

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY 08540

KURT WEITZMANN

Oral History Project

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THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

PREFACE

The following manuscript contains the edited transcript of the first of two interviews with Kurt Weitzmann. This interview was recorded at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, on March 21, 1989, and conducted by Patricia H. Labalme.

Dr. Weitzmann was born in Almerode near Kassel, Germany, in 1904. He received his doctorate from the University of Berlin in 1929.

Dr. Weitzmann was trained in both classical archaeology and art history. He came to the Institute in 1935 to work with the Art and Archaeology Department of Princeton University on the illustrated Septuagint manuscripts. A permanent member of the Institute, he also joined the faculty of Princeton University in 1945, retiring from both the Institute and the University in 1972.

Among his chief publications are four books published in Germany prior to coming to the United States on Byzantine and Armenian book illustrations, Illustrations in Roll and Codex (1947), The Joshua Roll (1948), Greek Mythology in Byzantine Art (1951), The Fresco Cycle of S. Maria de Castelseprio (1951), Ancient Book Illumination (1959), and Byzantine Book Illumination and Ivories (1980). He has, in addition, edited a large number of collaborative works in the field of medieval manuscript and book illumination. A bibliography is attached to the end of the interview.

Dr. Weitzmann has received numerous awards, among them the Charles Homer Haskins Medal of the Medieval Academy of America and the Charles Rufus Morey Book Award of the College Art Association.

The reader should be aware that the following is a transcript of the spoken word, that it attempts to preserve the spontaneity and informality of the original tape, and that the views expressed therein are those of the narrator.

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Kurt Werhmann

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Patricia H. Labalme

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Date:

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Tape and transcript of interview of March 21, 1989.

INTERVIEW WITH KURT WEITZMANN

(The first of two interviews)

Date: March 21, 1989

Place: Princeton, New Jersey

Interviewer: Patricia H. Labalme

CASSETTE ONE, SIDE ONE

Labalme: All right, we'll begin our talk now and let the questions lead us where you would like them to go. I'll begin by saying, tell me about your first coming to the Institute--how that came about.

Weitzmann: Well, actually the initiative came from the Art Department-- Charles Rufus Morey. He wanted me to join the Art Department in a research project. It was the illustrated Septuagint manuscripts. And since the University doesn't have research money, he went to see Mr. Flexner and asked him if he would support this project so I could come to Princeton. This was in the end of '34. Well, I accepted the invitation, but postponed my coming to early '35 and I came with one year's stipend. The understanding was that I would work with the Art Department but the Institute would pay the salary. I was only five months in this country when the Art Department wanted me to stay permanently and so again Mr. Morey took the matter up with Mr. Flexner, and the Institute made me a permanent member. This was still in '35. The School of Humanistic Studies was only founded at the end of that

year. The first appointments were Erwin Panofsky and myself. Panofsky was at the time a member of the Princeton Art Department. It was Morey's suggestion to Mr. Flexner to make Panofsky the first member of this new school at the Institute, and there were very cordial interrelations between the two institutions. Since the Institute at that time had no buildings of its own, Panofsky kept his office in McCormick Hall at the University even after he became an Institute member. He continued to give graduate courses in the Department, and I saw a great deal of him there, discussing art historical problems and exchanging articles and books. Panofsky shared his office with his wife Dora, who was a scholar in her own right. Their office was opposite mine, and since our doors were always open, I saw a great deal of Dora, who was in the office more often than her husband, who often worked at home or was in New York, where he gave graduate courses at N.Y.U. I also was a frequent guest at their home, a University-owned house on Prospect Avenue, where their two sons, at that time still schoolboys, were often around.

I understand that Morey was more or less the advisor to Flexner for all the early appointments in the School of Humanistic Studies.

Labalme: Really?

Weitzmann: Morey had an idea that he wanted to have appointments at the Institute in certain areas which were not covered by the University. So while the Princeton University had a very good department of classics, there was no professorship in epigraphy or paleography. They were fields Morey himself was quite interested in,

and thus he persuaded Flexner to get Benjamin Meritt, a classical epigrapher, and Elias Lowe, a paleographer. Though Lowe's interest was chiefly in Carolingian manuscripts, he also showed interest in my studies of Greek manuscripts. When I was at Sinai he asked me to take photos of a Latin Carolingian manuscript that he knew existed in that monastery. I made the photos and he published them. I had begun to collect material on Greek uncial script, and he proposed that we publish jointly a volume on this subject. But he died and nothing came of this project.

I had personal contact with several of the new members, and was often invited to their houses. My wife had stayed in Berlin, where she held a position as an assistant in the Department of Classical Archaeology at the University and research assistant at the German Archaeological Institute. After she joined me in Princeton in 1938, we were invited by the Meritts when his first wife was still alive and, of course, they came to our apartment at 30 Nassau Street. We stayed in contact with Meritt after he married Lucy Shoe.

Other appointments at the Institute as well surely go back to Morey's initiative. He suggested to Flexner at the same time that he call to the Institute Ernst Herzfeld, an oriental archaeologist who was one of the most prominent scholars in ancient oriental as well as Islamic art, and I got to know Herzfeld very well. As a matter of fact I consulted him when I had a problem in oriental archaeology. I worked on late-antique Bactrian silver bowls with scenes from Euripidean tragedies, and I had all the advice I wanted from Herzfeld on Bactrian

art. He was a bachelor whose sister, Mrs. Brodführer who later changed her name to Bradford, kept house for him. I last saw Herzfeld in the hospital in Basel, Switzerland, shortly before his death. He had throat cancer and could no longer speak, but he was still very alert.

Labalme: From your point of view, that was one of the advantages of the Institute, was it not, the accessibility to other experts?

Weitzmann: It certainly was. Yes. It happened that Herzfeld got as his assistant Richard Ettinghausen, who was the most gifted Islamic scholar of the younger generation, and he came to be the leading scholar in his field in this country. We became very close friends. When I had a problem in Islamic art I, of course, consulted him. As a matter of fact, when I wrote an article on some Islamic manuscripts in a Festschrift for Herzfeld I consulted Ettinghausen. Once I saw in a Persian exhibition in New York a rather unique silver bowl with scenes which I identified as coming from Euripidean dramas. I suggested to the Blisses to buy it for Dumbarton Oaks; they hesitated and Ettinghausen acquired it for the Freer Gallery in Washington, where he headed the Islamic Department. I was instrumental to have him give a graduate seminar on ornamental Hebrew manuscripts in our Princeton Department which I attended as an auditor. I tried in vain to make him join the Princeton Art Department but he took the double position as a teacher at N.Y.U and as the chief curator of Islamic Art at the Metropolitan Museum. But he lived in Princeton and commuted to New York. He was very hospitable and I met many renowned scholars at his house. At one of the last visits to his home I met Petrowsky, the

director of the Hermitage in Leningrad who had come to New York in connection with the exhibition of Scythian gold, one of the greatest treasures of the Hermitage. He told me that my wife and I were expected in the Hermitage to attend--as guests of the Russian government--a conference in connection with a big exhibition of Byzantine art, an invitation we gratefully accepted.

The Institute consisted of a very small group of scholars, as you know. Flexner had his office at 20 Nassau Street--it was just a flat--with Mrs. Bailey and Miss Eichelser, his two secretaries. That's all there was of the Institute, before Fuld Hall was built.

Labalme: Where did the others stay?

Weitzmann: The married members, of course, lived in houses built or rented by the Institute. The unmarried ones got rooms in the Graduate College. The Graduate College in those days wasn't even filled up with graduate students. There were empty rooms and the Institute had an agreement with the University that some of the Institute members would get rooms in the Graduate College.

Labalme: These were offices?

Weitzmann: No, just living and bed room. I was already married but my wife had still stayed in Berlin, because I had come in 1935 not knowing whether I would stay in this country, or not. I was a few months here, and I got the permanent appointment I have already mentioned, but even then, I did not immediately ask my wife to come to Princeton because the University's Art Department was interested that I should make an expedition to Mt. Athos, and so I spent five months in Greece and on

Mt. Athos. And the next year again I spent five months in Greece and on the mountain. Altogether I made five trips to the holy mountain. I didn't want my wife to come to Princeton while I was travelling in Greece. Thus she came only in '38. But until she came, from '35 to '38, I stayed three years in the Graduate College. I had all my meals there and had comfortable rooms. Another member of the Institute, the mathematician Marsden Morse, also lived at that time in the Graduate College. He had a room below mine, and when he played Bach, which he did masterfully, I opened my door and listened.

Labalme: And you worked where?

Weitzmann: In the Art Department, McCormick Hall. From the very beginning, McCormick Hall was my working place. Also, my project was an Art Department project. They had all the material. Actually, all the art historians who were members of the Institute, permanent or temporary, were dependent on the Marquand Library in McCormick Hall. Even after the Institute began to build up its own library, it realized that, where art history is concerned, it had to remain dependent on the Princeton Art Department, and thus a room was built with the Institute's money in Marquand Library as a study room for Institute members.

Labalme: What about someone like Ben Meritt?

Weitzmann: He established right here at the Institute a center for his material. So it was different for the classical scholars, who, unlike the art historians, were able to build up a self-sufficient library and thus did not have to use Marquand Library as frequently.

Labalme: But there was no building here [at the Institute] in the early days. So they borrowed offices from the University?

Weitzmann: Yes, just like the mathematicians, who worked in Fine Hall, as guests of the University. And also, Panofsky, as I've already mentioned, kept his office in McCormick Hall. It was a very close relationship between the Institute and the University in those days. For instance, every year Flexner gave a Christmas party at the Princeton Inn, inviting members of the University faculty. Flexner was very interested in cordial relations with the University, and they existed, indeed. I remember the Christmas party in '37, here were Flexner and Harold Dodds, the President of the University. I happened to be standing alongside of them and I couldn't help hearing what they were talking about. It was a question of whether delegates should be sent by the University and the Institute to the bicentennial celebration of the University of Göttingen. There was a particular reason why Göttingen was interested in Princeton. Göttingen and Princeton are sister universities founded by the same man: Göttingen by the Elector of Hanover and Princeton by the King of England, who was the same person.

Labalme: Really? That I didn't know.

Weitzmann: You see, that's why Göttingen was particularly interested in having Princeton representatives for this great celebration.

Labalme: But many of the mathematicians also had come from Göttingen.

Weitzmann: Yes, Weyl came from Göttingen. Oppenheimer had studied in Göttingen since it was a great work center for mathematics, just as

Princeton is a great center for mathematics. Both had started out at the same time with the same emphasis on natural sciences. This was the period of enlightenment that shaped both universities. There had always been an exchange of professorships between Göttingen and Princeton. So the point was, this being the year 1937, that Flexner and Dodds decided not to send delegates to Nazi Germany. Their talk was overheard by an assistant professor in the German department who was a Nazi spy. He reported to Berlin and so the Germans knew that Princeton would not send delegates, and the invitation never came. Well, this gives you a picture of what the situation was like in the pre-war days.

Labalme: How interesting!

Weitzmann: Well, I got to know Panofsky very well. He was a great scholar, but at the same time, different from the archaeologists who had built up here a group of scholars, thanks to Benjamin Meritt and later the active and helpful Homer Thompson, after he joined the Institute. Panofsky was the type of person who could not tolerate a strong person alongside of him. In other words, art history was never built up like archaeology. It remained a one-man affair. Two very prominent scholars were connected with the Institute. One was Paul Frankl, who had been rector of the German University of Halle and at the same time chairman of the Art Department there and a leading scholar in the field of Gothic architecture and the methodology of art history as a whole. His scholarly achievements were outstanding, but he was never made a full member; he simply held a stipend which had to

be renewed every year. He should have been in my opinion a full member at the Institute. And the other great scholar was Charles de Tolnay, the man who wrote those many volumes on Michelangelo. He was a few years at the Institute and then he left to become the director of the Casa Buonarrotti in Florence, a position he well deserved. So from the point of view of building up a larger group of scholars in the field who would communicate with each other, I think archaeology developed more successfully than art history.

Labalme: But Meritt gathered around him visiting members, not more in the permanent faculty.

Weitzmann: This proves the point. He was in the Department of Classics and not Art History. There was Hetty Goldman, who joined the Institute as a permanent member in the field of classical archaeology. She had been excavating in Tarsus in Asia Minor and trained a number of younger scholars, like Frances Jones, a lifelong curator of ancient art at the Princeton Art Museum. Hetty Goldman was one of the early appointments that had not been suggested by Mr. Morey, but was brought by Flexner personally. He was, if I am correctly informed, a relative of hers.¹

The second additional permanent appointment in the field of classical archaeology was Homer Thompson. Like Meritt, who called certain epigraphers in some cases quite regularly to the Institute, Thompson and Meritt also called some of the most distinguished

¹Ed: There was no family relationship between Abraham Flexner and Hetty Goldman.

classical archaeologists as visiting scholars to the Institute with some regularity. One was Allan Wace, who for many years had been head of the British Archaeological School in Egypt, where I had met him. He was very helpful and arranged my acquaintance in Alexandria with Lukas Benaki, a great collector of Greco-Roman antiquities who let me study, photograph, and publish objects in his collection, in Alexandria. I maintained contact with Wace when he and his wife came to the Institute quite regularly after his position as a Britisher had become untenable in Egypt. We had a common interest in some Greco-Roman relief pottery with scenes from the life of Achilles. The second classical archaeologist who came quite regularly to the Institute as a visiting scholar was Henri Seyrig, who had been head of the French Archaeological Institute in Beirut, and later became head of all the museums of France. I had met him first at Dumbarton Oaks, where I had given jointly with Professor Carl Kraeling from Yale a series of lectures on the third-century frescoes of the Dura Synagogue. Seyrig not only took a lively part in the discussion, but when I was in Paris shortly thereafter working in the Bibliothèque Nationale, he came to see me there and invited me to lunch. After that we often met in Princeton, and we exchanged offprints and discussed problems of common interest whenever we met. He had invited my wife and me to visit him in Neuchâtel in Switzerland where he had a house, but then he died suddenly in an accident and the visit never took place.

Of course, as far as the field of art history is concerned, there

were very prominent scholars coming to the Institute as visiting scholars, but none with the same frequency as some archaeologists, and many prominent scholars were never called.

Labalme: Did Panofsky invite junior people who were less prominent? Did he have a group of younger visiting members who came?

Weitzmann: Well, he had one assistant. That was Hanns Swarzensky. But he was basically a museum man, and he later became curator of the medieval department at the Boston Museum.

Labalme: And what about you, although you were not in a position to invite people to work with you, could you have any influence on some of the junior members who came?

Weitzmann: Well, it was typical I would propose a man and Panofsky would turn him down.

Labalme: That must have been a bit frustrating.

Weitzmann: Still, I had two other outlets, so to speak, for getting people I wanted to work with. One was the Princeton Art Department, and the other was Dumbarton Oaks in Washington.

Labalme: So you maintained a close connection.

Weitzmann: I had of course my closest connection with my colleagues in the Princeton Art Department. The man who was most instrumental in getting [people] here for collaboration was [Albert M.] Friend, and he was the man who had conceived the project of the publication of the illustrated Septuagint. In this project, Morey was supposed to do one volume on the so-called Octateuchs. I independently had started in Germany to work on the Octateuchs. Then I wanted to get photos of some

of the illustrated manuscripts. I wrote to the Vatican Library and I was told that they had been photographed by Princeton University. Write to Princeton and ask for permission to have prints made from the negatives [they said]. So I wrote to Morey, and Morey answered, "I do not like to give you this permission because we have here in Princeton embarked on the same and even a larger project, but we would like to have you come to Princeton to work on the particular volume of the Octateuchs." That was why I came to Princeton. A few years later Friend became the Director of Dumbarton Oaks, but remained a member of the Princeton faculty, thereby establishing a kind of liaison between the two institutions. He and I jointly gave a graduate course, and through Dumbarton Oaks I could ask Friend to have any person with whom I wanted to collaborate come either to Princeton or to Washington.

Labalme: That would be very useful, I'm sure. So you would spend quite some time down there in Dumbarton Oaks, did you go back and forth?

Weitzmann: Yes, I went very often, but the idea was that Friend would keep the research on illustrated manuscripts away from Dumbarton Oaks and reserve it for Princeton. So while Dumbarton Oaks got the whole field of Byzantine art, this one area was reserved for Princeton. Now I realize that my time is running out, and that after my retirement in 1972, the research I started is not going to be continued in Princeton as far as I can foresee. Thus for my eightieth birthday Professor Herbert Kessler of Johns Hopkins University, one of my pupils, presented me with the plans to establish what he calls the Weitzmann

Archives in Dumbarton Oaks. They are building up a Weitzmann archive there, and the plan is to duplicate all the photo material of Princeton, as far as the collection of Byzantine miniature painting is concerned.

Labalme: What a good idea. That must be a great pleasure for you to know that it will be in two places.

Weitzmann: But also, when Friend was in Dumbarton Oaks as Director, he got as a guest for a year, Andrew Alföldi, who was at that time teaching at the University of Basle, Switzerland, so actually Friend was the bridge to bring Alföldi to this country, and it was from Dumbarton Oaks that Alföldi came to Princeton to become a member of the Institute. Here I got to know Alföldi quite well, as my wife and I were repeatedly guests in his house, while his first wife was still alive. I heard him lecture frequently here and in Bonn where I was a guest professor in 1962 and where he and a group of colleagues worked on problems of the emperor Augustus.

It was also at Dumbarton Oaks that I met for the first time Ernst Kantorowicz. Same thing. Friend had got him to Dumbarton Oaks at the time when there was this crisis, this oath question in Berkeley.

Labalme: Tell me about that.

Weitzmann: It was in the McCarthy period where all the professors were forced to swear an oath and Kantorowicz refused and quitted. While in Princeton, Kantorowicz became my closest friend at the Institute. To go back to my own career, I was for ten years exclusively with the Institute. In '45 Morey left Princeton to become cultural attaché to

the American embassy in Rome. At this time, his successor, [E.] Baldwin Smith, offered me a half-time professorship at the Art Department. It was arranged between the Institute and the University that I would be half Institute and half University.

Labalme: And the course was a survey of medieval art?

Weitzmann: Yes, the course was a general survey. But I saw my main task in training graduate students. Friend had built up what was called the "manuscript room," where studies of illuminated manuscripts were pursued, where students would get the methodological training. What was also a great pleasure to me was the fact that I always had in this graduate course, alongside the students, quite a number of renowned scholars sitting in. I had Carl Nordenfalk, the director of the museum in Stockholm, sitting in as an auditor. He was also several times a member of the Institute. We had been old friends, and he had once invited me to give a lecture at each of the four Swedish universities. I had two professors from the Theological Seminary who were auditing my course--Bruce Metzger and Pieper. With the former I had taken a course at the Theological Seminary to study Syriac. There were many more visiting scholars auditing my graduate course, several of them while they were members at the Institute, as for example Leopold Ettlinger from Berkeley, who was intensely interested in my treatment of the Octateuchs because he had discovered that they were used as models by the quattrocento painters of the Sistine Chapel. In the same year Ihor Sevcenko sat in on my course and had valuable suggestions to make in the discussions. Also Mr. and Mrs. Muraro from

Venice and Hugo Buchthal came to audit during the years they spent at the Institute. They all had much to contribute.

Labalme: Whom do you remember among your graduate students of those years? Did some actually go on to become important scholars?

Weitzmann: Oh yes. One is George Galavaris. Born Greek, he came to study here in Princeton and he is now professor at McGill University in Montreal. He's a very prominent Byzantinist. The thesis he wrote under my direction on the illustrated manuscripts of Gregory of Nazianzus was published as a volume in the series I am editing, Studies in Manuscript Illumination. There are eight volumes published in this series, in which several volumes have been written by my pupils. Galavaris is now my collaborator on a volume of the illustrated manuscripts of Mt. Sinai.

Labalme: That's been an ongoing work of yours, hasn't it?

Weitzmann: Sinai was another project which I started. When Friend died in '56, one of his best friends was George Forsyth from The University of Michigan, and he came to the funeral. He said to me: "I am just on my way to the Near East to look for a place to do archeological field work and at the end of this trip I will go to Sinai. I know that you are always interested in Sinai. Would you come along?" So, at the end of the term, I took a plane to Cairo and we went for a short visit to Sinai. We were so overwhelmed by the riches of the monastery, particularly the collection of icons, that I decided then and there to make their study a going concern for years to come, and I made five expeditions to Sinai, between '56 and '65.

Labalme: Was it difficult to get access to the Sinai collections?

Weitzmann: Well, I was very lucky. I had made a friendship with the Egyptian scholar Aziz Atiya, a very prominent Arabist and historian. He had been on Sinai--before our expedition there was another Sinai expedition organized by the Library of Congress, to microfilm all the New Testament manuscripts of Sinai, and here Aziz Atiya was joining this expedition as representative of Alexandria University. And so when Atiya came to give a lecture here in Princeton, I met him. I told him that I wanted to go to Sinai and immediately he promised me his support. He was on the best possible terms with the abbot, and through his recommendation, all doors were opened to us. I could do what I liked, I could take the icons out of the frames, out of the iconostasis in order to photograph them. Whatever I wanted, I could do. We even got the permission to have the apse mosaic with the Transfiguration, the greatest masterpiece of the Justinianic period, cleaned and so fixed that we saved it from an impending collapse by the best craftsman there is, Ernest Hawkins, whom I had invited to come from Istanbul where in a never-ending task he is cleaning mosaics of Hagia Sophia. We got the permission to clean icons and to photograph everything we wanted.

Labalme: When was the last expedition?

Weitzmann: '65. In '66 I had a heart attack, and after this I could not take the risk to go back to Sinai because of its altitude. The mountain is about 5000 feet high.

Labalme: Is it a strenuous journey to get there?

Weitzmann: Not so much the journey, but it's a very strenuous life in the monastery.

Labalme: Why is that?

Weitzmann: We lived in the monastery from dehydrated food, which we brought along from the U.S., most of the time, and fresh food whenever we could get it from Suez or Cairo. It was very difficult. Now it's easier. In the meantime the monastery has become an international tourist center. But it wasn't yet when we were there.

Labalme: Were you able to photograph most of the material.

Weitzmann: Everything. There were no restrictions. As far as Atiya is concerned, I got him later for one year at the Institute as a visiting scholar. He was later Professor in Utah.

Labalme: In Utah, the University of Utah?

Weitzmann: Yes, they have built an international institute for oriental languages.

Labalme: Because of the Mormons?

Weitzmann: Yes. But Atiya was a Copt. He died last year. Now, after having told you about the Sinai adventure, I am coming back to my pupils--another one who made a successful career is Herbert Kessler. He is the chairman of the Art Department at Johns Hopkins. Like Galavaris, he wrote a thesis--on the illustrated Bibles of Tours--that was published in the Department's series, and he also has been my collaborator in a volume which I published two or three years ago, a volume on the so-called Cotton Genesis. And now I have still another volume in the press also with Kessler as my collaborator, something

entirely different--a book on the third-century frescoes of the synagogue of Dura in Mesopotamia.

Labalme: Well, I know the name because Herbert Kessler wrote the introduction for one of the collections of your essays.

Weitzmann: In '72 he put out the first collection of my essays. Later five more volumes appeared, four in Variorum Reprints in London, and one, on Sinai Studies, at the Princeton University Press. Another of my pupils is one of the leading scholars in Greece, Doula Mouriki. She was the first woman who took a Ph.D. degree in our Department, and she is now professor at the Technical University at Athens. Moreover, she is at the moment a guest professor here in our department. And she has published several books on Byzantine frescoes and mosaics.

Labalme: So you feel that the future of the field is still strong?

Weitzmann: Oh yes. Even outside of Princeton. Two very good theses were written not on Byzantine but on Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. One was a doctoral thesis by Robert Harris who was a much-beloved professor at Smith College, but he died. I have his manuscript and I will publish it also in the Department series. Another pupil is Robert Deshman who is a successful professor at the University of Toronto. He has promised to send me soon his final manuscript for publication, likewise in the Department series.

Labalme: So you still have a great deal to edit? You don't lack for occupation, I can see.

Weitzmann: Surely not. One of the difficulties of my life was that I came to the Institute in 1935 and had ten years entirely to myself,

before I started teaching in 1945. And so I felt an obligation to start large projects, not to disperse my energies on small problems. Then I started too many big projects, and that's why I now need collaborators in order to finish them.

Labalme: But that was one of Flexner's ideas, that the Institute should serve great projects.

Weitzmann: Yes. That's why I felt this obligation very strongly.

Labalme: Did you have many conversations with Flexner personally?

Weitzmann: Oh yes, we have been in his house frequently and he came to our apartment. We kept up our relationship even after his retirement and visited Mr. and Mrs. Flexner in New York. It was a very personal relationship. And also, it was a small faculty in the early days--my wife and I were in the house of [John] von Neumann, of [Hermann] Weyl, of [Oswald] Veblen, of [James] Alexander; we all had personal relations and any one of these mathematicians turned out to be very culturally broad-minded. They were not narrow specialists in their field. And with von Neumann and Weyl one could talk about everything in the arts and literature. My wife and I were in the home of [Albert] Einstein only after his death, when his daughter Margot Einstein invited us. She was interested in the arts and had been sitting in on my medieval art course, and we frequently had lunch with her in the Annex. She was an artist in her own right, had started as a sculptress but later concentrated on making mosaics which she was eager to show us when we visited her. We also had contacts with Helen Dukas, Einstein's secretary, and with his one-time assistant, Valentine Bargmann, whom my

wife had known since childhood in West Berlin. We had very friendly relations with him and his late wife Sonja. Both too were very interested in the arts. We met Einstein personally only on the Institute grounds, and together we recalled the twenties in Berlin. At a party at the Institute we heard him play the violin, and on another occasion he played in a quartet formed at the Institute, with von Laue, who was an excellent violinist.

Labalme: [The mathematicians and physicists] actually understood and were interested in what you were doing.

Weitzmann: Oh yes. And also the Sinai project--not only did the Institute support it with travel money--but when I was asked to give a lecture at the Institute on Sinai, Oppenheimer came not only to listen but to take an active part in the discussion. He was so bright he could talk to the point. And he had a grasp of everything. As far as my relations to the Institute was concerned, I was a permanent member but did not belong to the Faculty because I was half at the University, but I was invited to all social events, all dinner parties and special occasions. This lasted through the eras of Aydelotte and Oppenheimer. It stopped with Kaysen.

Labalme: Why was that?

Weitzmann: I don't know. Don't ask me. When he came, I paid him a courtesy visit, and that was all there ever was. When I retired from the Institute--I was thirty-seven years with the Institute, from '35 to '72, and I retired from both the University and the Institute at the same time--the University gave me a great farewell. As far as the

Institute was concerned, just the pay check stopped. I was dropped. Not a word was said.

Labalme: What a shame! I know the University put on a show, didn't they?

Weitzmann: Yes, they made an exhibition on Byzantine manuscripts in American Collections, and they printed a catalogue--it was written by my pupils. There was a colloquium with invited scholars, and the colloquium papers were printed, so this was a very nice celebration. Members from the Institute were also invited to the great dinner party.

Labalme: Do you think it was because the relationship between the Institute and the University was not the same, by the 70s--was that a possibility?

Weitzmann: It could be. I don't know.

Labalme: Did you sense that over the decades, over your time there was a shift?

Weitzmann: Well I can only say that the relations were very cordial up to Oppenheimer's death. Afterwards they were non-existent.

Labalme: But it must have been not just you. It must have been some change in Kaysen's view.

Weitzmann: I used to get, naturally, all the reports, lists of members, etc.--everything I got automatically. No longer in Kaysen's time. I was cut off the mailing list.

Labalme: Well, these things happen. Of course, he had problems of his own. Tell me about Oppenheimer. What was he like as a person? What struck you about him in particular?

Weitzmann: He was the most intelligent man I ever met. He could talk about everything. And he was very kind and helpful. For instance, one day Kantorowicz who was my personal friend came to me and said, "Look here, you are a half-time Institute member, you should at least have a half-time secretary." So he went to Oppenheimer, to propose this for me. Oppenheimer said "Yes, we will do it, under one condition--that the University give him the other half." He forced the University! And I got a full-time secretary. It was a miracle. He was thoughtful of my research, and was much interested in my Sinai expeditions in particular.

Labalme: Did you see him during the time of his difficulties in Washington?

Weitzmann: No, I was not close enough. But I signed the Institute's letter of protest to the Government when he was dismissed from the Security Council. I went to his parties, he invited us to, and the conversation was always interesting.

Labalme: Tell me about Kantorowicz a bit.

Weitzmann: He was a very outgoing person. He lived here in Princeton, not far from the University campus. He was also very close to Mr. Friend. Friend had gotten him to Dumbarton Oaks before he came to the Institute. Friend lived in 10 Mercer Street. I was very often in Friend's house, at times even daily. He was a bachelor and had good relations with Kantorowicz as well as with another person whom we met a great deal, too, and who lived in Friend's house: Theodore Mommsen, who was the grandson of the great historian Mommsen. He and

Kantorowicz were already close friends in Berlin in the twenties. Mommsen was at the History Department, and it was typical too that all German historians had a strong interest in cultural history, especially the fine arts, while American historians were more oriented toward economics. So it happened that when Mommsen gave a course in medieval history, he asked me to give one lecture in this course on the art of Ravenna. And also Kantorowicz knew a great deal about art, has written also about art historical problems and I always said, "You know, there's an art historian lost in you." And he answered, "No, no, I never wanted to be an art historian and waste my time collecting photographs!" I knew him quite well and he'd invite me to his house. He was a famous cook.

Labalme: What did he cook? What were his specialties?

Weitzmann: I'll tell you what I remember. He made a soup. And on the table was a vase with a chrysanthemum in it. And he took the flower of this chrysanthemum and put the petals in the soup. Chrysanthemum soup!

Labalme: Something fairly original. But I suppose it was good.

Weitzmann: When I made a Festschrift for Friend's 60th birthday, which was lavishly published by the Princeton University Press, I engaged Kantorowicz and Mommsen as coeditors. In addition, both wrote very substantial articles for it, as did Alföldi and Panofsky, and quite a number of authors who had held temporary appointments at the Institute, like [Richard] Ettinghausen and [Hanns] Swarzenski, and visiting scholars such as Gerhart Ladner, Hugo Buchthal, and others.

END OF SIDE ONE.

CASSETTE ONE, SIDE TWO [starts around counter 99]

Weitzmann: One of the persons with whom I had very close contact was Ernst Herzfeld. He also came to our apartment and brought his violin along. He was an expert violinist. He played solo Bach's Passacaglia. He was actually one of the most gifted archaeologists I have ever met. He was one person who could, if he wanted, make an excavation all alone by himself. He had all the qualifications to be a digger, to be an epigrapher, to be a philologist, every aspect he covered--an architect and an artist who made beautiful watercolors of the Islamic frescoes of Samarra which he had excavated. When I visited him in his office at the Institute where he was surrounded by a truly remarkable library--which, unfortunately, the Institute did not try to keep after his death--there was on the wall a photograph of Emperor Wilhelm II. This was not just a sign of political expression but rather one of personal devotion. Wilhelm had been one of the greatest patrons of the arts and especially of archaeology. He had written two books himself on classical and ancient oriental archaeology and he also conducted an excavation at Corfu and was befriended by many leading archaeologists--among them Herzfeld. When Wilhelm after 1918 lived in exile in Doorn (Holland) a group of German archaeologists devoted to him--among them Herzfeld--visited him regularly and held conferences in Doorn.

Labalme: Herzfeld's many-sided expertise isn't usual, is it? Mostly you need a team with each person an expert in one of these aspects?

Weitzmann: Yes. I had wanted to hear him already as a student in Berlin, but he was always on an excavation in Persepolis and I never could hear him because he was away. I met him for the first time here in Princeton.

Labalme: So Princeton provided a kind of group of extraordinary people in its best days? Was there anything like it elsewhere in this country, do you think?

Weitzmann: Well, of course, there was hardly an American university without prominent German scholars. At Harvard there was [William] Koehler, and there was George Hanfmann the archaeologist, and NYU was almost entirely built with German emigrants. There was Walther Friedlander and Richard Krautheimer and Karl Lehman-Hartleben, the archaeologist.

Labalme: It's proverbial that the misfortune of Germany was the good fortune of the academic profession here.

Weitzmann: And Walter Cooke who was Chairman at NYU took advantage of it. Truly, in my field, the most influential person was Rufus Morey, and Cooke was his pupil who built up the department at NYU.

Labalme: Morey seems to have had his finger in many pies.

Weitzmann: Yes. He had excellent relations with the Vatican, and with several collaborators he made a catalogue of the Museo Cristiano in the Vatican Museum. And he had this excellent relationship with French scholars--[Henri] Seyrig. Through Seyrig Princeton got a concession to excavate Antioch--one of Morey's many projects.

Labalme: When you look back, which of your many projects gave you the

most satisfaction, or can't you distinguish between them?

Weitzmann: Well, it's difficult to say. I see, you have here a volume of my articles in *Variorum Reprints*. Its editor had approached me and said, "We want a volume of your essays, but we do not want just a variety of diverse subjects, but some essays with a common theme, that belong together." I said, "Well, I don't have just one province, I have worked in at least four provinces." The answer was, "Let us publish four volumes." And so four volumes were published. Each one had an accent in a different area.

Labalme: You surely don't regret you had these four worlds, because they interlocked, after all.

Weitzmann: When I started to study, I studied two fields at the same time side-by-side, classical archaeology and art history. And jokingly, I said I could not make up my mind on which one to concentrate. The union of these two fields was for me the attraction of Princeton's Department of Art and Archaeology. Morey himself was a very good chairman because he was active in both fields. That's why I fitted so easily into the Princeton Department. I am not being very coherent.

Labalme: No, that's actually much more interesting to have you talk this way, and we just have a few minutes before we go for lunch. We may want to meet again because there's so much to say. Do you have a feeling that Flexner's idea of the Institute, which I put in my letter to you, that it would be a beacon that would change education elsewhere, do you think that was realized?

Weitzmann: I think one can rightly say that the main influence perhaps is through the yearly scholars who come and get in contact with each other and with the people of both Institute and University and then go back and are enabled to pursue their research programs which would not have been possible without having the free time here. Some came quite regularly--you say archaeologists don't have a permanent faculty, but they did have a few who came almost every year and, as I have mentioned, one was Alan Wace and the other was Henri Seyrig.

Labalme: I would love to continue but I think we'll stop now.

END OF FIRST INTERVIEW.

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY 08540

KURT WEITZMANN and JOSEFA WEITZMANN-FIEDLER

Oral History Project

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THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

PREFACE

The following manuscript contains the edited transcript of the second of two interviews with Kurt Weitzmann, in which Josefa Weitzmann-Fiedler also participated. This interview was recorded at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, on May 3, 1989, and conducted by Patricia H. Labalme together with Robert E. Lerner of Northwestern University, visiting member in the School of Historical Studies.

Please see the preface to the first interview (March 21, 1989) for a brief summary of the background of Kurt Weitzmann.

Josefa Weitzmann-Fiedler was born in Berlin. She received her doctorate in 1930 from the University of Berlin, and her thesis on Die Aktdarstellung in der Malerei vom Ausgang der Antike bis zum Ende des Romanische Stiles was published in 1934.

Dr. Weitzmann-Fiedler served as an assistant at the Archaeological Seminary and the Museum of Casts and the Collection of Vases of the University of Berlin and was employed as an editorial assistant by the German Imperial Archaeological Institute.

Arriving in the United States in 1938, she was trained as an architect, receiving her architectural diploma in 1943. She taught at Rutgers University and has published in the field of classical and western medieval book illumination, including a catalogue raisonné of Romanesque illustrated bronze bowls (1981) with supplement (1983). She was assistant to Paul Frankl for the publication of The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations Through Eight Centuries (1960) and Gothic Architecture (1962) and was instrumental in the publication of his Zu Fragen des Stils (1988) to which she contributed a foreword.

The reader should be aware that the following is a transcript of the spoken word, that it attempts to preserve the spontaneity and informality of the original tape, and that the views expressed therein are those of the narrators.

THE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

I hereby give and grant to the Institute for Advanced Study as a donation and for such scholarly and educational and other purposes as the Institute Archivist and the Director of the Historical Studies/Social Science Library shall determine the tape recording(s) and contents listed below, subject to the following conditions.

Ruth Weizmann

SIGNATURE OF NARRATOR

Joseph Weizmann-Fiedler

SIGNATURE OF NARRATOR

Patricia H. Labalme

SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWER

Date:

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Tape and transcript of interview of May 3, 1989

INTERVIEW WITH KURT WEITZMANN and JOSEFA WEITZMANN-FIEDLER

(The second of two interviews)

Date: May 3, 1989

Place: Princeton, New Jersey

Interviewers: Patricia H. Labalme and Robert E. Lerner (visiting member in the School of Historical Studies from Northwestern University).

[The tape was not running in the beginning, but the interview began with Kurt Weitzmann speaking about his former students and associates at the Institute for Advanced Study. The following notes were supplied by Dr. Weitzmann]:

William Loerke, Professor at the University of Pittsburgh and at the same time Director of Dumbarton Oaks. His thesis was on the Rossano Gospels; as a second reader of it I had engaged Kantorowicz and we both considered the thesis as being excellent.

Paul Underwood of the Whittemore Institute and Dumbarton Oaks, working on the cleaning of the mosaics of the Hagia Sophia and the Chora Church of Istanbul, permission obtained from Kemal Pasha. Being the expert in mosaic decoration, I engaged him and Mr. Hawkins in cleaning and consolidating the Justinianic apse mosaic at Sinai.

Shigibumi Tsuji, a Japanese student, taught at Tokyo University by Mrs. Miura, a German scholar married to a Japanese, née Stange, pupil of Adolf Harnack. He is now professor at the University of Osaka, and a few years ago he organized a colloquium in my honor, but I felt too old to make the trip, and my paper was read by another student of mine who went to Osaka. It was printed as the first article in a new Japanese journal devoted to Western and Eastern art. Last year Tsuji was guest professor at Houston, Texas.

Samy Shenouda, an Egyptian, now Professor at Alexandria University, taught at Gordon College in Khartoum, and then in Libya and then Morocco, digging in Heliopolis. He managed that the University of Alexandria became a third participant of the Michigan-Princeton Expedition to Mount Sinai.

Robert Bergman now at Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.

Gary Vikan, vice-director at the Walters Art Gallery.

Tom Hoving, later director at the Metropolitan Museum. He wrote his thesis on Carolingian ivories and as a curator at the Metropolitan Museum, he made as his most important acquisition a Romanesque ivory cross. When he proposed it to his trustees for acquisition, they insisted that he must show an expertise from me. So I went to Zurich where the cross was in a bank safe and I OK'ed it. Hoving wrote a book about the dramatic story of the acquisition of the cross in which he also describes the part I had

played in it. After my retirement from the University and Institute in 1972, he made me a consultative curator at the Metropolitan Museum, a position I held for ten years, devoting my time to organizing a blockbuster exhibition, "Age of Spirituality," dealing with Late Antique and Early Christian Art.

Wen Fong is another student who achieved prominence. He now heads the Far Eastern section in our Princeton Art Department and at the same time the Far Eastern Department of the Metropolitan Museum. In my manuscript seminar he read an excellent paper on an illustrated Anglo-Saxon manuscript. He got deeply engaged in his subject, and he now proposed it as a subject of a thesis under my supervision. This is the only case in my career where I dissuaded a student from working with me. I knew he would write an excellent thesis, but I also knew that he would not stay with this field but that he was destined to become a leading scholar in Chinese art.

John Rupert Martin is another student who made a successful career in our Princeton Department. He wrote a thesis on the illustrated manuscripts of John Climacus which I published as a monograph in the Departmental series of Studies in Manuscript Illumination. But soon thereafter he gave up studies in the Byzantine field and he became a well-known Rubens scholar.

Doula Mouriki, a Greek from Athens, was the first woman to take a degree in our department when women were first admitted at Princeton University

20 years ago. She wrote her thesis on Greek manuscripts and is now a professor at the Polytechnion at Athens. She has published several books on Byzantine mosaics and frescoes, and last year she was a guest professor in our Princeton Art Department.

George Galavaris who came from Athens is professor at McGill University at Montreal and now my collaborator on the catalogue of the Illustrated Manuscripts of Mount Sinai.

Herbert L. Kessler, Chairman of the Art Department of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. He has been my collaborator 1) of the publication of the Cotton Genesis and 2) of the Frescoes of the Synagogue of Dura and Christian Art (in press).

Oleg Grabar, now professor of Islamic Art at Harvard. I was the co-reader of the PhD thesis on fresco decoration of desert palaces, and in my manuscript seminar I put him to work on the illustrated manuscripts of the Maqamat of Hariri which years later he published as a monograph.

I could continue the list of my students who have made successful teaching and museum careers, but I'd like to stop here.

[CASSETTE ONE, SIDE ONE]

Weitzmann: I mentioned several people who came as temporary guests to the Institute with whom I had contact. There are several more with whom I had quite a close contact when they were here at the Institute. One was the late Eric Turner. He was a famous papyrologist, an Englishman, and he was called by the classicists to the Institute. It happened that at the time, a collector in Los Angeles had sent me photos of a Hellenistic glass bowl with enamel paint, and he thought that Weitzmann knows about all kinds of iconographic subject matter. Perhaps he could decipher what the scenic representation meant. It turned out to be, in my opinion, a possible illustration of a comedy of Menander, and it had inscriptions which apparently pointed to New Comedy. And of course for the inscriptions, the man to decipher them was Eric Turner. So when he came to Princeton, to the Institute, the owner sent this bowl to Princeton, and it was temporarily stored in our museum. Turner came to McCormick Hall and we studied together this bowl and published together a joint article on it in the Swiss journal Antike Kunst, 24 (1981), 49-50, "An enameled glass beaker with a scene from New Comedy." One of our dearest friends who came to the Institute was Hans Hahnloser, the Swiss. He was the Chairman of the Art Department in Bern; besides being an art historian he had an extraordinary collection of impressionist paintings, one of the great private collections. I had known Hahnloser from the year 1925 when I was a student in Vienna and he was assistant of Julius von Schlosser who was a great art historian in Vienna, and from there on we had remained in contact. When he came to Princeton, to the Institute, he worked at that

time on the treasure of St. Mark's of Venice, and especially the enamels in the so-called Pala d'Oro. I pointed out to him, that the head piece of the Pala d'Oro was actually a piece from an iconostasis beam of a Byzantine church. It put him on the trail, and I gave him all my material of iconostasis beams. So apparently it came from a Constantinopolitan church. Well, it was one of the many points of contact that we had. Still another member who came several times, I think, was Gerhart Ladner, the historian and art historian. Of course I had known Ladner, too, from Vienna. He had written a very extensive review of my first publication, my doctor's thesis on Byzantine ivories, and since then, we remained in contact, and I have seen him repeatedly in Switzerland. Another one was Herbert von Einem. He was a leading art historian in Germany before and after the war, the chairman of the art department in Bonn. We had been studying together in Berlin in 1924 and were friends. After the war, he got me in 1962 for half a year as a guest professor to Bonn, which I enjoyed very much indeed. And then he came to the Institute and again it was a great pleasure to see him here. There were other members at the Institute, but I will stop here.

Labalme: I think that's very useful, very interesting.

Lerner: I'll leap in, if I may. I didn't know that you knew Gerhart Ladner, but it leads me to a question that I was going to start with, that is, I saw that you have your degree from Berlin in 1929.

Weitzmann: That's right.

Lerner: There were a number of people who were interested in both art history from the iconographic point of view and history--medieval history,

late Roman history. As I recall, Kantorowicz came to Berlin around 1929, 1930, to work on the Ergänzungsband [supplementary volume for his biography of Frederick II]. Is that right, roughly about that time?

Weitzmann: Yes.

Lerner: And then Ladner was an 'arbeiter' at the Monumenta Germaniae Historica around that time and Felix Gilbert would have been working on either Droysen or his Renaissance interests around that time--

Weitzmann: And another member was Ted Mommsen.

Lerner: Exactly so. And so my question is, to begin with, did you have the feeling that there was a kind of circle, a group of people who had similar interests and identified each other as such?

Weitzmann: Unfortunately, I had not met Kantorowicz in Germany. I met him for the first time in this country. But I remember distinctly, that when I was still a student, his book on Frederick II was a bombshell, and it was very much read also by art historians. Now, of course, I knew that the book was criticized by [Albert] Brackmann who was a leading historian in Berlin. As a matter of fact, when I took my Ph.D. in Berlin, in art history, Berlin was the only place where you had to have four fields to be examined in. You had to have as the second major field classical archaeology, it means you had to have Greek and Latin, and even if you wrote a thesis on Picasso, you had to have Greek and Latin to make a degree in Berlin. And my two minor fields--one was philosophy, where I concentrated on ancient philosophy, and medieval history, and I was examined by Brackmann. It was very pleasant, because Brackmann had a weak side for art historians. He loved art and so there was much

communication. But I know that he had been quite critical of Kantorowicz's writing.

Lerner: That would have been in 1929?

Weitzmann: It was in the 20s, yes, my exam was in '29. And I found out only when I was in Princeton that, about the same month, Ted Mommsen had taken his degree in Berlin. But we didn't know each other. I met him in Princeton for the first time.

Lerner: So that you didn't customarily go to the Monumenta?

Weitzmann: Not being a historian I had no reason to go there.

Lerner: The library in art history was strong enough so that you didn't need another library in medieval studies?

Weitzmann: It was a general library, in addition to art historical--

Lerner: Didn't you have any sense yourself as to which side you were on in that mythenschaustreit between Kantorowicz and Brackmann?

Weitzmann: Of course, I was much taken by Kantorowicz.

Lerner: I read--of course I wasn't born yet, so it's just something I know about from reading--that the lines were formed to some extent on generational grounds. Allegedly, the younger people were more for Kantorowicz and the more traditional older people were for Brackmann. Is that, more or less, your recollection?

Weitzmann: Of course I am not a historian. I only read the Frederick II because it was intriguing to an art historian to see Kantorowicz integrate this figure who played a great role also in the history of art. If you want to know something about Kantorowicz's early days, I just bought

accidentally in Switzerland not long ago a book which contains the letter exchange between Kantorowicz and Stefan George. Have you seen that?

Lerner: By [Eckhart] Grünewald. It was a dissertation. But I'm just interested in other people's angles. Did you have a sense yourself of what you thought of the George-kreis?

Weitzmann: I knew about it naturally. Everybody read George at the time, but I did not become a member. And I tell you why. Because of one single line of Stefan George which was: "Nicht aus dem Osten kommt das Licht." You see the implications it had! [Laughter]. And this I said, No! It involved already all the German nationalism which I disliked.

Lerner: Excuse me, where were you born? Were you born in the eastern part of Germany?

Weitzmann: No, in a little village near Kassel.

Lerner: So you're not an east German.

Weitzmann: No, I'm a Hesse.

Lerner: Is that a poem by George? This line, "Nicht aus dem Osten kommt das Licht"?

Weitzmann: Yes, it's a line from George.

Lerner: Did you speak about George with [Eka Kantorowicz] when you got to know him here?

Weitzmann: No, at that time he no longer was very much involved in the George movement, and I had the impression he didn't even care to talk about it.

Lerner: There's a lot of uncertainty about what Kantorowicz's stand regarding the George-kreis in his American career really was. And my

sense of the matter, but this is purely a sense, I don't really have documentation, is that he had enormous regret for his own German nationalism and for all the really nearly Nazi things that--

Weitzmann: I know, no doubt. He tried to avoid a discussion of this subject.

Lerner: Distance himself. On the other hand, he talks in his writings of the 20s and early 30s about Treue. It seems as if Treue is something that made a great deal of difference to Kantorowicz, and tell me what you think about this: his sense of Treue made it impossible for him to say anything that would be regarded as unfaithful to the world of the George-Kreis in which he lived.

Weitzmann: Perfectly right. He kept a certain personal loyalty.

Lerner: I see. That's helpful. Do you have any sense as to how one can explain the enormous personal enthusiasm and loyalty and dedication that a range of otherwise critical intellectuals had for this poet? Obviously you didn't share it yourself, but it's still, to me, a source of enormous amazement that people like Kantorowicz wrote to this man as "Lieber Meister" and kept on saying "When you're not here we don't know how to survive. We need your guidance"--all sorts of things that are so foreign to an American mentality.

Weitzmann: This really touches on almost a split German personality which also made many people Hitlerites.

Lerner: It's that kind of "führer-princip," is that right?

Weitzmann: Yes. As far as I am concerned, being a typical German bourgeois, the class in which so many fell for Hitler--why I didn't fall

for it, I don't know. As a matter of fact, I detested it from the very beginning.

Lerner: Apparently so did Felix Gilbert.

Weitzmann: I have no understanding why so many fellow-Germans could be so uncritical and fall for it. Perhaps [because we were] emotional about things.

Lerner: I've just been reading a memoir of Kantorowicz's cousin, Gertrud Kantorowicz, who was a student of Greek art in Berlin in the first decades of the 20th century and was the only woman ever allowed to publish in the Blättern für die Kunst. Although under the name "Gert. Pauly," which was her maiden name, so that the readers would not have known that this was a woman, but perhaps you recall she lived with the philosopher Simmel and was then a private scholar. Obviously, with the Kantorowicz wealth, she had enough wealth to live on, but was also thoroughly dedicated to George to such a degree that when he died, she really did write letters saying that she didn't know whether she could live any more. This was in 1933 or '34. It was a source of such extraordinary amazement to me that this kind of critical intellect could still be so almost blinded by the aura of this great man.

Labalme: [To Weitzmann] Did you know this person yourself?

Weitzmann: No.

Lerner: I'll just parenthetically that the memoir is extremely moving, because she was able to travel to England as late as 1938 or even 1939 but returned, and when asked why she was returning, she cited a line from Pliny's letters which tells about a Roman aristocrat who was suffering

terrible pain, and he tells Pliny that he is only enduring this pain for one reason, and that is so that he could outlive "that terrible cutthroat"-- in this case one of the evil emperors--by as much as a day. And she says she is going back so she can outlive that cutthroat, for even a day.

Labalme: And did she?

Lerner: She was then rounded up, put into Theresienstadt and died in April, 1945, just as the SS pulled out of Theresienstadt. When Kantorowicz arrived in Princeton, there was an extraordinary group of German emigrés, refugees: Kantorowicz, yourself, Mommsen, Panofsky, the list goes on at great length. Did you feel then that there was a German circle of dedicated scholars and medievalists?

Weitzmann: No. the Germans did not keep to themselves. For instance, the very close friendship with Mommsen and Kantorowicz included an equally close friendship with Bert Friend. He was Philadelphia high class and as American as one could be. The situation was quite different from that of the German refugees in England who were not as easily absorbed by the English. They formed a group. But not so in America. In America we were immediately accepted by the American scholars and the American society at large. We had American friends immediately. We never wanted to form a German group really.

Lerner: Somebody told me recently that Bert Friend was primarily responsible for seeing to it that Dumbarton Oaks was made a research center. Is there truth in that?

Weitzmann: Oh yes. He actually was the one who built a permanent faculty and made it a real research institution, at Dumbarton Oaks. But he remained at the same time a professor at Princeton University. He was very wise and very clever. If the Harvard trustees didn't fulfill his wishes, he could at any minute go back to Princeton. [Laughter]

Labalme: The Harvard trustees were not entirely sure what the future of Dumbarton Oaks was?

Weitzmann: Well, it was an institution centered primarily on Byzantine art and culture. That's what the Blisses wanted. It has now taken a different turn, different from what the Blisses wanted it to be. But Friend was very far-sighted. He got an outstanding faculty. He got Vasiliev from Wisconsin, a renowned Russian Byzantinist. He got Father Dvornik, a Czech historian of great repute. He got Sirapie Der Nersessian, a well-known Armenian scholar. These were all excellent people.

Lerner: You didn't mention Erich Kahler. Would he have been part of this group?

Weitzmann: No, he had nothing to do with Dumbarton Oaks. I have met him repeatedly here in Princeton, but I had not much personal contact with him.

Lerner: It's my impression that he had a close relationship to Kantorowicz.

Weitzmann: Yes, they knew each other. How well, I don't know. We never discussed Kahler, as far as I remember.

Lerner: One of the reasons I asked is because my sense is that Kahler was quite politically engaged, but that Kantorowicz and Mommsen were not. Is that accurate?

Weitzmann: I don't know about Kahler, but I know about Mommsen and Kantorowicz.

Lerner: Am I correct in saying that they weren't particularly interested in politics?

Weitzmann: I met Kantorowicz the first time--Friend had gotten him to Dumbarton Oaks at the time that there was this "oath crisis" at Berkeley. I remember still that at Dumbarton Oaks, I saw Kantorowicz for the first time when he was on the telephone. And when he put down the receiver, he said, "I have just had a talk with Felix Frankfurter," the Justice of the Supreme Court, because he was his advisor in how to deal with the Berkeley problem.

Lerner: Isn't that interesting! But again, I'm coming back to Kantorowicz's Weltanschauung, so to speak, in his second life as a scholar in the United States. There seems to be no doubt about what his Weltanschauung was at least 'till 1933, but the question about his set of attitudes in America is, I think, so much more complicated, because he was one of the leaders of the resistance to the loyalty oath, [the] refusal to sign the loyalty oath in Berkeley, which many people associate with the left and would have thought was a left-wing cause. It's my sense that Kantorowicz did not become a man of the left, and when you tell me that he was on the phone with Felix Frankfurter, I would strengthen my sense of

that. Frankfurter in 1950 was a very conservative Justice, even though he stood for strict construction of legal principles.

Weitzmann: He was a friend of Kantorowicz and his advisor in how to handle this whole affair.

Lerner: Right. But in terms of presidential politics or social policy, matters of that sort, did you have any sense that Kantorowicz was in any way engaged in these matters?

Weitzmann: I don't think we talked much politics. [We talked about] our fields and academic professional concerns.

Lerner: Exactly. Did you have any sense of whether the Institute was making a political statement by hiring him in 1950 when he was at the center of this controversy at Berkeley?

Weitzmann: I don't know.

Lerner: It didn't occur to you or it wasn't discussed?

Weitzmann: No, no.

Lerner: Because again, of course, Robert Oppenheimer was the most important person in that decision, and just a few years later, Oppenheimer was stripped of his security clearance.

Weitzmann: I don't think so. I really think he [Kantorowicz] stood on his own scholarly merits.

Lerner: Without doubt. The minutes of the Faculty meeting insist on that point. Nonetheless, Oppenheimer, I believe, had some public commitment there which may in one way or another have affected his own reputation at a time of extraordinary hysteria--the fact that the Institute took

somebody who refused to sign an oath was no doubt part of the dossier against Oppenheimer.

Labalme: Do we know that?

Lerner: Not explicitly. But Oppenheimer had to report to Admiral Strauss who was the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, the very man who was responsible for stripping him of his own clearance a few years later. And so I think it's obvious that all of these things are interrelated in various ways. How to sort them out is, of course, another question.

Labalme: [to Weitzmann] But you and Kantorowicz did not discuss these things.

Lerner: You did not talk politics. Tell us more about his effect in Princeton. Was he available to students, for example? Was he a personality who had an important role in the intellectual life of the entire community?

Weitzmann: Oh yes. It was mainly through Mommsen that he was drawn into the History Department. I'll mention this also: Mommsen asked me to give a lecture on art history in his general medieval history course. He and Kantorowicz both had a considerable knowledge of and high regard for art history. But this was, in a way, the tradition of German training in history. You know that Kantorowicz and Mommsen had both written straight art historical articles. Naturally, both came to me discussing art historical problems.

Labalme: Was Kantorowicz a part of the University community as much as you were?

Weitzmann: No. I think there never was another appointment made like mine, half University and half Institute.

Labalme: Bernard Lewis, to some extent, later, shared that. But I mean, informally, was Kantorowicz part of the University social world, intellectual world?

Weitzmann: Yes, through Mommsen, and he knew Strayer very well and had contact with him.

Lerner: Tell us about the famous dinner parties. Allegedly--it was Homer Thompson who told me it took Kantorowicz three days to give a dinner party because he needed a day to shop and plan the menu, and another day to prepare it, and still another day to clean up after it was over, so one assumes that these were--

Labalme: Important occasions!

Lerner: Yes, extraordinary events. Did you--

Weitzmann: Yes, he was a great artist as a cook.

Lerner: You know that he told Gräfin Dönhoff, when he knew he was dying, that in the obituary, he said to her, "Vergessen sie bitte nicht meine Kochkunst, das ist das Einsige wovon ich wirklich etwas verstehe." It was apparently something that he took great pride in.

Weitzmann: There was at the time somebody in the Art department who also claimed to be one of the master cooks. That was Ernest DeWald. When Kantorowicz and Ernest DeWald both met in Friend's house and prepared a dinner, in no time they were in each other's hair! [Laughter]. Everybody knew better.

Lerner: Was it really true that he made chrysanthemum soup, or was it just a legend?

Weitzmann: No, he did. Once he invited me to dinner and actually had chrysanthemums on the table and he took the flower and put the petals in his and my dish!

Lerner: There's a story that I've heard only once but it is such a wonderful story, I wonder whether you've heard it and can tell me any more details, namely that Eka had a little coin collection--of course he had a collection of Greek vases as well and desired more than anything else the Emperor Frederick II's gold coin, which is extremely rare and which, for one reason or another, despite his wealth he was not able to acquire. The story is that a group of his friends, some of whom had wealth of their own, knew that an augustale of Frederick II had come on the market and pooled their money to buy this coin as a gift for Eka, and there was a presentation ceremony at which they presented him this gold coin at the bottom of a glass of water and told him that he would get the coin on condition that he drank the water. The punch line being that this was the only time in his life that Eka drank water! [Laughter]

Labalme: Does that ring true?

Weitzmann: Yes.

Lerner: Do you recall anything about such a presentation ceremony?

Weitzmann: I have heard about it.

Lerner: So it would have happened here in the U.S. if it did happen at all.

Labalme: Does this mean that he was a great connoisseur of wines?

Lerner: Oh, indeed yes.

Weitzmann: After all, "Kantorowicz" was the name of a famous liquor chain store in Germany--his father was a great wine dealer, and Eka grew up as a great connoisseur of wines himself.

Lerner: Indeed, he had an extraordinary wine cellar, and I was in Princeton when he died. At that time, the executors of the will were Ralph Giese and Michael Cherniavsky, two of his most prominent students, and the will stipulated that they destroy all his papers and all his unpublished scholarship. As for the wine cellar, they were free to take it themselves. Ralph said it was an extraordinary gift, because he had put down bottles of red wine that were age-old and for all I knew came from his father's collection. But the white wine doesn't keep as long, and so Ralph brought me a bottle. I was only 23 and not a connoisseur of wine, but it did seem extraordinary at the time. Tell me, though, about this set of instructions that the papers be destroyed. Were you consulted about that?

Weitzmann: No. I knew nothing about it.

Lerner: There's still some question as to whether material was destroyed or not and under what circumstances. Were you aware that he knew he was dying?

Weitzmann: Yes. Only I know he had refused to have this heart operation made, and that this refusal would lead naturally to his end. He could have prolonged his life if he had agreed to the operation. That's all I know.

Lerner: Apparently Panofsky was with him the night of his death?

Weitzmann: I don't know. I wasn't in Princeton at the time.

Lerner: Did you have any sense of his mood and behavior when he knew he hadn't much time to live?

Weitzmann: No, no.

Lerner: Can we talk a bit about Ted Mommsen? Did you know him as well as Kantorowicz?

Weitzmann: Yes, I think so.

Lerner: Do you have any theories why he left Princeton and second, why he killed himself?

Weitzmann: No. He lived in 10 Mercer Street, and this was the house that Friend had rented from the University and then he selected the people whom he wanted to live with him, and one of them was Mommsen. There were times when I was almost daily in Friend's house, and so I saw a great deal of Mommsen. Now, among other things, I remember he had in his room a portrait of his grandfather, by the famous German painter Lenbach, and he couldn't live with that picture, because it gave him the feeling of being in the shadow of his famous grandfather. So he offered the painting to the Princeton Museum, but they wouldn't take it. Lenbach didn't mean anything to Princeton's art historians. Then Mommsen made, I think, the only right decision. He gave it to the Free University of Berlin. After all, his grandfather had been a professor at Berlin, and to be back in Berlin was the place to be. And I think it was a very wise decision.

Lerner: So far as you know, it's there now?

Weitzmann: Yes. When I made for the sixtieth birthday of Friend a Festschrift, I had chosen Kantorowicz and Mommsen both as co-editors, and both wrote very substantial articles for it.

Lerner: Do you have a sense of why Mommsen left Princeton, for Cornell?

Weitzmann: I never knew.

Labalme: You don't speculate?

Weitzmann: No, I don't want to.

Labalme: Did Princeton make an effort to keep him? Do we know that?

Lerner: I believe that they matched the offer in terms of the rank. I believe that it was a promotion to full professor. Nobody talks about the monetary dimension, but nobody believes that had anything to do [with it]. What about his death? There were people who were quite surprised that he committed suicide, not because they didn't realize that he had a streak of depressiveness, but because they thought at that particular time he was less likely than, it seemed, before.

Weitzmann: He had a streak of depressions, I know. Also, he was at times irritated by Friend and Kantorowicz who were both very powerful personalities, and this sometimes made him uneasy. This is all I can say.

Lerner: Do you have a sense of Mommsen's scholarship? Is it something that--you talked about his work in art history as well?

Weitzmann: Well, you know he was a great Petrarch scholar and he turned to art history and the illustrations of Petrarch. This is one of the subjects we discussed repeatedly.

Labalme: He left here before Felix [Gilbert] arrived, right?

Lerner: Yes. Well before, although apparently Bryn Mawr and Princeton were near enough for them to see each other quite often.

Weitzmann: When did Felix Gilbert come?

Lerner: 1962--somewhere in there. But Mommsen left Princeton in '56, well earlier.

Labalme: Are there other things, as you reviewed the material that I transcribed, are there other things that you wanted to add or comment on as far as the Institute goes, its role in your life, its role in the larger academic scene?

Weitzmann: [consulted some notes he brought]. No.

Labalme: Have we covered the principle things of which there ought to be a record?

Lerner: Have you spoken about Panofsky?

Labalme: A little bit.

[END OF CASSETTE ONE, SIDE ONE]

[CASSETTE ONE, SIDE TWO--starting about counter 110]

Lerner: The question would be whether you had any collaboration with Millard Meiss.

Weitzmann: No, we had met and on occasion discussed art historical problems. But it was not a very close connection.

Lerner: Was he a student in Princeton when you were in the Department?

Weitzmann: No, as a student in Princeton he was before my time, he left Princeton and became, I think, a student in New York.

Lerner: Was there a sense that, in terms of Art History, the proximity to NYU and Columbia was an advantage in terms of a community?

Weitzmann: I don't know. I have no idea, either way.

Lerner: I meant to say, in your own career, here in Princeton? Would you have worked closely with people of the Institute of Fine Arts?

Weitzmann: I was called to Princeton to collaborate on a research project, and I was tied up through this research project with Princeton.

Lerner: E. A. Lowe--was he discussed [in an earlier interview]?

Labalme: We mentioned him a bit, and I just learned this morning that Mrs. Lowe was the translator of Thomas Mann.

Lerner: H. T. Lowe-Porter. Did that mean that Thomas Mann came to the Institute at any time?

Weitzmann: I don't know. His connection officially was with the University.

Lerner: Did Lowe's work on paleography intersect with your own research?

Labalme: I will share that with you. What about the future of a place like the Institute, as you see other centers of research?

Weitzmann: Well, it's difficult for me to say because I am too much out of it. I knew the Institute fairly well only until Oppenheimer's death. After, I lost practically all contact with it.

Labalme: But you feel that, during those years that you knew it well, it played an essential role in sponsoring projects like yours or others?

Weitzmann: Oh yes.

Labalme: Did you find that it commanded immediate and knowing respect throughout the academic world or was it somewhat outside of the general academic process, because it was so special?

Weitzmann: Wherever you went in Europe, it had an extraordinary reputation. It was great to be called at some time or other to come to the Institute.

Labalme: So that right from its earliest days, it had an impact?

Weitzmann: From the very beginning, it was prominent. Prominent German scholars were called to the Institute, and overnight it was a world-famous institute for all the mathematicians.

Labalme: But in your field also, not just in mathematics?

Weitzmann: In my field, Panofsky, as I said, was first called to the University. He was already a professor in the Art Department before any School of Humanistic Studies was founded in 1935. And then he was taken over. But the Institute didn't get him to America.

Labalme: Did you feel from the start that there was a good balance between the mathematicians and the humanists, so-to-speak, that it worked, as a double center?

Weitzmann: The most cordial relations were in the early days. I mentioned already we were in the house of Alexander and von Neumann, Weyl and Veblen, and we were all highly cultivated people. What amazed me was the degree of what von Neumann and those other mathematicians knew about the general culture, literature, art. One could talk with them about these intelligently, and this included Oppenheimer. So one had a broad basis for communication.

Labalme: And that later on, although you say that you were out of it, did you feel, even at the periphery, that this changed, this kind of close relationship?

Weitzmann: Well, later I had contact only with individuals who came to visit me in McCormick Hall. For art historians are all dependent on the Princeton University library--as you know, we have a special room in McCormick Hall for visiting scholars of the Institute--and there, of course, there was a continuous communication. But for other people who did not come to McCormick Hall, I knew very little.

Labalme: But would you meet some of the mathematicians socially?

Weitzmann: Only the first generation.

Lerner: What about Oppenheimer? Was he able to converse with humanists, art historians?

Weitzmann: Oh yes. When I made the Sinai expedition and I gave afterwards a lecture at the Institute, he came to the lecture. He took part in the discussion and raised intelligent questions to the point.

Labalme: I have heard that some of this was more superficial than profound.

Weitzmann: No, no. He really had a grasp, an extraordinary grasp of things. I remember being at one of the dinner parties, and he made it a point that I was sitting alongside of him, and we discussed Sinai.

Lerner: Do you recall the drama of his being stripped of his security clearance in 1954?

Weitzmann: Well, only for what I had read in the newspapers. But as I said, the Institute wrote a letter protesting to the government, and I too signed it.

Lerner: Did you have any sense of how it affected him?

Weitzmann: I came very seldom to the Institute and thus did not get a deeper insight in what was happening and how it affected Oppenheimer.

Lerner: He did read German?

Weitzmann: He had studied in Germany.

Lerner: Could he converse in German as well?

Weitzmann: He was absolutely fluent.

Labalme: He knew the classical languages, also.

Weitzmann: Not only that, he knew Sanskrit. Studied in Göttingen.

Lerner: Did he overlap with Neugebauer in Göttingen, do you recall? It's worth checking. He didn't talk with me about that.

Labalme: Have you anything further, Robert, to ask? What we'll do is what we've done before, is to make a transcript of this. I'll need a little help filling in the first part which I didn't record. But that's all right--we have some good notes on that. And then Dr. Weitzmann will add to that and, if you have further questions, we can submit them by mail.

Weitzmann: I understand that you are writing a book on Kantorowicz?

Lerner: I'm not sure about that. I am giving a lecture on him in Berlin. There is now in the Technische Universität a "Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung" and they've got a Ringvorlesung on "Wissenschaft im Exil", and I will be speaking on Kantorowicz in a series.

Weitzmann: Where is it in Berlin?

Lerner: It's in the Technische Universität, and while we used to think of this as kind of an engineering school, they are committed to doing much more than natural science and therefore have founded a center for the study of anti-semitism which is more active.

Weitzmann: I was a few years ago in Berlin, at the Free University, they gave me an honorary degree there, and I gave a lecture.

Labalme: Was this something that you ever had an occasion to talk to Kantorowicz about, the anti-semitism of Germany at the time?

Weitzmann: Well yes, we discussed it, naturally.

Labalme: But no particular memories come back about such conversations?

Weitzmann: Inevitably, this question of anti-semitism came up.

Lerner: Did he never refer to the death of his mother or his cousin, both of whom--

Weitzmann: [to Dr. Weitzmann-Fiedler] Do you know?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: I remember something.

Labalme: Well, please, won't you share it with us?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: Certainly, I also knew and talked to them.

Labalme: But it's interesting. What we want to do with these tapes is to have a record, and we're not interested in any particular--

Weitzmann-Fiedler: I can tell you one thing. The sister of Kantorowicz was in my class. And when I saw Kantorowicz here I asked him, what happened? He didn't want to tell.

Labalme: He preferred not to talk about it?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: No. He didn't want to tell to me. So that's it. I didn't ask further. I think I heard later she went to Israel, but I don't know.

Lerner: My understanding is that she died in Theresienstadt.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: She died in Theresienstadt?

Lerner: That's my understanding, but I will not--

Weitzmann-Fiedler: That's very interesting, for you see, he told me, I think, that she lives in Israel. Now, I don't know whether he has only one sister or two.

Lerner: Oh, that's a possibility.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: You see, I don't know. I only know she was in our class and she behaved very strangely. At school. She had a friend--I forgot the name of the friend--and they had some family troubles. I don't know. The only thing, I know that he didn't want to give me the real answer, but I knew the one I am talking about, Ruth was her name, she went to Israel. But if she died in Theresienstadt, why did he bring up Israel?

Lerner: It would be perfectly possible that there were two sisters.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: Exactly so. My question is, how did you get interested in Kantorowicz?

Lerner: Kantorowicz, in the first place, is now becoming recognized as one of the greatest medievalists of the twentieth century. His King's Two Bodies has just been translated into French. An extraordinary accomplishment for a writer in English and German to have his work translated into French! In addition, The King's Two Bodies is surely one of the most widely-cited and used books that was written more than fifteen

or twenty years ago. So in terms of his scholarly career, there's adequate reason to be interested in him, but this extraordinarily fascinating life which went in so many different directions is a chapter in the history of the twentieth century which I find compelling and significant, relevant in the deepest meaning of that word. So I don't think it's surprising at all. I should add that I did meet him in Princeton, briefly, although I didn't know him. Tell me, you went to school in Posen?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: No, in Berlin.

Lerner: Did the Kantorowicz family move to Berlin?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: They lived there.

Lerner: He went to the gymnasium in Posen.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: She went to the gymnasium in Berlin and she was in my class, and she came very late, I think it was the last two years. I don't know what happened later. I have no idea. I only know that since I met him I thought I would ask, and that was all I could do.

Labalme: [to Dr. Weitzmann-Fiedler] I'm interested, if we could take a few moments, in your own career. Would you be willing to tell us a bit about how it was for you? It must have been difficult coming here, because you had a position in Germany, right?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: I was already employed at that time when my husband went to America, and my husband decided to stay here. I was married and I had to go.

Labalme: Yes, of course! That nice old-fashioned idea.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: It was quite difficult. On the one hand, he was in America, and he should be a soldier in Germany, and I had the registration card for him. He was under thirty-eight, and everyone under this age had to serve in the German army.

Labalme: And then you came here?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: I came here, and that was a disappointment.

Labalme: Tell me about that a bit.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: I didn't know about Princeton. In Europe, one thinks of America as very modern and up-to-date, and I couldn't imagine that the University wouldn't permit the women even to use the toilet.

Labalme: No, those were the days that Princeton was a men's college.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: Before I left Berlin, I was just nominated the first woman archaeology professor in Berlin.

Labalme: Could you use the facilities of the University as far as the library--

Weitzmann-Fiedler: I was permitted to label and catalogue slides, and all the negatives I could identify.

Labalme: In the Art Department, you mean?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: Yes, and they even gave me, Morey gave me the desk for my lifetime. That was one thing I got. I had this desk, and I had received the permissions for Firestone and Marquand libraries. That was for me the most important, because in Firestone I had a carrell and in Marquand a desk where I could work. I am very grateful for that, but it was a time that I really wondered--. I even made a catalogue of Friend's books. It's still there somewhere. Anyhow, my mother had a good idea.

When I studied in Berlin, I wanted to become an architect. And in Germany you couldn't be a woman architect, so I tried here, and I was very lucky and could make my diploma in architecture in the New Jersey Industrial School. That's when I went out of the office. When I came back with my diploma I came to see Labatout, I don't know whether you know who Labatout was?

Labalme: No.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: He was Professor of Architecture at Princeton University.

Weitzmann: And also one of the architects of the World's Fair in New York. He was a leading architect.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: A very interesting, wonderful architect. He told me, you know, as a woman you just clean the dust. That's all that you can do. But he gave me a position in New York. At that time, still there was a train you could use. I went and liked it very much, but I was paid 35 cents an hour.

Labalme: 35 cents an hour?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: At that time [the wage] was regular. They were remodeling and I was very happy about it but then, after two months, I said, it's impossible. I pay more for the train! That was all.

Labalme: That was your architectural career! But you've continued to do your work.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: Yes, yes. Research work I've continued, and I was a professor in Rutgers for many years, and I lectured at Metuchen and Newark. Now, one thing with architecture I was very proud of. While I

was working at the Trenton Industrial School, we had some projects to make, and just by mere chance, many, many years later we went to an exhibition in Washington of architectural--Latin America or something--and there was my building!

Labalme: Really?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: I was so surprised to see it.

Labalme: And it gave you credit?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: It gave my name. And one other building also--for recreation, for soldiers--that was my architecture--but I used it in my research. I had a project but then I heard that another was working on that. My interests were really so much on Europe and my fields are archaeology and art history. As my husband said, in Germany you had to have archaeology and art history as the main fields, and I started as an assistant at the archaeological seminar in Berlin at the Deutsches Reichs Institute.

Labalme: Did you participate in some of the archaeological conversations at the Institute? Certainly there were great archaeologists here. Did you feel some connection?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: That's a good question. We saw a lot of Mrs. Flexner. She wrote some poetry, but I'm not a judge of poetry. But she was a poetess. She gave it to my mother who read it. She invited us repeatedly for dinner, also later in New York. But she was very unhappy in Princeton.

Labalme: Why was she unhappy here?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: She had interests which were not shared.

Labalme: Well, I'm interested in how women fared at the Institute.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: I think she was not understood.

Labalme: O.K. What about Mrs. Oppenheimer? She was quite a character, I understand.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: She was quite a character but kept out of the Institute, and he was the greatest personality we have met here. They never realized how much. He was very badly treated.

Labalme: Badly treated by the government?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: Yes.

Labalme: I'm interested in your impression of how it was for scholarly women such as yourself in this country when you came.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: Impossible. For us [in Germany] it was not a problem any more, you know.

Weitzmann: When women were permitted here twenty years ago, for the first time, there was a circular sent around to the University faculty--"what's your opinion about admitting women?" And my answer was, "In my opinion, you are talking about something of yesterday, because when I was a student in Berlin in the '20s, women students were taken for granted."

Weitzmann-Fiedler: Exactly this.

Weitzmann: There was no problem.

Labalme: It wasn't just women students? It was women professors you were talking about?

Weitzmann: No, even students. There were no women admitted at the University, in Princeton.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: I'm sure you have read it, this Princetonian, or the Princeton Weekly. We read an article. One person, I think he studied in 1950. "Princeton is a great school," he said, "but there is one thing that I really must say--I missed women there." Another, one of the women students--and this was when I came here--I thought I don't believe it-- There were busses of women brought to the students here! [Laughter]

Labalme: You mean, for the parties, they imported women.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: It was crazy! I mean, I still think so. It was asking for what they had as an answer exactly now. It was fifty years back in every respect.

Lerner: Were there female faculty members at the Institute?

Labalme: Not before Hetty Goldman.

Lerner: When was that?

Labalme: She came fairly early.

Weitzmann: Yes, she came very early in the '30s [1936]. She was one of the very first members.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: That I would like for the record: of all the people in the Institute, Hetty Goldman was one of the really human persons. I had an experience with a little mathematician. She came from Vienna, a pupil of Gödel. She was asked by the University to come to Princeton, but they didn't realize that she was a woman. When she came, they dropped her like a hot potato. Nothing for her! No home, nothing for what she could do. She was sitting here without anything to do. Gödel was no help. He was afraid of everything!

Labalme: Can you remember what year?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: About 1958. Not only that. I will tell you, we tried to help her. And we were told, the only thing is how can we get a stipend, some money. She had to pay for her room, for instance, she was sleeping in the library. She was a very difficult but very interesting person, and so at that time I was a Rutgers professor, and she said, could I do something there? I couldn't do anything, but I said, all right, I will try. I called the Institute, they will understand. The ones I really knew best there were the Weyls. I tell him so-and-so came. [He said] "I heard the story, I have nothing for her. I have no interest in her."

Labalme: This is Hermann Weyl?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: Yes. "No interest in her. I don't want her. She said she has no way out but to commit suicide for she has nothing to eat; then I don't give her anything." That was the answer. I talked to Mrs. Weyl about it. She knew it. But then, I called Hetty Goldman. She said, "But of course, we have to help her."

Labalme: Good for her.

Weitzmann-Fiedler: Right away, the check was there. But that has to come a second check, and that didn't come. I called her and I said, "Look." "Oh my God, I forgot, double the check!" Weyl and Hetty Goldman! There's a difference! She did not only do that, she helped later and so on. Really, she was a human being.

Labalme: Your impression of some of the other professors was that they were not so human?

Weitzmann-Fiedler: I do not know all of them. Oppenheimer was the only human being. Aydelotte, a Quaker, tried very hard--but without success.

Weitzmann: I've told the story, how I got a full-time secretary. This is Oppenheimer.

Lerner: Could we talk a while without this [tape machine]?

Labalme: Yes.

[END OF CASSETTE ONE, SIDE TWO]

[END OF TAPED SECOND INTERVIEW, which continued another twenty minutes as conversation].