsky: Pan. I didn't care; it didn't make much difference. When I wrote to him, it was "Dear Pan" in my letters, as far as I can remember. Dieter Wuttke is publishing Panofsky's letters and Gerda has given her permission. Gerda can be very difficult. I

wanted to give a lecture at this memorial feast a year after Panofsky's death. I was asked by the university to be the speaker, and I wanted to talk about his method. I said to Gerda, "Will you give me permission to sit in his study?" I sat in his study and photographed endless things. Panofsky made beautiful copies of classical sculptures. Marvelous. I don't know where these things are because I can't go and look. But I was able to photograph these things—this was before Xerox time. Just before my lecture was due, Gerda said, "Ach, Wilhelm, I'd rather not." She withdrew her permission. Legally, according to American law, the estate has the right to deny using letters. If you write a letter to me, that letter is still your property. I can't use it, I can't quote from it, I can't publish it in any way. So I had to change my lecture. Luckily I had my three-by-five cards with records of what he had said, and these I massaged into a talk.

SMITH: Do you know what kind of relationship existed between Panofsky and Goldschmidt?

HECKSCHER: Adolph Goldschmidt, yes. I knew him very well. I tried to persuade him to stay in the United States, not go back to Switzerland, but he survived. He and Panofsky were on good terms.

SMITH: What about Goldschmidt's commitment to formal analysis? Their methods seem very much opposite. Goldschmidt has his students counting folds on ivory figures—a very quantitative and descriptive approach.

HECKSCHER: Well, Panofsky could be very tolerant. He could be very anti-Wölfflinesque, let's say, and then adjust his mind to the fact that [Heinrich] Wölfflin was a great person and a great scholar in his totally different approach. Goldschmidt, I don't know. I'm not sure I could contribute more to this.

SMITH: Did you read Goldschmidt in your seminars?

HECKSCHER: Of course we read everything, everything, like mad. It was only when he came to America that Panofsky published syllabi of literature which students at NYU should be aware of and read. He would always say, "I assume that you read everything." This approach was followed when I went to high school in Holland. The professor said, "You have to know everything. You have to build up your own bibliography; that's not my job, it's your job; that's how you learn."

I used to teach art history at the University of Iowa. I came early in the morning to get slides for my lectures and there was always a beautiful Danish girl with snow white arms. She put them around me and kissed me, without any exchange of words. She was one of my students and she got a B- for her term paper. The head of art history phoned me and said, "Dr. Heckscher, there is a complaint about you. Miss so-and-so complained that you have not paid enough attention to her." I said, "Dr. Harper, all I can say is she is a very gifted student, she deserves a B-, and I will never change anything. This is not a

matter of persuasion. If I am fond of a student and see her as a valuable person, I do bottle feeding; I refuse breast-feeding." That was the end of that.

Panofsky also refused breast-feeding, but he was extremely critical if you raised your voice and talked in his presence. You had to be mighty careful. You could be torpedoed by him. You were alerted and you were elevated. When I was in Europe and I couldn't see Panofsky, I was unhappy because I needed the tremendous stimulus of his presence and his profound attention to what went on and what could be said. He was of course deeply interested in everything that happened, politics and so on. He was invited to the White House to see Kennedy, and he said no, for philosophical reasons, so he wrote a letter declining the invitation. He didn't agree with Kennedy. So he was quite, quite brave.

SMITH: What about Wilhelm Pinder? How would you compare Panofsky to Pinder?

HECKSCHER: No, Pinder he did not evaluate. I know too little about Pinder. Werner Jaeger, who was like Pinder, wrote a book called *Paideia*, and Panofsky made jokes about the book which fascinated everybody. Jaeger was a Harvard professor and a teacher of Virginia Callahan. Panofsky could be very critical about his colleagues. [Hans] Liebeschütz is a name which is very important. Liebeschütz was a Jewish man whom I worshipped almost like Panofsky. He was very awkward, very shy, but he was just wonderful as a teacher. So

Panofsky really had a staff of geniuses, including Charles de Tolnay, who was the son of a rabbi. Edgar Wind was the son of a Romanian rabbi, but he was not a practicing Jewish person.

SMITH: Can you recall any details from your oral examination?

HECKSCHER: Panofsky was out of the picture and I had Heydenreich, who asked me about Rubens landscapes. You were put into a little room about a third the size of this one, with one door and no windows. Any professor in the faculty could come and ask you questions. So people banged in and asked me questions. Burmeister was the Gothic man and since my greatest interest was medieval Latin, I got a very good report on that. Then came a professor who was my medieval Latinist, and he came out of a concentration camp. This was under Hitler of course, 1935, pushing 1936. Hashagen was his name, and Hashagen had been seen dancing with a Jewish woman in Italy, so: lifelong concentration camp. This was the illogicality of life: he was allowed with a gestapo man to come into my little cell and examine me. The subject of our discussion was of course Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. Under Theodoric the Great, Boethius was declared a traitor and put into a prison, condemned to be tortured and killed—which is what happened—but during his time in prison he wrote five books called *Consolatio philosophiae*. Philosophy is a person who comes into his cell and argues with him, and this argument about prison and so on helped me

through my own prison times, you know—my eight prisons. I could constantly quote Boethius to myself. It was very moving to have a man who was going to die in a concentration camp questioning me about Boethius. It was a sort of farewell from this world. Hashagen didn't die; he survived. I sent him food parcels from America in the end. He was a grumpy, wonderful scholar. Do you know this book by Boethius?

SMITH: I know Boethius, yes. I've read the book.

HECKSCHER: He was certainly a Christian; it is an incredible work. To me, it is of such a high level because I see it against this Hashagen event and the concentration camps and my own prison times, and it was a consolation. It introduces in a wonderful way the Goddess Fortuna, so it is also full of iconological material.

SMITH: I wanted to ask you also about theoretical aspects of iconology and the kinds of discussions that you had in Hamburg, both formal and informal. What were the conceptions of history and historiographical practice that Panofsky and the rest of you in Hamburg entertained?

HECKSCHER: I think the essential thing was the interblending of picture and text. I was shocked when I consulted the Index of Christian Art at Princeton to find that handwritten inscriptions were not published by them. In the beginning I consulted Panofsky about which subjects I should choose. You had to have art

history, and then you had two side subjects, and I selected historical method in medieval times, and medieval Latin with Hashagen. As a student you took any course you wanted to, so I took a seminar with the philosopher Cassirer, and I took a seminar in Middle High German from a woman who was later killed on the way to a concentration camp. She was squeezed to death on a freight train.

SMITH: Do you remember her name?

HECKSCHER: It escapes at the moment, but she was a great person. Her name comes back: Agathe Lasch. I made a funny discovery. I concentrated on the Middle High German of the thirteenth century, *Minnelieder* and that sort of thing. Then at some point I went and saw a Shakespeare play in Yiddish, and I said to myself, "This is Middle High German. I can understand it." In later years I had a Jewish friend, a wonderful man, who taught me Yiddish. So I can read it but I can't speak it. I realized that historically the Jews were expelled from the Rhineland at the time of the Minnesinger in the thirteenth century and they took their Middle High German to Poland and added it to Polish and middle Russian and this and that, but essentially it is as Middle High German as the English spoken in the outer islands of North Carolina, where people still speak Shakespearean English. Did you know that? You've heard about it. I heard it with my own ears and I didn't believe it; it was like hearing the sonnets. Each village had a different Shakespearean intonation and accent. I was eleven years

in North Carolina and I always made a beeline for these outer banks.

Now I'm drifting on purpose. One of my favorite subjects is the history of sounds. What sounds do we still have? In the Lateran, the door of the baptistery makes music if you move it, and the music is the Greek tones. I didn't believe it until I went to the goon who stood at the door in uniform and I said, "Can you move the door?" He said, "Forbidden, forbidden, forbidden," so I gave him a thousand lire and he moved it, of course, for me and my Dutch students. That was very interesting.

I was in Copenhagen, and as I left the museum I suddenly heard flute music. I banged at the door. The museum had closed and a grumpy Dane opened it for me and I said, "Where is the music coming from?" There was a clock and it made beautiful flute music. I said, "Does it make only this one composition?" He said, "No, every hour a different one." So he let me hear the nine different compositions and the director came and said, "What the hell is happening here? You are not allowed to play this instrument." But of course I always bribe people, you know. Everybody is bribable. It was music composed by Haydn, and it was called a flute-clock—*Flötenuhr*.

So I want to collect all kinds of sounds of the past, where we can still hear them and get an impression of it. I had Panofsky's last public lecture recorded on a gramophone record, which, unfortunately, is [technically]

primitive. I don't know what happened to it; it is at Duke. He came to Duke with Gerda and he lectured and that was his last talk. I scolded him for accepting the order *Pour le Mérite* in Munich from a horrible man, Percy Ernst Schramm. Schramm wrote the most beautiful book on Rome. He was a wonderful scholar and he and I were friends in New York and went to Harlem to night clubs and had a divine time together. Then when Hitler came to power, Schramm's wife, who was German nobility, came to him to say, "You must join the Nazi party." I said, "*Finito*. I will never talk to you again." Now naturally, like most Nazis, he was elevated after the war, in Munich, and he distributed the order *Pour le Mérite*, which is the most prestigious civilian distinction you can get. Panofsky went there to receive it and said he was ashamed and I was right to scold him.

Henry, my brother, was a captain in the U.S. Army, and his job at one point was to interrogate prisoners after a battle. There was Percy Ernst Schramm, and when Henry introduced himself, Schramm said, "Are you the brother of Wilhelm Heckscher?" Henry said, "Yes, I am." And Schramm said, "Please send my kindest regards!" I said to Panofsky, "You shouldn't have gone into the claws of all these Nazis just for a little honorary degree. It's unnecessary, you don't need it." I got an honorary degree at McGill because I had taught prisoners and prepared them for McGill University. So I'm allowed to wear their necktie—no harm done, you know. But Panofsky's degree in

Utrecht was the first honorary degree he ever got. That of course was very much deserved.

SMITH: You said you took a seminar with Cassirer. How did you understand symbolic form? How was it relevant to your work?

HECKSCHER: At times, I must admit, I use terms and don't quite know what they mean. Cassirer was very lucid. He was very simple, very clear in what he said, and I think what fascinated me was the combination of letter and image.

[The understanding of] meaning-charged forms, I would say, is what I gathered from it. That's about all I can contribute.

SMITH: What about contemporary German scholarship. Were you discussing [Max] Weber or [Georg] Simmel?

HECKSCHER: Max Weber, yes.

SMITH: But did it influence art history?

HECKSCHER: It did not, no. You see, I got a doctorate in philosophy, but I can't claim any real knowledge of philosophy. I'm now studying philosophy by reading books on the history of philosophy, but I'm shamelessly ignorant.

SMITH: What about [Wilhelm] Dilthey? Some people argue that Dilthey's theories of learning were important for Panofsky's concept of *Erlebnis*.

HECKSCHER: Yes, I heard about it, but these are things which are really foreign territory to me.

SMITH: They weren't discussed in classes, then. And Panofsky, whom you spent a lot of time with, didn't bring up Dilthey?

HECKSCHER: No. Oh God, no. Panofsky taught art history and he really taught the art. He had wonderfully observant eyes. I learned from him how to look. As a copier of old masters I'd looked and used my eyes, but if you stare at one painting for three months of course you learn an enormous amount. I learned something from Panofsky which I passed on to my students. I had a Carnegie-Mellon [University] professorship at Pittsburgh, and I did something no one had ever done. I took my graduate students to New York, and we went to the Metropolitan Museum. I said, "We will now look at one picture for two hours, saying nothing." The students thought they would go insane. They started itching, they went to the bathroom and they came back and so on, and then we had a seminar-like discussion in a motel. It was the most elucidating thing that had ever happened to them.

When I wrote my book on Rembrandt's *Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp*, I sat for hours just staring, living in the picture, and I discovered things which nobody had seen. One man holds a piece of paper and there is a list of numbered names. I discovered that this list was made long after Rembrandt had died by a disciple of a disciple, and was probably correct. But underneath this list was an anatomical drawing, and I could find the atlas from which Rembrandt had copied

it; it was a sketch for the Tulp painting. Then I found out in which room this anatomy took place—it still exists, in Amsterdam.

I once went into the Metropolitan Museum to see a show and there was Irving Lavin, going from one picture to the other—ding, ding, ding. When I was at the Washington National Gallery, I said to the Director, Chuck [Charles] Parkhurst, "Chuck, I need a wheelchair for a sick person." I got a wheelchair and I sat in it looking at pictures. For hours I was in front of one picture, and I learned so much. I used a little flashlight which he gave me. I think I owe to Panofsky this intense method of looking at things.

Of course Panofsky did more than I would ever do with photographs. He had very good photographs and he had certain subjects, like the Flight into Egypt. That was a topic which he never really finished. Dora worked with him on it: the donkey and the boat and all these things. A whole evening could be spent looking at books on the flight by boat into Egypt—the holy family.

I miss Panofsky, which sounds sentimental but it's logical. You live by being inspired by somebody, and this is I think the secret of his didactic gifts, that he inspired people to increasing independence of him. If you look at a list of dissertations written under Panofsky you couldn't say, "Oh, this is typical Panofsky." He was extremely generous in accepting outrageous topics.

SMITH: I've heard it said in the course of this project, by several people, that

Panofsky did not leave a legacy. He did not develop a school that you can identify as the Panofsky tradition in art history.

HECKSCHER: Maybe he did more in America than in Europe, because here he converted people from boring subjects. But I don't want to minimize the American scholars in art history. They were incredible, and I mentioned one or two. There was Meyer Schapiro, who was my teacher in NYU. Enchanting.

[Tape IV, Side One]

HECKSCHER: Millard Meiss was Panofsky's successor and Panofsky was very fond of him. When Meiss was working on a topic in Paris, Panofsky happened to be there and wrote an article for him which made Meiss famous; this was Panofsky's generosity. Meiss was a wonderful creature.

SMITH: Were you aware of phenomenology and the work of [Edmund] Husserl or [Martin] Heidegger?

HECKSCHER: Yes but . . . negative, you know?

SMITH: Negative. Why so?

HECKSCHER: First of all, it didn't interest me terribly, and then Heidegger's reputation wasn't terribly good. We were very politically conscious. I learned one thing. You cannot befriend a communist or a National Socialist. My panic when I am in Germany and see older people is always, "Has he worked in a concentration camp?" I met the head of a concentration camp once. He took a

girlfriend away from me. She was half-Jewish and I said to him, "You know her racial background. I want you to promise me a holy oath that you will protect her whatever happens," and he did. She survived him and survived Hitler in the war. She was a Lepsius. Lepsius was a great name in Germany because old man [Karl Richard] Lepsius, flourishing around the middle of the nineteenth century, was Germany's greatest Egyptologist.

SMITH: If you didn't discuss much of contemporary philosophy, did you spend a lot of time discussing Renaissance philosophy and the Scholastics?

HECKSCHER: More than contemporary people.

SMITH: How far would you go? Did you discuss Leibniz or Kant or Hegel?

HECKSCHER: Panofsky of course knew so much more about philosophy than I did, and he made us read Marsilio Ficino by simply saying, "I take it for granted that you know Ficino." Then you sat at home reading like insane. We also read Michelangelo's poetry. Panofsky liked [Jacob] Burckhardt's Renaissance book [*Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*]. It's a very important book; a sort of school text I prescribed to all my Renaissance students. I was a medievalist and then I moved into the Renaissance gradually.

When I taught medieval art history at the University of Iowa, several of my students became Catholic through me. I wrote to the Vatican and I said, "I need a Bible inscribed by the pope." Well, I never got an answer of course, but

all my students had a Vulgate. I said, "You can't live without the Douay Version, the English version of the Vulgate." That is of course a Bible which art history is made of. The King James version of the Bible had no efficiency until a hundred years after it was published, and it certainly didn't reach artists, although Shakespeare apparently contributed to the King James version—the psalms.

SMITH: I have a few more questions on this line and then we could go eat and start a new topic when we get back. What about Aby Warburg? You said you had met him briefly, but he was a legend.

HECKSCHER: He was always there, and of course his principles were mostly in the arrangement of his books in the Warburg Library, which influenced me tremendously. He called it "the law of the good neighbor." I don't know if you know that term; that was a Warburgian term, and it always had a sort of witticism behind it. You look for a certain book and the book is of course out, on loan to a scholar, but you don't go away, because the books to the left and right are the "good neighbors" and they may be even more important. This can only happen in a Warburg-arranged library. If you work in the Warburg Library and you have a certain topic, you have a hundred books adjacent to the specific book you want, which deal with similar things, and that is the law of the good neighbor.

I applied this method in Iowa. Also at Duke I changed the library

completely and made all of the books "good neighbors," but then the librarian came and lectured me. I said, "Listen, I don't take lectures from an idiot." I was very offensive as a professor. But Iowa was better. There was only one president in my whole life whom I totally admired and he was the president of Iowa, [Virgil M.] Hancher. Heckscher and Hancher were good friends. He favored me in everything, and I had a wonderful librarian who pushed money my way and so I built up one of the most wonderful art-historical libraries in Iowa, and it still is very good. I've seen it recently. Duke was a rubbish university. I don't want to go into personalities because I could really dismantle them, strew them to the birds in little pieces. And yet, I need hardly say that in the Duke administration there were quite outstanding people. There was Terry Sanford, former governor of North Carolina and subsequently president of Duke. And nobody in my decades of academic experience equaled Mary Semans—a distinguished trustee of the university and once the mayor of Durham. She was a liberal in the best sense of the word and thereby a stabilizing factor, especially at times of unrest and diminished civility.

SMITH: Getting back to Aby Warburg, there has been some controversy over Gombrich's presentation and interpretation of him. Do you have anything to say about that?

HECKSCHER: I admire Gombrich and I think he's a wonderful person. He can

be so incredibly nice. He came to Princeton to give a lecture and Panofsky and everybody in the institute was convulsed, just to hear him, and I said, "I'm not going to his lecture." I did something else. At some point after his lecture I just ran into him on the campus, and he said, "I didn't see you in my audience." I said, "I didn't attend your lecture." He said, "Oh, I'm sorry to hear it." He put his satchel down and he got the lecture manuscript out of it and said, "Why don't you read it and then return it to me; it's the only manuscript of my lecture I have." I almost wept with emotion. He showed kindness instead of being huffy that I didn't come. But I don't think the Warburg book is the last word said about the subject.

SMITH: I was wondering how his presentation fit with the general collective memory of Warburg in Hamburg?

HECKSCHER: I had the feeling Gombrich was an outsider, you know, but a wonderful person.

SMITH: I wanted to ask you if you could compare Panofsky's iconological method with that of Hoogewerff and Mâle?

HECKSCHER: Hoogewerff was a very cultured man. He was the director of the Dutch Institute in Rome. After the war everybody trusted him and he ran every institute; he was a sort of mollifying person. When I came to Utrecht as his successor he accepted me and gave me a list of names. I said, "What does

this list mean?" He said, "These are people you must hate." Interesting, isn't it? Now I didn't use that list I can assure you. He was a fascinating person. He had been a sailor as a young man, on freight sailboats on the Baltic Sea, where he met his wife, some Scandinavian lady. He was a rebel, rebellious to the extreme, and this was why he had hate lists and this kind of thing, but he was totally admirable. When he died, I, as his successor, had to make a speech to the faculty. The president of the university and all the deans and everybody and I sat at the same table, and facing us was an easel; on it was a portrait of Hoogewerff with black ribbons around it, and I talked about it and made a humorous speech, and everybody laughed. You know, I hate the "great loss" type of speech; anybody can do that. I wanted to massage the figure of Hoogewerff in close relief. He was admirable, original, and very independent.

He and Emile Mâle were the great protagonists of iconography. The Germans and the French spent World War I debating where the Gothic had begun—in Germany or in France. Totally dry stuff. So there was this hiatus. To me a war is the worst thing that can hit a world. When I was a child my father said to me, "You are so lucky, you live, and will live, in a time of eternal peace." I was six years old and I said to him, "What about the Balkans? What about the war between Russia and Japan?" He said, "Those are not human beings." This illustrates the German view.

SMITH: Or the Western European, American view.

HECKSCHER: Also, yes. People like to be superior. People like to tell me that I should be grateful to be in America. I say it's the reverse. America should be grateful that I am here.

SMITH: In terms of your own work, and the work of other people doing iconological analysis, why is collage so important?

HECKSCHER: You mean, putting things into units?

SMITH: Yes.

HECKSCHER: Well, this is of course what attracts me into the realm of emblems. The Greek word *emblema* is "mosaic," you know.

SMITH: I didn't know that.

HECKSCHER: And *emblema* can be a composition of inserted little stones or insertions in wood and so on—anything inserted. For example, Shakespeare, our great dramatist, has plays within plays, which are silent, and they are called *embolium*, which is also like emblem. I have studied *intarsia*, which is an Arabic word incidentally, not Italian—it's Italianized Arabic—and I've studied the idea of insertions and I've found in the course of the sixteenth century more and more of what you call collages, tangibles as well as elements of text. You see, an emblem consists of three elements: a motto, a picture, and an epigram. It only makes sense if all three elements sing together, but the epigram doesn't explain

motto or picture. The motto must never be the title of the picture; if that is the title, then the emblem has gone to hell. Especially in the early sixteenth century, the emblem is a mosaic which poses a riddle—a riddle for the intelligent humanist mind. It is very clear that no clues are given; you have to find the solution yourself.

I'll give you an example. In the National Gallery in London, there is a picture called *The Ambassadors*, by Hans Holbein the Younger. Two ambassadors stand flanking a table. The table has a beautiful rug on it and on top of it lies a lute, a musical instrument. One string is broken and curled up. A very clever woman analyzing this picture said, "It means that the two gentlemen are discussing a very specific international agreement and one point of agreement was not adhered to, so the harmony was destroyed and the string was broken." If you go back three years earlier, [Andrea] Alciati has the emblem *Foedera*—"agreements" is the motto. You have a picture which shows a lute and one string is broken, and you have an epigram which says, "If you deviate from an agreement the harmony is destroyed, like a broken string." It makes it a little clearer. So you can say Alciati writes an emblem and Boom! Holbein makes a picture out of it. Then Holbein has a distortion on the bottom of the picture which if you see it sideways shapes into a skull, and a skull in German is a hollow bone—*Hohl-Bein*. So that's his name; that's his signature. You couldn't

be more emblematic or more collage-like than that. Everything sings a different tune or shows a disharmony and illustrates the topic of the discussion. Isn't that nice? That I think is what I find so extremely Panofskian about it.

Emblems and mottoes were *au fond* destroyed by the French Revolution, which destroyed almost everything spiritual and intellectual. That was one of the worst events on earth and one of the stupidest—beheading these nice royalties and the rise of the proletariat and so on. The result was that emblems were almost totally forgotten. Emblems had survived in the eighteenth century but in the nineteenth century they were really only used by nannies for little children, and among them there are such emblem books as those of [Francis] Quarles and others. Finally come two Englishmen who rediscover emblems. One was in Manchester and one was in Glasgow, Scotland. They collected cheap emblem books. They were still cheap in my time. I found a copy of Ripa's *Iconologia* that was less than two dollars. I said, "My god, how expensive." Now it is worth two thousand dollars, the same copy. I've never thought of investing in something which gains in value, but with the crazy inflation, emblem books are among the most expensive books you can buy. So there is a sort of revival of this interest.

I got pushed into emblems through Panofsky, although I wrote my first emblem article when I was just out of school, on the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*

of 1499, by a monk, Francesco Colonna. It has the reputation of being the most beautiful wood-cut illustrated book of the early period. The strangest thing is that you can still buy old copies of it for lots of money. If a book didn't sell in its own time, it's possible to still find it. If you want a schoolbook of the nineteenth century, that is almost impossible to get because they get used, but this book was untouched and exerted very little influence.

SMITH: What was it about that book that attracted you? Did it grow from your interest in Roman ruins?

HECKSCHER: It had a very difficult text. Francesco Colonna was the monk who wrote it. He added Arabic words and it had Italian and Latin mixed in a funny way, but I forced myself to read it because I planned to write on it and it was one of my dissertation topics. In 1932 when I came to New York, [Philip] Hofer was there, and he was the greatest book collector in America. He had a copy which had different typography, so I phoned him and said, "Can I visit you and look at your *Hypnerotomachia*?" He was grumpy but he said, "Okay, don't take too much of my time." I went to a very expensive apartment in Manhattan, and the doorman said, "Hello Mr. Heckscher," to me. I thought, "How nice, in a million dollar place they know me." I went up and Hofer was distraught and very grumpy, and left me all the time. I thought, "This is my chance to read all the letters on his desk," which I did. I looked at all the photographs and

suddenly I saw myself in an American World War I uniform. When Hofer came back I said, "Who is this?" He said, "It's my brother-in-law, my wife's brother. He died, he was killed in the First World War." His wife was pregnant, and he left me all the time because he was worried. She was close to giving birth to a child, and I was obviously a nuisance. So I looked at his *Hypnerotomachia* and was very grateful and of course we became the best friends in the world.

I stayed in his summer house in Maine, and his wife was indeed a Heckscher girl, you know; this was the reason for the similarity. Suddenly I discovered there were American Heckschers. I have a photograph of her and me sitting at the seashore in Maine, in profile, and we have the same funny long nose and short upper lip. Philip Hofer was the most useful man to me because he was head of the rare book library at Harvard, the Houghton Library, and I was like a child at home. I hadn't finished a book, which I needed desperately, and I came with my car to say good-bye, and he said, "Open your trunk," and he threw the book into my car. He didn't say, "Bring it back and be careful with it." He was a gentleman. I returned the book of course, and I had a wonderful time and a lot of scholarly help from Philip Hofer, the grumpiest man on earth . . . incredible, and so insulting. Panofsky knew him and he too liked him.

SMITH: I was curious about this research you did on the Pantheon and the perception of three-dimensionality research that you did for von Uexküll?

HECKSCHER: This goes back to my Hamburg days, the Nazi days. Baron von Uexküll taught a seminar on environment and what animals can see. He discovered that dogs and cats see no color. Red meat is not red in their vision and so on. I suggested to [H. W.] Janson that we give a talk in Uexküll's seminar, not on animals but on human beings and what they can see and can't see. So I did the talk and Janson did the footwork and I can't really say with a good conscience who got what. We came to the conclusion that the average, well-functioning human eye has certain limits beyond which three-dimensionality vanishes. The Pantheon was constructed in such a way that the coffered ceiling could still be seen as going in depth, you know, different distances from the eye, but anything more than thirty-nine meters away was unmanageable. After our lecture Janson and I were arrested by the gestapo and we were told, "One more lecture in which you quote Jewish authorities and it's the concentration camp; your life will be finished." This was a little warning. You always had students who were spies for the gestapo. That was university life in Hitler time.

Janson was such a wonderful, decent man. His brother was a famous Nazi, and his mother was a typical German widow: a broken reed dressed in black, mourning a husband who was gone long ago. She and her sister and her own mother were arrested by the gestapo because they had lived in Russia and had not acquired German nationality. So in a concentration camp old Mrs.

Janson, the grandmother, was beheaded. The two daughters had to stand to attention and watch the beheading of their own mother. Janson's mother was then shifted with her sister to a concentration camp in Poland, which was overrun by Russians. The Russians machine-gunned every prisoner. Janson's aunt was machine-gunned and killed, and Mrs. Janson shouted in Russian, "I'm Russian," or something like that, so she was arrested by the Russians and they said, "Can you cook?" Well, anybody can cook under those circumstances, but she was put into a machine gun company and she manned a machine gun and went fighting in a Russian uniform against the Germans and killed many of them. Then they crossed the Oder river, which was full of ice floes in the winter, and the machine gun boat capsized, but of course Mrs. Janson, who was the only survivor, swam ashore, was arrested by the Polish army, and spent a year in a prison where she was tortured and thrown down a stone staircase every morning before breakfast. She escaped.

She found herself on a battlefield with destroyed farmhouses. From one farmhouse chimney a little smoke came. She went in. There was a woman. She and the woman spent months, hungry, grubbing for a little food on this battlefield, hiding from the Poles, when a Red Cross jeep came. The Red Cross people said, "Are you doing this for fun?" They said, "No, no, no. We are trying to survive," and she gave Janson's address in Washington Square in New

York. I happened to be there as his guest when a phone call came from Europe. "Your mother is in a house on a battlefield. What do we do with her?" I phoned Henry, who was in the occupation army in Berlin, a captain in the U.S. Army, and he sent a Red Cross message to her: "Steal a row boat on the Spree River, drift into Berlin, and at such a place you will see a Negro sergeant with a jeep and he will get you." So she and her girlfriend found the Negro sergeant and were taken to Henry's house, where they had their first square meal. Henry said he watched. It was like two tigers eating, and then vomiting, of course.

She came to New York and told me the whole story; I heard it from her. How can you survive seeing your mother being beheaded? This illustrates war to me. She said, "I saw my life as a pearl necklace, and every moment of my life was one pearl. I didn't look at what preceded and I wasn't interested in what came after. This kept me sane and balanced." An amazing image, isn't it? So if you want to know what war means, or dictatorship, think of Mrs. Janson. She turned into a mighty creature, with muscles and all.

SMITH: Who were the students you were closest to?

HECKSCHER: Lise Lotte Möller was one. She later became the director of the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe—for art and applied arts—in Hamburg, which is next to the Kunsthalle. It's one of the very distinguished German museums, I would say. She was a woman from a farm in Schleswig-Holstein, which is very

Nordic, close to the Danish border. She and I very often correspond in Low German dialect, which is a completely different language from what you think. It has a completely different vocabulary, which I mastered, because when I was a child I learned to speak High German, Hamburgian city dialect, and Plattdeutsch, which is the language which has received cultural status as the only Netherlandish tongue in Holland. Dutch is a Low German dialect, and yet, even if you know Plattdeutsch, which is the Low German of the North—and there are all kinds of variations of the dialect—you don't automatically understand Dutch. It's the difference between Spanish and Portuguese. They are similar, but, oh God, you can make horrible mistakes, and similar sounding words very often have completely different meanings.

Lise Lotte and Janson and I became friends—we were a trinity. In 1936 we went to Berlin. Lise Lotte was the driver, she had a car, and she drove us to my uncle's garden farm. This was the Olympic year in which a Negro from America won as the fastest runner and the Germans were terribly depressed because racially this was against their rules of course. It was a dangerous year and an interesting year. Janson was madly in love with Lise Lotte Möller, but we shared her in a nice way. It was a very nice trinitarian friendship. My uncle was wonderful and he had a civilized house and a divine garden.

Lise Lotte was totally un-Jewish, and when Panofsky was dismissed she

raced to his home in the Alte Rabenstrasse, the Old Raven Street in Hamburg, to express her grief. Panofsky was deeply impressed, and throughout the war she was one of the few Germans I knew for whom I would take an oath that they were absolutely decent. So Panofsky kept his association with Lise Lotte and after the war she published his Dürer book in a one-volume German translation which I reviewed in a German journal—critically, but of course with great respect.

Then there was Ursula Hoff. Ursula Hoff was a girl of immense gifts—very profound. When I got past all my exams for the Ph.D. and handed in my dissertation, the signature was still missing, so I spent a whole year without a job or anything, just waiting and hoping I would get a signature and get my Ph.D. so I could go to America.

SMITH: This is from [Werner] Burmeister?

HECKSCHER: Yes. I used the time to help people who were writing dissertations, and I learned a tremendous amount. Ursula Hoff wrote a dissertation on Rembrandt and London—influences from England on Rembrandt's drawings and so on. It was interesting, and a little hypothetical. Of course we talked as friends, and I said to her, "Are you a Hamburgian?" She said, "Oh no, I was born in London in a hotel room. My father was a Jewish salesman and he was in England, my pregnant mother went along, and Boom! suddenly I appeared

in a hotel room, a sort of emergency birth." I said, "But Ursula, this makes you a British subject." She'd never thought of it. So I went to the British Consul in Hamburg, whom I knew, and I told him the case. He said, "Fine. She's a British subject, and we'll issue a British passport to her after she has sold her German passport to the gestapo." The British passport was going to cost her nearly a thousand marks, quite a heavy sum, which she didn't have. So I made the rounds. That's when I went to Heydenreich, who said, "If you come once more with a request for a Jew, it's the concentration camp for you." I did get her the money, and I found her a job through an English friend in Australia, and there she is, still. She's alive and we correspond. We're marvelous friends and I'm very fond of her. She never married, she's very spirited, and she really introduced art history in Australia. There were so many people I was close to, men and women. There was this Hungarian girl, Pia von Reutter, who was the girlfriend of Panofsky.

SMITH: Oh, yes, you mentioned her.

HECKSCHER: It's a German-sounding name but she was Hungarian, and she was very beautiful. We saw Panofsky making love to her on a bench in a park, and we said, "That is a man to our taste. He does it right." He took her away from de Tolnay. These events were always significant to us, of course. Pia wrote a dissertation on Senlis, in France, on the portal of a Gothic church. I

worked with her and we were very good friends.

After the war I visited my mother in Hamburg and I had a Russian girlfriend. She was Russian educated, Russian speaking, with a German name. She was from Moscow and she lived opposite my mother. My mother said, "Ilse is on a vacation, so I asked her to give me the key to her apartment so you could stay in her room." I stayed in Ilse's apartment, which was very nice, and when I left to visit my mother for breakfast across the street, I found, among the mail for Ilse, a printed dissertation by Pia von Reutter. I grabbed it and said, "How interesting." I shaved and did what one does before breakfast and I sneezed several times, which I do every morning religiously, not knowing that Pia von Reutter was living underneath. She and her husband were in the bathroom and he said, "How strange. Ilse is on vacation and yet I hear footsteps." Then they heard the sneezing, and Pia said, "So niesst nur Wilhelm Heckscher"—That is Heckscher's sneeze. Her husband got very jealous when she said that was Heckscher's way of sneezing. I said to my mother, "Is there a Pia von Reutter here?" She said, "Oh she lives underneath Ilse," and this was why the dissertation was there, just to send a little message. I rang Pia's doorbell and a pale German answered. He said, "What do you want?" I said, "Listen, when you talk to me you stand to attention. Now, I do the talking and you do the answering. Who are you?" He said, "My name is Wilhelm. I am married to

Pia." I said, "Poor Pia." I just wanted to get him small and dull. I said, "Where were you during the war?" He said, "I was in Siberia, in prison." I asked him how it was, and he said, "Quite nice." I asked him what made it quite nice, and he said, "I'm an artist. I drew pictures of the Russian guards and I got cigarettes for that. That was nice." I said, "Okay, I've seen enough of you. Get Pia." He said she was out shopping, so I said, "Let her come up to my room, if you hear my footsteps. But not you, I don't want to see you again." He said, "Yes sir." He knew military discipline. Pia came and it was very sentimental and weepy, you know, remembering the olden days which we had. She was another German who had spent the wartime in Germany and who was totally kosher and decent.

[Tape IV, Side Two]

SMITH: I saw some correspondence about Hans Konrad Röthel.

HECKSCHER: Yes, he was more man-oriented. When men's pants with zip shutters came from America, Janson showed them to Röthel and said, "This will be of particular interest to you, Röthel." We always laughed about him, but he was very nice and a very gifted person. How funny that you should remember the name.

SMITH: He came to America, right?

HECKSCHER: Yes, I met him here. He was not as interesting as some of the

others. But, as I say, except for one man, who was a Nazi, we could all talk like human beings, which was rare in Germany.

SMITH: Why would a Nazi go to study with Panofsky?

HECKSCHER: Panofsky had left already, and this was just an inferior man, like all Nazis. To me, the whole fascist regime was simply the filth that comes to the surface from the bed of a lake—you know, filthy things drift. When I came to Cuxhaven, which is the harbor leading to Hamburg, I bought the last issue of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, which was a prominent newspaper in Hamburg, and it had a huge headline, "Schmutzwelle über Deutschland"—Wave of filth covering Germany. Then of course it was empounded and forbidden. That phrase, *Schmutzwelle über Deutschland*, describes fascism to me. It is low-class people who are totally uneducated. Hitler was totally uneducated. He wrote *Mein Kampf* and I was one of the very few people in Germany who read it before he came to power, and I warned people.

Then I was very lucky; I knew a general in the German air force, but he was a neutral person for me. He was interested in me and in my dangerous position and he warned me. For example, he said, "This time, Holland, the Netherlands, and Belgium will be overrun by the German army. Holland will not be spared." I had two Dutch girlfriends who were rich, and on my advice they went with all their money to the United States and survived and kept their money

intact. So that was a very good thing. I had this adviser, who once in a while met with me and I learned very important things from him. For example, he was flying in a little airplane with Hitler and the airplane had to make an emergency landing, and as always, all the officers along with Hitler jumped out of the plane, went to a hedge, and relieved themselves. Not Hitler. He was on the off-side of the hedge, and my adviser, being shrewd and clever, looked round and saw that Hitler's penis was less than a centimeter in size. Of course he said this explained Hitler's fascism, you know, a desire to be manly and virile.

Did you know that Hitler was from Braunau, in Austria? He started the Braune Haus in Munich, and they had the brown shirts, and at the end of his life he married Eva Braun. Has that ever sunk in? Isn't that interesting? I have no key to it, but it's interesting. The iconology of Hitler gets a little zip there.

SMITH: Have you looked into the iconology of Nazism?

HECKSCHER: Of course I was exposed to it, and if you are exposed to it you learn to keep your mind shut and to not think too much. Thinking is a danger. You might think naughty thoughts and you are dead before you know it.

SMITH: When did you know that the Nazis were going to take over Germany?

HECKSCHER: I hoped it was avoidable. I had my hopes pinned on the communists, but the communists were deceptively strong and in reality were terribly frightened. They got beaten, and beaten, and beaten by the brownshirts.

Hitler started the brownshirts as a sort of gigantic bodyguard. Janson was a member of the brownshirts. He was not a Nazi but he joined the brownshirts because he had been invited to an exchange scholarship to Harvard, and the only condition was you had to join the brownshirts and you had to take an oath that you would return to Germany. He was hesitant to take the oath. I said, "You ass. You take the oath. You are in the hands of criminals. Any defense is justified."

SMITH: So he went and never came back.

HECKSCHER: Well, he didn't have money for a return ticket so I went to the Jewish Warburg bank where I knew a social worker, a wonderful woman, and I said, "I have a candidate for help. He needs a return ticket which will not be used, but the sad message I have is that he is not Jewish." She said, "It makes no difference, as long as he is anti-Hitler." I said I could vouch for that. So they gave him so many marks for the return ticket, and since he stammered they found a woman who taught him speech, which made it possible for him to be a professor. He stammered like hell—incoherent.

SMITH: What do you think about his *History of Art*?

HECKSCHER: Excellent. I attended his undergraduate lectures and I was deeply impressed by the clarity and brutality with which he sliced art history like a cake and presented it to his students. He did a beautiful didactic job and I think

he had a brilliant mind. Did you ever use that book?

SMITH: It's mandatory. It's a text that's used and been used for the last thirty years. I'm not making any value judgements, but it's curious to me why art history professors prefer Janson's book so much over any of the other possible alternatives.

HECKSCHER: He was such a good manager of himself. When he was in Iowa, where I succeeded him, he fell in love with a girl called Dora Jane [Janson], who was Jewish, and she said, "I can't marry you." He asked why not and she said, "You are not rich, you have no money." So he spent one year getting rich.

Whatever he put his mind to, he was successful. He got millions and millions.

How he did it, I don't know, but he was incredibly wealthy. He was original.

He wrote a beautiful study on Donatello's homosexuality, he wrote a beautiful book on apes and ape lore in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, which was after we started this iconology of animals. I wrote the most heavenly article on the iconology of the kitchen fly, *musca domestica* [reference on page 57].

I think Janson was a genius who wasted a lot of time in organizing, and Panofsky disliked this idea. He liked Janson, but he objected to his constant money making. Janson was offered the job of successor to Millard Meiss, and he declined it because he could make more money in New York. But I was closer to him than to my own brother. We could talk and he was shocked by my ideas.

I was very fond of his wife, Dora Jane, who is still alive; she's in an old-age home and we correspond. She is the woman who looked after Janson's mother like a daughter. The world is full of incredibly nice people.

Janson was a wonderful scholar with a great logical mind. In fact, when he was in his great depression because his brother was a Nazi, I invited him to rent an apartment in my mother's huge house in Hamburg, which he did, and I paid for it. We were living together and working on our oral Ph.D. exams, and he was the one who taught me method—how to memorize, how to work. We divided everything fifty-fifty, so that we could diminish the intelligence load which each one of us carried, and we shared the good news. He had ways of abbreviating knowledge, which I lacked. He was practical like hell, and this I think is part of the success of his book. He made an enormous amount of money out of the publisher [Harry N. Abrams, Inc].

SMITH: In its updated version it's still the most used textbook in art history classes.

HECKSCHER: He knew how to launch himself again and again. We were very different, very opposite in many ways, which of course made us friends. I was very opposite to my own brother and we were not friends because I hated his ideas, whereas with Janson I found his getting rich *à tout prix* quite laughworthy. I've never touched money. Roxanne is the financial wizard of the family. She

can make ten thousand dollars out of one hundred dollars in minutes, you know, and she makes it a full-time job. I believe that we are in for heavy inflation, like the German inflation, and everything will be wiped out. I own land in Martha's Vineyard, my idea being that if you have something substantial, you can survive a little while. Dollars will soon be toilet paper, like the million mark notes we could use as toilet paper in Germany.

SMITH: What was the role of connoisseurship in the training you received? Was it treated at all?

HECKSCHER: This is to me a very interesting question. Panofsky despised people who were connoisseurs, like de Tolnay, and got paid for it. I have never given connoisseurship any room in my life, and, incidentally, in all my academic life I have never bargained with an administration. I have always said, "You will pay me the best you can do." This has given me wonderful dividends, you know, this trust. But de Tolnay got paid for connoisseurship, and Panofsky said it could warp your scrutiny of pictures and your ideas about art. I don't know. De Tolnay was a difficult, difficult man. He was so pathological. One time, I was working at a desk in McCormick Hall, in Princeton, the art history place, and to get out of my seat I had to pass behind de Tolnay. For some reason I got stuck and he turned round in a fury and said, "You are not allowed to look over my shoulder." I said, "The shit you are doing doesn't interest me. Shut up you

idiot." I can be very rude. That floored him. I was very fond of his wife, who came from Florence, Italy. She was my Italian teacher, and we were good friends. But then de Tolnay, who was a Michelangelo specialist and head of the Casa Buonarroti in Rome, would give us a brilliant, living seminar on the Dutch Netherlandish minor masters in the Hamburger Kunsthalle. He gave me the first feeling of *Kunstgeschichte*—this was de Tolnay. He spoke funny German, which made us collapse laughing when he made mistakes, but we tried not to show it to him because he was grim and humorless. He was in a sense a genius, and as a teacher, in spite of his bad German, he was quite wonderful. He couldn't make up his mind whether he was Tolnagyi, de Tolnay, von Tolnay, Karl von Tolnay, or Charles de Tolnay; it changed all the time and, as students, this made us laugh.

SMITH: What kind of people do you think were drawn to art history as opposed to sociology or regular history? Was there some kind of link uniting the people who were drawn to art history at this time?

HECKSCHER: Now this is a very interesting question, which I've never thought about. What unites art historians? I think it was an amalgam, a mixture of things. Some people, like I, were artists who came to the history of art. Some people were intellectuals, which I was decidedly not, who came and were of course fascinated by the Panofskian approach and method. I don't see a sort

of unifying element.

SMITH: Do you think Panofsky could have achieved equal eminence if he had gone into the study of literature?

HECKSCHER: I think Panofsky had the gift of an original independent approach to things, which would have shown in many ways. He was a perfect linguist in Italian and Latin and Greek. His Latin was beyond any conception—perfect. He had a wonderful eye for art, and an ability to observe and record and to remember forms and shapes and appearances in pictures; that I think was a unique, native gift, which he improved upon systematically. But it was somehow *ab utero*. From the very beginning he had this amazing gift.

SMITH: What about the role of stylistic analysis in your training?

HECKSCHER: Panofsky's *Idea* helped a great deal, categorizing styles in neat compartments. When we were both old, I said, "Your *Idea* was really a block in our path. It was so difficult to climb over that wall." It is a history of the Greek idea, which governs various styles, and he went very deep into it. And he said, punning, "Eine Kater-Idee?" A tomcat idea is something very demeaning. It was a heavenly book. Then something strange happened. A team of two professors in South Carolina translated it into beautiful English, and it's one of the best translated books of Panofsky. I mentioned this to Panofsky and he said, "In my time, when we were students of philosophy and studied Immanuel Kant, we

couldn't understand it. You know what we did? We read Kant in French translations, which were crystal clear." Interesting, isn't it?

SMITH: I've heard that sort of comment in more general terms, that the German philosophers become a little clearer in translation.

HECKSCHER: Panofsky really was at home in philosophy. I think he would have been quite brilliant in literature. Someday you should talk to Roxanne about her Panofsky ideas, because she saw him from a different point of view. We went to see my doctor—I have a wonderful doctor in Martha's Vineyard—and Roxanne came along for some reason. After the doctor talked to her, he asked her, "Are you a teacher?" She speaks English with such precision. Panofsky wrote his ideas for a book or an article in longhand, then he corrected it, then he fed it to Roxanne and she typed it with triple space. Then he corrected the triple-spaced manuscript, sent it back to Roxanne, and she carefully spent a day studying what he corrected and added and changed. Then they would have a big trouble meeting, and Panofsky sometimes got raging mad at her and would say, "You are dismissed," because she objected to certain things, but then he gradually accepted her suggestions. She was a style master in many ways to him, to his English. And she did the same for me. My God, I was in despair, because she saw the weaknesses of a lecture I was going to give at the University of New Hampshire. I was lecturing instead of Panofsky, whose wife was sick

and he said, "Bill, you go and give my lecture." I gave a lecture on Goethe and Weimar. The awful thing was I had over a thousand people in my audience. Half of them suddenly got up and marched away halfway through my lecture. Somebody told me they were ROTC people; they had to go to exercises, but I hadn't been prewarned.

SMITH: You had a debate with Otto Pächt over the relationship of iconology versus stylistic analysis in the late fifties. What is the relationship between iconology and stylistic analysis? Are they really opposed to each other, or are they complementary?

HECKSCHER: To my mind, they should walk hand in hand. How can you deal with the iconography of something when you don't know the style in which it was painted, which very often makes necessary thematic changes. I saw Pächt in prison, in England, but he was never sent to Canada; he was released. That was the last time I saw him.

SMITH: Some people were released early; Buchthal was interned for two months and then he was released.

HECKSCHER: Could be, could be. Decent people got out, I didn't. You see, every enemy alien had to pass a tribunal. My tribunal took place at Colchester, in Essex. When I appeared before the judge, since I wasn't Jewish enough or any such thing, my case was pleaded for by the Quakers, the Society of Friends.

A Quaker woman came all the way from London to appear before my judge and make a declaration, "Your honor, we've lost the dossier of William S. Heckscher." So the judge said, "What do we do now?" I made him an encouraging face and he said, "Why don't I ask William S. Heckscher to tell me what was in the dossier?" I said, "There was a letter from Sidney Webb and a letter from Trevelyan"—you know, distinguished English people—"saying that I was the son of a very decent German father and that they had no doubt I was on the side of the good people versus the bad people." So the judge said, "Well, I'll make you category C," which was the best. I was treated as a Norwegian or a Dutch person. I was totally free and all I had to do was have my identity card. Category B was for people who they were not quite certain about. They were restricted and couldn't go everywhere in England. Category A people were sent to the Isle of Wight as prisoners of war because they were suspicious. So I was C and I was kosher and I was secure, but then Dunkirk happened, and Churchill, one of the greatest idiots ever, Anthony Eden, a horror, and Lloyd George, a swine from Wales, got panicky and Churchill said, "Collar the lot." Well, of the thousands and thousands of enemy aliens in category C who were collared, not one betrayed anything, except one man who gave secrets to Russia—[Klaus] Fuchs was his name I think—and the rest were all very kosher, the Jewish and non-Jewish. So one day I was arrested by a nice man, and I was ready for it

because other people had been arrested. There was Otto Demus.

SMITH: The Byzantinist?

HECKSCHER: Yes. He was a man whom you and I would envy with shaking of heads—how can this be? He was married to two women simultaneously. One was his bride and one was a girl from Czechoslovakia or something. Demus and his girls always invited me for lunch. I was a little bachelor and I would go for lunch and we had a wonderful time. One day I came and the two girls wept uncontrollably because he'd been arrested. I said, "Well, I'll be arrested too and we'll meet." Which was true; we met on the same ship. He was a great man and a great scholar. When I visited Vienna after the war, he took me in a government limousine and showed me all the important things outside of Vienna. I got a wonderful view of Austria, with his explanations. He was on the same prison ship as I, but we were separated in different prison camps in Canada. We liked each other, of course, from London days, and I had a huge bag full of China tea and he had a bag full of pipe tobacco and we exchanged these things and he gave me a shirt—all this on the prison ship. I only had one shirt, but now I had two shirts, which was heaven.

Can you imagine this: we were two thousand prisoners in the hold of a ship for twelve days and twelve nights, in a room with a stencilled inscription on the wall which said, "Suited for forty-eight prisoners." We were two thousand

and we had standing room only for twelve days and nights. We stood nose to nose, we vomited into each other's mouths when we got seasick, and we didn't fall because there was nowhere to fall; you were held up by the bodies of the others. There was barbed wire all around. It was deep down in the ship, with one tiny light hanging and swinging back and forth as the ship moved, and there were four machine guns manned by Indian troops who didn't speak English and who constantly loaded them and aimed at us. You can imagine what fun it was.

SMITH: It sounds like the German trains going to Auschwitz.

HECKSCHER: Yes, yes it does. In Liverpool we were in a sort of barbed wire compound, in a complex of workmen's buildings, and we were five hundred. I was sitting reading Shakespeare—I had taken my Shakespeare volume, which I still have on the piano in the living room—when there was a hand on my shoulder and someone said, "We've just elected you." I said, "What have I been elected to?" He said, "You will be our Führer." I said, "That's an awful word; what do I do?" He said, "You are responsible for all five hundred of us. We trust you." So the next thing I knew, there was another hand on my shoulder. "One of your men has hanged himself in the attic. You are supposed to cut him down." So I got a ladder and a helpmate, and I cut down a man who hanged himself because he didn't get the medicine he needed. So that was a good beginning. I found my way—I'm a spy—into the office of the British soldiers who were guarding us and

I found my name on a list of prisoners to be sent to Australia. So I struck it out and I wrote "William Heckscher to Canada." I didn't want to go to Australia.

Then we were marched through Liverpool and the population of Liverpool threw stones and shit at us and called us Nazis. We couldn't explain to them that we were victims. We left our gas masks—everybody had a gas mask at that time—in a pile because we wouldn't need them, and we went into the hold of the ship, the *Etrick*, and the trip began. We were in a convoy where finally the *Arandora Star* was torpedoed. Four hundred thirty-nine people drowned, all Jews, and I told this to a German in Wolfenbüttel. He said, "I know about it. My son was one of the people on that ship." I asked what happened to him and he said, "He survived. He swam for eight hours and then a British ship came and sent a rowboat to him. The sailors tried to push him under water with their oars to kill him." This was England, my England. Then another boat came and saved him, and he was sent to Australia. When the *Arandora Star* news came to England—four hundred thirty-nine people killed—Anthony Eden said, "Good riddance." This is England. After Lloyd George had visited der Führer in Berchtesgarden he came back to England and said, "I've come away from an interview with the greatest German of this century." When I mentioned Hitler critically I was given a terrible beating in a prison in London.

SMITH: By other Germans?

HECKSCHER: No, by an English policeman. You know, the metropolitan police force, the inner city police force of London, was 100 percent fascist, under guarantee. So you were in good hands. No . . . we were treated so badly. I was in a prison transport and we were put into Camden race park for forty-eight hours. The food was porridge which was burnt so we couldn't touch it, and weak tea. And then for thirty-six hours we were on the *Ettrick* without food or anything to drink. So you can imagine the restlessness.

We were four people: Heckscher, Prince Lingen, who was a grandson of Kaiser Wilhelm II, a Jesuit priest, and a communist from Aberystwyth. Each one of us was responsible for five hundred men. At seven o'clock we had to stand at attention when the commandant of the ship came down with a trumpeter trumpeting—as if we needed to be woken up. We had to stand at attention and say that everything was under control. I became a very good friend of Prince Lingen, who committed suicide later, so he was out of the picture. But it was quite a trip, quite a trip.

One of my men got very ill and I got permission to take him to the infirmary. After I had handed him in, I went alone through the ship, which was of course taboo, and I saw the first-class cabins. In every cabin, which was open to the sun, sat a German officer with a swastika on his lapel and English soldiers served them cocktails, and there we were, down below, two thousand

people—standing room only for the fugitives of Hitler. Of course the moment the *Arandora Star* was torpedoed, the ships began zig-zagging to avoid being hit, so we zig-zagged across the Atlantic ocean, vomiting, vomiting, vomiting, and diarrhea, and we finally got permission to use the toilets on the upper deck. The Jesuit and I were watching one toilet and when a man had been sitting there two minutes we just lifted him and said, "Start queuing up again," because otherwise people would defoul themselves. A dwarf came along, and the Jesuit and I were ready to lift him, but we couldn't do it because we were convulsed, laughing, and then when we tried to lift him he was ten times as strong and heavy as we; we couldn't move him, so we laughed even more. You know, these were the joys of World War II.

SMITH: Why did you decide to leave Germany in 1936?

HECKSCHER: The moment I had my Ph.D. I had *gratis conveyance* on ships of the Hamburg-America Line since my father was a director of the HAPAG. I had been accepted by the German army. Henry and I had been examined and found to be okay. We could be officers, if necessary. The gestapo gave me a warning. You see, I was constantly called to gestapo headquarters and scolded and interviewed and given directions, and I had to take the Janson oath saying I would return from Princeton, but then they said, "No, you are a suspect, you cannot go."

I walked around the Alster basin with my sister to say good-bye to her. It was late in the afternoon of the day before my departure [September 1936], and we heard screams from the water. I went into the water with my beautiful immigration suit and saved a girl and pulled her ashore. She had been sitting making love in a canoe with a gentleman who escaped and vanished, a German gentleman. When I put her in the light of a lamp—it was a rainy day—it turned out she wore a Nazi youth uniform. I whispered to Lottie, my sister, "Shall I put her back again?" We laughed. People came and I said, "Can you please call an ambulance." I said to Lottie, "We vanish here, because if we are found and examined, I'll never get into America."

So at three o'clock in the morning I went on foot down to the Elbe River and I had an appointment with a little man in a rowboat, and he rowed me to the wrong side of a ship called *Hamburg*. There was a rope ladder hanging down, and I climbed up and entered the ship into the hairy arms of a cousin of mine, who was second engineer. This was all prearranged of course. He hid me in a broom closet, where I stood for two days and two nights, waiting for what would happen. When we were outside German territorial waters, I emerged from the broom closet and went to the purser of the ship and said, "I need my cabin." He said, "Where were you?" I said, "Well, you know, celebrating—a little drinking and so on." I lied and was safe.

Then we crossed the Atlantic Ocean and halfway over, the German zeppelin appeared with huge swastikas painted on each side. All the American passengers shouted, "Heil Hitler!" And I said, "What shits these Americans are. It's not a joke. It's just a horror." Then I arrived in New York, and that was my flight from the gestapo.

SMITH: Were there friends of yours who surprised you by becoming Nazis?

HECKSCHER: No, no. I had an uncle who was a senator in the Hamburg senate, and he praised Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and said it really was a wonderful book. I said, "You shit. You should be ashamed to say such things." There was a terribly nice couple, a judge and his wife, and we had anti-Hitler meetings, simply to let off steam. But nobody surprised me. We had a beautiful Jewish brother and sister living on our street. The brother had frequented a prostitute, and being Jewish he was circumcised, which no German was. In Germany circumcision meant you were Jewish. So the prostitute denounced him and he and his sister were arrested and killed in a concentration camp. His sister was a beautiful girl. I was changing trains outside of Hamburg, in no-man's land, and I saw a block of, let's say, a thousand people and I saw that they were Jews, and there were three groups of SS men, and they all stood to attention. I walked up and down the rows hoping somebody would drop a message I could pick up, you know. They were terrified. They were on their way to be executed and they

knew it, I knew it, and the gestapo knew it. That sort of scene you don't forget.

But let's say Hitler gave a speech. You had to hoist a swastika flag. If you didn't, you went to a concentration camp, and not alone—the whole family would be exterminated. People always say, "Why weren't you heroic?" On one rainy day my brother and I saw a group of SS men marching down a street with a swastika flag. If you didn't salute it, that was it, you were off to be killed; that was the end of your life. So we went behind a hedge and lay in the mud. We got very dirty and very wet, hiding. You don't forget these things. Every house in Hamburg and in any big city, had a *Blockwart*. That was a proletarian who had a key to the house who could come into the house at three o'clock in the morning to see who was in bed with whom.

[Tape V, Side One]

HECKSCHER: My sister Lottie, as I told you, was a high-school teacher and she had a colleague called Ilse Bandmann. Ilse was 100 percent Jewish and she was hiding in our house. We had a room in the basement where she slept. Instead of eating in our dining room we all ate with her in the kitchen. I still have a photograph of Ilse, Henry, my mother, Lottie, and our maid, serving. With this maid we could be absolutely certain she would never betray Ilse. You got money if you betrayed a Jew in hiding. Ilse managed to get to the Danish border. It was in winter and she had a fur coat, which a Nazi took away from

her. She went to Denmark and Sweden and she's still alive.

Our maid—Grete Sachse was her name, Margaret—had a brother who was a Prussian policeman in Altona. He and I became very good friends because he told me he was anti-Hitler. He was in the Prussian police force, which was sent to a very early concentration camp, in 1934. In 1934 the Americans denied there were concentration camps and said, "Don't bore us with these stories; they are probably criminal Jews." He and his police force were asked by Göring to conquer this concentration camp, which was held by an arch Nazi, Streicher. Streicher was *the* Nazi.

SMITH: Oh, Julius Streicher?

HECKSCHER: Yes, yes. He was a horrible man with eyeglasses, who was arrested by Henry, my brother, and interrogated. Henry handcuffed him to a Negro sergeant and took pictures, which I have in an album. Henry was also the one who told Hitler's sister that her brother had committed suicide. He said, "I told her, and when she wept uncontrollably, I laughed uncontrollably." So there was sobbing and laughing at the same time. She was a stepsister of Hitler, or something like that, so Henry had interesting people to interrogate. I fled Germany and I had friends I left behind, but I never had nostalgic feelings; it didn't mean anything to me. Of course, what little taste I had for Germany was soured. Then, later, Roxanne insisted on seeing Germany, so Henry and

Roxanne and I and our little daughter Charlotte traveled through Germany in a car. I saw Germany for the first time. I had never been in these places. I'd been in Munich on the way to Italy, because I have Italian relatives in Napoli, but that was it.

SMITH: [Hugo] Buchthal had mentioned that he was completely surprised in January 1933, when the Nazis took over. He had no idea this was going to happen. He said the group around Panofsky never talked politics.

HECKSCHER: This, unfortunately, is very true. I was the only one who had read Hitler. I was terribly interested in politics and I knew enough to know that the danger was enormous. Ever since I witnessed the assassination procedure against Rosa Luxemburg, I was aware of the right-wing dangers. I can never say who was worse, Stalin or Hitler. Murder is murder, you know? Luxemburg was a different story. I can't say that I was wise, but I was, through my father, politically interested.

SMITH: To get back to more art-historical kinds of questions, how did your topic on the ruins of Rome relate to Panofsky's interest in the Renaissance and renaissances?

HECKSCHER: He never quoted me. I don't know. Was I before him?

SMITH: You were long before him. Was he talking about this theme at that time?

HECKSCHER: No, no. You see, I had seen Rome when I was still a painter. In 1929, I went via Rome to Napoli to visit my Italian relatives. I have an uncle, a lawyer, Giovanni Lazazzera. He has a Spanish name, but many people in Naples have Spanish names. Lazazzera was anti-Mussolini, and his friends were pro and anti and pro and anti, so I saw fascism at a very early point, before Hitler came to power. I even saw Mussolini speak from his balcony, reading with eyeglasses and stammering and losing his place in a manuscript. Finally he removed his eyeglasses, he took the piece of paper, threw it away, and it came close to me—if only I could have gotten it, you know? But there were thousands of Italians, and he said, "Adesso io parlo dal mio cuore"—And now I speak from my heart. It was a trick—everything was a trick. It was very interesting to hear him.

In Italian mode, my uncle and I walked up and down Naples at night, arm in arm. I got raw skin from all these bearded Italian men kissing me. People said, "You should dedicate your dissertation to Mussolini." I said, "Nothing doing." I realized the enormous danger. I got a very clear impression of what was going on. Of course, in contrast to Hitler, Mussolini was intelligent. When he was given an honorary doctor's degree he said, "I can accept it only if you allow me to submit a dissertation," which he did. He had an intelligent, political left-wing father, but of course Mussolini was a despicable creature. The pope at

the time had been papal a nunzio in Germany. My father knew him very well. He became Pope Pius XII. The church now tries to canonize him. I ask, how can this be? He sent Italian Jews to Auschwitz. He kowtowed to Hitler. He was not a Nazi, he was anticommunist, and he said that the best weapon against communism was Hitler; that was his argument. To my mind, he behaved despicably, and he was a pope.

SMITH: But to get back to the Renaissance and renaunces question, I am just curious about the relationship of your work to Panofsky's thinking on that subject. I don't know if you're footnoted in Panofsky's book. You probably are, to some degree.

HECKSCHER: I never thought about it, isn't that funny? You know my life motto? I'm proud to be humble. That's very witty, you must admit.

SMITH: Iconology has a lot in common with hermeneutics. To what degree did you discuss hermeneutics?

HECKSCHER: Theoretical things were discussed very little.

SMITH: What about Freud?

HECKSCHER: Panofsky despised him.

SMITH: Why?

HECKSCHER: Well, there was a whole circle of people who despised Freud and I defended him, although I called him *Schadenfreud*. One great influence on

me was Oswald Spengler. He wrote *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*—The waning of the West. I met him. He was a German schoolteacher, a horror to see, pudgy and awful with a huge broad-rimmed hat, and he was a mathematics teacher or something like that, in Hamburg. I met him just in passing. His *Untergang des Abendlandes* makes awfully good reading. Who was the Englishman who did the same sort of historical study?

SMITH: [Arnold] Toynbee?

HECKSCHER: Yes. Toynbee and I were very close.

SMITH: Oh, really?

HECKSCHER: He was a member of the Institute for Advanced Study, and we had lunch every day. He invited me to the Trinity Church in Princeton, where he gave a sermon when Queen Elizabeth was coronated. Toynbee was impressive, but Spengler was majestic; he taught me enormous things about painting. He gave a definition of painted portraits which was classical. This was before I even knew I was going into the art-historical field. But Spengler was absolutely taboo.

SMITH: It sounds like Panofsky despised most modern culture, or modern high culture, perhaps.

HECKSCHER: When Panofsky's one hundredth birthday was celebrated in Hamburg, I understand this was a point which was heavily discussed. I can't get terribly excited about it. I must say that he had very fine feeling for what was

modern art in his time.

SMITH: But he seemed to be much more comfortable with, shall we say, antiquarian ideas than with modern, contemporary ideas.

HECKSCHER: Yes, and I may be the same, you know; I'm old-fashioned. Of course, Panofsky was much more puritanical than I was. Dora Panofsky and I would tell each other hair-raising stories, and Panofsky would get up and say, "Now things are going bad," and go into his office and lock himself away so that he wouldn't have to hear what we were talking about. I didn't mind, and Dora didn't mind, and it didn't lead to any enmity, but he just said, "Oh, no." Sometimes I used words which he objected to.

SMITH: Such as?

HECKSCHER: I just mean naughty words. All my naughty words in English I learned from my daughter—high-school naughtiness.

SMITH: So he objected to that kind of language?

HECKSCHER: He did, yes. Things had to have substance. You know, this plays into what you suggested. He was old-fashioned. Modern things don't excite me because they are modern. History goes on and on and on, and I look at our history with extreme pessimism. I think that the stupidest thing in modern politics was [Henry] Kissinger's and Nixon's approach to China. Only a demented person could think of arming the enemy. The Chinese are much more

communist than the Russians. Instead, they should have approached Russia, which they didn't do. Kissinger is one of the greatest disgraces on earth. He comes from a place called Fürth. This is like saying you were born in Newark; you don't say that, you keep it a secret; it's too embarrassing for words. Fürth is in Bavaria, you know.

SMITH: What about Jung? Was he an influence in Hamburg?

HECKSCHER: Jung was a strong influence in Hamburg. Of course, people were either Jungian or Freudian. The difficulty was that Jung was under heavy, probably justified suspicion of being right-wing and anti-Semitic, so Panofsky would not hear of him. My oldest daughter [Diana], as I told you, is a psychoanalyst, a consultant, who treats psychological cases in England, and she is a Jungian. Through her I get lots of literature and learn a lot. She writes a great deal, not for publication but just academic papers. I think Jung was simply excluded as being anti-Semitic. The whole Warburg Institute had only two people who were not Jewish, and one of them was the librarian, Hans Meier. He was a wonderful man, who was killed by a bomb. I contributed little articles to the Warburg bibliography, and this was my first English publication. I had written wonderful articles, but this was before you kept manuscripts, and they were all annihilated by this bomb which killed Meier.

Then there was Fritz Rougemont. I spoke about the brown shirts.

Rougemont was perhaps the greatest Petrarch connoisseur on earth, in his generation. In my *Romruinen* I dealt with Petrarch. It was natural I visited Rougemont. He and I became very good friends. He was a sublime musician, and during Hitler time I was under great stress and music was like pure heaven, so he played Mozart and pre-Mozart for me and he gave me all his Petrarch information. Then Gertrud Bing summoned me and said, "Something awful happened. I saw Rougemont in a brown uniform of the SR." I said I would find out, so I routinely visited him for Petrarch, and I said, "What happened? Are you in the SR?" He said, "Yes I am." I asked him why and he said, "You want the truth?" I said, "Well, give me something I can tell Bing." He said, "My father discovered that I had a sexual relationship he disapproved of. He had a light fixed so that at nine o'clock the light in my bedroom goes out and he locks me in. I can't work and I can't think and I get impatient. I joined the SR because they have night exercises, and even my father, who is Mighty Mouse, can't do anything against the brownshirts. So I am a free man again." I went to Bing and said, "He's totally okay. Don't worry about him. He's anti-Hitler like any decent person." He joined the army and was killed on the third day of the Russian invasion. He was an officer in the German army, but he was a wonderful scholar and a wonderful musician. His father was one of the subalterns of my father. He was a chief steward of the Hamburg-America Line.

I think Rougemont was a great adornment for the Warburg people, and then of course he was dead and they fled just in time with their boxes and books to London, and were incorporated in London University, which is no news.

SMITH: After you got your Ph.D., what made you decide to work on pagan gems and medieval decorative art?

HECKSCHER: That was really a chapter of my Renaissance, Middle Ages idea, what Warburg called *das Nachleben*, the reliving, returning of things. I always had a sort of early ambition to publish my dissertation on a much broader scale and have this included in it, as well as my ideas on the source for Christopher Marlowe's lines, "Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?"

I did write a little article ["Was this the Face . . . ?" *Journal of the Warburg Institute* I (1937): 295–297], but I drifted away from it. I wasted so much time doing little jobs to earn money just to survive. I had very little money in England. I was on this farm of friends in Essex, which was heavenly, and I worked on that farm, so I was contributing.

SMITH: When you were at the Institute for Advanced Study the first time, you got to know some of the faculty there. I was wondering if you could talk about some of them. I understand there was conflict between [Charles Rufus] Morey and Panofsky.

HECKSCHER: Was there really? I was a great admirer of Charles Rufus Morey. My English was very hazardous and unshaped, and I had to give my first lecture in English there, but I had terribly nice people around me. I have terribly nice friends who are still alive and are professors here. John Rupert Martin was a great Panofsky admirer and disciple, and Dave [David] Coffin. They were all very influential figures and all of course very American people. That is to say, Jack Martin grew up in a house which was next to the house where my future mother-in-law lived as a young girl. Mabel Agnes Dixon was her name. So Jack Martin and I discovered that we were closely affiliated through my wife's mother.

SMITH: Did you know Albert Friend?

HECKSCHER: Oh yes.

SMITH: [Kurt] Weitzmann referred to him as the most brilliant man he had ever met.

HECKSCHER: I think he was right. I wouldn't give him that predicate, but I would say he was very gifted.

SMITH: But he never published.

HECKSCHER: No, but he was brilliant. He was very nice to me, although I was *punkus minimus*. [laughter] He was a great person. Panofsky worshipped him, and when the news came to Panofsky—"Your friend has died"—the maid

was just serving soup, and there was deadly silence. The maid, Emma Epps, said, "God bless his devilish soul!"

SMITH: It has been said that Friend was evil incarnate.

HECKSCHER: Yes, yes, this was all true.

SMITH: But why?

HECKSCHER: Well, why shouldn't a genius be evil?

SMITH: What made him evil?

HECKSCHER: I don't know, he was just an evil man. But Emma put her finger right on it and everybody said, "Aye, aye!" That was Albert Friend. I attach myself like a leech to great people. I attached myself to so many people just to learn, to learn. I told you about my death bed scene, didn't I?

SMITH: You might have, but I'm not recalling it right now.

HECKSCHER: Well, I lie in a beautifully white room, in a hospital, and I'm dying, and in the background is Roxanne and the doctor. She whispers to him, but I can hear better than ever: "Give him another shot. I need one more signature." The nurse is sitting on the left side of my bed, and while she gives me the shot, I hold her to balance her, so that she doesn't fall off the bed, but I balance her in such a way that my left hand holds her breast. In my right hand I have a Latin grammar which is open at the subjunctive, which has always been a weak point in my grammatical knowledge of Latin, and this is the end. It's the

two balancing points of my life: enjoying it and learning, learning, learning.

I'm not good at teaching. I've taught thousands of students of course, but I don't consider myself a good teacher. I can be inspiring in single combat, like Betsy Sears. When she was eighteen she came into my office at Duke to find out what art history was—what did it mean, what was it like? So she enrolled, and she came constantly to my office to report on her work. I scolded her and I would see the little shoulders going and she was sobbing as she left my office. That was our first relationship. I grew very fond of her and I realized that she was brilliant, that she was worth talking to and listening to.

SMITH: But when you use the word "brilliant," what do you mean?

HECKSCHER: I would say "brilliant" is somebody who proceeds beyond limits set by common sense and goes into terra incognita. Betsy does crazy things. She knows Egyptian hieroglyphs. Who knows Egyptian hieroglyphs? She spent two years in Germany and she's fluent in German, but she's so humble. She says, "Oh, my German isn't very good." It's brilliant, it's wonderful. She has written a beautiful dissertation which appeared as a book, and I sit here as a little disciple, *punkus minimus*, learning from her. She tells me things I ought to know and I don't know and so on. In contrast to my usual behavior, I am silent and absorbing when she is here. Roxanne and my daughter worship Betsy Sears. She just turned forty, so she's a baby.

SMITH: What made Albert Friend so brilliant?

HECKSCHER: He had insights and he knew what he was talking about. He was incredibly learned and very inspiring to other people. Why he never published, I don't know. He was witty in the sense of being a man of *esprit*, you know. He was original for not publishing. In German there is a word, *Publikationszwang*—compulsion to publish—which can be from outside, but also from inside, of course.

SMITH: Did you attend Panofsky's seminar on Michelangelo at the Institute for Advanced Study?

HECKSCHER: No, but I attended lectures of course. I attended his lectures at NYU. His syllabi are very, very important. They are still very interesting, like unpublished work. I think they've gone to the Getty people.

SMITH: That I haven't seen.

HECKSCHER: Then somebody at NYU must have his syllabi, or maybe the Princeton University library has them, because he was here. They are more than just bibliographical lists for students. They were summaries of his ideas, and I would say they are highly publishable and novel and very different from his published work. Panofsky was of course a tremendously creative and inspiring person, and brilliant in the sense that he illuminated new perspectives for everybody—anybody who had ears in his head and paid attention.

SMITH: In 1937 you go to England.

HECKSCHER: I couldn't take America.

SMITH: Why not?

HECKSCHER: Well, I tell you, this sounds very indiscreet, but the homosexuality in the graduate center was so enormous that it made me shudder. And people were always very strange and fascist-minded in America. I was thrown out of a cocktail party in 1936 because Dora Panofsky and I talked about concentration camps. People said, "You disaffected Jews only want us to go to war for your sake, and those Jews in concentration camps are probably all criminals who deserve to be in prison." And in the middle of the party a woman, our hostess, said, "I'd like to talk to you. You both should leave. You're not wanted here." So we left and we stood outside the house, laughing compulsively, you know, being kicked out of a cocktail party because we'd mentioned Nazi horrors. No, America is a fascist country. I never doubted it—very few exceptions, very few exceptions. There are very few people with insight, you know? Anybody who worships Reagan and Bush is an endangered species. Henry, my brother, loved Bush.

SMITH: Oh, yes, he worked with him.

HECKSCHER: Yes. He said Bush was the most wonderful man. That's where I couldn't quite salute the flag as he did, you know? But in this world, at this

point, I think the United States is the only country to live in. I think of every single European country, and I have to say no. But in America you have a certain amount of freedom to be independent in your thinking. Senator [Joseph R.] McCarthy was the great turning point. When he came to power I left the country and went to Holland. I was a fugitive. I said, "No. I've gone through this before." When Eisenhower met him in a train station and shook his hand instead of putting his fist in his snout, I said, "No. This is impossible." This politeness and crawling around a man who was just the incarnation of evil. But then Queen Beatrix married a German Nazi, whom I met, and found to be a terribly nice man, I'm sorry to say. [laughter] He was in SS Panzertruppen. He volunteered for it, asked to be admitted. The wife of King Baudouin in Belgium was a Spanish fascist and I worshipped her because she wrote the most beautiful fairy tales. You know, this duality of feeling I think is just. If you want to be historically just you cannot just see the totally negative or the totally positive.

SMITH: It's often said that when Panofsky came to America he dropped the philosophical idealism and became much more concerned with simply the facts of art history; does that ring true to you?

HECKSCHER: Yes, yes.

SMITH: Why do you think that happened?

HECKSCHER: I think there's a tremendous dividing line between the German

Panofsky, who was a genius and did beautiful things, and the American Panofsky, who of course was liberated through the medium of the English language. German is encapsulated and complicated, and if it isn't complicated, it's under suspicion. And Panofsky's German was the most difficult German; even I had to struggle with it. But his English was lucid and beautiful, and he was very conscious of the fact that English had liberated his mind. He could think much better in English than in German, and he had a wonderful vocabulary. So I think there is every reason to say the Anglo-Saxon Panofsky was a different person from the German Panofsky.

SMITH: What about you? Are the Anglo-Saxon, the German, and the Dutch Heckschers three different people?

HECKSCHER: To me, yes. I try to accommodate myself to it and to learn, learn, learn. As you know, I'm a Canadian citizen and I'll keep it that way, unless they cut me out, and then I may be homeless and drifting. I wouldn't care a damn. You see, I want to end my life as a homeless man, living on heat registers in the winter and eating out of garbage cans; that is my dream of life. That is the highest triumph: independence.

SMITH: The absolute bourgeois?

HECKSCHER: Yes, well I can't deny that I was educated in a bourgeois fashion, but that doesn't condemn me eternally to the bourgeoisie.

SMITH: So you settled in Britain. I understand that the German exile community in London was very separated from British life in general, very insulated. Was that true for you?

HECKSCHER: No, I lived with a British girl, Helen Wright, and she was very happy-making. She was the daughter of the publisher of the oldest British journal, somewhere in Norwich. She was high society, which was not the attractive point because when I met her I didn't know anything, but she had an eighteenth-century house on the Thames. When there were races the mayor of London sat on her property with her and his wife and me, and we watched the races together, which bored me to tears, but it was nice, you know? We are still in contact, she and I. She was a nice, wonderful creature. I met her when she was sixteen, in Germany. She came there to learn German, and she wrote me a letter from Lübeck, where she had seen the organ which Bach had played. But her German sentence said that she had seen Bach's organ and had played on it, which had a sort of double meaning which was very comical.

[Tape V, Side Two]

SMITH: You said you went to Oxford.

HECKSCHER: Yes, Corpus Christi College. I took a course in palaeography from E. A. Lowe. He and I became friends, strangely enough. I still have photographs of myself wearing a cap and gown, which you had to wear to

lectures and for meals and so on. Palaeography is one of my hobbies, and I learned a great deal from E. A. Lowe. He was a Princetonian, originally. It was a totally English setting at Corpus Christi, and I lectured at Girton College. I was the only man who ever slept overnight in Girton College, because a tremendous fog descended after my lecture and the taxi driver said, "We can't move." So they found a bed for me. I gave a wonderful lecture on the cultural renaissance in the thirteenth century—the use of telescopes and so on. This is hardly every mentioned because they didn't yet scan the heavens with the telescopes, but they looked at inscriptions from a distance, and corn fields and such things. [laughter]

Somebody said that if you lecture to the public you have to simply single out one person and address this person. You would look a little bit left and right, but address mainly this one person. The students were all sitting at an open fireplace and I had a little pulpit from which I spoke. There was a Chinese girl, who seemed to be going along with everything I said, which was wonderful you know, so I felt uplifted and inspired. After my lecture I went down and shook her hand and said, "How very nice to have you," and she said, "I don't speak English." She had just come from China. [laughter] So, this was one of life's illusions, you know?

SMITH: Did you go to the Warburg frequently? Were you part of that circle?

HECKSCHER: I was never accepted, really, as part of the circle. I went there and studied there and, as I say, I contributed to Hans Meier's publications about bibliography. Buchthal and I worked on a manuscript on the Renaissance, by a Frenchman, [Jean] Adhémar, who I think is still alive and at the Louvre, and we did an enormous amount of changing and correcting. Adhémar wrote a beautiful book which I have on *Nachleben* in the Renaissance, a wonderful reference work which I worked my way through. I still have a copy with all my penciled notes in it. So Buchthal and I worked on this joint project.

SMITH: Was that Fritz Saxl's idea?

HECKSCHER: Yes, yes. They paid me for certain work, the way everybody was paid, and I did good work, I thought. I liked Meier immensely, and I was terribly shocked when he was killed.

SMITH: What were your plans in England, what were your goals?

HECKSCHER: To survive.

SMITH: No one was getting a teaching post.

HECKSCHER: No, I had no hope. I had hardly any ambitions. The only thing that mattered was to survive and to learn, which is still my motto. I volunteered for the British army, you know. I wanted to wring a few German necks. Otto Boll did it, but I was incarcerated before I could join the army, which, for a pacifist, was quite a decision. Otto had an Iron Cross, first class, which is quite

choice, and when we came out of the subway and saw the news of the crystal night, when Jewish things were smashed, he threw an object into a waste-paper basket. I said, "Otto, what was it?" He said, "My Iron Cross." I told him I needed it for my collection of *curiosa*, and he said, "To hell with it." I understood, you know; it was his act of disdain.

I had lots of English friends in Great Braxted Hall, and that was a totally English setting, except the lady of the house was born in Japan and raised in a castle in Murano, so she was Italian speaking and somehow had Germanic parents. She became very ill at the end of the war. She lost half a lung, and Henry, who was stationed in England before the invasion of Normandy, phoned me and said, "Renate is very ill and she has lost her lung." I went to a cocktail party in Rutgers University and found a Russian Jewish man, whose name I forget, who had invented streptomycin. He had been in Russia and had gone to a tubercular hospital for children and had cured fifty children; he simply rejuvenated them. I said to him, "Where can I get streptomycin?" He said, "Go to any drugstore in New York and they'll have it." So I sent it and I got a letter from customs saying if I tried to smuggle a drug like that again I'd get seven years in prison.

At that time I lived in a house in Princeton which was divided, and the other half belonged to a professor and his wife, who was my nude model.

Whenever my own wife was in New York, shopping, and he, the professor, was lecturing at Princeton, she undressed for me and I made a huge drawing of her, naked. I went to her and said, "Look at this letter." She said, "Dope. My stepfather is in Washington. He'll give you permission." So before long I got fifty little slips of paper stamped by the government—"life-saving drugs"—with signatures and so on. So I went every week to La Guardia airport and was allowed to go straight to the pilot of the plane. I didn't have to filter through customs. Soon I knew all of the pilots by name. They flew to England with my little parcels of "life-saving drugs," and Renate's life was saved.

Then came the birthday of the professor, and his wife, in my presence, gave him the nude drawing. I've never seen a man happier than that. He was delighted. After a while I heard from Renate's husband, who was a farmer, that she had leukemia. I was in Iowa at the time and I showed the letter to an oncologist and he said, "Forget it, don't touch it. She has no chance of survival." I wrote to Henry and said, "There is a quack in Zürich called Max Edwin Bircher." You may have heard of a cereal called müesli. Bircher's father was the müesli man and Bircher was a quack, so Henry and I shared the expense of sending this girl to Zürich, because English people couldn't take pounds out of England, and she's still alive. Can you imagine? She visited us recently from England and we are wonderful friends.

Bircher performed miracles. He cured any kind of cancer if it was found on time, and Renate came on time, luckily. I went to Zürich to shake his hand, and he was a grim Swiss man, who said, "You talk too much." I said, "I just came to shake your hand and I'll leave." He said, "Take your shirt off." I told him I didn't come as a patient and he said, "You talk too much. Take your shirt off." I took my shirt off, he listened to my lungs, and he said, "Do you have varicose veins?" I said, "No. Do I need them?" He said, "Don't say silly things to me. I'm deadly serious." He was very disappointed in me. He said, "You are a weakling and you have no muscles. There's nothing in you." He wrote a prescription for me to go to his sanatorium. I said, "I have a ticket to go by boat from Genoa to Barcelona." He said, "Tear it up." So I went to his sanatorium, and I spent the two most wonderful weeks of my life there. I was turned into a bunch of muscles. I rowed on a choppy lake. I walked in dewy grass at six o'clock in the morning. I climbed mountains.

Bircher and I became friends, and he did what he never did with patients, he took me to his own property. He had four hundred square kilometers of land in the Alps. There he had a village with seventeenth-century houses for his family, his sons and so on. So I learned a tremendous amount from him, and he taught me medical tricks, like the laying on of hands. I could cure people and alleviate pain. My daughter has the same gift. If you have toothache she puts

her paws on it for forty-five minutes and the toothache is gone and will never come back. She treated patients for a doctor and she learned it professionally. This is very important iconological information, which I thought you needed.

[laughter]

SMITH: You met Gombrich at this time, when you were living in London?

HECKSCHER: Yes, I met him and I was his grateful guest. His wife is a nice Czechoslovakian lady. They are wonderful people and wonderful hosts, and, as I said, Gombrich was one of the coronations of the Warburg of London.

SMITH: Did you meet [Rudolf] Wittkower?

HECKSCHER: Wittkower was my teacher, in this sense: When I came back to Duke University, I said, "I am a novice in the American scene," so he tutored me on how to behave and what to expect. I said, "Rudi, what can I do for you?" He said, "I hate the idea of Panofsky getting one honorary degree after another." So I said, "I'll get you one." I went to one of my trustees at Duke and I said, "I have a wonderful chance for you to give an honorary degree to a most distinguished art historian, Rudi Wittkower," and he got it. I gave a wonderful speech praising Wittkower.

SMITH: How do you assess Wittkower's work?

HECKSCHER: Highly. There is nothing more wonderful than what he has written. He was a tremendously gifted man.

SMITH: We've been talking to some people about an apparent competition between Gombrich and Wittkower.

HECKSCHER: Was there such a thing? I didn't know that, but I would say that Wittkower towers above everybody. Wittkower saw my drawings when he was at Columbia and he said, "These are the most wonderful drawings I've seen. We'll have an exhibition at Columbia."

He was having lunch with a German, and somebody mentioned a nasty article in the *Times Literary Supplement*. At that time, articles in the *Supplement* were not signed, and this was an art-historical review of a book, which was poisonous. The German said, "Who could have written it?" Wittkower said, "I have absolutely no doubt. It can only be Edgar Wind." And then he had a heart attack and fell down and was dead at the restaurant. Interesting isn't it? That was the end of Wittkower. This art historian, whose name I forget, told me the death scene, which was gruesome of course. I was very fond of Wittkower and I must say, he was my tutor. He taught me how to run shows and how to run a department. He was one of my main mechanical advisers, and he was very successful. I was sad to see him go. He was at the Warburg when I was a *punkus minimus*, and he helped me when I wrote my first articles. He read my English critically and corrected it. He was the editor of the *Journal of the Warburg Institute*—he and somebody else. Our friendship began because I

learned from him. It wasn't just criticism, it was helpful suggestions and ideas.

Did you ever meet him?

SMITH: No. We interviewed Margot Wittkower for this project.

HECKSCHER: Do you know her?

SMITH: I haven't met her, no. Another person did the interview with her.

HECKSCHER: Oh, I see. Well, I have good memories of her. Rudi was just so wonderful and so sacrificial. He jokingly referred to this honorary degree, but I was sure I could get him one.

SMITH: Did you know John Summerson or Anthony Blunt?

HECKSCHER: Anthony Blunt and I had lunch every weekday for a whole year, and then suddenly, during the war, he vanished, and when he came back he wore a very elegant English officer's uniform. I said, "Anthony, where the hell have you been?" He said, "I was in the battle of Arras." I asked him to describe it, and he gave me the most beautiful description of the noises of the battle. He was a very patriotic Englishman. Then I had a job at the National Gallery in Washington D.C., and at a cocktail party somebody bumped into me and said, "Did you know that Anthony Blunt was a traitor and a homosexual?" I said, "I didn't know it, and if he was, fine. It ain't my business." And they said he was a communist and he wrote communist articles during the war. I said, "Well, I didn't see them." We talked art history, you know?

When I heard this news I went home and typed a letter to Anthony, which is a classical letter, I think. I said to him, "I heard about the trouble which you are having at the moment, and my prayer is that with the help of the divinities which rule this world, you will soon be free to be totally an art historian again." I showed this letter to an English friend who said, "I will never talk to you again." I said, "Your bloody patriotism has gotten in the way of your thinking." He gave secrets to the Russians, who were our allies. Don't forget, they weren't the enemy; it wasn't like giving secrets to Hitler. But a traitor is a traitor. I didn't know any of the other people. I simply knew him as a colleague and as a wonderful man. He was snooty, more than he should have been. He sort of walked two paces behind the queen with his hands on his kidneys. He was the queen's art adviser.

I met Queen Elizabeth and felt terribly tempted to ask her, "How do you feel about Anthony Blunt?" but I didn't. I'd had a long talk with her in Holland, and I did everything wrong. I had in my pocket instructions on how to behave when being introduced to Her Majesty. The Canadian ambassador was a friend who said, "You and Mary will be introduced to Queen Elizabeth." We were five thousand Commonwealth citizens standing in an oval in a building in Holland waiting for Her Majesty, and for the Canadian group they had drawn two chalked shoe prints where Mary and I would stand when the queen came, but we stood

with the ugly masses. At the moment the queen appeared, forty-five minutes late, the British band played, "I'm the girl that can't say no." It was the most embarrassing thing because Princess Margaret had just met Captain Townsend illegitimately again, although she had promised not to do it. She was the girl who couldn't say no. [laughter] So Her Majesty appeared, flanked by the usual general and admiral, and she came to us and my wife and I stepped forward. My wife made the ugliest curtsy I've ever seen—although she had an English education and should have known better—and I had a laughing fit. The queen didn't share my laughing. She gave me a gloved hand and the ambassador introduced me, and she said, "I'm very pleased to meet you. Tell me a little bit about what you're doing." I said, "I'm a professor here, I teach." She said, "Do you teach in Dutch?" I said, "Oh yes." She said, "How curious." [laughter] I said, "How was the exhibition?" She came from an exhibition which was called *Shakespeare and Elizabeth*—her great predecessor, Elizabeth. She said, "Just wonderful." I said, "Isn't it a pity this show can't be moved to England?" She said, "I would be prepared to give any of my palaces to show it." I said, "Shouldn't we take practical steps?" She said, "Why don't we ask our cultural ambassador?" So I beckoned the nice ambassador and said, "John, could you get Mr. so-and-so, the cultural ambassador," and John, with dignified haste, went out and the queen and I went on talking about Queen Elizabeth and the fact that there

were paintings of the old queen from private collections, which were never seen in public. I said it would be heavenly for the English public to see these things. Then the man came back again, downcast, and said, "Mr. so-and-so has a nosebleed. He can't come." He was nervous, you know, to appear before the queen. Then we talked about Holland and teaching and so on. It was a long talk and I realized she was getting very restless and she was crossing her legs. She left and went to a toilet behind potted palms, so that was our farewell. But nothing ever came of this plan, which was a pity because it was a heavenly exhibition. Then I went with my wife to a very posh restaurant and had chocolate and whipping cream and read the rules for meeting the queen and the first rule was: While talking to her Majesty, you will never ask questions, but leave the topic to her. I'd done everything wrong, but it yielded nice results, and she was, the poor dear, accustomed to barbarians.

[Tape VI, Side One]

SMITH: You wanted to start this time by talking about Queen Elizabeth and her art collection.

HECKSCHER: Oh, very briefly. I was in Windsor Castle ages ago to look at the huge collection of old-master drawings there, and I said to the curator, an art historian and a very nice woman, "Isn't it a pity that it's hidden here? It's difficult to get to, difficult to get permission to consult it, and I'm sure the queen

is uninterested." She said, "What do you mean? She comes here every night she spends at the castle to look at old-master drawings. I stand behind her and give her a running art-historical commentary and she takes notes on it. She's deeply involved and interested." This is again my philosophy, that in the historical view, common sense can always lead to complete misunderstandings—of course anything that happens is history, even our discussion; when I finish a sentence, history is changed profoundly. When you think of the queen you think of horse racing and dogs and so on, and completely overlook the possibility that she is art historically very much *au courant* and worthy of being the owner of such a wonderful collection. Amen.

SMITH: I wanted to go back to Panofsky a little bit and what we were talking about at dinner, *les bons détails*.

HECKSCHER: Well, I wrote an article about it, "Petites Perceptions: An Account of sortes Warburgianae." [*The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 4 (1974): 101–134.] I won't repeat what I wrote in the article, but I was interested to find out where this idea occurred, of God inhabiting details or minutiae, and I think I discovered the original source in [Gottfried Wilhelm] Leibniz, the German philosopher. This led me to many questions which nobody can answer. If I ask my colleagues a question I usually get deadly silence. If somebody asks me a question I spend up to ten days to find an appropriate

answer. Roxanne always laughs at me and says I am wasting my time for other people. I now have a list of people to whom I have sent things at their request, who never acknowledged it. I have red circles around their names.

I have asked questions which are vital to me. For example, this philosopher, Leibniz, was a great figure in German philosophy before Kant and I remember vaguely that he was Polish. He had a Polish name; it wasn't German at all. I never got an answer to my question—What was his Polish name?—but it inspired me to write a little article, which is now beginning to take shape, on Germans who weren't German. Albrecht Dürer's name wasn't Dürer, it was Ajtos—Hungarian. His father was an emigrant from Ajtos, which is a little hamlet in the vicinity of Budapest. He was der Thürer in German, and then he softened it to Dürer with a "D" and left out the "th."

One of the greatest military political figures in Germany was Helmut von Moltke. He is one of my ancestors because his mother was an aunt of my mother. My mother's mother was a Paschen, which is a Mecklenburg family, and the mother of von Moltke was von Paschen. Both of them had the same first name, Henriette. Von Moltke himself was Danish, but he was the image of the Prussian officer. He won the battle against Napoleon III and started the German Reich with Bismarck. He went for eight years as a young man to a Danish military academy. He couldn't speak German; he was totally Danish.

Germans always wipe this away. So I have a whole list of Germans who weren't German. Lodewijk van Beethoven came from a beet farm—*biethoeve*. He was the greatest German composer after Bach, and here is somebody who decidedly came from Belgium and had a Belgian name. He still has the v-a-n prefix. Then there were my Flemish ancestors with the name Vorster. They were Flemish-speaking Belgians who were Huguenots, and for religious reasons they fled to Silesia and their name became Foerster, with "oe" and "f." So I have a whole list of such people whom the Germans claim. They try artificially to suppress the fact that they weren't really Germans; they had other ethnic backgrounds.

SMITH: You were saying that Panofsky drowned in details and that meant that theory did not work very well with his method.

HECKSCHER: I think he abstained from generalizations. He was very careful in his descriptions of styles and so on. His *Idea*, which is a sort of bible of iconography, shows that he avoided generalizations. There were always certain of his works which he doubted. I said his work on thirteenth-century architecture was one of the most enchanting things he'd written and he said, "Well, thanks a lot but I have heavy doubts about it." He was hypersensitive to any form of criticism and doubt, including his own. He made horrible blunders. For example, you can visualize the engraving by Dürer of *Melencolia I*: she sits with her limp wings, in a meditative pose, against a building. A ladder leans against

the same building, and it has seven rungs, and Panofsky said this showed that the building was not finished. [Walter] Friedlaender wrote, with the voice of authority, that the ladder showed the building was in ruins and had to be repaired. I found endless intact buildings with seven-rung ladders leaning against them. They represented the House of Wisdom. That is the whole point of *Melencolia*. We know from Dürer's secret diary that this engraving was created at a critical point in his life, when he disputed his own conception of beauty and said that beauty was not measurable. So at the feet of *Melencolia* lie geometrical instruments which are useless, according to me, and the seven-runged ladder leans against the House of Wisdom, and each rung has a different name and a different quality, and if you ascend it and you embrace *Sapientia*, then you've reached the height and you don't need any instruments or any lowly things. I wrote an article on this, which has now been published in the revised edition of *Art and Literature*. I don't militate against Panofsky, but I just implicitly show that in this case his ideas were totally untenable.

SMITH: What was your source for determining it was the House of Wisdom?

HECKSCHER: Endless representations preceding Dürer of woodcuts showing the House of Wisdom with a seven-rung ladder and some kind of male or female figure sitting by it and being wisdom incarnate. So I think it's a totally convincing thing, but Panofsky didn't want to accept it when I talked to him. He

hated any casting of doubts on his pet theories; that is a weakness scholars have, you know. You fall in love with your idea and you don't want to abandon it.

SMITH: But could you convince him that he had made a mistake?

HECKSCHER: No. I published it long ago. Joachim Camerarius, who died in 1574, was the first to write a little essay on Dürer's *Melencolia*. He wrote a sort of interpretation in Latin, with lots of mistakes, and I published this, the original text. I made an English translation of it, followed by a thirty-page commentary with a Heckscherian index at the end. I got a medal for that from the Society of Indexers, in England. I am one of the four medalists of the Society of Indexers. No, I think I was diplomatic. If I see there is no chance of convincing someone, why should I try to ram home my ideas?

SMITH: You had mentioned that you also had a run-in with him over the Abbot Suger book [*Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St. Denis and its Art Treasures*].

HECKSCHER: I wrote a very critical review of it, praising but also criticizing, and this upset him very much. He invited me, as he said, to come to the Institute for Advanced Study as a member, to have it out with me, but we never talked about Abbot Suger. It was one of the most American things he ever wrote because he imitated a profile in the *New Yorker*. It turned into a profile of Suger. Suger was a tiny man, Panofsky was a tiny man, and Napoleon was a

tiny man, and Panofsky suddenly discovered that a tiny man, just because he was tiny, was pushed energetically into showing that he was tough and could do things. All three of these people were like that; there was this trinity in Panofsky's mind, and that I found very amusing. I of course never criticized that aspect. My review appeared in a Canadian classical journal ["Spiritualia sub metaphoris corporalium." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1947): 210–214]. I wrote it while I was in Canada, and it got me into Princeton.

I had never taught art history until after World War II. I taught Middle High German and High German in Carleton College, in Canada, and I had wonderful students who are still friends of mine. I was a founding member of Carleton College because I was the first professor and the first chairman of a department which had no staff. I was head and body of this department and got \$45 a month. I got engaged to Mary Leitch and I didn't even have money to invite her to go with me to a movie. We stood in the snow talking, nose to nose, you know? That was about all we could do. I did lowly jobs. I knew people who had two dogs and while they were doing office work I fed the dogs, let the dogs pee, and then I got a meal free. So I just barely survived with this funny Carleton College position, which was my first serious academic job.

Then I applied for a job in Saskatoon, which is near the Arctic Circle, in Saskatchewan. Saskatoon is so high north that there are practically speaking no

more trees. There were oak trees to be sure but they were never higher than three or four feet. That was a miracle to see because it was a desert. It was so cold in the winter that the desert consisted of a flat plain with little grasses and growth, and then the desert split open into deep crevices. It was like ice in the winter. The river was so cold that heavy trucks would drive up and down on it in winter. The bridges were so high that a truck could go underneath them.

The governor general of Saskatchewan wanted the city of Saskatoon to be elegant, so he planned to build a hotel which would be called Lord Besborough. There was a typical midwestern headline in the paper: "Lord Besborough Expects Erection in Spring," and everybody laughed of course! That was Canada. The head of the Canadian Broadcasting Company was the president of the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, and he interviewed me in Ottawa. He spoke strange English, with a Scottish accent, and I could hardly understand him, but I was humble, just trying to get a job. He said, "Are you married?" I said no and he asked me if I was going to get married. I said, "I am on the point of marrying Mary Leitch." He said, "The Scottish family? The almost Earl of Perth?" I said, "Yes, he's my future father-in-law." He said, "The job is yours." So it was through no merit of mine. [laughter]

SMITH: I did want to begin to talk about your career as an educator and your philosophy of education. It seems to me that it really started at the prison camp

at Farnham [Quebec].

HECKSCHER: You're absolutely right. At Farnham I found that among the two thousand prisoners there were roughly a hundred young boys between the ages of sixteen and seventeen—sixteen was the youngest age. I asked permission of the commandant of the camp to get a barracks hut for my school, and this was granted, which was an enormous prestige thing for me. I found thirteen teachers among the prisoners, and we had eight priests. Two priests came to me for confession; they didn't trust each other. I absolved them of their sins, which were of a sexual nature, of course. Two priests were my teachers. Thirteen teachers was a huge number for a hundred students. It was the highest quality of scholarship because we had very bright people, and I got all the right people to help with teaching. I imposed very strict orders. The students were not allowed to masturbate, and they were not allowed to smoke. This promoted concentration on their work. I was very tough about it. I had difficulty only with one student, who went insane.

SMITH: Why did you think those two things were important?

HECKSCHER: I realized we were in a very specific situation. Of course, when you have young males in this kind of situation you have lots of temptation to turn to homosexuality. My favorite homosexual was a movie actor. Tony was big in Hollywood, especially as a lover of women, but he was really a homosexual and

I knew it and we talked about it. He said that the most disgusting thing in prison was to see all these amateur homosexuals. I said I totally agreed, and I thought the sexual activity should be diminished. It was very tempting, of course, but I wanted everything to funnel into concentration on their work. So it was a "concentration" camp in that sense.

SMITH: Why smoking?

HECKSCHER: Smoking I think was also an escape. The students accepted these rules. I was very Germanic and authoritarian, but the students were deeply involved and deeply interested. Once I missed a class. I had fallen asleep after lunch on my bed. We had double beds and in a room for forty we were eighty-two, so you can imagine how cramped everything was. I made a picture of this camp, so you may see it. Two thousand people for two years in the same conditions. You never saw a woman. There were military police, so nobody could get close to us. Of course there were searchlights all the time. You couldn't sit on the toilet seat and be happy, because a searchlight was always turned on you wherever you were. The architectural construction was such that they had four towers with searchlights and they were always looking in toilets and bedrooms—this is what happened. So for two years there was absolutely no privacy. You couldn't do anything without being observed. But the students escaped into these classes. In a sense it was a liberation; there was a time when

they were mentally away from this prison cell.

SMITH: Were you reproducing typical German *Gymnasium* education?

HECKSCHER: I was trying to give them the matric, which was the technical term for the university entrance exam of McGill University. I wasn't thinking of a German education, because I had never been in a German *Gymnasium* myself. I was in a *lycée*, in Holland.

SMITH: Did they study in English or in German?

HECKSCHER: Nobody spoke German. German was banished except for German classes. We all spoke good or bad English. My English was not bad at all at the time. When Dr. Tory came with his books for the military camp and I was introduced to him, his first question to the commandant was, "Does the prisoner speak English?" The colonel said, "Oh yes, very well, he can speak and understand." I wasn't deaf yet. Everything was fine except I had one teacher, a historian, who was a communist. He was a snooty man. In his field, which was not very predominant, the students didn't do too well, but they made up with other A+'s, you know, to balance that. This experience meant that I had to face groups of students and my stage fright was diminished. It was a very useful introduction to academic life.

SMITH: What did you teach, personally?

HECKSCHER: I taught Shakespeare. McGill prescribed a comedy and a

tragedy: *Richard III* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, something like that. So my students learned it by heart and we acted it, without reference to the text. We always memorized, so I still know *Richard III* by heart. It's not a terribly exciting play, but of course *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is divine, and the students did fantastically well. In other words, they overshot the aim of the university demands by far, in knowledge, and this is why their tests were of such high quality.

This encouraged me when I was in Duke teaching the black children. I had a feeling I could really do a much better job teaching younger students. If I were a teacher I would take small children, three or four years old, and treat them like adults and forget about this sort of infantile worship of some romantic idea, which historically is quite recent. It goes hand in hand with the idea that the Alps are beautiful, that nature is beautiful, which is a completely cockeyed idea. Everybody hated nature and the Alps, and then in the second half of the eighteenth century, Hölderlin in Germany and Haller in Switzerland wrote long poems on *die Alpen*, which were romantic and set the wheel spinning; then the horrible French Revolution came with its worship of nature. Petrarch climbed a mountain, but he used his solitude to read a book, you know, he didn't admire nature. There is enough testimony in medieval writings to show that nature inspired people to horror and fear. If I look with a magnifying glass at an

unmade bed, it's like the Alps with snow, you know? It's just a huge mess made by God.

I spent much time in Switzerland, and I was always disgusted by the mountains. I went there with a painters' colony, and they were terribly nice people, I must say—young artists, my age and older. We were all going to climb a mountain and while we were going through a Swiss village I heard the music of Bach played on an old instrument. I approached the house and knocked at the door. There were two sisters playing a harpsichord. I spent the whole day listening to their harpsichord music and the others said, "Where is Heckscher? He has vanished." I never moved on to the mountain because that was hateful to me. I just wanted to listen to Bach, and I had a wonderful time.

No, I think *les détails* you don't find in mountains, but I don't want to go into detail about my aversion to nature. *Natura* is a feminine power which rules the world much more than the divine male power called God, G-o-d, which, spelled backwards is D-o-g, you know? Why all this upheaval? It is an invention of the human mind, and if there is something gigantic ruling all these events, something which is incomprehensible to human minds, then forget it. Leave it to the devil and let's go back to reality on earth. Why should I walk through these fears and worship something which man invented?

I love the Bible, of course. The Bible, for the art historian, is of course

one of the basic books. Panofsky always stressed this. When I taught medieval art and Renaissance art, the Bible was almost always the text which was behind things—the psalms and so on. So I can say that almost every night I read in the Bible, and I find astonishing things which hadn't struck me before. I read the psalms, which are beautiful, all the time. So I stress this in my teaching—not so much religion, but theology. I had a priest who taught theology to my students, which they didn't really need, but I think it helped again to overcome the horrors of the prison camp. I had a group of oldies, men who were without education, who were terribly suicidal and unhappy. I met them twice a week and tried to talk them out of their agony and melancholy, not to cheer them up, but to give them food for thinking and liberating their minds. So that was my educational beginning.

SMITH: When you got out of prison camp, did you go to work immediately as a teacher in a university?

HECKSCHER: Not the next minute, of course. I went to Toronto and I gave a lecture in the German department about Jean Paul Richter. I may have mentioned that to you. In the German department was Ulrich Goldsmith, whom I mentioned before. He was my nicest prison friend, I would say. He was a holy man to me, a man who was working on his Ph.D. and doing very well—a brilliant mind. After one of my lectures he came to me and said, "There was a

blond girl in the first row who said you look very cute, like an Austrian ski runner." I said that was offensive to me, but okay. He said, "I want you to meet her." He gave me her address in Ottawa and I took her out and then we lived together and finally got married, but Ulrich Goldsmith didn't want me to marry her. He wanted to marry her himself and just wanted me to report on her. I'd misunderstood him.

SMITH: This is Mary Leitch.

HECKSCHER: Yes. Ulrich was in such despair. Then he married the wrong person; she was insane, and they begot a daughter who is, I believe, in an insane asylum. In spite of this our friendship was never interrupted. He was in great despair but he was not angry at me. It was just fate. Then he married a very nice woman who has this herd of fifty llamas in Colorado, and this is where he is. He got a very nice festschrift, and he publishes very excellent things on Stefan George; I mentioned this to you.

So I began learning and then Dr. Tory, who had pushed me into the McGill exam, started Carleton College in Ottawa and said, "Will you take over the German department?" As I said, I earned \$45 a month and conducted intensive night classes. At the height of World War II there were lots of young ambitious people who went to Ottawa to get credits so that when the war ended they could finish their bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and so on, and so this

was the idea behind Carleton College. I also did intelligence work. I had Canadian officers who were marked to be dropped behind German enemy lines, and they had to speak flawless German of course. I said, "Men, even officers, under stress do an enormous amount of swearing, and I will teach you how to swear in German and how to use powerful, magic words." I never followed the fate of those people, but I had a fairly good conscience about it.

After my first real academic work, two years in Saskatchewan, I went to Winnipeg, to the University of Manitoba, and there I was second in rank, but I was the only one in the German department who knew Middle High German. The head was shamelessly bad in his German. I was the only one who was fluent and who really knew Middle High German. We had the standard literature of romantic mediocrities in prose, which I had to read with them. So I spent two years in Winnipeg.

SMITH: Teaching German language and literature?

HECKSCHER: Yes. There was no art history except in Toronto, and every job was of course filled. In Toronto I went to a professor who taught drawing of nude models, and I said, "I haven't seen nude women in two years, so I will attend your nude classes." Do you know what silverpoint is? You have prepared paper and a piece of silver, and the silver makes the most beautiful line as you draw with it on the prepared paper. I made minute, beautiful drawings,

and all the students were females. I was the only man. All the men were at war. After the first session they came and stood around and admired my little drawings. They were doing these huge charcoal things.

Charles Comfort was the instructor, and he became head of the Canadian National Gallery. Of course we became friends, and when I was Mighty Mouse in Utrecht I had a Fulbright grant to invite a foreigner every year. Of course Charles Comfort came, and Chuck Parkhurst, who was second in command at the National Gallery, and Lotte Brand Philip. So I think I invited very suitable personalities to join the department and give lectures. I had one wonderful man from California who was fluent in French, so fluent that he could go to French-speaking Belgium and give lectures in French. He was the pride of my department, Richard Popkin. His mother is a fairly well-known writer, and Popkin was a wonderful asset to this kind of teaching. I didn't interfere with their teaching; I let them do their own spiel. After Lotte Brand Philip was there, the students came to me and said, "Can't we nail her down and keep her here? She's such a wonderful teacher and listener." She'd listen to students outside of class. I also cultivated this approach: to be always available to students at any time, to listen, and to really let them talk. I tried to guide them into channels of interest that would evoke their special gifts and not censor them if they were not doing too well in this or that. I said, "I am only interested in those areas where

you really do good work." So I created, especially in graduate school, a few very gifted students. I continued this approach to the bitter end.

Speaking of museums, I started the museum at Duke University and people were very skeptical and said I was making a horrible blunder because I was spending close to a million dollars for uncertified works of art which came from a warehouse in New York and were collected by an art dealer called [Ernest] Brummer. Brummer had come from Hungary, he was Jewish, and he had gone to Paris, where he was a garbage collector. He found that he could sell sculptures which people had thrown away at a good profit. He was told that Monsieur Rodin was the best sculptor in Paris, so he knocked at the door of Rodin. Chance willed that Rodin came in person and opened the door and there was Brummer, who said, "I want to work for you gratis. I will not accept any money." He was still a garbage collector, but he worked for Rodin, and he learned a lot. Apparently he was a brilliant man, and as soon as I knew that the Brummer collection was for sale, I pounced on it. Without anybody at Duke knowing about it, I went to New York and I talked to the widow of Brummer, who was Polish or Czechoslovakian, and she spoke Viennese German, so this helped. My competitors were the museum in Cleveland and the Metropolitan Museum, who also knew this fantastic collection of sculpture was available.

So I got the collection for Duke and worked with Mrs. Brummer and put

numbers on each item and recorded everything and went back to the university and the president was enthusiastic. I said, "Is there money?" He said yes. But it turned out there was no money and he got into trouble as a result. This was not my fault, but it turned into a real scandal. Two trucks laden with this heavenly sculpture came to Duke and I put them into the basement of the chapel. Then I found that the military people had air conditioning in their buildings. I had wooden sculpture which needed 50 percent humidity and no more. The officers were nice and they allowed me to put this valuable wood into their sheds, which were air conditioned.

When the museum opened, I had Rudi Wittkower make a speech. Janson came and made an opening speech, and it turned into a smashing success when somebody from France came and said that one of the madonnas was the missing madonna from Chartres Cathedral. I had misdiagnosed it. I thought it was twelfth century and it was thirteenth century; I made a real blunder. But the museum was a great success—that was 1970. Just before I started my museum career, I went to the Outer Islands and I was stung by a brown widow spider, which means if you are stung in your arm your arm is amputated. My arm turned black and I didn't know what had hit my shoulder. I went to the emergency room with this black arm, and then they wanted to amputate it. My doctor came and said, "No. Put ice packs around it."

So that was the beginning of my museum career. I couldn't use my right arm and hand, and I found I couldn't write with my left hand, so I used a dictaphone. I was very bothered. That was a funny beginning. I was totally amateurish, but I have a feeling that being an amateur means you are free to see things more clearly than a conventional professional museum person. I had wonderful volunteers, ladies who coordinated tours, and my black children also conducted tours. You should have seen the faces of the dumb Durham do-goody whities who came to see the museum and were confronted with my little black children, beautifully dressed, not only explaining everything but answering questions.

SMITH: Maybe you should explain at this point what your project was with the black children in Durham.

HECKSCHER: My secretary was Betty Sands, a wonderful woman who was married to a Protestant minister. One day she said to me, "I am working every weekend in a slum." The city of Durham is surrounded by twelve slums, of which eight are black and four are white. Betty said, "I want you to come and look at it." So I went and there was a minister whom I knew because he was the man who also cleaned my office. I didn't know he was a church minister.

[Tape VI, Side Two]

HECKSCHER: So I held classes for little black children on Saturday and Sunday, little boys from ages five to ten. We all sat or lay on a dirty mattress, drawing, and I supplied paper and crayons and so on. I got horrible migraine headaches and I couldn't take it any more. Then I said, "I want to meet intelligent older children," so I got four girls and two boys, and I said to them, "Vocabulary building. Ready? Go." I taught them for about seven years. Every Saturday and Sunday I worked with the children. I had no free weekends. I didn't teach them vocabulary, I lied. I taught them Greek and Latin. I got them into Latin and they were ten times as good as a professor teaching classical Latin in the university. The results were incredible. Of course this corroborated me in my feeling that theories about genetic diminishment in black people are completely invented by ill-willing malevolent people like Nixon, who subscribed to this kind of thing. I fell in love with the oldest girl, who was the least handsome of all. She wrote the most beautiful poetry.

I knew the granddaughter of Henry Ford because she was married to an art historian whose name I forget. She invited me to Ossabaw Island, which is an island three times the size of the Bermudas off the coast, near the city of Savannah. It's the first of these golden islands and it is totally private. It has a sheriff and no unauthorized human being may set foot on the island because it is

privately owned. In 1924, Henry Ford started a beautiful, palatial, Spanish-style house, which had lots of apartments. It had a guest book, which Ford was the first to sign and I was the last to sign, in my time. I spent summers there, studying, and I had my own apartment. There were black ladies feeding me and serving me who were the offspring of slaves. They were still living in slave houses made of seashells, you know? They became my friends and then a woman was appointed as the director of [accommodations]. There weren't very many people visiting, especially in the summer; it was too hot. So I wrote to this lady and said I would come with six children, and I wanted accommodations for the six. The girls would share two to a room, but the boys would have their own individual rooms. I discovered that the girls all menstruated, even at eleven years old, which was to me strange, so I took Betty Sands with me and said, "You are in charge of Kotex and Tampax. That's not for Heckscher." Betty was a wonderful person and the children loved her.

So we were eight people, and I had rented a beautiful air-conditioned truck, which I drove to Savannah. When we descended from the truck there was the director, whom I'd never met. She took me aside and said, "You didn't tell me they were black." I said, "I told you they were children. I don't see any racial difference, and you will comply with this and be polite to them." Two weeks later we left and she took us back to Savannah in a speedboat across the

sound, and wept copiously because she had fallen in love with the children. I was so proud of them. They were wonderful. I taught them every day, every day. I was terribly strict, you know, I beat them when they were naughty and didn't do well. When, for example, the children got the assignment to learn by heart certain Shakespeare sonnets—"How oft when thou my music plays / Do I envy those jacks that nimbly leap to kiss the tender inward of thy hand"—if they made one mistake, they got 10¢. If it was perfect they got 25¢, which was the biggest sum a Negro child saw then. They were not fed at home; they got 25¢ a day and had to steal food in order to survive, at that time. I knew the slums in and out.

The parents were never in existence. There was only a single mother, always. I said to one mother of a little girl, Patricia, "Why is Patricia so naughty?" She said, "She's probably undernourished." So I got Mrs. Sands to feed her, and she grew into a real woman in a short time. I also asked her who was Patricia's father and her mother said, "Look sir, at night they come in one window and go out the other window. You don't see who they are. They fertilize you and you can't do much about it. In the summer it's too hot to shut the window." All the children except one were illegitimate, from one-parent families. But I met all the parents and I was accepted in this slum. I knew almost everybody and people invited me for a cup of tea or coffee. The slum

was so neglected by the city of Durham that there were no pavements, and there was just mud when it was raining. You were ankle-deep in mud. I knew older people, younger people, and I was terribly interested of course in the whole structure and the mentality of this neighborhood. Where I was living, there was an elevated section with three or four shacks, and that was a white slum. There was a policeman who only wore underwear and who shot a rifle into my window, trying to kill me, so I couldn't sleep as I wanted to, near the window; I had to find a hiding place.

My two enemies were this horrible policeman and a dog who barked all night long outside of my window. I had a Negro gardener who was a military man, totally illiterate. He couldn't write, he couldn't even read a stop sign so he couldn't get his driver's license. I taught him and another black man English, and writing; this was my educational compulsion. I said to him, "If you kill the policeman, I'll give you ten bucks, and if you kill the dog, twenty bucks." The policeman wasn't worth so much. The dog got run over by a truck. This was a dead-end street and it was full of trucks.

There was a house opposite my bedroom, the elevated section, with a woman and her three daughters, who were all prostitutes for truck drivers. It was a bordello for truck drivers. Two little boys lived there, and so I got involved with them. I had beautiful plants in my window and they came and

said, "Do you sell those plants?" I said, "Listen, I kill little boys. Don't come again." They came again, and I said, "What is it now?" They said, "We are hungry." I told them I had no candy and they said, "Do you have bread?" I said, "My God, do you need bread?" So I gave them bread with a little butter and some jam, or something like that. They had never had butter in their whole lives. It turned out they were much older than I thought. So for years those two little boys were my guests for dinner, and they grew, grew, grew. Then the youngest daughter suddenly was pregnant. I taught her how to burp a baby and not to leave her baby uncovered in the hot sun of summer in North Carolina. I discovered that she was married to a G.I. and he was in Germany, so I got her a lawyer to compel the father to pay her a regular sum on condition that she would stop seeing men. This was our secret agreement. She promised me she would not prostitute herself anymore. So those were my didactic efforts, but I learned a great deal from these black children, and I found that with a certain amount of Germanic discipline and strictness, you could get good results.

SMITH: Why teach them Latin and Greek instead of more practical topics?

HECKSCHER: First of all, without Latin and Greek you are not a human being; this is the beginning of life, you know. And it was astonishing to see how these children used Latin and Greek, and how civilized and cultured they became when they were guides in my museum [at Duke]. I paid them out of my own pocket

when they worked for me. I had lots of volunteers in the museum, but this was, to my mind, a worthwhile endeavor. I have this priest friend in Naples who teaches children only practical things, for survival, but I wanted my children to be college students. I lost touch with them. I used to go to Durham every year to see my favorite doctor, but he committed suicide, so there was no attraction.

SMITH: So you haven't kept in touch with them?

HECKSCHER: No, well . . . with whom do you keep in touch? You know, people are funny.

SMITH: Did any of them go on to college to your knowledge?

HECKSCHER: I just don't know. I introduced them all to Roxanne. I have a beautiful album with photographs of the children and me with them. Of course, I learned how to teach, and the children said to this nice girl who worked with me, "Dr. Heckscher is so difficult. You tell him a funny story and he'll laugh, and you tell him another funny story and his fist will be in your face." I said to the children, "I hear there is a complaint about me. I can tell you what it is. I am reality. I am life, and this is what you are headed for. You have to take it and be not in competition with whitey, but better than whitey. I want you to be proud and I want to de-slum you, and de-Negro-fy you." They said, "Hooray," you know?

I talked to them very frankly and we did have philosophical lessons about

their lives and their futures and their personalities. I said, "It seems very funny, but it is entirely in you how you design and shape your lives. Don't say you are a victim of this and that—tower above it." And that helped. The children were remarkable creatures after seven years, but they were tough years on me, because I never had enough time for my own research. It wasn't just idealism, it was this tremendous curiosity: what can I do to create these minds? Of course, it encouraged me in my teaching; it taught me a little bit about it. Also, the children's parents could come to me if they wanted to attend seminars and learn something. I would teach them, gratis, so they could support the ideas of their children. But I would not have anybody advise me. Parents are automatically morons—white or black, it's the same. I don't want them; they stink up the place. I wanted the students to be treated very politely, and I wanted them to be polite. I wanted them to be healthy. They had to do certain exercises to keep their bodies healthy—swimming and that kind of thing. And this worked out well, I think, on the whole. I'm not superpraising it, but it was extremely gratifying. It was part of my inner program. I'll try to find the notes and the text for you. It may be interesting to you just as a contribution to my didactic ideals. I think every human has different gifts and nobody should be uniform, which is the American idea, you know—everybody has to fit. Charlotte, my youngest daughter, works in the testing service at Princeton and that's the most

horrible place. I think tests should be custom-made for each individual.

SMITH: Did you come to any conclusions about why you were so bored at the Nederlandsch Lyceum and finally had to leave?

HECKSCHER: I think I was a rotten human being. I was a spoiled brat. I always had this feeling, "My father is a great man." I had this German illusion. "We'll skip my generation but my children will be brilliant. I am worthless but I have millions of Deutschmark behind me so I am completely safe." Then, Smash! the inflation came and life and reality looked me straight in the face. And, as I said, I had twelve years in which I stoked kettles and painted portraits and didn't read a book and my brain was beautifully pure and uncontaminated.

[laughter]

SMITH: Let's go back to 1947 and your going from Canada to the University of Iowa.

HECKSCHER: I was invited by Panofsky at that time. He was visited by the head of the art department in Iowa, who asked him if he could recommend a scholar to teach art history.

SMITH: Was that Longman?

HECKSCHER: Yes. Lester D. Longman. We were deadly enemies very soon.

SMITH: Was he an artist?

HECKSCHER: No. He was a rotten man, who had nothing and knew nothing

and he was unreliable to an astonishing degree.

SMITH: But what did he teach?

HECKSCHER: He taught modern art.

SMITH: Art history?

HECKSCHER: Well, no. He was mostly a technical administrator of a very productive department which consisted of studio artists.

SMITH: So you were the sole art historian.

HECKSCHER: I was in charge of art history, so, in a sense, I was chairman. I had my own budget and so on, but he and I never saw eye to eye, and we had endless fights. I worked in a shabby office with another man—I didn't even have my own office—and if Longman rang three times it meant I had to rush to his office. I said, "I'm not your slave. I don't like to be belled. You can ask me politely to come to your office." Then I had a fight with him in the parking lot. I said, "Lester, you are a shit. You are subhuman. You are a cheat and you are incompetent in your own field. You should be kicked sky-high out of this tenured position you have." Suddenly there was laughter behind a hedge; part of the department had heard this discussion. The University of Iowa was managed from Des Moines. I read in the *Des Moines Register*, "William S. Heckscher promoted to full professor with a high salary." I stormed into Lester's office and said, "What the hell is this?" He said, "Look Bill, with all those witnesses, what

else could I do?" This is how I got my full professorship—isn't that witty? When I left Iowa, Longman was in tears and he came with a beautiful gift for me.

SMITH: Were your students there primarily practicing artists?

HECKSCHER: Yes.

SMITH: Did you have any potential art historians?

HECKSCHER: There was Claude Marks, who was working with me, and a woman who writes art critiques for the New Yorker—I forget her name this very moment. They were my subalterns. Marks was a terribly nice Englishman, and rich, rich, rich. He had for some reason served in the U.S. Army and was an utterly decent man who then withdrew and went as a guide to the Metropolitan Museum. He was never very successful or productive.

SMITH: Now you were at Ames or at Iowa City?

HECKSCHER: I was at Iowa City—the University of Iowa—and I liked it. I loved Iowa; I found it a terribly interesting place. I was invited to open the museum, and it was a very moving experience. The president of the university, Virgil Hancher, was very fond of me and I said to him, "Do not go and watch football games." He said, "Why?" I said, "I don't like you to prostitute yourself. You can do a better job in your own office. It's not good for your health. You just sit there, 'Rah, Rah, Rah.' Don't do it." He went to a football

game, although I'd forbidden it, and he got a heart attack and died. *Voilà!* I left the U.S. because Senator McCarthy got on my nerves. I said, "This country is not my country, I'll leave. I can't take fascism."

SMITH: What kinds of classes were you teaching?

HECKSCHER: I was teaching a survey of art beginning with Egyptian art and going down to modern art. I changed it a little bit, for example, at Duke I changed it so that each professor taught in his own or her own field, which was much more interesting, and there weren't several surveys running parallel. It was more profound and more interesting for the students and more rewarding to have people who really knew what they were talking about.

SMITH: But at Duke you had a Ph.D. program, did you not, in art history?

HECKSCHER: Never at Duke. I protested against it. I said, "We are not qualified." Duke made a terrible mistake. It split the art history library between the east campus and the main campus and it took twenty-five minutes by bus to go from one to the other. It cut into a day and destroyed time, and I said I wanted to unify the collection—this was the guarantee I got from the administration: if I came to Duke, the library would be unified. They lied to me and never did it.

SMITH: But at Iowa did you teach specialized classes?

HECKSCHER: I taught mostly artists, creative artists, and I made the very

interesting discovery that a good artist is usually a brainy person. You know, a dumb artist just doesn't exist. A dumb artist was usually dumb in my classes and dumb in painting and just useless. You could get a Ph.D. at Iowa by submitting three sculptures and writing a little symbolical dissertation, which I usually wrote for the students, to ease their lives, because it was a mockery anyway.

SMITH: What are your ideas about the training of studio artists?

HECKSCHER: There was a man from South America who taught graphic arts, and he was totally admirable. He was a brilliant mind. He had come from Mexico to North America and didn't have a job at first. He studied old-master techniques in graphic arts and taught himself to engrave using the techniques of Dürer and his contemporaries. He taught wonderful classes, and he was a wonderful didactic genius. I enrolled in his courses and I learned engraving and all these other things from him. That was a great friendship. I tried to get him to Duke later, and Duke University said, "No, no." They were idiots, you know. His name was [Mauricio] Lasansky, and he was an outstanding person and a good art historian.

I had good friends at Iowa. I came there because a woman was leaving and I took her place in art history. I was totally exhausted driving a thousand miles in one go without sleeping, so I limped into the department and the secretary said, "I don't know who you are." I said, "Well, I'm too tired to

argue." Then the entire staff came and they showed me the building, all the time looking me over, wondering what I would say. We came to the end of an aisle and looked out of a window—this was just before the semester began, in September. There were hedges and there was a man lying on a naked girl, doing what men do, you know? Everybody was just aghast and paralyzed, and I said with a loud voice, "I think I like it here." That made me immediately accepted as a colleague.

So I got in touch with all these artists there and I learned something. Lasansky was my marvelous introduction to graphic arts. Panofsky has written a beautiful essay in his Dürer book on burin engraving, the technique which Albrecht Dürer used. Dürer himself didn't do any woodcuts, he farmed them out. He made drawings on a piece of wood and somebody carved them out for him. But he did his own engraving, which apparently he also learned from his Hungarian father, who taught him the silverpoint technique, which I described to you. Dürer's first self-portrait at the age of fourteen shows him looking at the beholder, and it was done with silverpoint. It's a heavenly medium and I always wanted students to learn it.

I gave drawing lessons at Duke. We went on excursions to Italy every summer, and we were not allowed to photograph in museums, but nobody prevented us from drawing. So I showed my students how to draw a sculpture in

linear outline and so on, each in their own style, and this caught on beautifully. All my students were equipped with silverpoint and did beautiful drawings in museums. The drawings of course were much better than photographs because the work of art had gone through their minds and souls. That was a didactic success, I would say, and it was appreciated by the students.

SMITH: I noticed from your archives that around 1954 you were starting to look for other jobs because you wanted to leave Iowa.

HECKSCHER: Yes.

SMITH: Rensselaer Lee was helping you, and I guess Panofsky was helping you as well.

HECKSCHER: A horrible man from Holland came to the Institute for Advanced Study, Jan van Gelder. He was the head of the art department [at Utrecht University] and Panofsky pushed me and I was accepted; it took something like two years. You see, a professor in Holland is not appointed by a dean or a president or any such crap, but is appointed by the entire faculty. The faculty forms a committee of people who read all the publications of the candidate, and it takes almost two years. To be admitted to a faculty is like being admitted to a very exclusive club. So I was admitted, and I was in charge of iconology, medieval art, which meant I was totally my own master. I had no dean. I went every year to the minister of education in The Hague and submitted my budget.

He was so impressed by my budget and my self-criticism that he made me one of his seven advisers on academic laws. So I learned a tremendous amount about that. There's a fat law book which covers Dutch universities, which is worth studying. I knew it by heart. So I got drawn into administration and budget making. I made budgets badly every time; I hated it. I usually found some fool who was ambitious who could do the budget for me.

SMITH: Was there a difference between your goals at Utrecht and your goals at the American universities?

HECKSCHER: Yes. At Utrecht it was a totally different approach to teaching and everything. First of all, as I told you the last time, you were at the top of society and you were totally independent in mapping out your course. There was no dean and there was no administration. You were your own administrator. Of course I had lots of assistants who were wonderful people. They were all waiting for my death, because being an assistant is different there from what it is in America. You are very high up in the hierarchy already, and if your professor dies you have a fair chance to succeed him. Professors are chosen from assistants. When I went to Holland I had a Baedeker of 1904 and it described Utrecht University and the number of professors, and it has never changed. There was a tiny, tiny group of professors—very few numerically, but terribly influential and powerful. I made one woman a docent, which took an enormous

amount of time and preparation. She was a wonderful scholar, who died, unfortunately.

SMITH: A docent. Is that like a *Privatdozent*?

HECKSCHER: The same as a *Privatdozent*, and she was a perfect scholar but unacknowledged. She was married to a high-school teacher or something like that. In her last will and testament she left me a beautiful rare book which her husband immediately sold for profit. Panofsky left me a Cadillac and the day he died Gerda sold it—quickly you know, so I wouldn't get it. I've been cheated all my life. I am accustomed to it. The dishonesty of people is monumental in this world. I'm not huffy about it, I just take it for granted that people cheat you and are dishonest. This is human beings.

My only complaint in life is I do an enormous amount of research for people. As president of the Society for Emblem Studies I see endless manuscripts, and I'm always astonished how I have to improve the English of Americans and especially English people. I've had run-ins with British people. I was publishing the *Netherlands Yearbook of Art History* in Holland and a distinguished English art historian submitted a paper. I simply corrected his English and he was raging mad to have a bloody foreigner tell him that his English wasn't adequate. The yearbook is a wonderful publication. I was editor for two years, which was heavy work.

SMITH: What were your goals at Utrecht?

HECKSCHER: I think my goal in Utrecht was, first of all, to learn, learn, learn. I wanted to find out about the functioning of the university, and I was deeply impressed, as I said, and I learned a great deal. At the time, Kantorowicz had written a little brochure about why he was expelled from California. He refused to take a loyalty oath. I badgered Panofsky into giving him an appointment at the Institute for Advanced Study, and I succeeded. I got two or three people permanent jobs at the Institute. Kantorowicz was my great prize and my great pride. Of course Panofsky was clever and intelligent and sympathetic.

Utrecht was really an interregnum between my times in America. I got very itchy and I came back and went to many places, including Los Angeles, to be interviewed for jobs, and everybody wanted me, which was quite nice. Chicago even sent the president after me, but I said no because a Negro assistant professor had just been murdered and I said that wasn't the milieu for me. There were factions fighting each other at the university. I was in Louisville, Kentucky, and I suggested Dario Covi. I said he was a very good man, so he got a very wonderful professorship. Chicago was very tempting. They offered a tremendous salary, but the staff was very difficult, you know, fighting each other all the time, so I went to Duke University, but they lied to me.

The administration at Duke was full of deceit. The unified library never

came through, and I said I couldn't vote for a Ph.D. there because it would have been impossible to study since the library was not consolidated, which would have been a very easy thing to accomplish, technically. So I left Duke, which was terribly interesting of course. I started a museum there, but I was shaken when I realized the staff I had consisted of elderly people who didn't pay much attention to their teaching; they were unprepared. I had a professor who was insane and he was married to an insane woman and they alternated in the loony bin—you know, if he was free she was incarcerated. He was very difficult, so I had very little pleasure with my staff. Then there were two ladies who had never published anything since their dissertations. So I wrote an article for each under their names in the *Art Bulletin* so I would be able to plead with the dean to consider them for a raise in salary, or a raise in rank. That was unpleasant.

There wasn't really any good teaching at Duke. The university was badly run, and is badly run. They always ask me for money, so I send 25¢. I tape it on the letter and say, "Here you are." They expect thousands of dollars, but they owe me \$900. I got a grant for \$900 and I've never seen a penny of it. They know full well I cannot sue them because I'm not rich enough and it would cost me more than \$900 to sue them, and I would have to use a North Carolinian lawyer, who would of course kowtow to the university. I would lose my case and lose all my money.

I got the money as a grant to print a book, which is going to come out this year, I hope. It's a medium length book on emblematic vocabulary. I asked my colleagues in emblem research, "How many words are there which are substitutes for emblema?" They said, "You'll find at least a dozen." I found over a thousand, and alphabetized them and collected them; it took me years of work. It is a very interesting work, and quite witty. It's for literary people as much as for art historians; it really addresses both. **[The book, Emblematic Variants, has just appeared, with me and Agnes B. Sherman as authors (November, 1994).]*

I may have mentioned to you the article I wrote about the laurel tree symbolism, which is one of the most beautiful articles I've written. It's going to appear in a journal called *Emblematica* [*: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Emblem Studies*]. It was supposed to appear at Christmas last year, and there's not a sound yet, but I'll send you a copy if I get it. You know, people are very unobliging. I ask them to tell me how much I would have to pay for a copy and they never answer and they never oblige. You know, as an author you get a reprint, so I'll tear one reprint apart, give it to a copy store and say, "Make twenty nice ring-bound Xeroxes," and I shoot them off to my friends, or people who are interested in it. I'll do that for Virginia Callahan, who's writing a book on the fourteen trees listed by Alciati at the end of his emblem book. The laurel

*Heckscher added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

tree was one of the fourteen trees. It's a plodding work, because you have to study the whole iconography of the tree and what role it played under Julius Caesar and so on. Laurel trees were planted at the birth of a Roman emperor, and when the emperor died, the laurel tree was supposed to die also, wither away. A laurel tree was used against lightning and against evil ghosts. When Emperor Domitian heard thunder at a distance, slaves came rushing up with a laurel wreath to protect him, and so he was not hit by lightning. When an emperor entered Rome, after he vanquished the enemy, he wore a laurel wreath and all the soldiers wore laurel and shouted obscenities. The idea was to ward off the attack of the spirits of the enemies killed in battle, who threatened the peace of the victor. Isn't that interesting? It was not a glorious thing but it was "Ooh! The demons are after us!" So you discover these things by reading, reading, reading. That is what makes my article quite interesting. I can include what Alciati has to say, which are very interesting commentaries—short, but to the point.

[Tape VII, Side One]

HECKSCHER: I'm a typical drifter, like any scholar, I suppose. Of course I read about the fourteen trees with great interest, and the interesting thing is, as I defined an emblem to you, the motto is never the title. Alciati's fourteen trees each have their name in Latin as the title, so Alciati breaks his own principle. I

was trained as a gardener, and so with all my hatred of nature, I am still interested in trees and such things. Of course there was a temptation when I read Alciati's text. There were interesting references to Charles V, and a few separate lines on different laurels, so I selected it. But the initiative came from Virginia, who asked if I could shoulder one more tree for her.

SMITH: Your Tulp book [*Rembrandt's Anatomy of Dr. Nicolaas Tulp: An Iconological Study*] seems to have a long history, because you had looked at the painting with your sister. But it also seemed that Panofsky had a big role in getting you to actually sit down and write about that painting.

HECKSCHER: Well, I dedicated it to the Panofskys, and Pan wrote me a beautiful letter, which I can't find of course, in my mess, and he praised it sky-high. I think he was right; it was a nice book. It was original; nobody had done it. Quite a bit has appeared about the history of anatomy, but I think it is all boring. I found new things. For example, I discovered that anatomical theaters sold tickets for attendance long before tickets were sold to attend theatrical theaters. Then I got very much interested in anything staged, such as tournaments and so on, and I found to my greatest amazement that tournaments were set to music, which was put into emblem books, and this was the first form of opera. It started with tournament symbolism.

SMITH: Were you interested in changing the way people think about art?

HECKSCHER: No. I mentioned earlier that I was interested in people who seriously approach art, who take endless amounts of time to look at art, and who don't worry about what they're supposed to know. I said to my students, "Forget about worrying whether something is manneristic or whether it's late sixteenth century. Forget about all this rubbish and let the picture talk to you. Don't project anything into it, but sit there in a totally relaxed receptive way, and under guarantee the picture will start talking, and telling you what it means—if it is a worthy picture."

SMITH: So the form is independent from the social context that it comes from? Is it possible for something to communicate to you if you don't already know the language and the social conventions?

Heckscher: Well, it doesn't do any harm to know something, but I think the art is to suppress your knowledge and let the picture talk. Then you can ask questions about the date and the locality and the style of the artist and so on. Take a Giorgione, or anything High Renaissance—a sculpture by Michelangelo, or the Sistine Chapel ceiling—and it will tell you an enormous amount if you give it time, if you sit there for ages without projecting things, just letting it project out to you.

SMITH: But if you don't know the iconological codes?

HECKSCHER: Well, this can come second, but it's not the primary thing. It

doesn't do any harm to know literature of the time, of course, but if I think I have to work on a given picture, I would first of all just look at the picture for hours in reproductions, and if I'm lucky, in reality. At the Mauritshuis, I sat for days. I got a chair and I bribed people. I said, "I'll give you twenty guilders if you'll leave me alone. Get me a chair and keep people out so they don't disturb me." Sometimes I was locked in with Dr. Tulp. As long as the director didn't know what I was doing, everything was fine. I believe in paying people off. If I were caught in a crime I would give \$5,000 to the judge and I know I would be free in seconds. He would scold me to show that he was very judicious, but I would go free. You've never heard of an executive being executed—unthinkable. "Cash, please"; that's the way we handle it.

I once made a mistake. I entered the United States and I had a hundred dollar bill in my suitcase, on top. The customs man thought I was bribing him. He took the money and said, "You can shut it now." My father-in-law, who was a terribly influential rich Canadian man, bribed everybody in customs and he was wafted out in seconds. He never had any trouble or any questions. There was always a hundred dollars and nobody asked him boring questions and out he went into freedom. No, I believe you should simplify life with the aid of whatever is there, within certain ethical frameworks. I wish I were rich, you know. I would know how to spend money.

SMITH: Why did you decide to leave the Netherlands? You had a very powerful, influential position and no university position in the United States.

HECKSCHER: I didn't like my colleagues, Jan van Gelder and Murk Ozinga. Ozinga was in charge of architecture and he was a measly man, and van Gelder was a good-for-nothing who was banished for life from the university. He couldn't lose his tenure, but he was not allowed to enter university territory any more. He had been cheating and lying, so it was a very unpleasant situation. Ozinga and I were summoned by the curators, the regents of the university in Utrecht, and there was this kind of judicial meeting in which van Gelder was condemned for lying and deceiving the university. He did awful things with money, and then it turned out he was insane. He was committed to an insane asylum, and came out again, and he finally committed suicide. Then a year later his wife jumped from a high window, eight stories high, and smashed herself. My assistant went insane, and one of the curators had a stroke and lost his mind; it was incredible, the upheavals at Utrecht. It didn't affect my mind very much, but of course it took time away from work; it was a little boring. Then Beatrix married a German Nazi, and I said, "Well, I'll go back to America. Holland is also going to the right." Later I met the Nazi and he turned out to be a terribly nice man. He spoke beautiful primitive Dutch.

When I came to Holland, Prince Hendrik, the husband of Queen

Wilhelmina, took me for a ride in a coach with two horses, with servants standing on the side, to see all of The Hague and all of Wassenaar and Scheveningen and so on. I was a child, and he was terribly nice. We were speaking German of course, and we passed the royal palace, and he said "Da wohnt meine Frau." That was the advantage of being an embassy child—you were treated very nicely.

I was very lucky I was pushed into a Dutch school, but I didn't know a word of Dutch, so the children came and said to me, "Teach us dirty words in German." I blushed. I was terribly embarrassed because I didn't know one single dirty word; that was the way I was educated. So I associated myself with a sort of brainy group of friends, and we remained lifelong friends until they all died. I grew up with a wonderful set of creatures. They were so much nicer than what I would have found in Germany I think.

Paul Meyvaert is secretary of the Mediaeval Academy in Harvard—an important man and a good scholar. He spent endless decades as a Benedictine monk on the Isle of Wight, and he fell in love with an American woman who came to look at old manuscripts which were kept in this monastery. He asked the abbot to allow him to follow the woman. The abbot's name was Sillem, and Sillem and I went to the same school as small boys in Hamburg before I left for Holland. He was a terribly nice boy and we were very good friends, and he was

the most enlightened Catholic abbot you can imagine. He said to Meyvaert, "If you feel you have to remain in the outer world, let me know please, and if you come back I will make it very easy for you to return to the monastery. I hope you will be disappointed and return." But Paul finally married that woman and never returned. He got permission from some archbishop somewhere, and I had to plead for him with this archbishop, who offered me a job. He said, "You can get a wonderful professorship here if you promise to convert to Catholicism." Interesting, isn't it? I was pushed by a group of people who wanted me to be a professor at that university and regretfully I had to say, "I think I am not suitable for this," and I escaped.

Meyvaert was self-taught and he turned into a beautiful scholar. I heard that he was drifting somewhere in the United States, so I phoned him and offered him a job as my librarian at Duke. He came and he was very successful, and then people at Harvard discovered his genius and he was made secretary of the Mediaeval Academy. He is the editor of *Speculum*, which is their journal. So he was an interesting figure in my life. Are you dead?

SMITH: I'm getting close to dead.

SESSION THREE: 18 SEPTEMBER, 1993

[Tape VIII, Side One]

SMITH: In several other interviews that I've seen and in my discussions with people, there is a sense that the Rembrandt Research Project overly controls access to materials and research on Rembrandt.

HECKSCHER: Oh, these people are like veterinarians, you know, over the body of some animal. There is a real interesting man, Joost Bruin, who is half Dutch and half Chinese. I examined him orally for his Ph.D. and I hit hard at him. He has a brilliant mind, but he is at times totally misguided. He has a team of very gifted, fairly well-informed Dutch art historians who declare what is a real Rembrandt and what is not a real Rembrandt. I think it is totally worthless and totally unimaginative. Intuition plays no part in it, and they never cared that Rembrandt had a huge studio. He had a large number of incipient artists who painted Rembrandts, and then he signed the paintings with his name, in his style. So the whole thing is to my mind worthless and I express this in all my letters to Dutch people who ask me about it.

SMITH: Is stringent control of materials a typical aspect of Dutch art-historical research?

HECKSCHER: No. I would say this an excrescence which is like poison oak or poison ivy growing in a nice garden. No, it is people who are mentally really

lazy; they have specialists checking this and that. If I look at an historical painting, first of all, I try not to project what I know into it, secondly, I look at the technique—how was it done? I can see more than most art historians because I've painted for twelve years and I knew old-master techniques at a time when not much was known about them. There was a man called Coremans in Brussels, who did wonderful restoration work, and this is where I sent my photographer to learn all about restoration. He was a scholarly diagnostician of a very high caliber, a master, and he was Panofsky's adviser. When Panofsky wanted to know how something was done he would contact Coremans in Brussels. I wanted to be a little Coremans, but then I drifted into *Romruinen*. [laughter]

SMITH: Do you know John Walsh? He's the director of the Getty Museum. He was a student of Julius Held's.

HECKSCHER: Yes, I know who he is. He is a very good scholar.

SMITH: He had wanted to do his dissertation initially on humor in sixteenth-century Dutch painting. He went to the Netherlands to pursue this as a graduate student and when they heard that his research topic was humor in sixteenth-century Netherlandish paintings, they said, "That's not a serious topic. We won't let you have access to the materials. Come back with a better topic." He came back and said, "Okay, I'll do a study of Porcellis," which was agreeable to them. Is that a typical kind of experience that one might have in the Netherlands?

HECKSCHER: I don't dare to say it. I mean, I had negative experiences in Amsterdam at the Rijksmuseum, you know, where I tried to find material and there were lots of unnecessary blockages. Was Julius Held one of your victims?

SMITH: Yes.

HECKSCHER: He's a nice man, isn't he? Is his wife [Ingrid Held] still alive?

SMITH: No.

HECKSCHER: Did she die? She was my girlfriend when we were in Rome together. We spent an academic summer there. How sad that she died. She was Swedish or something.

SMITH: Yes, she was Swedish.

HECKSCHER: I loved her. Held was a funny man. He was very insistent about things, but a top art historian. How nice that you know him. You know everybody.

SMITH: Not everybody.

HECKSCHER: I call it a village, you know, the art historians of this world, and there is village gossip. But in the last few years I've had less and less contact with colleagues. I have a girlfriend, Sandra Sider, who is in the Hispanic Institute in New York, and she is a top emblemist. She is really interested in proto-emblematic things. The elements which constitute emblems existed in heraldry and Egyptian hieroglyphics and so on, and she does beautiful research.

She is one of the favorites of Irving Lavin here in Princeton, and I hope to see her at the Panofsky festivities, which will have very little to do with Panofsky; it's all just prestige for the speakers—all in their own glory. I've read some of the proceedings of the meetings in Hamburg, when Panofsky's one hundredth birthday was celebrated, and it was really very funny—feminists and people talking about modern art. I did show that catalog to you just to show I'm not totally blind to living, modern art.

SMITH: You mean the catalog from the exhibit of Boris Penson, the Russian artist?

HECKSCHER: Yes. I exhibited him and people were very upset about it. When I discovered him, he was in prison in Siberia, and I had hoped to use this exhibit as a lever to get him out of prison. I worked my diplomatic channels via my brother, Henry, but you never hear the results of these efforts. It's awful.

SMITH: I also wanted to ask you about your bringing the Index of Christian Art to Utrecht.

HECKSCHER: I was working on the elephant and obelisk [referring to "Bernini's 'Elephant and Obelisk.'" *The Art Bulletin* 29 (1947): 154–182] at the Warburg Institute, as a refugee, and then when I came to Princeton in 1946, I looked at elephants in the Index of Christian Art, and there was every elephant I knew and twenty more elephants, which means elephants recorded in pictures or

recorded in text, or both, in medieval times. So I knew them all by name and by locality and so on. There were even fights of elephants with rhinoceroses, which were arranged like tournaments. I became terribly impressed by the Index of Christian Art. Rosalie Green, who is still alive, is a very prominent art historian. Have you met her?

SMITH: No.

HECKSCHER: Oh, you should. Panofsky said she was the best of the contributors to his festschrift. She appreciates women, and she has a whole cortege of very nice and very gifted girlfriends, here and in Holland. I know you don't like my word "brilliant," but she is brilliant; she is glittering with cleverness. When I got my foot into Utrecht, I told Rosalie Green that I would like to buy the Index of Christian Art for Utrecht. She said, "Only if you pass a test, and I'll examine you." Well, I prepared myself and I flunked her test.

SMITH: What did this test consist of?

HECKSCHER: She asked questions about the technicalities of the Index of Christian Art, which is quite intricate. So I had a second try, and at the second try she passed me. This was typical Rosalie Green. She was tough.

SMITH: But you would not have been the person who would be administering the index day-to day.

HECKSCHER: No, but she did the same with Italy. You know, Cardinal

Spellman was desperate to be the pope, and he approached Rosalie and got the Index of Christian Art for the Vatican, which was a very good move indeed, and he hoped this would be his stepping stone to the papal corona. It didn't work out that way. He would have been a good pope, I would say. He gave Rosalie a special Catholic document which gave her access to every Catholic office when she, a Jewish girl, traveled through Italy. She put it on a gold background and made a very witty document out of it. She had a sense of humor.

I then went back to Utrecht and pleaded with the minister of education, and he was very favorable. I gave him a long, carefully written report on the meaning of the index and what it would add to Utrecht. The minister said, "This is not within your budget. It has to go to parliament." The Dutch parliament voted in my favor, and so we got the Index of Christian Art. I told Rosalie, "I only accept it on the condition that you will not sell a copy to the Germans or to the Scandinavians. I want to have the only copy north of Rome." She said okay. So we paid hundreds of thousands of guilders for this index, and I added immediately my own index of secular art, which is still being built up. You see, the Index of Christian Art ends, like a guillotine coming down, on the year 1400. I said, "Impossible. You have to go up to the present," so I added to it. Every year the index in Princeton makes a list of addenda and it's very carefully done. You pay for it and you insert it. So you need somebody who really knows how

to run it. I have no idea who runs it at the moment in Utrecht.

I had another index at Duke, and when I left they closed it, which was criminal. I had the most gifted Dutch woman running it for me after my departure, but she vanished and they put it in cold storage, which was like killing it. Duke, as I told you, is the most idiotic place in America. It glitters with academic and didactic idiocy. I've never seen a place so stupid and people so banal and unimaginative and unproductive. Iowa was divine. People from Iowa still come to see me—broken reeds. One of my former students from Iowa is now a professor in Milwaukee. She teaches the Holocaust, and she was influenced by me. I do an enormous amount of clipping from newspapers, which I send to her—literature on the Holocaust. This is one of my hobbies.

I feel like an amateur adviser in every field. I think if one isn't an amateur one is an ass in one's own field, as Einstein put it—you know, a specialist. I don't believe in specialization. TV presents the "voice of authority"; it's so incredibly funny to me. A student of mine demonstrated the opposite attitude in her dissertation on Raphael. She always used the phrase, "as I see it," and I said, "You don't need that bloody phrase, leave it out," because people know you write what you see. It is a sort of artificial modesty. I say it's mock humility.

SMITH: I wanted to move on to the next big topic, which is your study of

emblems. You've discussed it a little bit, but I wanted to get more information about how you happened upon it as something that would be interesting and why you thought the study of emblems would be particularly important. You've wound up spending forty years on the study of emblems.

HECKSCHER: Let me think about how I got onto it. Of course I've mentioned the key words, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. *Hypnos* is sleep, *eros* is love, and *machê* is the Greek word for battle. I cannot really say who put me onto it. It could have been that Panofsky talked about it in a lecture and inspired me. My feeling is I got echoes of what Panofsky said about the *Hypnerotomachia*, and I found a copy in the Kunsthalle, where we had our library— No, this was before Panofsky.

SMITH: You started reading it before 1931?

HECKSCHER: Yes. In other words, I lied to you when I said I never had a book in my hands. I published an article on it in Dutch for a sort of slick, elegant, magazine ["*De Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. Een italiaansch roman uit de Renaissance." *Op de Hoogte* 30 (March 1933): 93–95] It still reads like a very interesting article. I doubt that the word "emblem" appeared in it, but of course I just mentioned this to Sandra Sider, the woman who works on protoforms of emblems, and this was one of the very pronounced proto-emblematic things. In 1640, a French edition came out with heavenly engravings. It was never

embraced by popular taste, but it circulated in artistic circles and had great influence.

There was hardly an artist who did not use Egyptian hieroglyphics. Egyptian hieroglyphics were not the hieroglyphics of Champillon and Napoleon and so on, but *Hieroglyphica* was a Latin manuscript which was discovered around 1419, on a Greek island, and for some reason it found its way to Florence, was translated into Italian, and was circulated like mad. There was hardly a Renaissance artist who had not seen or studied the *Hieroglyphica*. The author was called Horapollo—a fictitious name. It turned out not to be entirely un-hieroglyphic, but it was low-class hieroglyphs. I used this work in my first eight-minute report to Panofsky. In a funny way, I did the right thing without knowing I was doing the right thing. I moved into emblems from their prototypes. I got very much interested in heraldry and studied it. Heraldry has images of course, but mainly it has mottos or slogans. As I said before, one of the three elements constituting an emblem is a motto. The motto must have no more than five words; this is an old rule. Of course, many exceptions were made, but on the whole, I would say, in emblem books you get a five-word or less than five-word motto. Usually, it is just one word. One slogan, one word.

So I grew into emblems without quite knowing what I was doing, but my interest existed. I realized that all these things were pulled together by Alciati

even before 1531. In the 1520s he wrote a letter to somebody and said he was working on a book on emblems, but in 1531, in Augsburg, Germany, the first emblem book appeared. Before I knew it, I was looking at emblem books, and I was enchanted. At that time I was under the influence of the Panofskian iconology. I saw text and picture—text, picture, motto. The text was usually a verse.

At the time of Alciati, a terribly clever Frenchman, whose name of course vanishes this very moment *[Barthélemy Aneau, the author of *Picta Poesis*, Lyons, 1552], translated Alciati into French—Alciati was still alive—and Aneau arranged his emblems in groups. Alciati had one emblem after another—about a hundred in the first edition—and they were muddled, you know, with no coherence. So this man gave it a grouping which was classical from then on, because Alciati himself followed it. He grouped his emblems into categories—erotic, religious, mythological, political—and then before he died he added those fourteen trees and broke with his own tradition, which was very pleasant to see.

SMITH: Were you interested in emblems for their own sake, as objects that you liked to work with, or did they have deeper significance?

HECKSCHER: Well, without a great plan, I collected and I bought emblem books. I have emblem books which have never been recognized as emblem

*Heckscher added the following bracketed section during his review of the transcript.

books. Getty will probably inherit some of them. I'm too lazy to do all the physical dirty work. If I had a secretary I would be a much better scholar. I have extremely valuable, rare books. I have for example a good edition of Berchorius' *De formis figurisque deorum*, by Pierre Bersuire, who died in 1363. It's the only good edition in the United States, as far as I know. Princeton has a lousy edition, which is illegible and full of abbreviations. Mine is beautiful, incredible. So I have rare, rare books.

The moment I lost all my books and came to America, I said, "Okay I'll build up a library of reference books which will make me independent of libraries." So I have historical dictionaries; I buy them every week, you know, if I find somebody selling them. I have a very good collection of reference works. I got my first copy of Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, which is not a true emblem book. *Iconologia* is a book which alphabetically lists personifications. So you have truth: a naked woman. For every abstract concept you have a representation based very often on classical coins and so on. Emblems come out of the imagination of artists or writers, and sometimes the writer and artist are the same. Catholic emblem books, which comprise the biggest group, date of course from the seventeenth century, really, and technically they are incredibly beautiful.

When I was working for Henry Francis du Pont, who summoned me to

Winterthur and wanted me to plan his library, I said, "Get emblem books." Now Winterthur has the biggest library of religious emblem books. I had a wonderful colleague, Frank Sommer, who was the chief librarian in Winterthur. He was a Catholic and he wanted to become a Jesuit. I said, "Well, before you go into prison, let's work together." We are still in contact, which is nice. He is retired now, and he is very helpful in suggesting things. Early American art absorbed emblem books, and Sommer worked on links between the books and American objects of art and American ideas.

SMITH: Did you see the emblem work as something that would restructure the way art historians looked at art or would have some important contributions?

HECKSCHER: In this long article I wrote with Karl-August Wirth, which you've probably seen ["Emblem. Emblembuch," in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte* (1967), cols. 85–228], I divided emblems into groups, and that categorization I think has never been shaken. Then, when I did the emblem exhibition in Princeton, I wrote an article in the *Princeton University Library Chronicle* ["Renaissance Emblems: Observations Suggested by Some Emblem Books in the Princeton University Library." (1954): 55–68], which I think is the nicest popular introduction to what an emblem is, and I can still read it with pleasure. I found that England was credited with emblems which actually came from Philadelphia and were done in this country. They show the Niagara Falls,

and a money bag with a dollar sign on it, so they couldn't be more American. So, in a sense, I can credit myself with having given an impetus to emblems at a very early stage and it's been very continuous. This is why they made me president of this emblem association [the Society for Emblem Studies], but I always say, "Let me go, give me freedom," because I'm incapable of listening to lectures or attending meetings. They say, "Well, just be beautiful in the background. Keep your mouth shut, don't say too much."

I have suggested to my betters in emblem studies, "Let us get money and give a prize to someone who writes a good modern emblem book." I've just finished two emblems. They are in Latin and they are very witty. One shows a woman, a widow, weeping in a forest, in the fall of the year. She has a vacuum cleaner and she's trying to clean up the dry leaves, but the vacuum cleaner has an electric cord and there's nothing to stick it in. A widow in Latin is *mulier vacua*, so there is a Heckscherian association here: she uses a vacuum, a Hoover, and she is a *mulier vacua*. Then, out of the clouds comes the voice of God saying, "Foolish woman, what are you doing?" The motto is very cleverly chosen: *Natura non amat vacuum*—Nature does not like a vacuum. Is that witty? Then I have one about Adam and Eve. Adam eats the apple and says, "Malum, malum, malo"—three words. *Malum* is evil, *malum* is the apple, and *malo* is the verb: "I prefer to eat the apple of evil." Then Adam gets an erection and his penis

grows—I say all this in discreet Latin—and Eve blushes at it and laughs. Then they are expelled from Paradise, and while Adam’s organ grows, *scientia*, knowledge, also grows, as they come out of this horrible place called Paradise. Most people don’t know what *paradaisos* means; it’s a Greek word which means an elegant, carefully groomed park. So those are my two emblems, which I think are quite nice. I added them to my vade mecum along with Latin poems, religious poems, and not so religious poems. Any kind of decent advertisement is an emblem, you know? It always uses a picture, it has a slogan, maybe the name of the product, which can be suggestive, and it has a text explaining it.

SMITH: In the iconological method, you have a continuity of images across time, but can that continuity sometimes be accidental? For instance, do you genuinely believe that Woody Allen’s joke ballet is really derived from an image in Virgil? [referring to Heckscher’s article "Petites Perceptions: An Account of sortes Warburgianae." Reference on page 175]

HECKSCHER: Well, Woody Allen is a miracle. I find him unappetizing and I love him at the same time. I have a sort of complicated reaction to him. There is one emblematic film where he ends by dancing away, arm in arm with Death, a skeleton, you know? It’s *finito*. It’s the end of the film and it’s the end of the actor’s life; it’s beautiful, a sort of poetic death. He’s a bit out of luck right now.

SMITH: In that film he was borrowing from [Ingmar] Bergman's film *The Seventh Seal*.

HECKSCHER: Oh yes?

SMITH: Right, and it may be more than possible that Bergman took that image from medieval and early Renaissance sources.

HECKSCHER: Well, nothing is new.

SMITH: But you suggest in "Petites Perceptions" that this joke about the fawn nibbling the grass and dying comes from Virgil [and Girolamo Fracastoro]. Does iconology have to assume that there's an actual connection working between these images?

HECKSCHER: I totally agree that certain things are in the air of course, you know, certain images. But nothing is new, I find. My ideas are not new; somebody else discovered them. When I say, "*Natura* creates mankind," there's Erasmus of Rotterdam saying the same thing, and he is not echoing me, nor was I echoing him. In other words, they are ideas which are somehow suggestive of each other.

SMITH: Did you start reading Erasmus as a teenager?

HECKSCHER: No, no. Later. Erasmus was of course one of my teachers, and still is. I have a Benedictine friend in Germany who is an Erasmian scholar, and I learned a great deal from him about Erasmus. He is a wonderful man. He

studied to be a Benedictine and he was in the order for years. I said to him, "Wasn't it a trauma to get into the world?" He said it was a trauma to be in the order.

SMITH: Who is this?

HECKSCHER: He is Johannes Köhler. He publishes emblem studies and wrote his dissertation on emblems; this is how I got to know him. I once worked in a castle in central Germany, which had emblematical tiles in one room. They were made in Germany but they were in the style of Delft tiles—Delft blue. It was a heavenly little room with tiles from the floor to the ceiling, and Köhler wrote a beautiful article on it. I was shocked to learn that when the castle was occupied by the British army, the soldiers put heavy nails through the tiles to hang their greatcoats on them. *La guerre*, you know? I was invited to the castle, and somebody dropped me off there. When I went to the entrance, a British officer came and said, "Identify yourself!" I said, "Listen, when you talk to me you stand to attention. I will not talk to anybody in uniform. You are dismissed." He turned and walked away. The count and his wife saw what happened and said, "What did you do?" I said, "I told him to go away." The count said, "We were terrified." It was a maneuver of the British troops. They occupied the castle and the buildings belonging to it. I don't care for any uniform. If anybody in uniform comes I get very itchy and aggressive; that's how I feel about

uniformity and patriotism and all this kind of unholy crap. This count, Goertz von Wrisbergholzen, later sold all of his books to Princeton. Of course he made a beeline to see me, which was very funny. I was in Wolfenbüttel, in a historical museum. I got an apartment there, which was very nice, where the German poet, [Gotthold Ephraim] Lessing, had lived, so it was historical ground. The count was there, he was a much younger than I, and he introduced himself to me and asked if I would come and visit his castle. He said he had emblematical tiles. For some reason he knew that I was interested in emblems. It was very nice, because I didn't have to ask, he invited me. He died, and I've just written a letter to his widow, whom he treated a little bit like a servant. When I was there with the head of the library she was with the servants in the background. We ate a meal and she stood just watching to see that everything was fine. This was very Teutonic. But that castle was one of the most wonderful dilapidated places. I tried to get money to have certain repairs done because it was falling apart and the ceilings were sagging.

SMITH: I noticed in your correspondence files that you were discussing your emblem work in 1959 and that you had plans for an iconographical reference system. I wanted to ask you what if anything developed from that.

[Tape VIII, Side Two]

HECKSCHER: Peter M. Daly is Mighty Mouse in emblems. He is an

Englishman who lives in Canada, and he runs every emblem show on earth. He is a very prolific writer on emblems and he arranges for significant meetings in Glasgow and so on. Daly and a very nice Canadian are working on a system to list every emblem book known in the world. It will be illustrated, and they need about a million dollars from some foundation to complete the project. I wrote a letter of recommendation, but they were turned down, and I am now trying to get this going again. I have written to millions of friends in emblem studies and said, "Write to Peter M. Daly and say how grieved you are that the system is not yet working and how necessary it will be." It will be a data list of every emblem book and every emblem in every emblem book, which is a mighty job—not my style. I'd much rather take one emblem book and drown in it. But of course I can see that this kind of work would be extremely useful to everybody.

SMITH: Whether they were working in emblems or not?

HECKSCHER: That is right. I wish I could find a copy of my book to come, in which I say this addresses itself not only to emblem specialists or artists or literature people, but people in sociology and so on. The Princeton University Library has the best collection of emblem books in North America, including Canada. I've worked on Spanish emblems with a Spanish art specialist. He's American, living somewhere in the South. He and I have written a review on Spanish emblems, which I can't find, but he is a gifted man.

SMITH: Yesterday we talked about your educational philosophy in relationship to the prison camp and the program that you were doing with the black children in Durham, but we didn't really talk about your educational philosophy vis-à-vis art history. I'm wondering if you could summarize your ideas about how art historians should be trained.

HECKSCHER: I mentioned one excursion to New York with students from Pittsburgh. I took them not only to the Metropolitan Museum but also to picture restorers and art collectors. I thought that some of my students should think about their professional futures: what to do with art history. I wanted to show them the whole spectrum of possibilities for earning money and being creative and productive in art history once they got their degrees. That I think was quite successful. A man who collected bronzes gave a beautiful talk, and a man who collected paintings showed the students a picture which was a fake, and he described it very frankly. The students got a feeling for the field and the kinds of problems one ran into. This question was always present in my teaching of graduate students who were serious about art history: what to do with it? My main contribution was an imitation of what happens in Oxford, where a professor sees, face to face, a single student once a week. I forget what this is called, this interview.

SMITH: The tutorial system.

HECKSCHER: Yes, and this tutorial system is very impressive. Of course when I was at Corpus Christi College I got a whiff of it. I spent an academic year at Oxford in my misery years in England as a refugee, and this was a method I tried to imitate. I applied it to many students, male and female, and we had long sessions in which I said, "If you plan to teach academically you must have Latin." I had an assistant in Iowa who had been in the U.S. Navy, Dario Covi, who came from a forlorn place in the mountains somewhere and spoke only an Italian dialect. I said, "Okay Dario, you must learn classical Italian. You must learn to speak like a gentleman." He was furious, but he learned it, and now he speaks like a gentleman. He is now the great specialist on [Andrea del] Verrocchio. I've been working on Verrocchio and I've given him very hot and good leads: Roman coins showing profiles of life-sized sculptures Verrocchio did, and the influence of Verrocchio's sculptures on literature—that sort of thing. I love Dario's wife. She is the daughter of simple people from Kentucky, and she is a Latin scholar and a wonderful poet. I was able to get Dario to Duke University.

SMITH: To teach Italian painting?

HECKSCHER: To teach art. We all correspond and they have visited us here. They had no children, and of course he's now old and retired, too, but still dynamic.

If you lecture to 135 undergraduates there is very little you can do. I had many assistants at Duke, I insisted on that, and I had a super salary. I was a titled professor and this kind of thing, which didn't do no harm, and I had a certain amount of liberty, but I had 135 students, and I got raging mad because I had athletics students who read the *Wall Street Journal* while I lectured. I got my assistants to write down their names and I summoned them after class and said I didn't want to see them again. Then I got a phone call from the head of athletics, who said, "Dr. Heckscher, I understand you are European, you don't really know America and what is essential in this country. I want you to review this case and let these gentlemen come back and let them read the *Wall Street Journal* during the classes." I said, "No. I'm sorry, I can't accommodate you." So I stuck with certain didactic principles. I had a war veteran, a G.I., whom I flunked, and he deserved nothing but flunking. Thirty-five people wrote a petition asking me to revise this verdict and I said no. They went to the president, and I said to the president, "No. *Finito*. I will not change it." I believe in certain principles.

I also believe in Panofsky's question, "Ist es interessant?" I tried to make my lectures interesting so that people would be able to continue thinking about it. Once I spoke about a thirteenth-century sculpture in Chantilly. It's the Virgin Mary offering her breast to the Christ child. St. Bernard of Clairvaux went to

Chantilly and went on his knees and said to the Virgin Mary of the sculpture, "Monstra te esse matrem"— Show that you are a mother— whereupon the Virgin Mary aimed her breast at the saint and a jet of milk came into his mouth. The Catholic church forbade this, but every artist, including Rubens, who was Jesuit trained, depicted this miracle of the Virgin Mary. After I finished my lecture—I knew it was vibrant and people were interested in it—a very naughty girl came up to me and said, "Monstra te esse patrem," which was very witty and cynical. So I got them into the swing of it and I think I was successful in making it vital. I had different demands for different students. I tried to find out what was their gift, what was their future, what was their possible profession.

SMITH: Are there students of yours who you feel have perpetuated the Heckscherian tradition?

HECKSCHER: Well, there is Lubomír Konečný, in Prague. He never saw me, but he wrote to me and said, "I am your student. I am a Heckscherian art historian." So I got him a job at the Institute for Advanced Study, and we met for the first time. He is a terribly nice man. He's a wonderful scholar, and he wrote beautiful things, of course partly in Czechoslovakian, but he gave a brilliant lecture and he is totally Heckscher-shaped as an art historian—a clone-like figure. There are a few of my students, like Betsy Sears, who consider themselves Heckscherian. I wasn't particularly keen on that because I was more

interested in encouraging their own talents.

SMITH: I'm still not clear why you opposed a Ph.D. program in art history at Duke.

HECKSCHER: We didn't have a unified library and we didn't have an adequate staff, which was of course a tricky issue. I couldn't brutally say that, because I wanted to propel my staff rather than criticize them.

SMITH: But did you ultimately want a Ph.D. program?

HECKSCHER: I would have welcomed it, but it was the stupidity of the administration and I had terrible trouble with the staff. I am not a dictator. I was trying to be helpful to them. I never went to anybody's lecture just to see how they were performing; I only attended when they invited me.

Mary Jo Sorkness was an American girl of Norwegian heritage, whom I met in the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. The head of the library, Louis B. Wright, said to me, "Bill, this girl wants to go to Holland." I said I would give her a job before I met her. Then I met her and she was very nice, and I asked her why she wanted to come to Holland. She said that as a child, she spent a summer in Scheveningen, on the North Sea. I said okay and offered her a job teaching. She had an M.A. and she was working on a Ph.D. She came to Holland on a very low salary—much later I discovered she was independent, so that wasn't so bad—then I took her with me to Duke; we lived

together. One day she came weeping to me and said she was pregnant. I said, "Do I have to be proud?" She said no, it was somebody in New York, but he didn't want to marry her. I asked if this was tragic and she said, "Well, his brother will marry me because he likes me too, so I'm not totally lost." Then he, number one, came and we became friends immediately. He was a terribly nice man, and was one of my greatest book givers and teachers. He was Jewish and Mary Jo's parents were Norwegian and anti-Semitic at the same time. They said, "Our daughter will not marry a Jew." So I let them get married in my house and I got witnesses and so on. I arranged everything. Mary Jo never got a Ph.D. She spent a year in Florence working on her dissertation and came back and said, "No, I can't do it." It was a disappointment for me, but then again, I'm not God, you know, I can't shape fate like that. But she's a wonderful person, she's a great musician, and she's interesting.

So you look into hundreds of lives, and you can never say you feel terribly responsible. This is my feeling. If you were to ask me, "Do you have strong virile appetites?" I would say my strongest appetite is to be a mother. If there are people who are committed to me, I have a desire to shelter them and protect them against the cruel world, and not push them. I think the height of education is to get out of the students their own aims. Your role as a teacher is to adjust them, navigate them a little bit, and then Zoom! off they go to their

fates. Don't you agree? I think teachers, like parents, can interfere too much. So that is my educational [philosophy], and one-to-one interaction is the most important aspect of it.

I did have students who flunked my tests, and I made them come to a special seminar I taught on how to take lecture notes. I said this was the crux of the problem; this was the difficulty. These students didn't know how to take notes. I gave them techniques, which I tried to adjust to their different gifts of memory. I could turn turnips into palm trees by pushing them into doing better and by trying to be helpful instead of critical. I was very lucky because I had four assistants for 135 students. I gave the term papers to the assistants and they wrote their criticisms in pencil and then I typed a careful statement for each student based on the assistant's criticism and my own reading. These "trouble" seminars were successful, and I always said to the students, "This is a Sunday gone to hell, but you owe it to yourselves; you can't complain and say, 'I can't do it.' Forget about social engagements. Just come to my seminar and we'll sit for an hour and a half." There were five or six failures whom I squeezed into being successful. Again, individual contact was most important—finding out the nature of each student's gifts.

SMITH: What do you think is the current status of the Panofsky tradition?

HECKSCHER: I have a feeling there has been a revival. It's not due to his one

hundredth birthday; even before, there was increasing interest in him. Of course there was a time when people lost interest and attacked his ideas. The Panofsky tradition is not something you can swallow easily and digest; it is heavy, like aging cheese. If you deal with art and literature, you have to know foreign languages just to mention something, so these are not fields for lazy people. I'm the laziest man on earth, you know? I'm so lazy it's just unbelievable, but I've kept it up and I say, why not? I work like mad, but I enjoy my lazy times more. I think that one learns that the world consists of individuals who are interesting. Masses always shock and appall me. If I turn on TV and I see people yelling, "Rah! Rah! Rah!" for some reason, I say, "Oh, God." But then again, there are nice people who are enthused about sports and marches and such things.

SMITH: How did the 1968 student rebellions affect you as a teacher?

HECKSCHER: I mentioned that students began to criticize professors and they handed their leaflets to the deans and I told them the paper was too hard to use as toilet paper and I sent them back, unread. I said, "I've absolutely no interest in students." Duke had meetings where students were allowed to appear and they took photographs of professors they disliked. I said to the dean, "I'm not going to any more meetings if students are present. They stink up the atmosphere. I don't want to rub shoulders with the proletariat."

SMITH: Were there demands for what was called "relevant curriculum"—the

inclusion of African-American art or African art?

HECKSCHER: Ridiculous, ridiculous. Absolutely despicable, you know? I have this aversion to racial things: yarmulkes on heads and prayer beads and turbans. It's like masturbating. I say, "Do it at home, privately." I like music, as you know, but then comes Beethoven—bad, bad. Then there is Richard Wagner; he and Cézanne are the great destroyers of every decent tradition. Cézanne makes me vomit. Wagner gives me migraine headaches. The conductor of an orchestra is simply a man who masturbates in public. It's no longer music; it's just clowning and buffoonery. Bach conducted church music from where he sat, at the harpsichord. Once in a while he raised one finger to the violinist and so on, but there wasn't this horrible, shameless gesticulating. So I think this invasion of students into meetings and their demands for what you call "relevant" things just represents mismanagement; these things don't belong.

I'm all in favor of giving a Negro woman the presidency of the United States if she's worthy of it. Why not? I'm totally color blind, and this is partly due to my Dutch education. I went to a snooty school, the Lyceum, and all the elite of Holland were there. Once in a while there was a student whose parents were indigent; that didn't make any difference. There was a student who was Javanese. Nobody ever made an anti-Javanese racial remark. My best friend was Stipriaan, who looked very Negroesque; this was no problem. The problem

was, "Does your father sell over a counter? If so, he is not a gentleman. He cannot be a member of our club." There is only one club in Holland, the White Society—*de Witte Societeit*—and if someone sells across a counter in direct contact with the public, he can't be a member of that club. So there were these silly things, but racially, there was absolutely not tolerance, but total blindness, and this was wonderful.

When I came to Holland there was a Belgian student who was violently anti-German. He was extremely hostile, but in a very short time we were very, very good friends. I convinced him that these ethnic [considerations] didn't matter. George Bernard Shaw was in South Africa and studied social situations there, and was interviewed when he came back to England. They said, "What did you find?" He said, "Well, mining is a very important industry in South Africa, but only black people can tolerate it. White people won't do it, so the blacks do this heavy work." The journalists said, "Is there any kind of solution to this problem?" He said, "Yes, intermarriage," which shocked the Germans of course; this was in Hitler times.

SMITH: I wanted to talk to you about the concept of egogenesis, and why that's been an important idea for you.

HECKSCHER: I think I've trod on many tender toes with those ideas. I mentioned the idea that I just don't see any disadvantage or advantage in race, or

ethnic [identity], or social standing, or environment, or appearance, or grades in school, but I've found in studying sixty-four lives of successful, creative people that being an A+ high-school student almost invariably kills you. If you are the darling or the praise of your high-school teacher, you have very little chance to be individually prominent. You have to be lopsided, somehow. American education wants everybody to have mathematics and this and that, and I say, "Why just cut your meat always one way?" It's so mechanical and so stupid, and you eradicate very gifted people because they're not complying with these schematic ideas. I wrote the biographies of these sixty-four people, but the book has not yet been fully published.

When I worked on this sculptor, [Raimundo] Puccinelli, I found that at a certain point he crystallized into a personality which had nothing to do with the fact that he was born in San Francisco and that he lived in Italy and that he'd become an Italian and so on; it was simply that the spark of genius suddenly hit. So I decided to find out what were the marking points of an important, creative life. You are born, you die, and if you are a creative and significant personality, you have a point of egogenesis. Now Panofsky doesn't fit into that pattern. He had his egogenesis in utero. I'm quite sure he was born perfect, *ab ovo*. He was mentally perfect and never had any difficulty with memory and all this kind of crap. But I found people like Dora Panofsky, whom I mentioned, who suddenly

experienced egogenesis as a result of a terrible trauma. A trauma can kill you or annihilate you—and almost did in her case—but it can also lead to a resistance and a crystallization of the ego. In favorable cases, the moment this process of egogenesis takes place, the person concerned goes on undisturbed and without trepidation and worry: Should I do this? Is this right? Intuition rules and creativity is guaranteed.

Goethe is a bad example because he wavered. He was a madly gifted man of course, but internationally seen he was a nonentity. Napoleon went to Erfurt, and Goethe came from Weimar because he was summoned to be introduced to his majesty, and Napoleon sat at a table writing dispatches and there were messengers rushing away with his notes. Then somebody came to Napoleon and said, "Monsieur, Goethe is here." He was with the ruler of Weimar, the archduke. Napoleon saw Goethe and said, "Voilà, un homme." The Germans interpret this as genius recognizing genius. I say these were words like *ecce homo*, when Pilate sees Christ bleeding with his crown of thorns, condemned to death. It's a snooty remark. Apparently, when Goethe was introduced he was very tremulous. He had to stand and Napoleon was seated. Napoleon said, "You are really a very bad dramatist. I will suggest to you a list of topics. You should write decent dramas from now on. Forget about Faust and all this nonsense." He also said, "In Weimar, the costumes used on your stage are moth-

eaten and bad. Josephine has sent beautiful costumes which I will give you, you poor man." So Goethe got scolded by the same Napoleon who loved *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, Goethe's early work. In fact, Napoleon had it in a French translation in his tent when he was at war. So it was a funny kind of relationship. But I mention this only because of egogenesis.

Napoleon was a very good literary critic, I think, very clever; he was a witty man. He was in Fontainebleau with his courtiers, about to enter a door, when court ladies came, and he elegantly stood back and said, "Passez, beautées." When the beautiful ladies had passed, he whispered to his courtiers, "Beautés passées." [laughter] I'm a great admirer of Napoleon. He was a humorous and interesting man.

SMITH: Do you believe in the concept of genius? Do you think that's important to art and to scholarship?

HECKSCHER: I find it so difficult to define, of course, but genius is somehow an inspiration which prepares a human being. I think it exists and there must be some higher authority who bestows these gifts. You will call it God and I will say, "Okay, maybe." Genius is not cheap; it's not easy to have, and it can't be worked at. You can be lucky. I think you are lucky as a human being with interests in things if you listen to voices of inspiration, if you are attentive to them and not just following a sort of military command, marching in goose

step—that doesn't lead to creative genius. Creativity and genius, I think, go hand in hand.

SMITH: How did you define the sample group for your study of egogenesis? What were the criteria you used to say, "Okay, this can be one of my sixty-four"?

HECKSCHER: I really started with Puccinelli. I had a feeling he was a genius and I admired him and it was wonderful to talk to him. I stayed with him in Firenze, and he had a terribly nice wife, who was his model. He was not a hyperintellectual genius; that I don't think is an absolute necessity. Passing a test means nothing to me, especially if the test is set by Peter [H. W.] Janson. You know, he earned millions of dollars here at the testing institute where my daughter Charlotte works now. Most of the people were dismissed in this [economic] crisis, but she kept her job because she is valuable; she is a genius. She writes incredibly beautiful short stories which get published, and of course I hope and pray that some day she will be a writer and nothing else. She is dyslexic and gifted like hell.

SMITH: Is art something that's irrational? Does the art object stand outside of reason?

HECKSCHER: No, not really. I mentioned to you that in studying the studio art students at Iowa, I found that irrational people didn't produce good art. They

had to be intelligent and they had to be good students in art history, and then there was hope. I found it again and again in different contexts. But it's a tough question you asked me there. Do you see an irrational element in art? Well, you see, art has a little bit the quality of dreams, and people are always so snooty. They say, "He's insane," or, "She's nuts" and so on, and they don't realize that we are all insane when we dream. There are people who don't dream, and I say to them, "Take vitamin B⁶ and under guarantee you'll have a dream which you will remember." You take it with a compound of vitamin B, but B⁶ makes you dream. If you ask a doctor he will say, "I don't know about that." Of course they never know anything. They don't even know that vitamins exist.

My strangest dreams are about architecture—very interesting because I don't care for architecture. I loved to teach Hagia Sophia, but Gothic was difficult—the terminology and so on. But in my dream I have to give a public lecture, and I'm in a TV studio with a group of people and we learn how a TV studio works. There is a hand on my shoulder. "Dr. Heckscher, you are on the air." I ask, "What am I going to talk about?" I panic and then I wake up. Then I feel wonderful because in reality I'm extremely well prepared for my public lecture, so there is this element of balancing the anxieties of the day and giving you a jolt, and you learn, "My God, it ain't so bad," you know? It's helpful, even though it is a nightmare. I do think that dreams could be materialized in

[painting] with a certain type of insanity, like van Gogh, for example, whom Panofsky disliked utterly. "Genius without talent," he called him; that was his formula for van Gogh. That's witty—genius without talent. Panofsky had this aversion to anyone who was insane. As I mentioned, he hated cripples of any kind. Any deviation from the norm was shocking to him.

[Tape IX, Side One]

HECKSCHER: So your irrationality question is needling me now, and I think you are right in pointing at something I had never thought about—this link between association, dream, and certain works of art may be a very productive idea. This is the birth of an idea for me and I'm grateful to you for traumatically triggering my mind. [laughter]

SMITH: It wasn't too much of a trauma.

HECKSCHER: No, but you understand, the shock of thinking, "God, what is he saying? What does it mean? Does it apply to art?" Then came my associative practice of taking refuge in dreams. I think that there may be something to it. You see, I'm constantly interested in dreams. I called Sigmund Freud *Schadenfreud*, which is a witty term, because he flourished on the damage done to people.

I met Freud once, in a Jewish section of London, during the war. I saw him hesitating to cross a street. Much later I found out he suffered from

agoraphobia, and I felt for a moment that I should go up to him. I greeted him in German and he nodded. I felt for a moment that I should offer him my arm and say, "I'll cruise you across the street." Then I thought this would be too intimate, so I vanished in the London fog and left him alone. Van Stipriaan was one of his patients on the Viennese couch.

I read Freud and came to the conclusion that even if his theories were therapeutically not very helpful, which unfortunately seems to be true, he was one of the greatest German writers. I made a very funny discovery, which nobody, to my mind, has ever used. For some reason, Columbia University has Sigmund Freud's private library. The majority of the books are French nineteenth-century psychological novels, and they must have been a source of information for Freud. He was fluent in French.

SMITH: He studied with Charcot.

HECKSCHER: Yes, isn't that interesting? I see Freud as a great German literary figure. He wrote beautiful German and you don't have to believe everything. One of his most beautiful things ever is a very early study, "Zur Einführung des Narzismus"—Narcissism Introduced. He had crazy ideas about Leonardo da Vinci, which are just rubbish, but there are other Freudian analysts who did beautiful historical work and art-historical work, too, like Alfred Adler. Freud inspired many people, which of course is a tremendous merit, and he

inspired thinking, even if the thinking was antagonistic to him.

Refugees have a magnetic attraction to each other because they are little creatures in misery, and when I was in Toronto as a refugee I met Hans Friede, a Freudian analyst. I wasn't formally analyzed by him, but we talked and talked and talked. His wife Eva was also an analyst and we became very good friends. Hans and Eva fled from Berlin to Italy and then Mussolini turned anti-Semitic. They were rescued by going to Toronto, and then they both became Jungians. I said, "Oh God, don't do it, don't do it." We corresponded all the time, and finally they came back to Freud.

SMITH: That's curious to me. I think Freud is the only modern figure we've talked about whom you haven't condemned.

HECKSCHER: Oh yes?

SMITH: I think so. I could be wrong.

HECKSCHER: You mean outside of art history?

SMITH: Outside of art history.

HECKSCHER: Yes. Well, is this a sin?

SMITH: No, it's just interesting that you condemn most of what happened since the eighteenth century, but you single out Freud as a positive [voice].

HECKSCHER: Freud, Strindberg, Otto Weininger, whom you don't know.

SMITH: Oh, I know of him.

HECKSCHER: You really do? That's interesting; that's exceptional. Yes, we did an enormous amount of reading and debating on a fairly high level, you know. There was never any flippant literature.

SMITH: You've said that the sixteenth century was your favorite period.

HECKSCHER: I've always been interested in Italian art of that time, and I got more and more fascinated by later artists, Parmigianino and so on. You see, when I see a work of art, I try to creep into the skin of the artist and the mentality of the artist. I say, "What could I do by applying the same technique?" I could just live in these artists, and this is one of my approaches to art and to a work of art as I try to look at it with the creative eyes of the artist who made it. I don't see it as a *finito* thing but I see a genesis behind it. What preceded it, what elements can be discerned in it, of thought, of formal echoes from other things and so on. That is not mysticism but I think it makes much sense, because when you've been an artist for twelve years of your life of course you see things artistically. When I see people I always look at them as subjects, as models for my drawing or for my painting. I must give you my self-portrait. This is my present. Fish it out and keep it if you want to.

SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

HECKSCHER: This is interesting, isn't it? [showing drawing] I can show you exactly where I knitted socks with a machine. I did the entire sock except for the

heel. Somebody else made the heel and a third man combined my sock and the heel. We got prison money, with which I could buy tobacco for my pipe, which caused my migraines. This was my hut and the communists were here, and the commandant was here, so you were led out of course. The guards inside had no guns, but they had night sticks to hit you over the head. This was my school, and this was the kitchen. On the day I was dismissed I made coffee for eighty people. Suddenly the intelligence officer called me and said, "Get dressed. Get out." Two thousand people stood at the gate looking at me leaving, with envy. I was number two or number three getting out; that was Christmas, 1942, I think. I've always dreamed I would revisit this site but then I thought, "Why should I waste time being sentimental about it?" [still explaining drawing] These were the towers with the searchlights. The outer barbed wire was electrified; if you touched it you were dead. Once in a while they had trucks loaded with heavy cement blocks which went around in case we had made a tunnel—Boom! We never did make tunnels. We dreamed of it but we were too clever to risk it. You know, we always studied the methods used to prevent our escape. But you can imagine how boring it was just to be with two thousand people in this place for two years, never seeing a human being outside. Once I saw a man and a little boy at the garbage dump. He was a garbage man who was a free Canadian citizen. But of course we weren't allowed to talk or to take notice. The little

boy wore strange parts of uniforms which he had gathered from the garbage. That was our reality. Also, two years without a woman is a long time, you know, especially for young people. That was interesting . . . *ist das interessant?*

SMITH: What is it about sixteenth-century mental attitudes that you find so congenial?

HECKSCHER: I think I like the idea that I'm in good hands with Erasmus. I've written fantasy short stories of me meeting Erasmus and talking about modern politics, in Latin. "How can you take Bush?" he says to me, and all this in *lingua latina*. I feel much more at home with sixteenth-century thinkers than with present-day people. I have lots of nice friends and so on, and terribly nice relatives, but I find it a tremendous advantage for my work on Alciati to know people who were close to him, so I read everything about them. I read letters a great deal and I get the feeling of how people thought, what made them afraid, what problems they were running into. I'm constantly nibbling at the Protestant group which was so unpleasant, and of course the Vatican is evil, evil, evil, you know.

SMITH: So it's not the sixteenth century; it's the humanists.

HECKSCHER: Well, the humanists are fascinating and of course people were *gebildet* to an extent which is no longer known. They knew what they were doing and what they were talking about. Of course the painters were on an

indescribably high level. My feeling is that nobody has done justice [to this period]. You know that I wrote a dictionary of Renaissance Latin. I got high praise for it, luckily, from professionals. It's a fairly long, substantial dictionary of Renaissance Latin, starting with Alciati, but going into anything, like technical terms for printing.

People always forget that in Latin dictionaries of the sixteenth century, classical Latin was recorded as it is in our modern Latin dictionaries. Nobody in the sixteenth century, to my knowledge, has ever recorded the Latin used at that time. Anatomy changed from Arabic terms to Latin terms. Printing had to invent endless new Latin terms. An oil press is *prelum olivae*—olive, press. *Prelum typographicum* is the printer's press, but the word is listed nowhere; I'm the first to list these words. For the *Anatomy of Nicolaas Tulp*, I studied [Andreas] Vesalius' *De Humani corporis fabrica, [Libri septem, ed. princeps]* of 1543. Vesalius was a terribly inspiring, versatile, witty, and cultured person and so there was a totally new Latin, and some of that I took into my dictionary of Renaissance Latin. It's terrible; with my messiness I never have all my own publications together. I wish I had bookshelves filled with Heckschers, you know? They're flying around a little bit. But all this encourages me to write my own private dictionary—*Vademecum Latinum*.

My feeling is that every human being should have a second language; it

doesn't have to be Latin, but the language should be a vessel of creativity and not just echoing Berlitz. Berlitz is the most fiendish impediment to any kind of linguistics. The strangest thing is James Joyce, whom I worship—the Irish writer. James Joyce was in Trieste—he was an expatriate—and he earned his money teaching English at a Berlitz school. Did you know that? It's interesting. In other words, with all his surrealism he was a very solid grammarian and a very solid Berlitz teacher. And then there is Yeats. All these Irish people write just the way I would like to write, especially Oscar Wilde. [Oswald] Spengler quite rightly says that Oscar Wilde was the last philosopher of the waning West. You should read "The Decay of Lying." You would say, "Oh my God, how incredible." That is also dream literature, you know, and unrealistic in many ways. *Dubliners* is that way, even though it describes concrete biographical cases.

SMITH: In terms of your writing style, did you work on developing your English-language writing style?

HECKSCHER: I learned an enormous amount from Roxanne. You know, she drove me insane with fear and fury when I had to give that lecture, instead of Panofsky, and I talked about Goethe in Weimar. Panofsky said, "I am in a fallow period. I'll give you to Heckscher. He works all night long and he never goes to bed and he is just getting crazy with work. I think you can help him."

Roxanne said, "No, I don't want him." But Panofsky insisted on it and then she offered her help and of course we became friends in a short time, but also enemies because her logic was superior to mine and my English needed disciplining. But I learned a great deal. Then there was Roger Kingdon in London, who was a marvelous English teacher. In Great Braxted Hall, Richard Parsons taught me English by teaching me limericks. My head is full of horrible limericks which make me laugh but nobody else thinks they're funny. Then this aunt of the Parsons family, in the castle, pushed my nose into Charles Lamb.

So I would say it was piecemeal. I got influences from here, from there, and Charles Lamb is still a source of wonder and enchantment to me—especially his letters. I think he is spoiled to students in England, Canada, and the United States; anything which is taught at school is spoiled. I'm so lucky I didn't have anybody teaching me Shakespeare, so Shakespeare is what *I* read in Shakespeare and not what any stupid teacher told me about Shakespeare. The same applies to Goethe. When I left Germany I hadn't reached the Goethe-reading age yet, and my German teacher in The Hague was not a very great interpreter of Goethe; he ridiculed things, so I had to conquer the territory myself and that, I think, is a certain advantage. I don't know how you feel about poetry, but I have no organ to enjoy lyrical or romantic poetry. I love Shelley and I admire Keats. To me, Keats is [the equivalent of] Charles Lamb in poetry. Keats is wonderful and

international and there is nothing that can touch him.

I have worked a great deal with Henry VIII, who was a great musician and a great literary genius [because he] inspired writing. He inspired the vocabulary which was the fountainhead of Shakespeare's English. I have followed this kind of thing not to do scholarly research but simply to learn English and to broaden my understanding of it. Then of course whenever I go on a holiday I take Shakespeare's sonnets along. I have several editions and I translate them into Latin prose—not to publish it but in order to understand what Shakespeare meant. You see, you are forced to really say, "What does this passage mean?" That is a tough assignment. Panofsky knew all Shakespeare's sonnets by heart. I would say Panofsky was a genius; there's no doubt about it. One could criticize him, but I don't see any great advantage to it. No, it was nice to have had a teacher who set such high demands; that was Panofsky's didactic skill—"Ist das interessant?"

SMITH: Could you talk a little bit about your work as a consultant for the Princeton Library?

HECKSCHER: It has sort of watered down a little bit, but there are still connections. They discovered my genius and gave me a half-time assistant and an office. Many of the Princeton professors are desperate to get an office at the library and I had the most beautiful of all offices, in the very center of Rare

Books, so everything was just within reach. It's still full with my notes and my research on books, and of course the library gets a steady stream of questions asked by outsiders, and I was often the person to answer complicated questions. In New Acquisitions I was the one who translated Greek and Latin titles into English, because I was the only one who knew Greek and Latin. My Greek is not to be recommended, but it's functional. I always say to people, "You need forty-five minutes of your entire life, which is minimal, and in these forty-five minutes I can teach you all the Greek letters and their pronunciation." But then you have to sit on it and repeat, repeat, repeat; you mustn't let it slip because then it vanishes. A few students and others learned Greek from me, and it turned out to be very helpful. My black students all knew Greek. They could consult a Greek word in a Latin dictionary, turn to the Greek dictionary, and they knew the Greek spelling and could write fluently in Greek letters; that was a nice advantage. They were happy to discover that the meaning of the Greek word had changed in Latin.

The beating which Latin takes by being anglicized is unbelievable; the meaning of words is totally changed. For example, you write a dissertation. In classical Latin, *dissertatio* is a verbal thing—we are having a dissertation with each other. Nothing written is ever called a dissertation. So that's interesting. The origin of words is a sort of compulsion in my mind which I inherit from

Panofsky. If he didn't know a word he zoomed into his library and wouldn't emerge until he found the answer. He said, "Never, never let a word go by which you don't know. Look it up immediately." That was didactic and extremely valuable. Whatever English I have was slowly built up. It took me a long time and I'm grateful to people who pushed me and helped me. Roxanne is a literary genius; she is wonderful. She's not creative, but I learned a great deal from her about writing and interpreting.

Panofsky spent a lot of time on German literature. I didn't. When I visit Austria and Germany I always say, "What should I read? What is hot and new?" There's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, by [Robert] Musil, which excites some people. I call him Metamusil, you know. He gives me diarrhea; it's so boring. There are very few German writers I can stomach now. But German friends always send me German books. I can dream in German, I can dream in Latin, but English is my main vehicle because I use it every day. I hear it every day as far as I can understand it. Are you getting hungry? I can see it in your eyes. Am I right?

SMITH: I'm about running out of questions.

HECKSCHER: Oh, how wonderful.

SMITH: We've basically finished, so if you have something you want to say before I wrap everything up—

HECKSCHER: Well, I had a funny feeling about this interview—"Oh my God, what will happen to my seven letters a day and all the things I have to do?"— but the experience of being grilled by you has turned into a great delight, which is not intended to be a flattering remark, but maybe a grateful remark. I have confronted myself and this has been very useful. I see myself in a totally different light after our discussions. I said to Roxanne, "He got tired, but I didn't seem to get as tired as I usually do," and she said, "Well, this is your egoism. You are just egocentric like nobody else on earth." I said, "Can't you say something nice once in a while, something edifying?" But it is edifying to [ponder] your questions, which were very penetrating and very much to the point. At times they astonished me, at times they compelled me to reshuffle my thinking, and nothing better can happen to a man. I want to learn, and of course I don't mind talking about myself because nobody is interested, you know? Nobody has ever asked me any questions like you have. Nobody has ever asked me, "What does emblem mean to you?" or "How did you improve your English?" and that is a tremendous gift. So I would say that this oral project is much more than a recording; it is also animation for the victims. I'm sure you had the same experience with [Hugo] Buchthal and with Julius Held and such people. They said, "Hah!" Here's a chance to hold up a mirror to myself." Isn't that true?

SMITH: I think it varies from person to person, and not everyone will tell me so.

HECKSCHER: It is individually different of course—*tema con variazione*.

I would say I hadn't expected an interview of this character—this kind of grilling and questions—and it is to me a very positive contribution to my own intellectual or emotional life, whatever is involved. I don't mean to flatter you, which you don't need, but I must say the choice of your questions was something wonderful and it will keep me going for a long time. You pushed me with your questioning into seeing the similarity and making a bridge between painting and dreaming. That is something which would never have come to me if you hadn't asked about the reality content—or whatever your phrase was—of a picture. First I wanted to say, "Well, well, well . . ." and then suddenly I realized, "Yes, it is a dream world," you know? There are strange things which control your dreams and direct them. God knows how these things come about. I think the greatest artists are the greatest dream realizers. This is the next step I want to pursue. Of course theology creates dreams in men's minds—I mean angels and devils and so on—and these things are not only depicted and copied from previous expressions, but they are images which constantly come to you. You deal with devils and you deal with angels and even if you are an agnostic you can't help thinking about God and divinity and the Virgin Mary and *monstra te esse patrem* and this kind

of thing. [laughter] So that is my counterspeech, but don't be angry; it's just the way I see it and the way I want to express gratitude—*gratitudinem*.

SMITH: Thank you.

APPENDIX

A SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ICONOGRAPHY

by William S. Heckscher

In grateful memory of Cairine Wilson

Introduction

Whoever aims at a complete knowledge of Iconography (and in addition Iconology and maybe even Iconosophy) should make a pilgrimage to the Warburg Institute, London University. My wish has been in composing this Bibliography to be of service to incipient scholars in the humanities as well as specialists such as students of *ars emblematica*. A fair knowledge of Greek and Latin may be taken for granted. Awareness of Western European languages can do no harm. When once I saw my name in a tract written in Polish, I bought myself a Polish-English dictionary. To those working in the field of art history, studying old-master techniques can pay dividend. Those among us favoring longevity should reserve several decades for getting acquainted with Iconography.

In my highly selective choice of items I have been guided by the wish to present my readers with references to the basic literature, and by "basic" I mean writings which have offered, in a variety of inter-linked fields, primordia. A compilation of more recent work would require a set of volumes, but even then a Warburg pilgrimage might be advised. In recording the Bibliography I had the good fortune of being assisted by my friend Agnes B. Sherman. As always I am indebted to Virginia W. Callahan.

WSH

A SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ICONOGRAPHY

A Basic Bibliography and a Guide to Convenient Research Tools

A. Primary Sources (Principal texts underlying representations)

I. BIBLE

1) Texts:

- i. *Vulgata* (S. Jerome's transl.).
- ii. *Douay Version* (English transl. of a XVI c. revision of the Vulgata).

2) Commentaries:

- i. *Glossa ordinaria* (Walafried Strabo, d. 849; based on Isidore's Questions in Vet. Test.; patristic commentaries run in margin of biblical text).
- ii. *Glossa interlinearis* (Anselm of Laon, XII c. ; interlinear comment).
- iii. *Postilla* (Nicolaus de Lyra; XIV c. "footnotes").
- iv. Petrus Lombardus, *Sententiae* (most important theological text of biblical excerpts; 1152 A.D., ed. Marcel Chossat, Paris, 1923).
- v. S(ante) Pagnini, a.) *Isagogae ad sacras literas*; b) eiusd. *Isagogae ad mysticos S.S. sensus libri vii*, Lugdunus, 1536. ("The biblical summa of the Renaissance." Edgar Wind, *Gaz. d. B.-A.*, VI series, vol. XXVI.)

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- ii. A. Cruden, *A Complete Concordance*, New York, s.a.

4) Onomastica:

- i. *De nominibus hebraicis*, ed. Paul de Lagarde, s.v. *Onomastica sacra*, Goettingen, 1887.

5) Picture Bibles:

- i. *Bibles moralisées*, XIII c.; each bibl. passage illust. in four interconnected parts: a) historically (the actual event); b) allegorically (Christian faith); c) tropologically (moral content); d) anagogically (the hereafter); ed. A. de Laborde, Paris, 1911 ff.
- ii. *Biblia pauperum*, XIV c. ; an illust. condensation of the glossa ordinaria: two O.T. types as prefiguration of each N.T. episode; ed. Heitz and Schreiber, Strassbourg, 1902; cf. Hendrik Cornell, *Biblia pauperum*, Stockholm, 1925.
- iii. *Speculum humanae salvationis*, XIV c. ; three O.T. or secular history events used as prefiguration; ed. J. Lutz and P. Perdrizet, Muelhausen, 1907 ff.

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- i. Alanus ab Insulis (d. 1202), *Dictiones dictionum* (alphabetically arr.), ed. Migne, *P.L.* , CCX.
- ii. *Mount Athos Hermeneia ton zographon*; Byzantine painters manual of debated age; ed. Didron; cf. H. Brockhaus, *Kunst in den Athoskloestern*, Leipzig, 1891.
- iii. S. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, V c., xx books, best ed. Teubner, 1909.
- iv. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, XIV c., *De proprietatibus rerum*, Nuremberg, 1483 (accepted by Renaissance scholars).
- v. Petrus Berchorius (Pierre Bersuire), *Repertorium morale* . . . , (composed ca. 1340) ed. unica: Venice, 1583, 2 vols. (alphabetically arranged, last great "summa" of mediaeval knowledge).
- vi. Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae*, 524 A. D. (some 400 ed. known; in every self-respecting mediaeval library; concept of Fortuna et al.).
- vii. S. Bonaventura, *Reductio artium ad Theologiam*.
- viii. Marcianus M. F. Capella, *De nuptiis Philologie et Mercurii*, V c., ed. A. Dick, Berne, 1885 (mediaeval sourcebook of seven liberal arts, astronomy et al.).
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 - ii. Pierio Valeriano, *Hieroglyphorum colectanea . . . libri xlvi*, ed. Lyons, 1610 (contains the Horapollo).
3. Hierozoica:
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iii. *Analecta Bollandiana*, ed. de Smedt.

5. Liturgy:

Church-use only:

i. Breviary – containing the offices of the entire liturgical year, except for the Eucharist

ii. Missal – containing the Mass-Service (first: under Gelasius, d. 496); cf. Adalbert Ebner, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kunstgeschichte des Missale Romanum im Mittelalter . . .*, Freiburg i. Br., 1896; A. Baumstark, *M. Romanum . . .*, Eindhoven-Nijmegen, 1929.

iii. Lectionary – containing the lessons

iv. Antiphonal – containing the songs

v. Psalter – containing the psalms; may be found in private hands before 1300; its place is taken by:

vi. Book of Hours – containing private prayers to be recited at the canonical "hours," originally added to the Psalms; from XIII c. onward; parts introduced by: Calendar / Hours and Offices of the Virgin / Hours and Offices of the Passion / Hours and Offices of the Holy Ghost / Seven penitential psalms / Suffragia (acclamation of Saints: intercession) / Litanies (acclamation of Saints: honor) / Office of the Dead.

6. Mythography: (for a complete survey as well as bibliography, cf. E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology . . .*, New York, 1939, pp. 21 ff.).

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ii. Alexander Neckham (d. 1217), *Mythographus III* ("conclusive compendium of high mediaeval mythography." E. Panofsky), ed. G. H. Bode, *Scriptores rerum mythicarum . . .*, Celle, 1834, pp. 152 ff.

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- iv. R. Eitelberger & J. Ilg, *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttechnik*, Vienna.
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