IMPORTANT

This transcript is copyright Association of Jewish Refugees

Access to this interview and transcript is for private research only. Please refer to the AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive, prior to any publication or broadcast from this document.

AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
AJR
Winston House, 2 Dollis Park
London N3 1HF
ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform ajrrefugeevoices@ajr.org.uk

Interview Transcript Title Page

Collection title:	AJR Refugee Voices Testimony Archive
Ref. no:	96

Interviewee Surname:	Cosman
Forename:	Milein
Interviewee Sex:	Female
Interviewee DOB:	31 March 1921
Interviewee POB:	Gotha, Germany

Date of Interview:	22 March 2005
Location of Interview:	London
Name of Interviewer:	Dr. Bea Lewkowicz
Total Duration (HH:MM):	5 hours

REFUGEE VOICES:
THE AJR AUDIO-VISUAL TESTIMONY ARCHIVE

INTERVIEW: 96

NAME: MILEIN COSMAN

DATE: 22 MARCH 2005

LOCATION: LONDON

INTERVIEWER: BEA LEWKOWICZ

TAPE 1

BL: Can you please tell me your name.

MC: My name is Milein Cosman.

BL: And when were you born?

MC: I was born 31st March '21.

BL: And where were you born?

MC: I was born in a place called Gotha.

BL: Thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview with us. Could you please tell us about your family background?

MC: My family? Well my parents were German and Jewish, German Jews but they didn't follow any religion really. But they were both very involved in bettering, improving if possible human society in various activities but that's not what you asked me. Their background, they came from Essen, my father's family came from Essen and my mother's family from Westphalia and I didn't know any of my grandparents unfortunately but it was a long story which starts way back in Prague I think. Certainly on both sides of the family there is a long pedigree and how they got to Germany, my forefathers, was, on my father's side certainly rather interesting because there was a chap Basevi von Träumburg, who was a Jew in Prague, who was a great friend of the Kaiser, the emperor in those days because no doubt he was involved with money and so he was ennobled.

BL: Yes.

MC: And Basevi, eventually, you may know the name from London, was an architect, brother of Disraeli and part of the family, of this chap's family when he was hounded out, and Wallenstein hid him in the castle in Prague because both Wallenstein and he, the emperor, was furious with both of them by that time. So one branch of the family went down to Italy. Those are the Basevis and eventually

reached England and hence Basevi the architect was the brother of Disraeli, who, we all know who Disraeli was. The other branch, however, went up the Rhine and settled somewhere around Essen. So that I think when my parents moved to Düsseldorf I was back in a sort of more traditional home, if you can say that, until of course Hitler made everything totally different by dispelling one, again, so that the whole family is scattered all over the world by now. So I don't quite know what else to say about the background except that it was on the whole full of rebellious spirits and fairly interesting people but nothing which I know very much about.

Tape 1: 4 minutes 16 seconds

BL: You said the name was Basevi, so from Basevi to Cosman?

MC: Ah no, Basevi was called the ancestor, the ancestor was called Cosman Basevi von Träumburg and the Cosman name was lost by the Basevis, obviously they went to Italy and our family went up the Rhine, as I said, and retained the name of Cosman.

BL: And you said you never met your grandparents?

MC: No, no.

BL: Had they died already?

MC: Yes, my mother was the youngest of eight girls, daughters, and her father died when she was about two and otherwise there would have been eight younger aunts, I suppose, to follow, but my grandmother never married again. She had eight daughters and so I never knew her or her husband because she died before I was born, my grandmother. My father's mother died very young and had six children. My father was the eldest son. I remember my grandfather when I was a little child. I always thought God looked like him because he was a rather short man with wonderful blue eyes and a beard, so I imagined that God must look like my grandfather, I don't know why. But I had this distinct image. But he was a furious chap who thought that I'd thrown away his teeth in a napkin. Anyway, I mustn't go on about it, because it's paltry.

BL: What was his name?

MC: Leopold.

BL: And do you know how did your parents meet?

Tape 1: 6 minutes 25 seconds

MC: I remember my father seeing a beautiful lady on a beach, I don't know where, probably on the North Sea and he said 'Who is that?' and they said 'Well, look, don't go any further she's married, she has a younger sister.' This is my Aunt Sofie who hangs up there, painted by Israel, a Dutch painter with whom she sought refuge. Well, my mother was the younger sister, the youngest of them all and so through a paternal aunt of mine who lived in Gotha, they met, and that was I think where they met, I don't remember because I wasn't there yet.

BL: When did they get married?

MC: In 1913 I think, yes.

BL: And where?

MC: I really don't know.

BL: What are your first memories?

MC: My first memories. My first memories were walking through woods in Thuringia, where there were wonderful woods, trailing behind the grown-ups, thinking of fairytales, telling myself fairy tales and the grown-ups walking in front. And when I was very young I went over a bridge with my parents in Hamburg on our way to the seaside and I remember distinctly walking between my parents, being perfectly happy and then people behind saying– because I was unduly small– always. So I must have looked quite sort of tough, walking along and then they overtook us and looking back, they looked at me and said, 'How terrible, how terrible'. That stayed with me for a long, long time because they then saw that my mother hadn't observed – she was very visual, she was immensely interested in art and pictures, as my father was, madly so. But she had overlooked the fact that her young daughter was cross-eyed and these people immediately cottoned on to this and that's what they thought was so terrible. I didn't notice, I was not aware that I was cross-eyed, and then I was operated on when I was six, to shorten the nerve which was dangling or whatever they do when you're cross-eyed. And so people then after that didn't ask me any more about it, unless I wore a black patch over the eye. That was quite extraordinary because it displays how vain one is even as a little child, when they said 'Oh look how sweet.' I immediately knew they meant me and then they looked and said 'Terrible' when they saw me from the front. Nowadays it must be the contrary, actually.

Tape 1: 10 minutes 0 second

MC: I always remember my big brother playing with me, he was terribly nice to me. He was a very good photographer so he took photographs of me when he was a bit older, very good ones. And I remember my first walk to school and that was absolutely marvellous because in those days one had huge bag, it wasn't shaped like a bag, but it was *eine Tüte* and it was full of sweets on one's first school day. My father brought me to the school and I remember the school and the benches and the thrill of dipping a pen into the ink in order to learn how to write. Splendid. Nowadays of course, all these things are obsolete, it's totally different because children, tiny children look at television and see letters. In those days one wasn't educated as young, until one was at school at the age of six. Meeting all these very nice girls who remain friends, five of them, for life, forever, and all sorts of things like that.

BL: What was the name of the school?

MC: It was called Goethe-Lyzeum, after Goethe of course, and this was in Düsseldorf. We went for walks by the Rhine. I remember a huge flood on the Rhine

when there were huge blocks of ice floating down and people were jumping from one ice block to another and my brother said 'I'll do that' and my parents were very upset that he might actually do that but he didn't. And I dreamt of being lifted up with one of these things which, I don't know what they're called, they're used to transport things, probably even now, huge…

BL: Cranes?

Tape 1: 12 minutes 35 seconds

MC: Crane, that's the name I wanted. I thought how wonderful if would be to be up there in between the river and the sky and suspended and to look at the world from that point of view and possibly to travel around a bit, by miracles. But also I had been taken to the circus and I was very good, in those days, at acrobatics, doing somersaults and handstands and headstands and I dreamt of joining a circus and I thought I might be good enough to do various somersaults, you know, whatever they're called. And in Düsseldorf actually there are lots of urchins who roam the streets, in those days, who do sort of, kind of funny, what's it called when you, a cartwheel, and they did cartwheels and when there was a school charity I said, well I'll do cartwheels, I'll collect money that way, and the headmistress was furious that a girl should do cartwheels for charity. By this time I suppose I was 11 or 12, my brother was at university in Scotland, and had sent me a kilt, a Scottish kilt, the envy of all my friends at school. But with it, there was little tartan shorts, of course I did the cartwheels not in a skirt but with tartan shorts and in those days it was deemed quite indecent to do cartwheels at all for a girl at that age but there it was and the headmistress never liked me very much after that, and I never liked her, and she became a Nazi too.

BL: Where did you live in Düsseldorf?

MC: We lived in a street, easy to remember, Beethovenstrasse 17.

BL: In what sort of area was it?

MC: It was near, fairly near, do you know the Uhlandstrasse? No, well it was a prolongation of that and not far to walk to the zoo and it was very near my school, the Goethestrasse, where the good Lyzeum was and where I had this wonderful experience with the first school day and many, many wonderful years there, actually. I enjoyed school very much and going around on the bicycle and on roller skates and rushing to the ice rink and despite those terrible times which began, I suppose when I was 11, I still had marvellous times at school

Tape 1: 15 minutes 59 seconds

on the Rhine where I used to bicycle with friends and eat carrots and throw stones over the river and I really loved the landscape, the huge sky and the boats going down the river and the little allotments, I loved the allotments, later on I realised that they were precursor of looking of pictures by Bonnard, strangely enough, done in a totally different light and climate and we used to walk the family also, very much and there were family meetings with my cousins in Essen who were all older than I, a whole lot

of them which was great fun. But all this is much later than the early memories of walking in these woods in Thuringia. The Rhine was the deepest early impression I think.

BL: So how old were you when you moved from Gotha to Düsseldorf?

MC: I was five, I think. Or four.

BL: And can you tell me, what were your parents? How come they were in Gotha?

MC: My father moved back to the Rhineland because he had a little steel factory there. Not in Düsseldorf but nearby.

BL: What sort of business was it?

MC: Well it was *Edelstahl* which means it's steel, very hard fired, which is used for tools, tool steel, yes. It was a tiny works, probably the smallest in the whole of Germany.

BL: What was the name of the business?

MC: Fakir. F-A-K-I-R. You know, like the people who sleep on nails.

Tape 1: 18 minutes 14 seconds

BL: Was there anything Jewish in your upbringing? Do you remember any festivals or any …?

MC: I really don't. I don't think we did but we did celebrate Christmas which isn't exactly Jewish, although the protagonist actually is Jewish.

BL: What sort of circles did your parents mix in?

MC: Well my mother was extremely involved with the … I think she sat on the committee of the International Women's League for Peace and Liberty. And I remember all my childhood there were these pamphlets, piles of them lying around and my mother being either at the League with the committee or working for it or playing tennis. My father belonged, and therefore I suppose my mother too, to a lodge, which was a sort of Freemason's lodge and of a very left wing character, which suited my mother who was a social democrat. But my father was by nature not really political I think, but he was a liberal out and out, and he was a bit of an odd man out in that lodge. But my mother was very involved with the other women and one of the brothers of the lodge, they were great friends and their three children were great friends of mine. And it must be said that this lady housed my mother when the Nazis came and broke into our house and smashed it up on what people called *Kristallnacht*. I don't like that, the implication of *Kristall* I don't like at all because it denotes a certain class of people whereas everybody suffered and it strikes me always as the wrong word, but that's neither here nor there. I know that my mother was saved by this lodge brother, Freemason brother of my father, and he, my father, was saved that night, hidden, after the invasion of the house and the destruction of things. He was

hidden by the wife of a marvellous sculptor who was one of the great impressions of my childhood. He was friends with my parents and they were known, he was known as the Turkish sculptor in Düsseldorf and in the Rhineland he had done a lot of sculptures for the parks and institutions of all kinds and we had a wonderful sculpture of his in the house, of an eastern woman's head, loved it. He was called Bernhard Sopher.

Tape 1: 21 minutes 42 seconds

By the time the Nazis came to power, he had already been commissioned to do something for the Nuremberg, not *Festspiele*, Nuremberg Games, Olympic Games, The Riefenstahl Games I suppose and he had been commissioned to do a sculpture. I remember as a child my parents took me to his studio and I saw the *Diskuswerfer*, somebody who's a disc thrower, marvellous sculpture and he was just finishing it. It must have been just before the Nazis. It may have been '33 actually and then it was discovered that he was not only a Turk, he was a Jew, because at that time Israel, Palestine I think, was Turkish wasn't it, and he came from a place called Tsarfat and was the son of a – I suppose nowadays it would be a garage owner, a parking space or something like that because he came from a camel settlement. His father owned many camels, and his son, Sopher decided that he didn't want to prolong this trade with camels and as a boy of fourteen, fifteen, he made his way to Germany. He went, I think to the academy in Frankfurt or Munich, I forget, and from there he went to the Rhineland, became really very well known and he had three sons, but they were all half-Jewish, discovered to be half-Jewish so I think all of them went to South America. However, shall I go on about this? I'm sorry. It seems such a long story.

BL: Go on.

Tape 1: 23 minutes 48 seconds

MC: Because it was very formative, I thought, always thought I wanted to become a painter, my father had wanted to become a painter also but I was sure I would be in that field, working in that field, dimly, when I was taken to this studio of Sopher, and I there thought this was the, an ideal sort of existence, and we became friends. This old sculptor and I became friends. We hardly met but he would write me letters when I went to school in Switzerland, and finally, when I was in my studio in Hampstead, much, much later, he wrote to me to say I should come to Hollywood where he had sought refuge and was doing sculptures of Schönberg and Freud and I should become his assistant. But by that time I had met Hans Keller, my husband and so I did not go. But much later, when I had an exhibition in Düsseldorf, in the Stadtmuseum, I walked in because I had a meeting with the director of the museum, and I had no idea, I walked into a room full of Bernard Sopher at the Stadtmuseum in Düsseldorf and when I got to the office of the director, Wieland König. I said you have a lot of Bernard Sopher. He said he'd just been to see the youngest son who I remember seeing in my parents' house. And so it was quite weird. Like a sort of circle of closing, childhood impressions and a sort of early worship of somebody who then is connected with the museum where I had my first show in Germany after the war, I mean, after the war, it's only about 12 years or so ago now. But the fact that my parents were so interested in art, of course meant that from the earliest days we were taken to museums. Then I had a cousin who visited us, who was Dutch, one of my

mother's sisters, no two of her sisters, had married Dutchmen, and one cousin, much older than I, came to visit us and was an art historian. He invited me when he got married to his house in Amsterdam and introduced me to all the museums in Holland, because he had the key to them. It was amazing, because you could at closing times and he introduced me, when I was 13 or14 to people at the graphic collection, the drawings. So I saw drawings of Rembrandt and Hercules Segers and it was an absolute eye-opener. I think I was probably 14 at that time, because I'd been to a little art school in Düsseldorf too.

Tape 1: 27 minutes 31 seconds

My parents were mostly encouraging. That was not surprising because they absolutely loved art and they probably liked me too and they were very encouraging in every way. But then when they had escaped by boat, first to Holland and then fortunately to England just four weeks before the war broke out. But then they didn't make me do some dreary job or training but encouraged me to go on with our original plan that I would go to an art school which in retrospect is totally unnecessary but that's beside the point. I managed to go to the art school and then with the help of a Quaker trust I had a tiny bursary and – as one could in those days – especially since I had the luck to be in a studio in Oxford, which was a kind of stable … It didn't have electricity and so I could exist on a tiny bursary and fire-watching at the Ashmolean Museum, which was at the back. I mean my studio was at the back of the Ashmolean, it would be disrespectful to say the other way round. And so that's how a golden cage happened to me: to be in Oxford during the war, with my art school.

Tape 1: 29 minutes 18 seconds

BL: Let's just go back, before we go to Oxford. You said you knew you wanted to be a painter, were you doing drawings in Germany?

MC: Oh yes, yes. Always

BL: What were you drawing?

MC: What was I drawing? I did a book of fairy tales, which I wanted, I was very involved with reading and fairytales were important, and so I did a whole book of illustrations to the fairytales for my parents. Some anniversary, I forget what, my memory's very bad. Apart from that I drew wherever I sat, at school I drew under the desk and teachers began to tolerate this and when we went for walks I would draw people from the back, which I still do sometimes nowadays and I always was interested in especially people and trees, bare trees I liked very much, and so I went to a little art school, and animals in the zoo, and so I went to a little art school, Kalk it was called in Düsseldorf, and I was really the youngest there, I was still at school but on a free afternoon I would go to Kalk and well they accepted me, which was very nice but all this is so long ago. I was encouraged very much, even art books. I remember being given *Van Gogh* for Christmas, big yellow Phaidon book and I was so overcome and little books with Rembrandt drawings Inselbücher and all sorts of things. You know, I didn't go to libraries, one didn't, I suppose, in those days, but we had masses of art books at home and all this, combined with my father's enthusiasm, especially, because he had wanted to become a painter and my grandfather had told

them that it was impossible, he couldn't possibly, which was a pity. Because he was very gifted but very modest and never followed my encouraging him when he was a refugee, to go on doing things. I've still got some lovely drawings he did.

Tape 1: 32 minutes 2 seconds

BL: Did you ever experience any anti-Semitism, in school?

MC: Not overtly. No, really not, except on the part of the headmistress, the hated one, who asked if I had very good friends at school and about the organised gang … oh yes this is to the point. Lots of my school friends had joined the BDM, the *Bund Deutscher Mädchen*, and one of my very best friends, actually, had done so, and she appeared in uniform in our house, she was very fair, almost an albino, I'm still friends with her, she's in Italy now, and she would come and blush to the roots of her almost-white hair because she was in uniform. But she wanted to see me and she had had to join another school, where they learnt Latin because she also wanted to become art historian or painter. There was no anti-Semitism, she was deeply religious, still is, and the others had parents who were perhaps secure enough not to have to send their girls to BDM and so I had quite a few who weren't in that league. But, somehow or other, before it all happened, or just before I left, when I was far too old really to do so, I founded a little red Indian club, at school, with my mates. We were about five or six friends, and then the headmistress asked the mother of my greatest and longest, friend, deepest friend, to come to school and she said 'How can you allow your child to associate with a Jewish girl?' My friend's mother said 'We like the friendship very much' and because she was rather a powerful person, my friend's mother, or parents, the headmistress felt humiliated, I suppose. But actual anti-Semitism I did not come across, except indirectly, once.

Tape 1: 34 minutes 58 seconds

Another story – an aunt of mine who lived in the Ruhrgebiet near Essen and who was the widow of a Justizrat**.** My father's eldest sister, she was and her husband had done something very good for a family in that town. A woman of that family came to be our history teacher but she was always terribly nice to me and then the Nazis came and she became, obviously, a Nazi and still was rather subservient to me because I was the niece of this aunt and her husband. But at the first opportunity she turned around viciously and said 'You must stand in the corner, you needn't come to history lessons any more.' That was the one piece of direct anti-Semitism I encountered. And of course that seemed terrible but I used to read under the desk, I drew or I read something when they were doing *Mein Kampf* at school. They read Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and I had been very good at history, not really, but anyway Miss Kummer, she was called 'Miss Grief', quite adequately, she was a miserable lady, this one, and she quite accepted that I would not read *Mein Kampf* with the others. I would say no, no, I'm reading something else, but then at the first opportunity she made me leave the history class altogether, I don't remember what happened, it didn't matter really, by that time I was nearly gone from the school. But of course I realised how terrible it all was. But I think I did like creating this club of my own and a kind of *Blutbruderschaft*, I don't really know what's it called in English but you cut into your skin and drink blood from two or three others. So I had that as well with two of my friends. And you know, all this was a response, I think, like creating a wall, a private

wall, against the onslaught of all these other forces against one which I felt. But I lived and created a kind of oasis for myself, which, I think when I look back I feel that I did not face facts but fled and perhaps I was not even so young anymore but I was very, a very late developer. It's looking back that I interpreted, I think rightly, but what helped was these wonderful friends who ignored anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism, not that I didn't encounter it but certainly one or two bits of intense cowardice. Like coming back from my school in Geneva, and walking down the street and meeting one of my closest friends, who was intensely Catholic but who had had to join the young German league, what do you call it, *Bund Deutscher Mädchen*,

Tape 1: 39 minutes 4 seconds

and I encountered her, she was not in uniform. I was on my way to another friend and it was holiday time from Switzerland, and she cut me. She became after the war a very good friend of mine. She never forgot, she was incredibly nervous person, and I think she never forgot this cutting, so that I did not write to her immediately after the war, as I did to others, I mean others wrote to me, but she felt deeply ashamed but that, this brought home to me that I had to leave. I cried when I left Düsseldorf and my school, after all, I wasn't that young, you know. But then of course when I was taken away from the Odenwaldschule in Geneva after one term, I also felt very, very sad because I had acclimatised myself magnificently there. I didn't want to leave it, it was like a paradise for children, really. My headmaster was Geheeb, who had been a great friend of Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian, and modelled himself on Rabindranath and his ideas. The place was filled with photographs of Paulus, long beard, and [inaudible]… kind of Indian clothes, embracing Tagore. So this was a totally free education, before the league school. Sorry, I've deviated, I always do, I'm famous for it.

BL: That's fine, I just wanted to ask you, being labelled suddenly Jewish, that must have been a very strange thing, for you.

MC: Yes, I hadn't realised that there was such as thing as Jews and non-Jews, you see. Not belonging to any religion, this was very strange. So one day I came back to my parents and said 'You know, I'm going to be given a wonderful order for being good at sports tomorrow.' They say, 'Oh wonderful, yes.' And I said 'Baldur von Schirach is distributing it'. They said 'That is impossible. You cannot do that.' So this was the time when they told me that this was impossible, that I was Jewish, and that they were against the Jews, and then I learnt that. But it needed that kind of incident for me to realise, although I knew that at home there was sort of atmosphere, of all sorts of apprehension, and my mother wanted to go away, I knew that, and go elsewhere. My father was infinitely older than my mother and believed in, as so many other German Jews did, the impossibility of that kind of regime that there was to keep going, because he thought it was, after all, a cultured nation and this was impossible go on like that. 'From Easter to Christmas, from Christmas to Easter,' he would say, 'Oh this can't go on.'

Tape 1: 42 minutes 52 seconds

From Easter to Whitsun, and then to the autumn, I remember pleading with my father to leave, in the snow, when my parents visited me in Switzerland, I said 'Please

leave.' By that time I realised what was up. My mother always wanted to leave but she was so much younger. My father was always sceptical about her pacifism because he said there will always be wars, because he had been a prisoner of war, he had seen the depth of horror at the Somme in the First World War, and he said 'Do you know, this is the horror of human nature, and you're fighting against something and it's right, it is terrible.' He had refused when he was sent it, what is it called, *Ehrenkreuz*, after the war, he had sent it back because he thought that the whole thing was horrific. He did not wish to be owning, what's it called, the Iron Cross, I think, but people are very proud of having it but my father sent it back because he hated it. But he did not think that the Nazis would last, year after year after year, until he began to see when, it was 10th of November 1938. I was at school in Geneva, my mother wrote me the most marvellous letter at that time, afterwards describing it all, and I began then to understand that, then they fortunately made it to England, just before the war.

Tape 1: 45 minutes 4 seconds

BL: When did you have to leave that German school, that lyzeum?

MC: I didn't have to leave it, but I left it, when there was … '37, I think, I went to Switzerland. Yes, '37, early. That was the *Reifeprüfung*, you know. Not *Matura*, but when you were …, there was something in between. Then my friends anyway left for another school, because at mine one couldn't make the *Abitur*, the final exam for university. So that was in '37, in Easter '37.

BL: So did you want to go Switzerland, or did your parents decide where to go?

MC: No, my parents had said you must go to a school, to a boarding school, they said, 'You must go away, you can't go on schooling here.' And I thought, gosh, I'd read a book called *Bibis grosse Reise* by a Danish writer called Karin Michaelis and the little girl had gone all round the world, well Europe, anyway. One of the places she loved very much, there were beautiful illustrations in the book, by Selma Lagerlöf, no by Karin Michaelis, a Dane, and there she'd been to a German school in the *Odenwald* and it was called the *Odenwaldschule* and it was headed by Paul Geheeb, who was called Paulus by the children. They didn't say *Sie* to Paulus, they said *du* and called him by his first name. He had a long beard, and he fed the deer in the forest and I thought, if ever I have to go to another school, this would be it. But I never wanted to leave my school anyway. But this was a place of longing. So I said, *Odenwaldschule* immediately. Little did I know of course, that the *Odenwaldschule* was no longer in existence under Paulus, but that he had to emigrate to Switzerland because he was married to a Jewish person, first of all, and his ideas were against the Nazis. His wife was Edith Geheeb, geborene Cassirer. Cassirer was a very eminent Berlin Jewish family, with philosophers, sinologists and art collectors and publishers. Bruno Cassirer was a very famous art publisher, and I had books of his as a child, even, but I didn't know that one of his relatives, had married my idol, the man with a beard who fed deer. But that was so, and they had emigrated to a school on the lakes of Geneva. Very near Geneva, one could go by bicycle, but it was quite a long way. And it was called, Versoix by the lake, and my parents then realised that I had a remote relative who was at the school in the *Odenwald* and they thought that was a good idea, and I was sent there then. That was it. And I felt terribly happy there.

Tape 1: 48 minutes 54 seconds

BL: Do you remember leaving Düsseldorf, what was it like?

MC: I was terribly sad. I wasn't looking forward to it. The book by Karin Michaelis was in the background, in the foreground was very much leaving my house, my parents, my friends. I mean I had quite a wonderful group of friends and bicycle and, you know, the landscape. I didn't feel it at the time, that I left the landscape as well, but I felt it, actually only much later, in England. Meanwhile I had other things to fall in love with, like this spring away was wonderful because I had really not experienced spring consciously, when I was in Düsseldorf. But by the Lake of Geneva, being on the lake and drawing by the lake, I'm rather disloyal not to people I hope, but in life I've got so many enthusiasms that one dispels the last one. It sounds awful but I think, I fear, it's true, I've never thought about it, until this moment. And so a day at this school or a visit to Paulus in his rooms up in his room, I went up the stairs and saw all these photographs of a man with a beard. I hadn't met him yet. My first day at school, when one is supposed to be homesick, I suppose, but then I met him, and he said, 'My dear child, are you homesick?' And I said 'Well a bit …,' and I saw behind him big fir trees, it was top of the house and the fir was enormously high, in the window behind him, this old man with a beard said to me 'I'm always homesick, so don't feel you are alone.' And we had a long talk and after that talk I felt at home there, and I felt so much at home that when my parents came to witness what they thought was really very poor education – there wasn't much one had to learn – one was totally free, so I had no maths and nothing that I didn't like, I was always very bad at counting and maths and so on and sciences were very weak points. One didn't have to have that. I didn't even learn French which was part of the idea, I suppose, in the French part of Switzerland, so they thought I must leave. Then I cried in the summer holidays, being homesick for Paulus' school, and so it went on. But then I went to the international school and finished school there, up to a point.

Tape 1: 52 minutes 27 seconds

BL: What were the other children, what sort of backgrounds were they from, at this school?

MC: At which one?

BL: The first one.

MC: Ah, the first one. All sorts. There were old students from the *Odenwald*, you know, who were, had been there as small children, it was a very famous, progressive school you know, the *Odenwaldschule*, one of the first, not the first, I think that was *Wickersdorf* but it was one of the first progressive schools, which Paulus I think founded, is it possible, in 1906, something like that, early on anyway. So by that time he was a grand old man, in a sense, when I first met him. The school was really very ramshackle in a way, on the lake of Geneva, the *École d' Humanité*, he called the *Odenwaldschule*. Then they moved from there, because it had not been very well governed by a Dutchman, whose school it was. So what were the students, you asked me, I always deviate. Sorry. Yes, students of all kinds. Ah, yes the first day I was at school in Versoix, at the *École d'Humanité*, I had an open desk in front of me, and I

opened it, there were books lying there, the first book I opened said *Dem geliebten Paulus*, in gratitude to the most wonderful headmaster Paul Geheeb by, and it said Thomas and Mielein Mann. M-I-E-L-E-I-N. Otherwise my name. And I had read Thomas Mann, a bit, I mean, very much so, *The Buddenbrooks* and *Tonio Kröger* and I thought, gosh, this is marvellous, you know, to be at school with somebody who Thomas Mann so loved, the headmaster. And so you see, all sorts of people were at the school. The school also housed refugees of all kinds from various countries. There were some Indians, and Dutch people, Dutch students, and also there was a friend of mine, who's still a friend, he's become a sculptor, Ralph Bayer, he was the son of a refugee, I think. His father, a German sculptor, refugee to Greece I think, but he sent his son there. And all sorts of freedom-loving parents had sent their children to the school in the *Odenwald* and then a few …, it wasn't very big you know, a few had been sent to the continuation in Switzerland.

BL: Were there any other Jewish children?

Tape 1: 55 minutes 52 seconds.

MC: Oh yes, oh yes. There were quite a few Jewish children. But I don't remember. Oh yes, one of them was from, no she married the Dutchman. Yes, there must have been. Yes, there were. Somebody called Sommer, I remember, because it was spring. He was called Sommerfeld. Nothing to do with that wonderful lady, you know.

BL: So in the holiday you went home? In the summer holiday?

MC: No…

BL: You said you went…

MC: No, I didn't go home again until '38. Just before, because my parents had a silver wedding in '38. No, by that time was I at the international school? No, I was just about to go there, I suppose. Anyway, no I met my brother in Belgium, where we had relatives and I met my brother, who was in Scotland, we couldn't go back to Düsseldorf, it was not advised, because of difficulty of the situation of going in and out of Germany, with, I don't know whether they were Jewish passports yet, I don't know. So my brother and I met in Belgium, at Easter and I went, ah yes, that was my first term at the school, École International, that's right. I went via Strasbourg and Colmar, I went to see Colmar then, on my way back to Geneva, to the international school and then in the summer holidays I went, oh no that was … All a bit muddled up in my old brain. Yes, because I went to friends of my brother's in Scotland. The first place in England I ever went to was to see friends of my brother's who were in Glasgow, and he was a philosophy don at the university who had befriended my brother and his family had come to Düsseldorf to my parents, as visitors, I'd met them and that was in the summer holidays that I went. They asked me to stay with them in Scotland, it was wonderful.

BL: When was that?

MC: That was in '38. My parents had a silver wedding in Düsseldorf, they were still in Düsseldorf.

BL: We need to stop because we have to change tapes.

Tape 1: 59 minutes 0 second
TAPE 2

BL: This is Tape Two of conducting an interview with Milein Cosman. We were talking about your time in Geneva, in 1937. So what happened in autumn of 1937?

MC: The autumn of 1937 was quite a revolution in my life, because it was totally a different kind of school from Paulus' school. It was formed at the advent or soon after the League of Nations, and it had an enormous amount of …, in those days, it was amazing really, I think it had 29 different nationalities at the school. Lots of Chinese and eventually of course, looking back, a lot of refugees, not only oneself, but every other person was a refugee from Franco or from this or that tyrant, and apart from that there were lots of interesting parents of children, film directors and ex-revolutionaries and all sorts of… Feuchtwanger, one of the relations of Leon Feuchtwanger was there. It was an interesting place, very handsomely situated, in Geneva, and we had one marvellous teacher on my side, I was on the English side of the school, and there was a man, whom I must, must mention because he was tremendous, and he was called Phillip Drummond Thompson. And he was a Scot, actually more English than Scottish but his name was Scottish. Anyway, Drummond was doing a lot of theatre, he taught English and bits of other things but the heart of the man was in the theatre. And he put on plays, directed them, and was passionately interested in theatre. Later on he took me to the theatre in London. He was not only grown-up but getting old at that time. And he cast me in a play and I didn't have to speak a word of English or anything, I just had to laugh and was a silly Dutchman, in a Galsworthy play. That I enjoyed. But after that, he gave me a marvellous part to play, this was quite important, looking back in my life, because it preoccupied me totally. Around Christmas time, '37, when we were supposed to go to the mountains – we went to the mountains – but had to leave the school quickly, because there was scarlet fever. I was intent on one thing only, and I only thought of that, and that was learning the part for Joan, Joan of Arc, in Shaw's play, which Drummond had given to me to the distress, I'm sure, of quite a few ambitious girls who were there from America. They wanted to do at college, they wanted to do acting or something. Anyway, he overrode every ambition that there was about and to my amazement, because I never saw myself as Joan of Arc.

Tape 2: 3 minutes 58 seconds

But then I immersed myself into learning the part, and I'm bad at memorising. But I did it and I'm sure that apart from the fact that he perhaps believed I was able to do it, I think Drummond saw much more. I never talked to him about it, but he saw what had happened to my parents in November, and perhaps he had the extraordinary empathy to give me a part to take my mind totally away from reality where we have a repetition of what I did in my school in Düsseldorf, at my school in that ghastly Nazi anti-Semitic atmosphere and maybe it is a kind of *Leitmotiv*, I don't know. It certainly did let me not think of the horror of my parents who had meanwhile moved to Holland, '37, was it '37? It was '38, actually that I did St Joan. Never mind. The main thing is that this was a great experience at my school in Geneva – acting St Joan but it

must have been in ’38 because the first play was the Dutchman. Then it was not safe at that time to go back to Düsseldorf, so I met my brother at Easter time in Holland and came back to Geneva while Colmar and the Grünewald had peace. And this summer of that year I was invited to Scotland, to friends of my brother’s, the Browns. George Brown was one of the most extraordinary, civilised people I have ever met and he and his wife who was a kind of artist, had a daughter who wanted to become a writer and perhaps has become one. I think she disappeared on one of the Scottish islands, out of my life, long ago, Doran. They kindly had invited me to stay with them. They invited me to the east coast, which was a wonderful experience. So I hadn’t really been to England properly because I only spent a night in Kensington in a boarding house on my way to Scotland. And how do I get there, for heaven’s sake, help me…

BL: You met your brother….

Tape 2: 6 minutes 59 seconds

MC: Yes I met my brother, that was Easter before … and then in Scotland I had to go back to school but I wanted to go to Düsseldorf to celebrate my parents’ silver wedding, because they were in Düssseldorf and celebrated their silver wedding. I couldn’t not be there. But everybody said ‘You’re crazy because war might break out any moment.’ It was the time of Chamberlain and Prague, you know. All the same, I thought I cannot possibly do this, not be at my parents’ silver wedding, and went. And I remember, when I went back to the airport at Cologne, from Düsseldorf, the banks of the Rhine, big roads, were littered with army lorries and tanks and all in preparation for war. The silver wedding was on the 7th September1938 and it’s the first time I really think of the conjunction. It’s mad, but it is so. And now I think of it, it was just two months and three days before my parents were visited by the Nazis in their house, when they were in their bedroom and suddenly the house was swarming with SA men and there was beating down of pictures and sculptures, china and everything, as we know, and worse things were happening elsewhere, actually. But my parents were surprised in bed and hounded out of their house and as I’ve said before, my father was hidden by a wonderful wife of the Turkish-Palestinian sculptor, Bernhard Sopher, and my mother was hidden by German friends. The father was a brother of my father at the Freemason’s Lodge to which he belonged. And only recently has their oldest son died and the grandson of this man written me the most moving letter, just a few months ago. But my father was saved and my mother saved and for another three weeks they stayed in Düsseldorf and then left with scarcely anything, by boat to Holland, where my mother had a sister, or two. No, one sister had died. She had two sisters who had married two Dutchmen, two Dutch brothers, and so they found temporary refuge in Amsterdam. My father was interned in Holland as a refugee without papers. He was smuggled in, as I said, on a smuggle boat.

Tape 2: 10 minutes 54 seconds

But my mother had a cousin there who was an international lawyer and had great friends and knew the Minister of Justice so he freed my father, fortunately from the internment camp in which he had been imprisoned by the Dutch. There was a small Nazi lot of people who decided that this was the thing to do with those illegal immigrants, which were swarming in Holland, I imagine, not only my parents. And so

owing to my cousin Lex, Lex de Vries' influence, my mother, rather like Fidelio in Beethoven's opera, Floristan, actually like Floristan, she went to the Minister of Justice and freed my father from internment. And so after a few weeks, by a miracle, they could escape to England, where my brother was in Yorkshire at the time, he had his first job as a metallurgist and so they were saved.

BL: How did they get to England?

MC: How did they get here? Well I think one of my brother's friends guaranteed for them. A man called Stewart; I think he was called Archie Stewart. But his son, his daughter-in-law is still a great friend of mine; she's now ninety-something. He also was one of the guarantors for me, when it finally came for me to seek visum, visa for England. Anyway. . .

BL: Can I just ask you your impressions from going back for the silver wedding, was there a sense of danger? What were your impressions of the situation then?

Tape 2: 13 minutes 0 second

MC: You know, I knew there was something in the air but I was so preoccupied with being at home again, and I really must have been quite criminally politically unaware. I can't understand me. On the other hand, I sort of seemed to have lived all my life on impressions, fleeting impressions, which are intense, and memorable, often, but apart from the shock of seeing all this army on my way from Düsseldorf to Cologne for the airport, I don't remember any thought going to the imminence of war.

BL: But you said you met that friend who didn't want to speak to you anymore.

MC: Ah no, that was earlier, that was much earlier. No, this was early September wasn't it, September? I don't remember even who of my friends I saw because I was there just a short time and it was mainly to do with the silver wedding, for which I'd done something. I think that was when I did the book of fairytales and yes, with illustrations, yes and it's quite vague, the memory of all that, even of the celebration, I may say, although many people were there.

BL: What was it like? Where was it celebrated? At home?

MC: At home, yes. Of course it was at home because where else would it be in Nazi Germany? But my uncle, my father's brother, who was in Essen, left even after my parents, also to England. I mean he had a non-Jewish wife which meant that his wife and daughters were subsequently, his wife certainly, were interned on the Isle of Man. That's in the future. Not so very distant … from so very far away. So he waited even longer. And there was a cousin of my father's who I liked very much, Alfred Cosman, in Essen. He'd been a judge. He was never married, a bachelor, very musical, great chess player, master of chess in Essen and he was called, by the whole family he was called Oblomov, after was it Ivan Goncharov, who's written Oblomov, Russian writer, yes, Ivan Goncharov. This was a man who never did anything. He was very, very nice and was unable to act and so Alfred Cosman, who had a girlfriend, a non-Jewish girlfriend, I believe, for years, but he was so lazy that all his life he just played chess and the fiddle in a quartet. He was a terribly nice man, who I remember my

mother liked very much, he appreciated my mother, who was very different from the rather dutiful Cosman, Cosman women, I should say. And Alfred perished in a concentration camp. He was the only member of the family, I remember, who actually stayed. He had no reason to stay at all, and he perished, disappeared.

Tape 2: 17 minutes 35 seconds

And also an old aunt of my father's did not go to concentration camp but she was in Kassel. My grandmother, on my father's side, came from Kassel I think, Tante Liese she was called and she jumped out of the window of her flat when the Nazis arrived in '33, and so she escaped because she would have been very old by the time of the Nazis, by the time the Second World War broke out, she would have been undoubtedly a victim. She was not married. I had only a few relatives left, you know, who, however late, did anything.

BL: What happened to your father's business?

MC: The business of course was bought, confiscated or something, and he evinced the desire in the middle of the war, to a family friend, a lawyer, he said 'I want to fight against this wrong, right it after the war.' And this lawyer, a nice, benevolent man, laughed and said, 'You are funny.' My father wrote a letter to Hess, actually, when Hess dropped in Scotland. He wrote him a letter telling him that he was suing his government or whatever. I'm afraid I don't know what was in the letter, I know that he wrote this lawyer friend of ours, who lived in Hampstead actually, he thought it was all crazy but my father wasn't that, he had a great deal of imagination so he was one of the few people who thought of that. I've heard of somebody else in the earlier part of the last war, last big war, who also had a thought like that. Recently I heard Africa [inaudible] I've got such a bad memory, it's such a pity.

BL: Did he ever get compensated?

Tape 2: 20 minutes 10 seconds

MC: Yes I'm sure, finally, but by that time my father was on the point of death.

BL: In the fifties?

MC: '52.

BL: So when they left they could just take very few possessions?

MC: Very little. In the smuggler's boat I remember, very strangely, my mother had a little suitcase where she had lots of gloves, and she was immensely generous, and so whenever, I always lose gloves, I lose a lot, anyway, but gloves, she kept on giving me gloves, that was the only thing she had. Apart from that, she ineptly made me some clothes, because I really had nothing. I wore my school clothes, which were not of course a uniform, not at that sort of school, but I did have sort of dresses from my childhood and things done by the dressmaker in Düsseldorf, and I had them until my student years. But by that time it was war and all I craved was to have a pair of corduroy dungarees. That was my dream, because I'd seen them in Holland, where I'd

been for a short holiday. I guess that was Christmas '38, I suppose. Must have been, of course yes, it was that and there I saw all these workmen in the Dutch streets with the corduroy dungarees and I thought that was wonderful, a dream to have such a thing. And finally, in Oxford, I got a pair. And so not only did I wear these old clothes from my childhood forever, it seems, but that is of course not very important. What I think was curious, was that when my parents were in Holland they had a very small little flat and I found it so cosy and so wonderful to be with them and in Holland. My cousins were not there at the time, I remember I said 'You know I think this is wonderful, life is so wonderful this way' and I really thought that it was. It must have been a much more relaxed atmosphere than the one I'd known for years under the Nazis, without knowing quite, without understanding fully, or not wanting to understand, the cause of the disquiet in the house, which was a beautiful house full of wonderful things. And so it must have seemed so strange to my parents for me to say, 'Oh this is the way to live' because it was totally and utterly basic, and they had practically nothing.

Tape 2: 23 minutes 35 seconds

My aunt, by that time, one of my Dutch aunts, my mother's sister, was rather ill in the South of France, and the cousin I mentioned before who propelled my mother into going to seek out his friend the Minister of Justice, this cousin had been in the Dutch cavalry, and of course, they didn't have horses, when the Germans invaded Holland, he went, not on a horse but on a motorcycle against the Nazis and was one of the first people killed. He's got a monument in his honour in Holland now, he's a Dutch war hero and well this has to do with my parents' stay in Holland, but I met Lex, I think briefly, that time, that was his name, Lex de Vries, and I met him and I have a dim memory of what I thought was middle-aged, then probably an elderly man, because he could be my uncle really, age-wise, a nice name but I don't know much else about him. This is rather, rather extraordinary to think of how one meets people and what fate awaited them within a very short time. And how my parents were …, by dint of miracle really, they came over four weeks before war broke out.

BL: When was the plan that you should also go to England?

MC: Oh, that was made firmly by my old brother, because he had studied in Scotland, got a whiff of the fact that the best art school was supposed to be the Slade School in London, so he kept on writing to me in Geneva to say 'You must go to the Slade when you come to England,' which he thought was fait accompli anyway. I should go to the Slade so I was curious, I just followed whatever he said. I mean if he told me if I had to look up friends of his, grotesque, I just went. In Oxford there were various people. Ah, there were people he told me to meet in London when I had a brief stay in London, no idea who these people were, there was the chap connected with Freud in Bloomsbury…

Tape 2: 26 minutes 34 seconds

Strachey, the Stracheys, ah, that may have been my headmaster Paulus' suggestion, because Edith Geheeb Cassirer was very much into psychology and Freudianism and all that sort of thing, so they sent me to Bloomsbury to say hello to some people called Strachey. I hadn't a clue but they had the window where this famous picture in the

Tate, of Strachey is, with the long legs and the armchair and I went there without any knowledge of anything like that.

BL: So how did you manage to actually get to England?

MC: How did I manage? That's a good question, because it was difficult to get there, but I wanted after all to study in England, which was perhaps easier, I don't know, but I had to have two guarantees, two people to vouchsafe for my not falling on to the state, that sort of thing and one of them was my great friend and teacher Phillip Drummond Thompson, who took me to the British consulate in Geneva and sort of guaranteed or introduced me, I don't know. I got one of my visas through him, and the other one was through my friend, my brother's great friend in Scotland, whose father was a judge or something, Stewart. I remember the friend of my brother's was Ian Stewart, his father's name eludes me but he guaranteed and I knew him because my brother had taken me, no, afterwards, in the summer holidays, I went to meet old Stewart in Campbelltown in Scotland, where his widow still lives. Ailsa.

BL: You mentioned obtaining this visa.

MC: Yes, then with the visa I got a ticket to London, no to Sheffield but first to London and there at Victoria, an elderly cousin, a cousin of mine who was then twenty or 22 from Essen, one of my Essen Cosman cousins, Otha, she studied languages and she was in England and she was destined to meet me at Victoria, to meet my train and she did and I then spent a night in London in a boarding house, which she had booked for me. We went to the theatre that night, that's right, and there were drunken people, I thought they were dead, in the street, but I was told they were drunk. This was, in '38, just before the war, before I went up to…

Tape 2: 29 minutes 48 seconds

No, I think it was the year before when I went up to Scotland that I went with Otha, yes. Anyway, never mind.

BL: When did you get here?

MC: Finally, was in '39, of course, '39, just before the… I mean it was in the beginning of the summer holidays, whenever they are, July, I suppose, end of July, and then I went straight up to Sheffield. Yes it was the end of July, I came to England, went straight to Gower Street, to the Slade, to inscribe. That was what I'd found out, or what my brother had told me I must do. And in those days, I just showed them a sketchbook that I'd done at school, and I was accepted. But, you don't want to know the details of that, I suppose, because there was a secretary who interviewed me, of course, for me to inscribe and war was not yet out, I mean it was in Gower Street, in London, University College London and Mr Elton …

BL: The microphone. Please don't cover the microphone with your hand.

MC: Sorry. Mr Elton was very nice, he was a sweet man and he said 'But before you leave the office, before you leave the college now, I must ask you, I must introduce you to the moral tutor. Moral tutor, I had no idea what that meant, but he introduced

me to this woman and she asked me all sorts of questions which I answered, and one of them was, I remember forever, ‘Miss Cosman, are you a good girl?’ And I thought, I think I answered, ‘That’s not for me to say’ because I couldn’t judge myself whether I was a good person or a bad person, I didn’t understand the allusion. I didn’t know the term moral tutor and I think it doesn’t exist any more now for a long time. It’s stopped but it was very odd. However, I was inscribed and then four weeks later, little more than four weeks later, the Slade was evacuated to, or amalgamated with the Ruskin School of Art in Oxford and we were housed rather crampedly so, in the Ashmolean, but beautifully so, of course.

BL: How good was your English?

MC: My English was pretty good. At least, I thought it was pretty good because I’d been on the English side of the International School, there were two sides, French and English, and I was on the English side, hence my part in Shaw’s St Joan and hence my relationship to Mr Drummond, the teacher.

Tape 2: 33 minutes 10 seconds

BL: So by the time you got here in 1939, it was your second visit. What were your first impressions?

MC: My first impression was indeed that one night I spent going to the theatre with my elderly cousin aged 22, no she must have been 28 by then so that was the first one, when all the people were lying around in the streets. When we got out of the theatre, one had to climb over people. That was my impression of England but that was in transit to Scotland. But my English then was rather tinged by Americanisms. There were lots of Americans at that International School, they were of course not refugees. What was I talking about? Oh my accent. I remember in Scotland in the holidays, asking in some shop for ‘tomatoes’ [in American accent] and the man said ‘tomatoes’ to you, you know. There were certain things that I said in an American way because English wasn’t my first language after all, but normally I did speak English English because the Scottish friends of my brother talked very English, possibly tinily tinged by a beautiful Scottish. It was through their visits in Düsseldorf, as a child when I hadn’t got English yet at school in Germany that my English was learnt by ear rather than by grammar. Finally by the time I got to Geneva you know, the language was…, the studies I had were English and then I had some German friends at the school, in Geneva, too, German friends.

BL: What were your first impressions of England?

MC: On the boat there was this wild man, I don’t remember names easily these days, I never knew his name properly, but he was a man with feathers, big feathers and he sang and I think he was a kind of mascot of the football or cricket team or something, a kind of thing to do with the empire, an Indian, I think he was Indian, with enormous coloured feathers, and he sang on the boat and all was very strange and different I thought. For one thing, in those days people had terrible teeth, in England. And I noticed so many women, especially the elderly ones, who had no teeth at all. The other people had peculiar teeth. This was an impression I especially had in Sheffield, where my brother had his first job as a metallurgist and so when I was alone a good

deal, a few times, I was only there a few weeks really, but when I was in the library or in the buses, I saw all these strange people and also ones in Birmingham. But never mind, this has nothing to do with first impressions.

Tape 2: 37 minutes 1 second

Yes, I've always looked at people a lot but without much thought, one might say. So my impressions were that of a girl who's been to school and who was sort of let loose in a world which she doesn't understand politically, structurally or anything, and I was involved with looking and liking fish and chips in a newspaper and going to the moors on walks with friends of my brother and him. Then he took me to Scotland immediately you see, to see all his friends, including the Stewarts in Campbelltown, not Camden Town, that's different and we went to St Andrews and Edinburgh, he wanted me to get to know his old home, Scotland but he hadn't been naturalised yet, so unfortunately he applied, when war broke out. He applied immediately to go to the Air Force or something but his eyesight was not good enough and he was not naturalised, and so instead he was terribly disappointed and left after a few months. He left for America. I regret it very much but he was so disappointed that he couldn't do his job, because he was an enemy alien, suddenly and so he left.

BL: For how many years had he been in Britain?

MC: In Britain, in Scotland I suppose, since '36, was it, yes. '35 or '36, whenever he went to university. So when he had a job in 1939 he must have been 3 years in Scotland, yes '36, I suppose, if not '35.

BL: And when did he leave for the States?

MC: In thirty-… in 1940, I think, yes. In 1940, of course, yes, it was in the spring of 1940.

BL: So your parents had arrived in England by then?

MC: They had arrived; my father was interned for a short time in England.

BL: Where was he interned?

MC: In Huyton near Liverpool, I think. But he got disinterned. I think he would have enjoyed the Isle of Man, where so many people enjoyed themselves, despite the deprivations of the camp, they had a wonderful time but in Huyton? I don't think it was so interesting.

BL: So when you came, you stayed first with your brother in Sheffield?

Tape 2: 40 minutes 20 seconds

MC: Yes, I did. But when my parents arrived we all stayed in a little boarding house.

BL: Where was that boarding house?

MC: In Sheffield, Sheffield 10 I think. It was in a suburb of Sheffield, I think.

BL: And then you went to the Slade, the Slade moved to Oxford, so when did you arrive in Oxford?

MC: Oh that was really at the end of the summer holidays, shortly after my parents had arrived. In September I suppose, September '39, I went to the Slade.

BL: And what were your memories, impressions of that time, that Oxford period?

MC: Well, it's, it was another world. It was not really another world, it was another country, because Sheffield wasn't a country but Oxford, by that time I'd been in England, what four or six weeks and to Scotland most of that time. It was so beautiful for one thing. I mean, I loved looking at the buildings and colleges and everything was new but the Ashmolean of course was empty by the time we got there, there were cast figures because everything else had to be hidden from possible bombs, you see. No, it's strange, one is told a long time ago that I don't think I am entitled to call myself an émigré because it seems to me that I have no right to that title because I didn't feel the change of one of my worlds always mingled into another, I can't explain it, why that is so but it seems that things always happen, so many things always happen, so many impressions, that an overall feeling perhaps evaporates. I cannot tell you what's wrong with me or what's right with me, but I did not until much later, realise the transition that I went through. And the novelty of England, Oxford in particular, I got immediately sort of into the mood of the Slade, which wasn't Oxford at all, then accumulated more and more friends around me in Oxford, who were undergraduates and that was my world then. There was no fracture really, although there was really, of course, in reality.

Tape 2: 43 minutes 45 seconds

BL: Did you feel like an outsider?

MC: I found odd how boys – I thought gosh, what's wrong with me – because the boys looked away from me, in the street, I noticed that, that the undergraduates, in those days, were terribly shy, you see, they wouldn't look at a girl, so I thought, perhaps there's something wrong with me. Because at school, my co-educational school, boys and girls looked at each other in the eye, yes, without any ... I wasn't wanting adulation or flirtation or anything, I was very backward really. But I noticed this, the difference in customs, the absence on the most part of the undergraduates of the experience of being equal to girls in their school-time, even if they had sisters. They hardly knew their sisters probably, being away at school and girls at another school. Oh yes, what struck me was extraordinary, the difference in family relations which at that time, I think, owing to the widely common spread of public schools, was a sort of kind of *Entfremdung* of families, naturally so, because children didn't know their parents that well, being away at school, so this coolness towards family relations struck me very much when I encountered a Spanish friend of mine. She was the daughter of Madariaga. And she met me, I think she was the daughter of Madariaga. Or some other Spanish tremendous person, and she said, I said to her, my parents are coming soon, because they had been in London during the Blitz and I was busy looking for some abode, some rooms for them in Oxford and she said 'Oh really. I

said, 'I really get on with them very well, I like them very much' and she said 'How English you've become!' and I noticed, I said that because most English people said, 'Oh your parents, I don't get on with my mother' and this was very, very frequent, you know. I noticed this kind of split between the generations, which probably always exists but which I had not experienced at all, because I was great friends with my parents. But I think if the Nazis hadn't come, I might have experienced it too, because it's part of a rebellion which I did not experience because how could one rebel against parents who were so unused to their new surroundings? And so without feeling particular, because that wasn't my thing at all, it never occurred to me that one could not love one's parents, it never entered my mind but I'd noticed with all sorts of English people the distance that existed between them and their family.

Tape 2: 47 minutes 34 seconds

You said 'How terrible, I heard your father died,' and someone would reply… [phone rings] There's my telephone, should I go or no?

BL: [referring to the telephone]. Is it important?

MC: No, I hope not. Well, so I said, 'How terrible,' you see 'I hardly know them.' I would say, 'I'm so sorry,' but 'Don't worry, don't worry, it's not really so bad.' But this was unheard of. But that, of course, is also one of the great virtues in English life. An absence of self-pity and a certain reserve. All of these things I noticed, but dimly. I made friends with … a tremendous student friend of mine, colleague of mine, Marjorie Beaumont, she was called then and we were on the lawn outside the Ashmolean, having a break. She was somewhat older that I and had been to other art schools before, she was only there a short time but we became lifelong friends. And I remember she asked me all sorts of things about my whereabouts, my upbringing, where my parents are, had they escaped, full of interest and all the time she knew that her favourite brother had been killed in France. This was in 1940. And she never mentioned one word of that to me. Asking me all these questions. This is an extraordinary thing to somebody as continental as I am, fundamentally, I suppose. It was much later, after the war that I found out. Not a word and he was her favourite brother, she had three brothers. So I met all these extraordinary English people in Oxford, at Oxford and it was very different from the continent, I'm sure. But it was a time, an unreal time in every respect, because there was this horrible war on, concentration camps, as we subsequently knew. But at that time, I felt conscious of being in a golden cage in Oxford actually, which I was, because there was never a bomb attack on Oxford and I'd been in London during the Blitz in the first summer holidays so I knew that things could be different from the peaceful, sleeping spires of Oxford.

BL: Where were you?

Tape 2: 51 minutes 1 second

MC: I was … what?

BL: During the Blitz, you said you were in London.

MC: During the Blitz I was in Belsize Park Gardens, actually, where my parents had rented this flat, which, actually was inhabited at the time by the writer Peter Vansittart who much later became a friend. But he was living there at the time and now the scientist, the South African scientist, oh you know the one. Louis Wolpert. He lives in that flat, in the same flat, but at that time, during the Blitz, all sorts of people came to the basement. My father was interned at the time. My mother and I slept in the parental front room. It was a garden flat, so all sorts of people thought it was safe to come and shelter overnight, and they arrived with their saucepans over the heads, some of them, to be protected, a steel helmet, in disguise as it were, which was there to protect them against possible shards of bombs. And we saw, from the top of the house, the fires in London, in the city, and one of the people who came with a saucepan over his head, no I think he didn't come with a saucepan over his head, was a youngish man who reminded me of my brother, physically, very much actually. My brother having left a few weeks I daresay, before, for America and this young man and I became friends, and he taught me Monopoly. I was not good at it. And he read me *Point Counterpoint* and *Brave New World* and he was very literary and he said he wanted to become a publisher. And I said, oh André, you must not do that, because I knew how much a sketchbook cost, I thought, let alone a whole mountain of books by many authors. And I said, 'Oh no, you mustn't do that, this is impossible, none of us have any money for that.' And he said 'Yes, I want to become a publisher.' Well, he became André Deutsch, you see. So he was not uninteresting. Meanwhile, the bombs fell and I went back to Oxford I looked for. My parents then moved out to the country, near Oxford and borrowed, took a house, furnished house of course, because they had no furniture and it became a sort of *pied-à-terre*, a kind of small, what do you call it, hostel, for several of their old refugee friends. My mother was cooking and so on, that was outside Oxford.

BL: How did they support themselves?

Tape 2: 54 minutes 19 seconds

MC: Well, from hand to mouth. My father was doing gardening, he never had a garden before, but he did some gardening in Oxford and later I met an old lady who – I liked her immediately– and she turned out to be daughter of one of the people my father gardened for in Oxford. It's amazing. She had thought that I had been doing gardening as a side job apart from firewatching at the museum and the Slade. No, it was my father, I know because my mother had told me of this woman's mother and how much she liked what the lady had said to her 'Could you tell your husband not to come in those wonderful tweed suits of his because you should buy him a pair of dungarees for gardening, it seems such a pity.' And my mother felt that she didn't want to tell them that she didn't have the money for dungarees, that's why he could only wear what he had brought in his little suitcase. My mother said 'Such a nice lady' and she mentioned the name, and it was indeed the mother of this woman who latterly has come into my life because she also does some etching. Isn't that amazing? And she thought that I had been helping her father's garden.

BL: Did they get any support from the Refugee Committee? Did they have any experience with Bloomsbury House?

MC: No, I think I got a Quaker bursary.

BL: To go to the Slade?

MC: To go to the Slade.

BL: But your parents, you don't think so?

MC: No, I don't think they did. No, no, no.

BL: Did you or your parents have any contact with other refugees? You said…

MC: Oh yes, of course. I mean that was that little boarding house of my mother's in, Wheatley outside Oxford. That was populated by refugee friends. One of them was an old, old lady. I remember she became 80 and I thought, how fantastic, she's so old, and she gave me a commission to draw her, and I did draw her. And it looked absolutely like her, she wore a little hat which was marvellous, she was quite a good subject but not very beautiful. It was so like her, I've still got a reproduction somewhere of the drawing, but I don't know where. And she took it and of course she did not like it, I wouldn't like someone to draw me at my age either, but she'd asked me to, she'd wanted it and I couldn't make her a beautiful girl, which perhaps she never was. Anyway she gave me, instead of paying me, which I'd rather hoped, she gave me a little mirror, a hand mirror which I've still got. It's really not particularly beautiful but it's been quite useful at times. You know, especially when you do a drawing for an etching, you want to see it the other way round, so I know where it is, which is rare for me, and so I still use this old lady's mirror.

Tape 2: 58 minutes 12 seconds

But the other ones were friends who were also refugees. An old lawyer my father liked very much, his wife less so, because she was overbearing, so it was rather difficult actually. But my mother was heroic, she was an absolute heroine they way she managed her exile. I didn't know, I saw it, I was a witness and I never realised until I thought about it many years afterwards. How she managed to ride above the waves of change, poverty. And my father had a very difficult temperament, he was impatient with people, I've inherited that. He was impatient, highly critical, which she was also, but it was terribly difficult to run a boarding house, when one or two people irritate you. But still, it was all right. I mean, my mother was a superb cook and…

BL: We have to stop, we have to change tapes.

MC: Oh all right, just as well, because I go 'into the villages' as my husband used to say.

TAPE 3

BL: This is Tape Three for conducting an interview with Milein Cosman. Milein, we were talking about Oxford and the boarding house, if you want to call it that.

MC: It was a kind of boarding house, yes.

BL: How many rooms did they let?

MC: Oh, the house was not enormous and there were only about four or five, five friends I think. Six, yes. Two very old ladies and two couples I think. I don't remember exactly. I know the personages of four of them and one had been sort of vague family friend for years and he'd been a lawyer. He was a wise, wonderful old man and then there were these two very old ladies. It struck me that they were very old, one of 80, I've mentioned, and the other one who was …, my father worshipped this marvellous lady, I forget her name and she gave him a whole edition of old Heine volumes, Bands, *Bände*, I meant in German. But so all these Heine volumes I still have and always postponed reading them because, of course, like with most Germans, but especially German Jews, I think, Heine was a tremendously important factor or author in their lives. And I never had the time to pursue it but I'm sure it would be fantastic, especially his connection with my hometown because he was born in Düsseldorf.

BL: Did you stay in the house as well or did you stay in Oxford?

MC: No, I lived in Oxford. I had this extraordinary studio by then, which was at the back of the Ashmolean and the garden of St John Street, so the stable-like structure, which now has been torn down, but recently they used it as a kind of deposit building for Ashmolean, I don't know, maybe boxes. I don't know. It was certainly not part of the museum collection but it was hired by the Ashmolean and it was very basic but absolutely wonderful to be in next to my art school, next to the Ashmolean, and really very much in the centre of Oxford, round the Playhouse, and for firewatching, which I did a lot during the war, which was not hard work but it meant that one had communal sleeping accommodation for the girls and for the boys also, separately, of course, and no alarm, because Oxford was never threatened and it was just round the corner and it was fascinating and marvellous to draw one's colleagues until dawn, play records. I remember Brahms sonatas, being introduced to them there, firewatching. It was kind of idiotic to talk of it that way, but it was like an idyll, looking back.

Tape 3: 3 minutes 27 seconds

And in the morning one came back to one's studio, and sometimes I had breakfast parties, because I did have an electric fire, a gas fire, yes a gas fire. Electricity there was not. But I only had a gas light. Sometimes I painted by gaslight or by candlelight until dawn because I had a lot of visitors until colleges were shut, they were shut because people had to reach college by twelve, and so it was a totally new milieu in which I found myself. On the one hand it was a milieu I dreamt of, really bare living quarters, a kind of primitive way of living, very limited materially, with hardly any furniture. And on the other hand it was very stimulating in other ways and all this in the middle of a war. Very strange, very strange…. So quite often when all my friends had gone I would either write into my diary, endlessly, I can't be very brief, I'm afraid. Then also sometimes I did some painting by gaslight, there was this gaslight. But other undergraduates and my co-students, they all found it of course extremely attractive, this studio at the end of a garden. And you know, the loo was in the middle of the …, it was not luxurious. If it was winter and one wasn't too well, it wasn't so easy to have only outdoor facilities and the bathroom was in the front house. And there was a refugee from Germany living there and I remember she used to knock at

the bathroom door and say '*Los* – quickly. I'm in a hurry' because she wanted the bathroom too. We all shared it. But it was a sort of curious experience, quite unreal, looking back, but perhaps all past things are unreal and become kind of dreamlike… Some of my new friends were in the army and went away and some of them never came back and one of them was killed in the war, and he was a very well-known poet who was killed in North Africa and his name was Sidney Keyes and he and his friends from Queen's College Oxford, they all were sort of introduced by Sidney to the studio one by one. One of them is still one of my oldest friends and he's the blind poet, John Heath-Stubbs. And it was very curious because I didn't really understand very much of what all the poems were about. They were highly, highly perceptive and very well educated minds those, and I was just amazed.

Tape 3: 7 minutes 23 seconds

I was perplexed, amazed and admiring without being very involved personally with any …, not personally. But Sidney intrigued me very much, because he loved German poetry, and was very influenced by Hölderlin and Rilke and translated Rilke even, when he waited for me. Perhaps he'd just finished a bit of verse, either of his own or translation of Rilke or some other, and he also very much venerated Schiller. He was really reading history and so Schiller was somebody he knew about, which is very rare in England, or was extremely rare. So all this, without me realising, wedded a sort of new home into my old one. It was a kind of relationship, which I wasn't aware of, but looking back so long after, was absolutely meaningful and important, as a kind of anchor to the past. A bridge. I'd never thought of that until this moment really, because I only think in moments, if at all. So there were also other people connected with my past, in another way, totally other way. There was a German refugee lecturer at New College, who was extremely, how does one say in English, *sympathique*, one can't, that's the trouble. And he turned out to be one of the Cassirer family, and well, I didn't realise why I found him so interesting, but he was something new to me because I'd never met people from Berlin before and he was from Berlin. And his parents indeed were great friends of mine in Oxford and it was all so, well as all life is, I suppose, for everyone, the past mingling with the new and endless meetings and new impressions and discovery of music through an émigré who was there, a much older man, we thought him very old. He used to play Mozart, all piano concertos to us, on his gramophone.

Tape 3: 10 minutes 21 seconds

He was Mr Loeb, who later on or probably before the war, supplied wine to Glyndebourne. And that was the curious thing in the war, nobody ever had drunk a decent drop of wine since, well, they did at my house at home but not during the war, and there was this man who was not only introducing us to Mozart piano concertos, but also introduced us to wine. But what was much more important was the presence, to me anyway, later on, of Egon Wellesz who was another refugee, an Austrian refugee in Oxford, a professor of music. He was attached to Lincoln College and one of his daughters went to the Slade, that's how I met him first, through Liesl. And Wellesz gave talks on Mahler and so some of my friends, my greatest friends at the time and I, became absolutely devotees of Mahler. This was way back in 1943, '44, I suppose. And he could show us still, manuscripts, notes of Mahler, which he had,

which were annotated by Mahler because he'd known him. And all this offered tremendous excitement, naturally, to us. So music played quite a role there too.

BL: So both art and music you were exposed to…

MC: Well, art was not so much in evidence except through books, because everything was, the Ashmolean was of course only sporting plaster of Paris copies of sculptures, nothing else. And art books of course played a great role in every art student's life anyway, because of art history, you have to, you want to read good books, especially when there's nothing else much. Ah yes, suddenly there was an exhibition of loans from the Tate at the Ashmolean, and that was one of the few art exhibitions one could see, although there was a picture once a month changing, at the National Gallery. One great picture. A wonderful idea really. Perhaps one should have only at the most 20 great pictures at any time in any museum, because it's too much, one can't deal with so much.

BL: Speaking of, did you find, did you have any contact with the Horovitz's, who were also in Oxford?

Tape 3: 13 minutes 25 seconds

MC: Well yes, indirectly with Jo Horovitz who is of course a son of Bela Horovitz, wasn't he, isn't he? Bela. Who was the founder of Phaidon books, and here we are back at my childhood in Düsseldorf under the Christmas tree, the Van Gogh volume of Phaidon . Jo Horovitz was at New College, I think, and came to the Slade because he was a very good draughtsman, very gifted in many directions, because he's a marvellous composer. He's mainly known for light music, but I've heard quite a lot of …, light music can be seriously good, and he is marvellous in his serious music also. And he came to do drawing at the Slade, and so I knew him and I think he knew a great friend of mine, Audrey, who was also at the Slade. And meanwhile here in London we met again and I'm glad to say he's a very good friend and his sister, his two sisters (are there two?) were at a school where my mother taught German in Oxford, a high school I think. And so very indirectly, without knowing the Horovitz household, the senior ones, I only knew Jo, and meanwhile the two daughters I know well in London. But that was a time when my mother taught German at the high school, which she had wanted to do when she was young, she was a sort of undergraduate in Detmold, in Germany and wanted to become a German teacher but then got married instead. And only exercised this privately and officially only in Oxford, during the war. And oh yes, Detmold, there is an interesting... At Detmold she was very struck, as all her other friends were, by a young actor there and she told me when I told here I'd been to Glyndebourne, this was just after the war, and Carl Ebert was the opera director, *régisseur* of opera at Glyndebourne as a refugee and I told my mother, I'd seen somebody called Carl Ebert, and she said, oh, we used to admire him so much when I was a student we all revered him and rushed to his performances in Detmold. And so there was another, there are endless connections in life, aren't there?

BL: When was your mother studying in Detmold?

Tape 3: 16 minutes 30 seconds

MC: I suppose, before she got married. I wasn't about, of course, I wasn't born yet. It must have been around about 1911, '12, '10, something like that. Before she got married in 1913. So.

BL: So how long did you stay in Oxford ?

MC: Well, I stayed on after I'd got my Slade diploma and did some Workers Educational Association, WEA lectures because I couldn't get into the Wrens. I wanted very much the Wrens or the Land Army because I really liked both uniforms very much and outdoor life would have been nice in the Land Army, but I was an enemy alien, so it was not possible although colleagues, a friend of mine at the Slade, who carried my portfolio, whom I told that I couldn't be eligible to any of the forces, he said 'Oh, let's get married at Christmas.' His father was a vicar. But I wasn't in the least inclined to marry him. So that fell by the wayside, it was a sudden idea, out of the blue, as he carried my portfolio on the way back to my studio. So I didn't get married to Nick Graham, who's now in Canada. But instead I devised, I thought, I looked at a huge poster in Wellington Square, outside the quarters of the Worker's Education Association, called WEA in short, and there I saw a plan of what they were teaching and I noticed that art was missing. So I asked to see the head of the place and introduced myself and said, 'Why do you not have art?' And he said 'Art has nothing to do with war and we are not concerned with it.' So I said 'May I prove the contrary, I'll propose something.' He said 'Well if you like, give it to me, once you've proposed it.' So I worked out something, to do with everything that war has to do with people, portraiture, education, even religion and war and I don't know, caricature, all sorts of things and worked it out. And then he had to submit it to somebody, an art historian in Oxford, and he okayed it and then I had three sessions, altogether a year or two, lecturing at the WEA in the evenings. For that of course, I had to prepare slides and so on and so forth, but I enjoyed that. But of course they were very few workers in the audience at the time. Mostly, well it would seem to be fairly old people at the time, who didn't have much else like theatre or concerts to go to in those days.

BL: You mentioned that you were an enemy alien? Did you have to tell the tribunal? Do you remember that?

Tape 3: 19 minutes 49 seconds

MC: No. I didn't. I don't remember. I don't think so. Never. Did they? I've never done that, no.

BL: Yes, sorry then…

MC: Well, apart from that I sort of taught at little schools before I went to London, you see. That was in 1945 or '6, '6 possibly only. '5.

BL: So you came to London after the war was finished?

MC: No, no, it hadn't quite finished. In fact, I joined the army bureau of American … bureau of current affairs but I think it was American maybe. ABSE it was called. Army Bureau of… ABSE it was called, funnily enough A-B-S-E… American,

whatever and they had a radio station in London, and again through an introduction of my brother in America I met the head and I wanted a job in London. And since I talked German and some French of course, he engaged me as what's called a monitor. But I was scarcely there for six weeks or eight, when the war was over. The war in Europe was over. And so I then got a job.

[Mobile phone starts ringing in background]

BL: Sorry.

MC: Qu'est-ce que c'est? It's your radio, I mean your, oh your children want you.

BL: Sorry.

[Inaudible]

MC: What?

BL: No it's fine.

MC: Oh.

BL: Yes, sorry for this…. Yes, so you stayed with them.

Tape 3: 22 minutes 12 seconds

MC: Yes for a short time but then they transferred me to something connected with the information… what's it called…Ministry of Information, yes. And but this was in Brook Street, an American office, where I did very dull work, and at the same time I gave some, continued with adult education at the YMCA and Red Cross, and also to begin with some WEA I think. It's so remotely long ago. In Tottenham, I think I went to Tottenham for WEA. And to various places doing, giving talks on art and so on. And YMCA that was interesting, because there were lots of soldiers and Waafs, women soldiers. It was fun to draw them, they loved it, having a glass of beer or ten mugs of tea or something like that. Anyway, so I kept myself above water, scantily, in London, even after the magnificent few weeks, months with the American forces in Wardour Street first, and then near Grosvenor Square and then I began to venture out into trying to find a job to do with my drawing, you see, and so eventually that happened but that was quite a while after, that was in forty-… no not that long after really, autumn of '46 I had my first job for the *Radio Times*, drawing Constant Lambert at the Maida Vale Studios in London, the BBC Studios, yes.

BL: Where did you stay in London, when you moved to London?

MC: I stayed, oh yes, I stayed first of all at Adelaide Road, that was near Swiss Cottage in a terrible room. I didn't find it so depressing, it was just so small and it was joyless and lightless and I remember feeling acutely embarrassed. My father came to see me from Oxford in my room and I felt so embarrassed that I lived in that ghastly place which was tolerable because some friends from the Slade had moved into the garret next door, it was really hardly a garret, it was just a sort of narrow, like

a sort of biggish cupboard. But the couple had moved in next to me, so it felt rather like Oxford days, in a way. You know. And yet when spring came, that was '46, that's right, I could not stay there any longer, it was too dreadful. I looked on to a blank wall. I know there are worse things and Rosa Luxemburg has written very well about looking at brick walls from her prison but so I jumped into the first bus that went to Hampstead Heath, and walked up the hill, and found a room in, opposite the Heath, opposite a wonderful big willow tree, and that's in Christchurch Hill, Hampstead. That's where I found lodgings and from then onwards I lived in that part of Hampstead, which I much preferred to the Adelaide Road. The house has been torn down meanwhile.

Tape 3: 26 minutes 7 seconds

It was really miserable, when spring came round. It wasn't right, somehow. So I was very lucky to find that room opposite the huge willow tree on Hampstead Heath. But it was icy cold when winter came because it was facing north-east and there was this bitterly cold winter and nobody had coal So it was marvellous, the stepson of the Minister of Fuel at the time, the stepson asked me to tea. And I thought, wonderful, I'll be very warm there. But this was of course not so, because the minister was an honest man and had not burgled any coal for himself. It was an icy big house where I had tea with this young man whom I hardly knew. He was a friend of a friend. And that was the house up the road from me, where Gaitskell lived. In fact it was Gaitskell's stepson.

BL: And then you got the job with the *Radio Times*?

MC: Well it wasn't a job, no. I had a very precarious but happy existence being what's called freelance and you're at the mercy of whoever fancies to have you draw this or that person or event. But I was very lucky. I was terribly lucky because first of all in the instance of this *Radio Times* art editor, who had imagination. Because very few people could have conceived of something that suited me more than this man, when he asked me to draw somebody, actually the person rather than design something from photographs. You know he was really a wonderfully imaginative man when I think back, I didn't realise it at the time, of course one doesn't but then, what was I thinking of, the other things, yes. A friend of a friend who'd been a Japanese prisoner of war, a man called John Coast, couldn't really be happy in England without seeing South-East Asian dancers, especially Javanese dancers. He was so engrossed with Asia, that part of Asia and had seen dancers there, of course, that he called over a troupe of Balinese dancers from Holland. Students they were actually, but to me it was a new world. And he said to me, 'Oh come and draw.' And after having drawn there in the wings and in the audience whenever there was a vacant seat he said 'You come, you're welcome.' And then he said 'Why don't you go to the *Tatler* and show them these drawings, because they might be interested.' And I said 'What – the *Tatler*? It was a very odd paper for somebody like myself. It was fashionable, it showed people at great festivities in ball gowns and it was totally outside my world.

Tape 3: 29 minutes 52 seconds

The *Tatler* and somebody called Richard Buckle who edits a little magazine called *Ballet*, and the *Tatler* did indeed publish my drawings of the dancers, sketches and

what was funny was that Dickie Buckle, the editor of *Ballet*, not only published them but then asked me to do Negro dancers and Spanish dancers. And I really therefore did an enormous amount of drawing in theatres and, apart from the musicians, I did always. So it went on, one thing led to another but it was a great deal of luck but for John Coast I suppose I would have never thought of showing these drawings to anybody, certainly not to *Ballet* because I'm not very much into ballet, so the very title of the magazine might have put me off. But dance, yes. So it was very odd. Everything sort of linking up.

BL: So were the portraits and movement, were these sort of themes you were naturally drawn to?

MC: Yes I think that's it, you've absolutely got it. I think I've always …, my cousin who is in South Africa, Agnes, she always says, she's much older than I and she says 'Oh well, you always did people running around and loved doing things in movement.' And it's true. I probably did even as a child. I don't know where that stems from. I'm a terribly bad dancer. A psychologist might call it compensation or something. But I used to be very sort of sportively interested, or active, not particularly good but very enthusiastic.

BL: So your portraits also, you did portraits when people are in movement, rather than sitting still?

Tape 3: 32 minutes 11 seconds

MC: Do you know, yes, on the whole I loved to do that. When people don't notice that I'm drawing them, that's the best. Because when they're conscious then something, not only are they conscious, I'm also self-conscious. But a great exception was Barbara Hepworth, who sat still for me after I'd drawn her at work. She was marvellous. She said 'When I come back to London shall I tell you where I'm staying and maybe you'd like to do something else.' I said yes. And when she sat still instead of sculpting, which I found fascinating of course, to draw, I've never known anybody who was more wonderful to draw statically than Barbara Hepworth. Why? I think she has such an inner life that when she was sitting she was not in the least bit conscious of sitting still, she was like a spirit going inside, you know, if that's not a contradiction in terms. It was marvellous. I recently happened to meet her daughter at a memorial and she confirmed this, that her mother was …, but it's very rare this, that people are sitting still and still themselves. And remain themselves, I mean.

BL: What years are we talking about, you working for the *Radio Times*?

MC: Oh I started in '46 and then it eventually ended on a sort of very flat note when I was asked to do illustrations an inch wide to be reproduced an inch wide with two and a quarter, two and an eighth high or something and although I did that I didn't cherish it.

BL: And in the meantime your parents were still in Oxford? Did they stay in Oxford?

MC: No, no they actually left because my father wanted to fight for his rights in Germany. He then died there. He died in '51.

BL: So what happened? Your parents went back to Germany after the war?

MC: Yes, my mother lived there for quite a long time. In fact she had sort of dual existence in the latter part of her life, partly there and partly here.

BL: So what was it like for them, to go back to? Did they go back to Düsseldorf?

Tape 3: 35 minutes 12 seconds

MC: Yes. I cannot answer this because I was not there, because I only went when my father had fallen ill. So I can only imagine that it must have, they had still friends there. Certain faithful friends, anti-Nazi friends and that of course didn't hardly play…, it came into play, or existence, because shortly after my father had gone back he was diagnosed as having leukaemia and I went to see him and he looked wonderful because there was a new treatment, and then almost immediately after he went back to hospital for a week and died there. And so I can't really tell you because then my mother had to stay on for various important reasons and she managed miraculously to create a life on her own, however difficult it was, with new friends and some few old friends and stayed there for quite a long time, and always visiting of course, either London or New York, Washington, where my brother lived.

BL: So what was it like for you to go back to Düsseldorf?

MC: Well shortly after the war my brother was dishing out Marshall Aid in Vienna, for the Americans and so he collected me in Holland to take me back to Vienna for a stay, and that was in '48, must have been, yes. And on the way I went quickly to say hello to my friends in Düsseldorf, one or two of them, and it was in a terrible state. The ruins were extraordinary, to see them in the flesh, I mean, and Cologne, was still terrible. Was it '47 or '48, can't remember. No. And so it was extraordinary, extraordinary to be back in that country so changed, the towns, but I didn't know the towns very well, I knew mainly the landscape, which was the same and moved me very much to be back. But then, in '49, the new German government came on and then I spent some considerable time in Germany because the Americans asked me to draw the new German government, Adenauer and Heuss, and all the ministers and the opposition and the High Commission. And the whole thing was very sudden and I didn't think that it was impossible, it was foolish but lucky, lucky and foolish. That's not unnatural, the two together. Lucky and foolish.

Tape 3: 38 minutes 53 seconds

Because I went there, for four days to Bonn and was to lodge there, and I just drew the whole crew, you know, like this, and then had to go to Munich to the editors and deliver what I'd done. But this is not the answer to your question. The answer to your question is that then it was that time being by the Rhine and hearing Rhenisch, which is extremely strong in Bonn, I've got sort of extraordinary *Heimweh*, it just overcame me, the roots took over and I thought, wouldn't it be possible to go back? And one of the people I met there was a really wonderful man called Carlo Schmidt. Have you heard of Carlo Schmidt? Well Carlo Schmidt was a historian, had been a history professor and he was half French and half German and was the head of the Social

Democrats I think, at that time. That's why I drew him and he created the party for me and read to all of us his translations of Baudelaire into German. I thought gosh, he didn't say what he was reading and afterwards I said to him 'What a marvellous poet, who wrote all this?' And he said 'It's Baudelaire.' I said, 'But not in German.' He said 'I translated it.' It was marvellous. Anyway, to come back to the point, he said 'Why don't you come back and help to rebuild Germany?' But by that time I'd met my husband, Hans Keller, and I don't think he would ever have wanted to go back either to Vienna or to Germany. Certainly not to Germany. To Vienna it was even more impossible because I think he was deeply, deeply scarred, as most people were, but he more deeply than most I think, by the advent of '38 and the Nazism of the Austrians. So he would not go. And I couldn't possibly. I don't know what he meant by helping rebuild Germany anyway because what could I do? But subsequently when my parents had gone there and I went to see my father there, and my mother, later on, I reformed old friendships and it, it is a problem, you know, and it wasn't much of a problem for a long time but finally I think, the older one gets, the more conscious one becomes of this duality of where is home. Is it England, and especially Hampstead, or does it lie on the banks of the Rhine? Everything is so very tangible, so very close within one. But I think in one or another way, most people have to have that kind of duality in them, wherever it is, because most people don't stay in their …, very few people stay in their birthplace or childhood surroundings.

Tape 3: 42 minutes 46 seconds

However in this case it is of course complicated by the fact of Nazism, and I think that it would have been very, very hard to go back and not to suspect every other person you meet, new person you meet, of what they might have, what part they might have played under the Nazis. And that is an uncomfortable way to live. And so I think that well, there is no solution because one might have gone back and gone back to England for long visits, and seen one's English friends. I don't know. But this way it was destined to become very much a second home, England.

BL: Tell me about your time with Hans Keller.

MC: Well, that was to do with those papers, actually. Oh yes, I didn't say about that. Johnny Heartfield. Now he was a marvellous anti-Nazi artist, as most art students know nowadays, even in England, and I had met him, unfortunately, only after the war, in '46 and he left for East Germany in 1950. But he was terribly friendly and helpful to me, because he wanted me to have a job drawing, got me to do a book cover, here and there, and then he said, there is a new quarterly magazine, I think it was Jewish actually, pretty sure, very left-wing, and he said, well if you go to the East End and do some drawings, I'm sure they would publish it. So I went off to see this man, Mr Sontag, and he published two or three pages, he gave me illustrations to do, I got paid about a guinea a time, if that, and so it helped one's life, it was very much cheaper in those days and one could live on very little and was happy to do so, actually. So one day, I heard there was this Edinburgh Festival and I thought I can't possibly stay away. This was in '47. September '47. And I thought, what can I do? And I thought, well, I'll go to all sorts of magazines and papers I'd been working for or with, whether they want some drawings of Edinburgh, musicians in Edinburgh. Because I didn't want Bruno Walter to meet the Vienna Philharmonic, for the first time after the war, playing Mahler's *Song of the Earth,* without being there. I mean it

was just a sort of incredible longing I had to be there, to hear it and because of having admired it on records all during the latter part of the war, in Oxford. So I asked whether there was any possibility of them giving me a sort of little note so that I could get a press ticket. I couldn't possibly have afforded to go into the opera or to a concert. So he said 'Well we can't do that but you ask our music critic, perhaps he might help you.' I said, 'You've got a music critic?' He said 'Yes, yes, have you got a phone number?'

Tape 3: 46 minutes 40 seconds

And I didn't have a phone number in my old digs opposite the willow tree but I had that moment begun to move into a little studio round the corner which had a telephone. I had no telephone before. And there the next morning, punctually at nine I was there, and punctually as ever, was a chap at the other end and he said 'Can we meet?' And then we met outside Goodge Street underground station. I was on my way to Mr Sontag to deliver some illustration and I said 'You'll recognise me, I'm exceptionally small, and I've got a big portfolio with me. You can't miss me.' And I saw Hans, for the first time. And it had been a very hot summer and he was very brown. And had these wonderful eyes. And I kept on thinking, he's got a turban on his head. I thought he was a Sikh, you know, an Indian. I'd done a lot of dancers, meanwhile. Then we went to a restaurant, and that was the first time we met. And then I delivered my portfolio to Mr Sontag, I mean my drawing in the portfolio, and then he asked me to the Café Royal, where I'd never been, in Piccadilly and he told me that Oscar Wilde had been there, and then he marched me back to Oxford Circus where I wanted to take the bus to Hampstead, and because I'd tea to go to somewhere and on the way we met, coming out of the George, which is a pub near the BBC, we met somebody who lifted his hat to me, and Hans said 'Do you realise who that is?' And I said 'Of course, that's Constant Lambert.' And he said 'Do you know him?' And I said 'Yes, because I've drawn him a few months ago.' Yes it was in '46, he happened to recognise me. Wasn't that extraordinary? That was the first time we met. And the rest is history.

BL: So that was in 1947?

MC: Yes, it must have been in 1947, early in September, I think, no, end of August, something like that.

BL: And did you go to Edinburgh?

Tape 3: 49 minutes 24 seconds

MC: Yes I did, because meanwhile I had a friend who said his parents lived there and could put me up. A friend from Oxford. But he was going to tell his mother that I'd come but she didn't expect me at all because he'd forgotten to tell her. And the house was full with all these people, her relatives who'd come to the festival, but she was wonderful person and said 'Oh, we'll find you a bed tonight' and then I went to the YWCA and that was my first visit to Edinburgh. And eventually I met Hans and he got me into the *Song of the Earth*, you see. We did go together. And meanwhile I drew Bruno Walter and it was Kathleen Ferrier, was she singing? Yes, she was singing. And Patzak. There was Patzak.

BL: So did you start working together with Hans?

MC: Well, yes, I suppose, yes, yes, in 1950 he was asked to go to the Film Music Festival, the *Maggio Musicale* in Florence and I thought oh gosh, it would be wonderful to have an excuse to go to Florence. So I got a commission with illustrators, it was a rather awful, well not so awful but fairly awful illustrated magazine, and so I did lots of drawings. I was staying for five weeks, it was marvellous. And Hans was only there for a few days at the film music thing, and he wrote the text. And by this time of course, we were living in the studio, with the telephone and one tap of cold water and it was really very wonderful, simple life. Not so simple as regards the arts because we went to lots of concerts and knew a lot of interesting folk and it was very, very wonderful really.

BL: When did Hans come to …, when had he come to England?

MC: He had come in '38, after the Anschluss he was incarcerated for a week, and then managed …, he was very lucky, we were all very lucky, in that respect because he had a much older sister, half-sister, who had married a wonderful Englishman, Roy Freney. And Roy Freney, they lived in South London, and he, Hans' mother happened to stay with them at the time, Marnie's mother and Roy Freney arranged for not only Hans to have an affidavit, or whatever, isn't that what it's called, or a visum, a possibility of coming in, but he saved all together something like 25 people from Vienna, a lot of them relatives or close friends. And if it hadn't been for him they would have stayed. They would have had to stay and probably would have died.

Tape 3: 53 minutes 1 second

So after he was freed from his prison, which he has described in what is it called, *Time of my Life*, it was a radio programme and he was asked to speak. It was on, was it Radio Three, maybe Radio Two, Radio Four, a long time ago, I think on the Third Programme, and he did that and some people think that was the only thing in his life, he's done, or rather they only know that and it was deeply moving, most impressive. He could speak much more economically than I can, I'm afraid, and could summarise things. He had the clearest brain and on top of it, the sensitivity that makes the brain tolerable, I suppose.

BL: And where had he spent the wartime?

MC: He had spent it partly in London and party with his evacuated sister who had gone with the children to the Lake District. And his mother also was there. His mother in fact had been accommodated in a house next to his sister and her husband. When that house became vacant they bought that little house. Which is an interesting place because on the ground of this Victorian very modest little terraced house, in Victorian or early Victorian times, there was a house there in which Ruskin lived. That's in Herne Hill in South London. And before Ruskin, that in itself is interesting enough, but before Ruskin in the 18th, in around the early, very early 19th century, before Mozart died, his favourite soprano lived there. The first Susanna. Now I know her name but at the moment it escapes me, as so much else. But she was the first Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* and Mozart loved this English singer and she lived in that

house, then Ruskin, then it was torn down or whatever. So Hans lived partly in London in that house and partly in the Lake District. Ah yes, there was the Adler Quartet, and he played in the quartet and I've got a friend who heard him there. And his mother, no she didn't play the cello in the quartet, only later, in London. But there were two other players in the Adler quartet and they toured around the Lake District, I don't know where else, and oh, I didn't know Hans then but old Dr Adler was the teacher Hans loved. He had been playing music in his house in Vienna when he was a child, from childhood onwards and he was a marvellous, marvellous musician, Oskar Adler, and skin doctor and philosopher and an astronomer, yes.

BL: Which instrument did Hans play?

Tape 3: 56 minutes 48 seconds

MC: He played, well what he thought was a dual duty, or rather it was one, the violin and the viola because he loved playing the viola in the quartet and Oskar Adler played the first fiddle.

BL: Was it important for you that Hans came from a refugee background as well?

MC: That's a very good question because I think the refugee background was perhaps less important than the German. There was this understanding of one's native language is meaningful, has a very deep meaning I think to one's, don't you think? I must say that was, also I must say I had fallen in love not with the Rhenish accent so much, that came later that I really liked that very much but in Oxford with Egon Wellesz and his daughter Liesl and all sorts of other people I knew who were Viennese, from Vienna. I had quite fallen in love with this exotic way of speaking German with a Viennese accent, rather than Rhenish. It drove my poor mother mad, the way I'd switched over from Rhenish to Viennese according to who was where, because she didn't like me to speak Viennese because it was really quite strange to her. Apart from when Hans spoke, it was all right. But yes I think that was, you perhaps meant the fellow feeling of shared destinies in some way or another, that perhaps, but one isn't conscious of that. At least, I was not. But the language certainly. And the main thing that struck me when I saw him was his face, and I thought ah! If only I could draw that man. You know, that was my one thought. And later on of course I could, I mean I did.

BL: We have to stop there again because we have to change tapes.

MC: There's another tape.

TAPE 4

BL: This is Tape Four. We're conducting the second part of our interview with Milein Cosman on the 14th April 2005. Milein, in the last bit of interview we discussed the meeting with Hans Keller, and you were telling us that you wanted to draw his face. And maybe you can tell us a bit more about your time with Hans?

MC: Oh, yes, it was a fair time. Not enough of course, there never is enough time. It lasted 38 years, our living together and what shall I say, well certainly I kept on

drawing him because he was working so much then at home so what else could I do? Only at the very end when he was enormously, horribly ill, he sat for me once. That was extraordinary. It was in the last summer of his life, before he died in November '85 and he was terribly proud of this rather unhappy looking man. He was not at all unhappy. He was one of the most radiantly positive people I have ever come across. And so, although he was ill and couldn't really keep his head up because it was one of these terrible degenerative diseases, motor neurone he died of, he was so pleased with the picture. And that's the first time really he said 'Oh have you shown it to whoever came into the house?' And I was amazed, because that was the first time he really took stock of what I'd been doing for so long, and before that he once told me how horrible it was in the house because wherever he looked there was a picture of him somewhere, either a drawing or a painting. No, he had a marvellous head, what was in it was probably important to a lot of…, To me it was also important, what an extraordinary head he had. At school he had been called King Alfonso of Spain because it was Spanish-looking, the art of that period, sort of El-Greco-ish face, and what shall I say, well he also looked very much a Giacometti and the combination of all this was very intriguing. And of course, he was a wonderful person to talk to, although I was a bit lost on him as regards my knowledge of music, it is very much confined to loving music and profound enjoyment of it but it's not tinged with much technical, or hardly any technical knowledge, even though I sang in the choir, in the Bach choir in Oxford.

Tape 4: 3 minutes 42 seconds

So I don't know, I went to endless concerts, of course, wonderful things and also rather tedious. Everything that was new when he eventually had joined the BBC and had all sort of functions there, different ones. He, the last of his field there, specific field was new music. So he went to endless new music concerts, in the Park Lane Group, in the Purcell Room, wherever, and abroad to music festivals, ISCN, International Society of New Music. So I really met an enormous amount of musicians. And not unnaturally I fell to drawing a lot of them, either in Dartington at the summer school of music or Gilbert Biberian's school of music, is it in Dorset or Wiltshire? That was a specifically guitar place, which Gilbert persuaded Hans to come and teach although Hans was not very keen on the guitar. So one went to all sorts of places and eventually to EBU meetings, that was the European Broadcasting Union, where Hans was, well the BBC whatever. I don't know what these official things are called. I can't remember all that. Anyway we went to Ireland and we went to Yugoslavia, to Dubrovnik, and to Finland, that was the last year before here, you know one retires at the age of 60 punctually at the BBC, as in the civil service. And so just before that we went to first of all, Dubrovnik, and from Dubrovnik straight to Finland. And all these things of course were very intriguing, as you can imagine, landscapes and the people and beaches and woods and red squirrels in Finland and wonderful revelation through the museum in Helsinki of Finnish artists. Yes.

BL: What was Hans' official position at the BBC?

MC: He started off as Music Talks producer and that didn't last, well it lasted, I don't remember, whether a year or two, and then he became in charge of Chamber Music which was right up his street of course, because Ben Britten once said that there's nobody in the world who knows more about chamber music than Hans Keller. And I

think that was a statement that, Hans was not vain, and he did not care that much about people's opinion but that I think must have pleased him, it certainly pleased me, and he of course knew enormously from the inside, from having played from his young years on, he played quartet at home and so that was, that lasted for a few years and then he got, became in charge of Provincial, I mean Northern Music, and then finally it was New Music.

Tape 4: 7 minutes 34 seconds

So there were, I remember all those four categories. Maybe there was a fifth, I don't remember. But, anyway I think he enormously enjoyed it. He enjoyed everything, actually. He enjoyed working madly and he enjoyed going to football and he was a great skier and loved going skiing until of course his growing illness prevented him from doing that. But he ignored the illness for years and years. In fact it struck him the same year when of course Stephen, that scientist…

BL: Hawking.

MC: Hawking. That's right. Stephen Hawking was struck in '63 and I think Hans was struck in '63.

BL: [referring to Milein's hand]. Can you give me the tissue because it's…

MC: A tissue?

BL: Yes, whatever you have in your hand, can I have it.

MC: Oh.

BL: Thank you very much.

MC: Oh sorry I didn't know that you went that far down. I'm so sorry, I've mucked it up.

BL: Yes. So it was the same year when Stephen Hawking …?

MC: Yes except Stephen Hawking was very young when it happened to him. So then we had to stop going skiing, unfortunately. But that wasn't the worst thing about it. But he ignored it, totally and went on as though nothing had happened. And he was right in not going to see a doctor for years and years because nothing could have been done, nothing has been found to help this particular illness. So in holidays the BBC, you only get 3 weeks holiday, something like that, part of the holidays we always took going to the Summer School of Music down in Dartington, which William Glock ran, had invented. That was absolutely wonderful. And there again, of course, one was surrounded by musicians, Yehudi Menuhin was there and first of all, one of my first years there, the Amadeus Quartet, and the young Lindsay Quartet, and the young Chilingirian, which Hans coached in Dartington and the Dartington Quartet he coached. And then he gave of course wonderful talks there and there were all sorts of composers, Theo Musgrave and South African and very, very nice gatherings on the lawn. It was surrounded by these medieval buildings in this wonderful honey-

coloured stone, honey and grey, and it was just paradisical and every organist, all of us who had been there, who had met there, and most of our friends came from those meetings in Dartington.

Tape 4: 11 minutes 12 seconds

Because in London one never has much time, whereas in Dartington one met at breakfast and lunch and dinner and at concerts and master classes and talks and so it was a whole, wonderful bouquet of friends one retained year after year, meeting them again and no August passes without me feeling a tremendous yearning for Dartington, where I hated the climate actually, because it's very heavy and you can never recoup enough sleep, it's that heavy. But it's fantastic, this old place, enormous woods and fields and ancient trees and it's indescribably idyllic.

BL: So did you draw throughout? I mean, whenever you went somewhere, you had your…

MC: Yes I did. Actually it's quite true. I must confess, I even drew a lot whilst Hans spoke in his classes and in Dartington, the audience and on the lawn, people playing chess under the big tree and having little serenades and wherever. But perhaps I always found it very daunting in Dartington to draw, because I always felt out on a limb because everybody else was talking about music in the most obscure of ways, partly, and here I was, like a sort of foreign body in a herd of musical cattle, you know. Strange and perhaps, well I've done some, quite a lot of sketchbooks, just sort of Dartington, Dartington and it was however perhaps not the most wonderful drawings I've done there. I think maybe I've done them elsewhere, because I felt so strange there. So foreign, an exile.

BL: As a non-musician.

MC: Yes, as a non-musician, yes.

BL: Were there any other émigrés, emigrants, do you remember?

MC: Well, emigrants, if you call the three-quarters of the Amadeus Quartet emigrants, then certainly yes they were there. Ah yes, and the brother-in-law of Schoenberg came, a wonderful man who played chess a lot. Oh gosh, I should know his name.

Tape 4: 14 minutes 11 seconds

Names escape me at the moment, it's horrible. And then Stravinsky came once, he was an émigré of a kind, you might say, not really an émigré to England though and but I wasn't there that time. I remember the commotion, the excitement that there was when Stravinsky came because he had to have a special diet and Judy Sutherland, who's a wonderful woodwind player, married to David Drew, the great Brecht, no not Brecht, I mean, who is the composer, Weill expert, he wrote tomes about Weill. Well Judy had done a course in Cordon Bleu so she was roped in to do the cooking and yes, the Lindsays were surrounding the …, good gracious, I really am impossible. Yes, you asked me about exiles, émigrés. You know, it was so long after the actual exile, the exodus; it was so long after the exodus when we began to go there, round about

1960 or '59 at the earliest. By that time, one was apparently integrated I suppose. You didn't know an exile from anybody else, did you? Not much. Cornish was the name of Schoenberg's brother-in-law who played chess and wonderful chamber music, and there were Sandor Vegh, the Hungarian, you might call him an exile, also. I mean, the world is full of exiles isn't it?

BL: Maybe linked to that question, did you mix at all in London, in refugee circles, in émigré circles …

MC: I don't really accept the concept. I mean, one meets people, doesn't one. Of course there were some wonderful people I remember being great friends with like the painter, one of the most wonderful people ever, Jakob Bauernfreund he was called, then he called himself Bornfriend. He was from Slovakia and his wife was a German German who had studied philosophy and they met in Prague and so she was an exile from Germany, because for political reasons and he was an exile because he was political and above all, Jewish, a Slovak. They became great friends, especially Jakob. One of the wisest and dearest people I've ever come across, and a very fine painter. Now there was another friend who I met, Johnny Heartfield. Have I mentioned him before?

BL: No.

Tape 4: 17 minutes 39 seconds

MC: Well, him I met much earlier than Jakob. In fact I met him before I even met Hans. And that was through a communist exile I knew, who was the son of a man who was beheaded by the Nazis after the Reichstagsbrand, a man called Helmut Stücker, who later on became a historian in East Germany, Helmut did, but he spoke perfect English because he came here as a child and was brought up in Cambridge. And Helmut said to me 'I must meet Johnny Heartfield.' I was so ignorant that I had no idea who I was going to meet, but I thought, well I'll go. (Excuse me, I think I must drink a bit.) And he was a refugee in Highgate, he lived by that time in Highgate, having been given shelter before that in Hampstead. [coughs] (Sorry. It's the residue of my flu.) Well, yes, Johnny became a great friend but a short-term friend because he left for East Germany in 1950. He was a very strange, highly imaginative man. He did all these wonderful anti-Nazi and pacifist posters and who had assumed this English name when he was called up in the army in 1915 or thereabouts. He was very young. And when asked for his name, he said 'My name is John Heartfield.' And they said 'That's impossible, that's the name of the enemy.' And he said 'Whatever it is, it's my name.' And he was born Helmut Herzfeld, Herzfelde I think and the brother of Wieland Herzfelde who ran a tremendous workers' publishing house in Berlin. Both of them were very left-wing. And so they, he was certainly an exile I met and that was a tremendous enrichment of my life to have met Johnny and his second wife Tutti. And who else was there? Well, and then of course there was Helmut who became *impossibly* a historian later on, and Erich Fried there was, the poet, who was an exile from Vienna and quite a few, come to think. Oh, there was old Dr Adler, I loved him. He was the only teacher Hans acknowledged to have been his teacher and he was the one who played chamber music with Hans when Hans was a child in Vienna with his mother and, well, it was Oskar Adler had a wife who had once bumped into Brahms when she was 14 or so and ran in the street and bumped into the

tummy of an elderly, bearded man and I always remember this story that Mrs Adler told us.

Tape 4: 21 minutes 32 seconds

And she never got tired of repeating this story and I never got tired of hearing it. Somebody who had actually bumped into Brahms, who said, in Germany it's much better: '*Wohin so eilig kleines Fräulein?*' which in English is 'Where are you off to so hurriedly, little miss?' and she ran on and suddenly realised, this had been Brahms speaking. Can you imagine? Anyway, so exiles, yes, who else? So many. There was an art historian who exerted a certain influence called Kurt Bart, who came from Berlin and from Lake Constance alternatively, and yes, I'm searching, it's so long ago all this, but it was all so very important. And still is actually. I'm searching

BL: Did you have any contact with other émigré artists?

MC: Well…

BL: I mean artists…

MC: Johnny and Jakob and, Marie-Louise [von Motesiczky]. My great friend, my greatest friend, Marie Louise from [inaudible].Yes, I met her, I remember exactly in 1950, which is a little while ago. And it was at Jakob Bornfriend's, and through my dear cousin Ernst Goldschmidt from Brussels. And that's how I met Jakob in the first place. And he'd been a refugee. There was a Czech army here in England having escaped by foot from Belgium when the Nazis came. And where were we, oh yes, so at Jakob's I met Marie-Louise and I thought she was, at that time I thought she was quite sort of old, it turned out, later on I found out she was 46, which isn't old in my estimation nowadays, it's very young. It's all very relative in life. But soon after we became great, great friends and there of course I also met other refugees and she herself had come to England via Holland when Hitler marched into Vienna, and she was a wonderful painter and had been studying with Beckmann, who of course also was an exile … refugee, first in Holland and then in America and she was also great friends with Quappi who was Beckmann's second wife. And there of course I met Canetti who was a great friend of Marie-Louise's. In fact, that was also in 1950. I remember exactly how it was. I took them both, Marie-Louise and Canetti to meet Hans and Donald Mitchell in a coffee house called Boulevard, no it wasn't the Boulevard, it was another one, the first one off Hanover Square in the West End, where I made a Rendez-vous with Hans and Donald and that's how we met Canetti who was a sort of a byword for amusement, entertainment, gossip

Tape 4: 25 minutes 25 seconds

and a great deal of intelligence too, in Hampstead. So that was in 1950 we first met, when the first coffee houses began to appear, and the nostalgia of the Viennese for coffee houses found fulfilment at long last, up to a little point. It wasn't all that much like Viennese coffee houses but it was a kind of a particle regained.

BL: Which were where, those coffee houses?

MC: Well there was the Boulevard in Hampstead which still exists, no, it's called the Coffee Cup, yes it's called Coffee Cup, eventually there was the Boulevard in Wigmore Street but the little coffee house I was thinking of near Hanover Square was to us revelation, one met there, Hans even went as far as to Park Lane at one point, from Hampstead to have a coffee. But funnily enough we did not frequent the Cosmo. To go to Park Lane instead of the Cosmo seems to me odd but.

BL: One second I just have to move your…[moves microphone]

MC: [referring to the microphone] Was I wrong all the time?

BL: So you didn't go to the Cosmo?

MC: No, I mean I've been to the Cosmo once or twice in my life but not as a regular. If Hans had known about it but then he came from south London really so he wasn't in the run of, you see there was an enormous amount of refugeedom in Hampstead.

BL: Where did you live, most of the time?

MC: We?

BL: Yes.

MC: Oh well, just when I met Hans I had secured something I'd longed for, for years, that was a little ruin of a little house, it wasn't really a house, it was a stable, it had been a donkey stable at the turn of the century, almost bang on the Heath, in Willow Road. It was raining through the skylights but it was absolutely wonderful. It was the sort of thing I was used to from my student days in Oxford, when I had a very rainy studio too and a very primitive one. At least this one had a little loo. The Oxford one had a loo in the garden and so that was already progress but it had only one cold tap, where we lived in Hampstead and it was very, very basic but wonderful. Really wonderful, because in those days Hampstead was truly something like a little village and one could stand in the middle of a road and talk to friends and no harm would become you. There were no traffic …, I mean traffic lights were not even dreamt of. And even the Coffee Cup in those days had not been invented, there was no coffee house, there was no fashion shop at all. No shoe shop, no estate agent, much, yes there was one or two, I suppose. But there were two or three bakers and all that kind of thing that has completely and utterly changed over the years. But life in the studio was very nice because, you know, when peace had broken out it was so unbelievably wonderful to be alive in peace time.

Tape 4: 29 minutes 22 seconds

And what did one care about the niceties of food, if one had enough eggs to make an omelette, that was already a kind of luxury. One lived on a pittance. And the pittance was quite wonderful to enjoy. It's very strange how much people need nowadays, and how much is required to live even basically. In those days you might have a debt with a baker for fourpence ha'penny, for a loaf of bread because you'd run out of money. And all one wanted was to have one's freedom to work. And one got a lot of work done, actually, that way because there were so few distractions. We got our first

television, I remember, I got it because I had regular employment for nine weeks at ITV's schools broadcast. Have I mentioned that before?

BL: No.

MC: No, well I had been doing WEA lectures in and around Oxford and then in London for a little bit, but then a friend of mine was in the education department of the school's ITV, she said why don't you do something on drawing? So I did a course and, because I then had for the first time a fairly decent salary for nine weeks, I bought a television set. I thought I'd give it to Hans, who kept on looking through people's curtains, you know in order to look at the football in other people's houses when we went out in the evening for a beer or something, he would look through the curtains to see what the state of football was. So this I found really quite pathetic. So in '58 when I had that course of talks, this was a Christmas present and we had a little television set. And he just loved it, because he was really very crazy about football, as I may have mentioned boringly enough before.

BL: [fixes microphone]

MC: Am I wriggling so much? I should be quieter, I'm so sorry. Be honest. Don't…

BL: So when did you actually get married to Hans?

MC: Oh that was much later. I mean, the actual, are you talking about the ceremony?

BL: Yes.

MC: Oh that was, I forget really, that was in, '61 or something like that, yes. In the Hampstead Town Hall.

BL: Can you tell me a bit about the ceremony?

Tape 4: 32 minutes 30 seconds

MC: Well it wasn't much of ceremony except that Hans' sister came from South London, his half-sister and she had arranged a tea at their house down there, sort of high tea it was, and that was it, I think. And we also, on the way to South London we called in on William Glock, who was Hans' boss at the BBC, to introduce him to the new state of affairs and that was funny. He really was very pleased and congratulated us and that was it. But you know, what you do, it was a sort of nice feeling actually. The only thing I felt was: how do people manage to get married without having had breakfast before being married, having tried it out, I can't understand how it's possible. I said that to Hans, that people get married to a stranger as it were. I couldn't fathom that. So it seemed quite natural. I hadn't been very much for marriage before, actually. It was for all sorts of reasons, family reasons, I began to feel it was unnatural for my mother to have to explain who her daughter's boyfriend was, it seemed, it had become …, also, yes there were these people we met when skiing who kept on saying, why don't you get married? And I thought it was ridiculous to have these strangers poke into one's private affairs like that. Ah yes, the final straw was when I was in hospital, I was in a huge ward with so many very ill people around me, it was a very

sudden operation I needed, ah yes, I'd forgotten that one. There was a wonderful refugee doctor in Highgate called Otto Menasse, he was the landlord of Johnny Heartfield you see, and, oh yes and I've forgotten Freddy Uhlman as well, who lived in Hampstead of course. But Menasse came and said 'You must go at once to hospital'. It was five in the morning. By this time we'd moved to our little house in Willow Road just about, and so I went to hospital and in this ward they all sort of said, is that your fiancé, they asked. This is ridiculous, why should I have to tell strangers who Hans is, you know? It became a bore. And why not? I mean it never made any different really, except in status, and in passport, and then suddenly one was Mrs.

BL: Did you ever change your name?

Tape 4: 35 minutes 48 seconds

MC: Well I had to up to a point because I have two original names in my passport, German names, Emilie Else. I was never called that, even at school, at my first school in Düsseldorf. I was always called Milein, which my brother, my much older brother coined when he saw me in the cradle and so I had that and my so-called first maiden name, artist's name if you like, and then Keller and so I had to kind of curtail it somewhat and had to do it in my passport or else I could never get my mail in foreign parts. That was in '57, yes I remember I went to Greece, it was wonderful.

BL: You changed your name to Milein Keller? What did you change it to?

MC: Well I've got a dual name in my passport. Keller also known as Milein Cosman. Because that's my first name anyway, yes. Well it was too long, the whole thing wasn't it. And I never used the two E's, my first name, you know, before.

BL: By then where was your mother?

MC: My mother was in Germany for a while after the war, reluctantly, my father insisted on going to demand his rights and so she lived for a while in Düsseldorf, and latterly partly in Düsseldorf and partly in London.

BL: So she came to your wedding?

MC: No, she wasn't there, actually. I don't know where she was at the time. Well it wasn't, do you know, it was really not a very festive thing. Ah, I remember we had a post-wedding party with her in Düsseldorf that was tremendous because she was a great party giver, she loved it, I'm not at all like that. She was wonderful at organising celebrations and all that, and I'm really very bad at it. Living with Hans didn't make me any better, because he wasn't used to that very much from his own house and he disliked the intrusion into his writing or daily life. And so I'm very bad at giving dinner parties and celebrations of all kinds because he just adored spending for instance Easter listening to either the Matthew Passion or the John Passion or Parsifal on the radio but you know otherwise he ignored festivals. But liked them to give him the leisure to write non-stop, or perhaps at Christmas time sometimes there were soccer matches, so we'd go to football. It's very strange, isn't it?

Tape 4: 39 minutes 17 seconds

Oh yes, there was another friend of ours, an exile, George Stroh, a psychoanalyst and he was also very much into sport and especially into football so we used to go to soccer matches with George and his wife Katrin and then got home and played foursome at ping-pong. I was the worst, of the four but it was great fun. And then they watched the match all over again on television, which of course by that time we had still the same old television that I first got and it was very, very odd Saturdays...

BL: You said so you did the post-wedding celebration in Düsseldorf. Was your mother quite settled in Düsseldorf?

MC: Well it was very difficult for her to find her feet. She hadn't wanted to go back. My father died shortly afterwards there in Düsseldorf and she found some old friends there. Yes, they had been hidden by these wonderful friends of theirs and after the famous night my father saw the light and they then left, I think I've mentioned that before.

BL: Yes

MC: So she found quite a wonderful circle of some old friends and made new friends. And of course she yearned for England and she came very often over and also to my brother in America. She enjoyed my brother's children, a very good relationship with them.

BL: I'm asking because she must have been one of the few Jews in Düsseldorf who came back after the war.

MC: Yes, strangely enough, yes that is quite true. In Düsseldorf itself she didn't … but she knew a friend in Cologne who had gone back and yes, it must have been very, very difficult, I must think.

BL: But you visited? Did you visit her quite often?

MC: Oh yes, yes. I must say, it was strange, this duality you know, what is home? I mean Peter Grimes sings 'Home, where is home?' and I can only say what is home. It's a sort of concept in one's mind, isn't it, despite everything that's happened. You cannot get out of your various roots, I call them various roots.

BL: What's home for you?

Tape 4: 42 minutes 33 seconds

MC: Well home for me is Hampstead and the Heath and at the same time, always, always the Rhine and the meadows on the Rhine, and the sky and I must say that is right in the pit of one's stomach, if you like, or soul. Stomach and soul, funny, perhaps they're the same thing, aren't they? Don't know. Yes, I think that is deep, there is a sort of yearning for that landscape, which I show, I think, well if I haven't lost it now, I won't ever lose it will I?

BL: Especially for you as a painter it's an important…

MC: Yes I love wide skies, yes. But on the other hand I'm infinitely more tuned to doing people and faces. I yearn for Indonesian faces and I love being in Nepal and being in Greece and Scotland is wonderful. But one's earliest childhood impressions, I think, are so deeply rooted that no amount of racism or politics can eradicate them.

BL: How would you describe yourself in terms of your identity today?

MC: Oh, I've always liked to think of myself for years and years as a European. I certainly don't feel much affinity with the United States but the older I get, the more I realise how England has shaped me too, and life as a student in England and life after the war with Hans in England. Yes, I mean, I think I find it very difficult to diagnose my identity. Is that rare? I think most people find it probably difficult, who have got sort of two roots system, as I have, in a way. I had a terrible experience when I had an exhibition in Düsseldorf and I found it also wonderful. This is what, it must be now about 15 years ago or something and I was at the airport in Düsseldorf and there was an announcement and it said 'Herr Müllernsieben is wanted on the telephone' and I suddenly thought, where, in what airport, do I hear someone called, who is presumably the cousin or brother of somebody I was at school with? Because we had somebody in my class called Müllernsieben. And at this very moment somebody embraces me, and it was this particular woman who had once had been a young girl in my class, Margaret Müllernsieben, I think. And I was so pleased and I thought, oh home, this is home, so small, this airport, I mean not all that small but still, in those days it was smaller.

Tape 4: 46 minutes 31 seconds

And she started to talk to me, and said 'How wonderful to see you again.' She had been to my exhibition in the Stadtmuseum in Düsseldorf so it wasn't the first time I re-met her but we had never been particularly close. And she said 'Do you know, do you remember so-and-so?' and she mentioned a terrible girl in my form who was terribly plain but that wasn't her fault, yes perhaps it was. She also was a tremendous Nazi, BDM girl, sort of Hitler youth girl and she was about twice as tall as I, which is fairly easy and I once sort of vanquished her and humiliated her, well, I was very wild then, I sort of put her down on the floor of the classroom, and she hated me of course for that reason, because she was humiliated. So she said 'Do you remember her?' and I said yes. 'Oh she had such a terrible time, you know, her father was an SS man' and she started to talk and I suddenly felt, this is terrible, where am I, I must go catch my plane as soon as possible, back to home, back to England. And when I got back to England, I thought about this on the way. And Hans was no longer there to greet me at the airport, as he used to and there was a couple, somebody I didn't know all that well, Jeremy Adler was there with his wife and when they greeted me, I mean, he is a refugee, from Prague I suppose, and I thought no this is home. I had this feeling. But you see, how do you account, how can you say what is your home? Everything is so mixed up with your very innards and I've never been psychoanalysed. I don't know what would come out but what I feel is very much a duality. And I was very tempted to. I love my native language and the other day I saw *Don Carlos,* by Schiller, and then I feel terribly German, you know, when I see it, although it was in English. Very good translation too. But well I suppose I'm divided, why not?

BL: Would you describe yourself as British?

Tape 4: 49 minutes 30 seconds

MC: Oh no. I don't think so. I think I'm terribly... The longer I live, the more I realise that my roots are much more… If I were a painter I would hope to have been influenced by Turner as indeed Strindberg was. You know Strindberg was a painter and came to England once and was madly influenced by Turner and turned himself into a colourist and marvellous …, tried to paint the air. Well, but graphically I think I feel very much more influenced by the Continentals: Dutch and Belgians and German artists. And Austrian, I suppose.

BL: How were you described for example at the exhibition in Düsseldorf? What did they say? Do you remember?

MC: Well they didn't say very much. All they did was to do produce a catalogue where they asked two people wrote, I think, one was Gombrich and, oh yes, I forgot about Gombrich as being one of the most wonderful people I've ever met. And of course I met him over this WEA course I gave for ITV. Did I mention him before?

BL: No.

MC: No? Well they wanted to get, they needed an advisor, because you see I'm not an academic, and since I made this series of talks on drawing which pulled in every aspect of drawing, war and peace and portraiture and education in academies versus modern approach and all that kind of thing. They said 'We need to ask somebody of repute to vet your scheme,' which I understood of course, before you're let loose on the schools of Britain, so they said 'We want to get Sir Kenneth, then he was only Sir Kenneth Clark, from the National Gallery and I had just briefly had a dip into a Gombrich book, I'd read a few articles, I said 'Couldn't you get somebody called Gombrich?' He wasn't famous yet at all. Certainly not generally speaking. And so he came into the office to meet and he vetted it and from the moment I saw him and I had a few sentences of his wonderful, wonderful wisdom I am patriotic perhaps more than anything else for Gombrich and people like him.

Tape 4: 52 minutes 43 seconds

People who don't only know a lot but have such imagination with it and humanity. And he said 'Yes, fine, this is fine,' but the biggest compliment I ever had in my life was when years later he came to write, (he didn't write for Düsseldorf, did he?) No, he wrote for another exhibition of mine in London, also and he came to look at my stuff and he said, 'You know, I once gave a talk for ITV,' he said, 'for schools,' so I said 'Excuse me, but that was me. And you vetted it.' And he said 'Yes, I'd mixed it up' and I thought this was the most glorious moment of my life, this mistake on the part of Gombrich. Yes, he was a wonderful man. By that time I suppose he was a bit well, yes he was older than I am now, I don't know, I don't remember.

BL: In a way he was sort of similar to Hans in the sense in that he had as much influence maybe in the art sphere as Hans had maybe in music?

MC: Oh, I mean Gombrich had enormous influence in the world, hadn't he? And Hans had a great influence not only in this country. He gave talks for Nordwestdeutsche Rundfunk on music and he was even asked to Cologne to talk about football and but you know, that's sort of sideline, I would say. No, I really can't measure. Certainly Hans had a tremendous contribution to the music world and the intellectual world of England but Gombrich's is infinitely, I would say, more worldwide. Actually, what did I want to say, Hans, in this volume, I don't know what things are called, but people who shaped our century, I'm sure Gombrich is in it too but it hasn't come out yet, but it will, I think before the end of the year, a friend tells me, who has written about him.

BL: Do you feel, because I know that there is this debate that Hans as an émigré in the BBC had it easier, difficult, or…?

Tape 4: 55 minutes 30 seconds

MC: Oh I don't think as an émigré he would have had it difficult as an émigré. Why? There were lots of other people there who were émigrés. Yes, I wouldn't say that. Wherever Hans would have worked he would have been difficult. But not because he was an émigré or this or that, just because he was Hans. Because the one thing about Hans would be, I think, that it would have been wonderful to have him as a boss but not so wonderful to have him if you were the boss, because he questioned so much and he would never … He was the most fearless of men, he would, I think if he had animosity, which I'm sure he had in certain quarters of the BBC, it was not decided or not because he was an émigré, it was because he loved controversy, he loved to confront people with his ideas and with what he would call the truth, which he thought was the truth. And he was fearless. And that is never easy for anybody in a corporation to be like that but I loved him partly because all the people from the doorman upwards, from the liftman and his secretaries, they all loved him. But the bosses were ambivalent or very much for him or terribly against him. I mean, he didn't have many bosses but there were a few who … He wasn't personal, nothing was personal with him, it was always what he believed in that he defended and propagated fearlessly. In music, in life and in everything.

BL: Milein, we have to stop, we have to change tapes.

MC: Oh have you? I see, you want to change tapes? You want even more? Haven't you had enough?

TAPE 5

BL: This is Tape Five and we're conducting an interview with Milein Cosman. Milein, maybe we can talk about the development of your art, in the last, I don't know, twenty, thirty years. Do you see different styles of different periods or have your themes changed, or how would you…?

MC: It is a rather good question and I'm hard put to answer it properly. For one thing I think that in a certain sense I stood not so still but certainly with my predilections what I like to do. All my life I've been interested in humans, in the human face, in

movement and animals, also, and above all, things that move, including the sky and clouds, trees. I like the mobility partly because I like to catch things on the wing, and in that way I don't think I've changed very much. What has ultimately, I'm afraid, changed me willy-nilly is when about, it's now about 10, 11, 12 years ago I had a terrible thing happen to me and I became half-blind. So now I work of course differently and in some curious way – I'm not glad it happened because it throws me up, it makes my reading practically impossible – but drawing, I think it has changed and possibly made me more aware of economy in drawing and because I have to summarise willy-nilly. I don't know why I keep on saying willy-nilly, it's a silly phrase but I don't know how it is that suddenly I'm beginning to, late in life, I begin to see things a little differently from before, because of my disability. It's very strange. I cannot describe it because on the whole, all the processes I engage in seem to me to always be unconscious. So it's very difficult for me to describe anything very succinctly because very often where I've worked in a kind of trance anyway, and my predicament with the eyes now means that I have to partly live and work in a void, a visual void. So that means that one changes. And I think I summarise more and I think that's no altogether a bad thing. The cause is disgusting but the result at times I find much more appealing to me, anyway and some other people have appeared to agree with me.

BL: Summarise rather than …?

Tape 5: 3 minutes 40 seconds

MC: Than, I mean the details get lost and I think economy is actually what drawing is about. You know, an abstraction is necessary, and is the essence of good drawing. So the more you abstract and if there is something which in itself becomes a kind of abstraction that you see, because you can't see that clearly, then that has got its compensations. Not in daily life but perhaps in one's work, or in my work. Does it make sense at all?

BL: Yes.

MC: So I love drawing directly on a plate, you know because I think in the past when I did printing, etching I loved doing aqua-tint and lovely, all that kind of thing but all this needs more deliberate decisions which my eyesight prevents me from doing. So what I like most is to draw directly, make a dry point on a plate of some kind, copper or whatever it is, and that leaves me free somehow.

BL: So you then print from the plate?

MC: Yes, of course, otherwise you can't get the print. The plate. Oh actually plates are very interesting things to look at, and the V & A sometimes have exhibitions, have exhibited, maybe they do now, of original plates which they have by artists, like all sorts of great artists and it's wonderful to see those copper plates or zinc plates with the drawing of prints one may have seen before, it's very interesting. It's fascinating, actually, I remember my dear friend Jakob Bornfriend whom I visited in the Royal Free when he was very, very ill and he said to me, 'A painter should really have 500 years to live, because one hasn't got enough time.' and I was very struck by what he said and I think even then, which is a long time ago, over thirty years ago. Even then.

I understood what he meant. And if you do printing, etching, I mean 500 years is nothing. One should really, well, one must not be immodest and it's good to have had the chance to work at that sort of thing instead of coal-mining or scrubbing floors, I don't know. It's a great blessing.

BL: What do you think would have happened if you'd stayed in Germany?

Tape 5: 7 minutes 15 seconds

MC: Ah, that's very interesting you ask that, because I sometimes have asked myself that very question. And I think one of the things that might have been good for me, if Hitler had not arrived, might have been that I would have been more rebellious because I think I'm terribly traditional and always have been, in what I do, my work, I mean. I think I regret that a bit now, not to have had the rebellion in me. But it was not a time to be rebellious when it was really nothing short of a miracle in my generation to be able to be allowed to go to art school, to be, at the time when horrendous things happened all over Europe and the East, everywhere, to be allowed to pursue one's own passion: to work at drawing and painting and looking at people and befriending people; to study characters to be able to read; all this was so wonderful, so miraculous rather that I should not regret not having been more enterprising. I think it is a kind of question of temperament and maybe I'm not a very enquiring person. That may have been my mistake. Because I think I should have developed in other ways than what I did. I was constrained for a while, for quite a long period, and having to earn my living by drawing for papers or books and that imposes its limits on the way one does things. And yet also it suited me, it must be said. Maybe there was nothing more adventurous inside me anyway, I don't know.

BL: Do you mean rebellion in terms of your work?

MC: Yes.

BL: Or also as applies to your parents…

MC: Well yes, that in regard to my parents I've often thought that this was impossible to be rebellious at that stage in their lives when really they were plunged into this total and utter change, the change into unutterable poverty, really. So I think at that point you cannot kick but perhaps if I had lived in sort of the normal milieu that I was born into, maybe I would have become politically active, communist probably, but that was no time to rebel, when your parents are down at heel, as it were, you know.

Tape 5: 10 minutes 55 seconds

So I was very influenced by especially my father who was so very good at drawing and he was very much against modernism or rather he didn't like much of modern art. So that formed me very much and held me back. My mother was infinitely more revolutionary in her views of modern art and literature and liked very new things a lot. So how does one know? But anyway, all together it's an imponderable, isn't it, what might have become? I'm sure I would have gone down south, and I would have gone to Italy like all German artists tended to do, or to Spain, somewhere in the south. I can imagine that.

BL: Let me ask you the same question a bit differently. How do you think your particular experiences have shaped your life and work?

MC: It's interesting, I haven't thought about that. But certainly being thrown into the world of musicians has had a great influence on my working life. And, frankly I deplore it. Looking back, I wish I'd had the more contact with my own world because you know it's no good saying it's all art, it isn't. I think musicians I've known always live on another planet from the rest of the world, they really do. And if you're not inside that planet from birth, like fish drink water and so music is, I think Schoenberg said that, and it is as though they drank music as their water and with me it is sort of tremendous, it has an enormous impact on me, music. I love it but when I see certain drawings of the past or present, Picasso that gives me such a sting of, because somehow one knows that sort of sphere a bit more from one's very innards. It's different. So one is infinitely more capable of constructive criticism in one's own field, than however passionately involved you are with music, hearing it only, instead of executing and understanding it from the roots upwards, it's different. And so I do regret not having mixed with more, I've always had painter friends and of course as long as Marie-Louise was around, that was wonderful to be in contact with somebody whose world was mainly eyes, you know.

Tape 5: 14 minutes 43 seconds

And that was great but apart from that I wish there had been more artists in my life, painters, sculptors. I mean I knew wonderful sculptors too but it revolved around concert-going didn't it, and summer schools and what-not.

BL: Well you adapted to that world…

MC: Yes but I mean you know there, there are regions which therefore you simply don't explore. That's a great pity. I think that that, although I've always gone to museums and galleries and I've always known artists, of course but the mainstream in our house was one of incoming musicians, students, Hans' students, composers of all kinds and it was marvellous of course but since you asked me I must tell you of a regret I've only recently really begun to discover and therefore I must mention it. It's real.

BL: What about the other experience of being in a German school, then being sent to Switzerland and coming to England. How do you think that shaped your life?

MC: As I said before I'm perhaps criminally unreflective, so I sailed from one nostalgia for my Düsseldorf school where I had these wonderful friends into the next paradise without much pain, looking back. Suddenly I was there and then I was right inside that and then that was only one term of an extraordinary experience at Paul Geheeb's school, that was quite extraordinary. Not for learning but for the landscape and the people and the lake and the newness of it all. And then I was plunged into the international school, which didn't have much impact on me except that it was international and full of refugees from all over the world, China and Spain and Germany and Austria and so on but there again there was a wonderful teacher and that was Drummond Thompson, whom I've mentioned, who was passionate about theatre

and acting and so that was another impact and another longing was born in me, of becoming an actress. I would have been awful. I would have always forgotten my lines. But still.

Tape 5: 18 minutes 17 seconds

So that was a very interesting experience but there I formed friendships with two German boys, you see, and a German girl, Anneliese, later on and the Odenwaldschule, Paul Geheeb's interim adventure of a school for me was again rather German, wasn't it? So there was a really sort of direct line and little did I realise how German I must have been until I went to the international school in Geneva, where I came across, suddenly, quite other points of view. Well, learnt English history which was completely left out of my earlier education and all that kind of thing and I didn't think about it much, it was just I've enjoyed most things in my life, I must say, very much, including hospital visits and I can enjoy riding on the underground very much. I like to draw on the underground because there are no interruptions, and then you are even rejoicing when there's a long interval, I mean when the tube is static one is never bored, in fact that's my only regret is that I've never had enough time in my life because there are so many things I like to do. And when I could still read, I've never had time enough to read a lot, because I've always so many things to do. And I mean I'd like to go to the British Museum and really get to know it, but who has the time to do that? Even if they live in London. And on the Rhine now, when I had my exhibition there what, 15, 16 years ago, there every other little town has got a fantastic museum so in the space of I don't know, 40 kilometres you could spend two months trying to explore those museums which are small compared to the British Museum or the National Gallery, don't you agree? And so what does one do? As Jakob Bornfriend said, one ought to live 500 years, really but one's very lucky to live at all, I think.

BL: Tell us about your latest exhibition.

Tape 5: 21 minutes 33 seconds

MC: Oh my latest one is peculiar because it's not in a gallery but it's in a restaurant. In the restaurant of the Wigmore Hall. And I just knew about it suddenly because a friend of mine had put that idea into their head, by saying that I'd done so many musicians, drawn so many musicians. So they were very enthusiastic and just re-opened their restaurant, and it was quite bare, so they thought of having drawings of people who played at the Wigmore Hall or composers who had their music performed there. They asked me to let them have something like 20 or 24 drawings to fill the gaps on the wall, there were many gaps and so it's on for quite a while now. All together two years with changes in between. But it's peculiar because it's only open of course to the public when there are concerts on, or when the restaurants are open and then one can go in and look over the heads of the people who are eating, if they are, or if they are not there yet one has the place to look at. And there are sort of people, young people haven't ever experienced I suppose, people like Edwin Fisher and the pianist who was the teacher of Brendel, who's also of course there and more familiar nowadays even. And there's Yehudi Menuhin and Stravinsky and quartets when they were young, the Chilingirian Quartet and the Lindsays and the Amadeus but the Amadeus has now been playing quartets for quite a while, only teaching.

BL: What's it called, the exhibition?

MC: I don't know whether it's called anything, it's just musicians. I don't know, it hasn't got a name and it's only musicians, you see.

BL: If you had to choose a favourite drawing or painting or etching of your work, could you choose one?

MC: I think I could. I think it's just behind me, isn't it? A little drawing of Hans I did after I met him first, after about three months or four months earlier. And I think it's true of him.

BL: We'll film it later, when we do the photographs. That's your favourite?

Tape 5: 24 minutes 35 seconds

MC: I think so. I think it sums him up. And you know, I did that early in '48. So I think it was Easter time. It was at Easter and I went to his house and I did it there and his mother was shocked because she said oh good heavens, you look so old, and she rang, I left it with her actually, what a mercy that she gave it back to me eventually. She rang me up the next day and said you've caught him exactly, you were quite right. She was a very extraordinary woman, Hans' mother, and really much more into music than into drawing and painting but she somehow or other thought that it had caught his soul. And I think that it has caught his soul. Although that's a bit of a conceited thing to say.

BL: Is there anything else you'd like to discuss, which I haven't asked you, any topic you want to?

MC: Can't think of it really. Because I've told you an enormous amount already I think.

BL: Is there, do you have a message based on your experiences as an emigrant, an émigré?

MC: Have I got a message… I hadn't thought about it until this moment, because I'm not really a messenger. But I would say that when all is said and done, Goethe said it very well, and far be it from thinking myself as wise, I'm certainly not wise, but Goethe said: 'To a wise man, all ports are havens.' And I think I agree with that. Even if one isn't wise, one may look at life in that way and perhaps that's the best way to survive the vicissitudes which undoubtedly every life has and I think it's wonderful to be alive. Whether you're an émigré or not an émigré, I don't accept the concept of émigré as I have told you at times, for the last three years I think I've told you that, I don't quite accept it, unless indeed you're lifted out of your language as an actor, as a writer or as a poet, or when you've been through, thrown out of your university or your school but I think,

Tape 5: 27 minutes 44 seconds

I think I've told you before, that two years make a great deal of difference in one's experience of political catastrophe like Hitler was in Germany because I know that my half-Jewish cousins who were two or four or six years, seven years older than I, girl cousins, found it terribly wounding and they've never quite, well I don't know whether they're recovered from it, eventually they did but it was such a terrible wound for them at adolescence to be suddenly cast into the corner. It's a difficult thing. I think that there, I must repeat it, I know that they must have felt extremely exiled, and I missed that feeling by just the two or three years difference there is between us. That it was a transition I experienced from one school to another and then to another and then to my art school in England and it's a different situation. The exile only dawns on one in bits and pieces. Like when you think of roots, what has influenced you, even as a child in way, of painting and drawing and woodcuts and the milieu you then shaped unconsciously, because it created your personality and then you changed with other regions, other countries, other skies. But it all has a kind of havenship, if I can coin a phrase. If you are that way disposed.

BL: So for you it changed rather than uprooting, while for your parents it was probably more of an uprooting?

MC: Oh, unthinkable for my father, who was considerably older than my mother, it is unthinkable at a certain stage but I was thinking even of people only a few years older than myself where it mattered that you suddenly was, were, before your end exams, that you were suddenly cast into the refuge of humanity. You couldn't go on. That must have been so unutterably uprooting, uprooted one's innards. And fill you with tremendous pain.

Tape 5: 31 minutes 18 seconds

And I am almost ashamed that I must confess I haven't had pain but I think it was very lucky circumstances which brought me into that particular group of children where only half of the class were Nazis and the other half were absolutely against. And so it was even almost a kind of game one played against the limited asinine part of the, of one's class, you know, of one's form who were so stupid anyway, had never been one's friends and flaunted their political, but they didn't much, because it was just below the age when that would come into it, except their uniforms. I don't know, I'm very bad at answering your question because they are very subtle questions, aren't they? It's no use just saying exile, there are thousands of different kinds of exiles and I'm one, but I have not sought consciously to suffer. I remember something that Hans used to say, when does one cease to be a refugee? Because he did believe in all those, there is an Association of Jewish Refugees, I think, there is a journal and he, our friend Carl Flesch, dear Carl, used to say, why don't you keep it and Hans said, but surely by now, this was about 30 years after one had come here, by now when does one, does one never cease to be a refugee and I must say I agree with him.

BL: Anything else you would like to add?

MC: I don't think so

BL: I would say Milein, thank you very much for this interesting interview.

MC: Thank you for asking me all those questions except it confounds me always to give a concise answer. There's so many: '*So viele Seelen in einer Brust.'* Do you know the saying? Isn't it Goethe somewhere or other?

BL: *Faust*?

MC: *Faust,* yes. It is *Faust*. Faust says it. I feel that multiply and I'm not as intelligent as he. Was, undoubtedly. I mean Faust.

Tape 5: 34 minutes 56 seconds

Photographs

MC: Oh it was done obviously not so very long after I'd arrived in the world and my father holds me and my mother looks on and so does my older brother, who was about seven at the time, or even eight. This was in Gotha where I happened to be born, although my parents came from near the Rhineland and so on and that was a long time ago.

MC: Well, I don't remember it, of course, but I was a child, you know, with I think a little ball or what, anyway, I must have been something like four or five.

BL: Where was it taken?

MC: I think it was taken in Gotha, still, unless it was taken in early days in Düsseldorf which I doubt, because I do look really rather young don't I. Difficult to tell from far away.

BL: Thank you. Yes please.

MC: Oh that, I think I was sitting at my desk in Düsseldorf, in my room, and it was full of marvellous books and had a lot of light, as you can see, in it, and I see that I'm wearing a kilt, a Scottish kilt, which my brother had brought me from Scotland because he'd been a boy scout in Scotland and it was my favourite piece of dressing for a long time because I never grew very much anyway. So I didn't easily grow out of it but that's all I can tell you about that. I'm obviously engaged in some drawing or painting or reading. It was a wonderful room, really, come to think of it.

BL: This was in Düsseldorf?

MC: In Düsseldorf, yes.

BL: Yes please.

MC: Oh that shows me I think drawing, prophetically I was drawing, very ineptly, some footballers there, and that's all I can see on the photograph, I don't remember the occasion. My brother took thousands of photographs of everything but especially me, because he found it fun to draw me in all sorts of activities, throwing cartwheels and whatever, so that's all I can remember. It must be my brother's photograph, and

obviously it is a very inept drawing of footballers, as though I was destined to meet my football-loving husband, much later.

BL: Yes please.

Tape 5: 37 minutes 55 seconds

MC: Well that is in the Hofgarten, I don't know whether it was re-instated, it was finally kicked away by the Nazis when they came, but the Hofgarten is a very beautiful park in Düsseldorf. It was originally planted by Napoleon when he came and invaded Prussia, whatever it was at the time, the Rhineland at the time. This sculpture was by another childhood idol, but a really great one: Bernhard Sopher who was this great friend of my parents who had come from Turkey and was known as a Turk. I think I mentioned him before, when the Nazis came it was revealed that he really came from Palestine and was a Jew from a tribe of a sort of camel estate …, rather like a car-park nowadays, or car-hiring firm, because camels were of course more prevalent than cars in those days and Sopher it was who escaped, when it was discovered that he was in fact Jewish. He shipped himself over to America eventually where he settled in Hollywood and did sculpture there. And he was very well known in the Rhineland, he was a very good sculptor and impressed me enormously as a child, even before I met him. But this is before I met him I think. I was just gaping at this beautiful figure on a mountain in the Hofgarten.

BL: Thank you.

MC: Oh here I'm walking by the Rhine with my father, and I loved those walks we used to do and I loved to walk there in rain and sunshine. I remember when I was very, very young child, seeing the Rhine frozen over with enormous ice blocks. It was very exciting. Later on of course I went there on a bicycle with my friends and we had a tremendous time by the river, where indeed when we walked along we often saw circus people practicing, wonderful. I had a great liking for little allotments which were of course on the country side of the riverbank, and it was wonderful to see all the cabbages and sunflowers and little gardens. I loved those walks, and I still would like to do them except it's probably now much more built up than in my youth.

BL: When was this picture taken?

MC: I've no idea but I imagine it must have been when I was about 12, possibly '34, '35, something like that.

BL: Yes please.

Tape 5: 41 minutes 12 seconds

MC: This is a picture again my brother too, I'm sure. He was going off to study in Scotland and we all brought him and had a holiday in Belgium and this was done in Belgium, of my father, having a drink in a bar or something. And it must have been around '34 I guess, '34 or '35.

MC: This is a picture of friend of mine called Anneliese Schwartz, who was at school with me in Geneva and it was a summer holiday in ‘38, I suppose, or was it ’39? No, must have been ‘38 when my brother took us, these two girls with him to Italy. I remember in Venice I was not so struck by the wonderful, wonderful city but particularly struck by all the gondoliers, because I loved to watch them. And my brother got quite annoyed and said ‘Look at the palaces, don’t look all the time on the sailors and people who were working the gondolas.’ But I feel quite ashamed when I think of it, what an impression of Venice it was. It was the water and people, well it was also quite prophetic in a way. But Anneliese was a great friend of mine at my, at the international school in Geneva and we were great friends until she died not long after the last war.

BL: Yes please.

MC: That was in ‘39 in, just before the war, just before war broke out, my brother took me to his old Scottish friends and this must have been in Campbelltown where a great friend of his lived, Ian Stewart, with whose widow I am still in touch now. In fact it was old Mr Stewart, of course in those days one didn’t know the Christian names. It was old Mr Stewart who I think, was part of my admission to this country, i.e. he signed my visitor’s visa from school. I mean when I was in Geneva, it was here, my wonderful teacher Drummond Thompson who gave me the kind of guarantee I suppose; it is to enter this country so this was there, which I loved. I loved the landscape.

BL: When was it taken?

MC: In August ‘39 I think, just before war broke out, or maybe end of July. Who knows?

BL: Yes please.

Tape 5: 44 minutes 16 seconds

MC: Um…

BL: It’s the picture of you outside the studio.

MC: Ah yes I had this great luck to get this studio in, at the back of the Ashmolean, in the mews behind St John Street, and that, outside the studio there was a little back garden with a loo in the garden. I mean the wall underneath the studio was where I’m standing and I suppose it must have been something like 1942 or ‘3 at the most. No, ‘42. It was a very primitive place, the studio but it was quite wonderful to be so central.

BL: Thank you. Yes please Milein.

MC: This is outside the Ashmolean Museum on the front lawn, it must have been taken in 1941 or so and I’m with Biddy Swan who was another art student at the Slade, who now I think still lives in Cornwall. Again, she looked rather dark, and I always though very un-English and I attributed to the fact that she had been born in

Egypt. But little did I know about empires and all that sort of thing. But she is a terribly nice person and a very good artist.

BL: Thank you.

MC: Oh this is a picture of Hans and myself, I guess, we were going to a journalists' club I think, terrible place, down near Piccadilly Circus I think.

BL: Go on.

MC: A street photographer took this, and I'm rather fond of the picture.

BL: We'll have to do it again. Yes, let's do it again. Second take.

MC: This is near Piccadilly Circus, a street photographer took us, both of us going somewhere or other, perhaps it was even the journalists' club which we had briefly joined, I don't know quite why, and obviously I have a portfolio under my arm and Hans had his little briefcase with lots and lots of papers on him.

BL: When was it taken?

MC: Probably, I would say, something like, early '48 or thereabouts. Can't have been much before then.

BL: Yes, please

MC: I used to go quite a bit in the early days of the Edinburgh Festival, and this must have been my third Edinburgh Festival in '49, when Ustinov had a play of his performed called I think 'The Man in the Raincoat.' I don't remember much about the play, nor about Ustinov who seemed to be a nice fellow and nice to draw and I knew nothing about him, really and it was only later that I realised what a wonderful wit he was. I wish I'd had a word with him but I don't think I even talked a syllable to him at the time when I happened to draw him. I used to tend to draw whatever was there which looked interesting and I think that's what it is. Or somebody took a photograph.

BL: Thank you.

Tape 5: 48 minutes 2 seconds

BL: Yes please.

MC: That's the old registry office in Hampstead where Hans and I got married and that's all there is about that picture, taken so very long ago which yielded a certificate, wedding certificate, which I've still got somewhere.

BL: When was it?

MC: I think it must have been in '63, if I remember rightly.

BL: Yes.

MC: This was I think the wedding present by Gertie Hopkins, no Gertie Deutsch was her professional name, who was a very good photographer, and she took us in the studio where we then lived in Hampstead, a rather derelict place, where my dear mother had done the raffia wall hanging so as to hide the rather ugly meters that there were above. I don't know what they were, gas meter or whatever it was but it was nice this straw skirt she made especially to cover that area. And then I think it shows also my great love for Indonesian things because I had bought this marvellous hanging, batik of Indonesian origin or making, at the Berkeley Galleries where I had my first exhibition, and that hung over the rest of the unsightly things. And it was a very, very nice end to rather neglected, hardly dwelled-in place where we lived.

BL: Thank you.

MC: Oh, I forget which one it is now.

BL: With your mother.

MC: With my mother, yes. This is my mother in that wonderful tropical straw hat she liked so much and which I've still got and obviously we're enjoying a place in the sun in our garden and we had wonderful times together.

BL: Which garden, where is it?

MC: In Hampstead, here, outside this room, over there. Yes.

BL: In 1968?

MC: '68. How do you know? Does it say underneath?

BL: Yes.

MC: Ah well.

BL: Yes. Milein, can you describe this drawing?

MC: Well, I remember quite well that I did it after my half a year's acquaintance with Hans. And I did it in his mother's house or his family house in south-east London, near Dulwich and Herne Hill, and I left it at his mother's, who was horrified when she saw it because she thought it made him look so strange and old. However, she was a tremendously intelligent lady, my mother-in-law, and she rang me the next morning and said 'You have absolutely got Hans. It isn't him but it's his soul.' And I still think that it's one of the best drawings I've done of him because it transcends ages, he never really changed that kind of look, as far as I can judge. And I can judge fairly well, after a long, long life with Hans. So I'm fond of it yes, I would take it with me if I had to take one, I think.

Tape 5: 52 minutes 10 seconds

BL: To a desert island?

MC: Yes, preferably to a desert island.

BL: Milein, thank you very much again for this interview.

MC: And thank you for being so wonderfully questioning.