

MONDRIAN AND THE HOYACKS

TWELVE YEARS OF REMARKABLE FRIENDSHIP

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THE EXTENSIVE MONDRIAN LITERATURE

Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan, better known as Piet Mondrian, hardly requires introduction. He is widely recognized as one of the great modern artists and has attracted numerous publications, including many articles, dozens of illustrated exhibition catalogues and online contributions as well as at least thirty substantial studies devoted to all or part of his life and work. To limit ourselves to arguably key items, they were published by Michel Seuphor in 1956, Carel Blotkamp in 1994, Léon Hanssen in 2015, Hans Janssen in 2016 and Nicholas Fox Weber in 2018 and 2024. They are all listed in the bibliography below along with any English translations.

A great deal of relevant material could be eliminated. Online entries are hit and miss, with Wikipedia postings often ephemeral and always anonymous. Exhibition catalogues, like that of 1994 by Yve-Alain Bois, are fragmented by their very nature. As for Carel Blotkamp's fundamental work of 1987, it was in essence preparatory for his comprehensive 1994 monograph. Suzanne Deicher's book of 1994 remained an outstanding dissertation and not a mature study. For instance, her book lacks both table of contents and bibliography. With "only" ninety-five pages, she was in effect swallowed up by Blotkamp.¹ Finally, Jan Stap, writing in 2011, was interested in Piet's personality more than his art and was only truly authoritative with respect to the importance of his native village of Doetinchem.

It is difficult to see the remaining mountain of material in terms of a steady march of progress. Seuphor knew Mondrian well, but his work was almost entirely based on his often unreliable recollections. Blotkamp remains the rock of ages, with an enviable mastery of almost all developments of Piet's life, work and ideas, as well as of the sources. From then on, however, we encounter most of three thousand pages of print (if we include Hanssen's

¹ Will Boesten, Deicher's Dutch translator, is well represented online and at the KB (the Dutch Royal Library), but his Mondrian translation of 1994, though acquired by the KB, is nowhere else mentioned. English and French translations of Deicher, published by Taschen in 2015, did not find a place at the KB. Nowhere online are the translators specified.

extensive online notes). We meet with countless valuable supplementary insights and illustrations, and that with remarkably little duplication.

Every scholar had his problems, however. Format and emphasis varied widely. Hanssen concentrated on Piet's Paris years between 1919 and 1933, but his closing date was arbitrary, since Piet believed that the German developments of that year were abhorrent but would not last. Hanssen's circumscribed time span and online notes allowed him ample space to concentrate on irrelevancies. His material on the family situation of Wim Stieltjes, for instance, is fascinating but tells us nothing about Piet Mondrian. Nor do we need a lengthy digression concerning Gustave Courbet's *L'Atelier du peintre* and his intentions with that famous painting once we have been told that this allegory scarcely interested Piet. The connection with Piet's recent domestic problems, as proposed by Hanssen, is highly tenuous. Finally, Hanssen introduces a hobby horse concerning the deeper meaning of Piet's numerous flower paintings, which is discussed below.

Hans Janssen had still other problems. He arbitrarily jumbled the chronology of Piet's career, thereby undermining all sense of continuity and necessitating laborious search through endless columns of documentation in tiny print, which may even hide vital information. More than his colleagues, Janssen tended to function as a time-travelling mind reader, so that we are told about Mondrian's hypothetical thought processes behind creative decisions and works of art instead of concentrating on what was in fact decided and created. As he admitted in his introduction, Janssen could not always resist the temptation to function as novelist, so that he even resorted to reconstructing fictive conversations to present insights that could not be documented.

Nick Weber is problematic in that he came out in two instalments, a book-length dissertation for the years before 1919, when Mondrian truly settled in Paris, and a comprehensive biography that opened with the same time span but that could not possibly incorporate all the detailed information of the earlier work. Truly disruptive is Weber's hobby horse, namely Piet's alleged antisemitism, which we shall consider in an appendix. We also encounter information that has very little to do with Mondrian. That the American collector Sidney Janis visited Piet's studio and bought an influential work for seventy dollars is of interest, but that Sidney was "a short, dapper man with expressive eyes and long straight hair brushed straight back off his

forehead”, who had made his money with his innovative way of selling shirts,² tells us next to nothing about Piet.

Nor was Weber’s use of sources always clear. Whereas he still used Blotkamp, Hanssen and Janssen for his 2018 dissertation, he seems to have lost sight of them by 2024, as he nowhere cited them in his text and end notes. Worse, Hanssen did not even make Weber’s bibliography. In point of fact, he did not even cite his own work of 2018. Yet we will see, for instance, that he certainly relied on Hanssen with respect to Ella Hoyack’s visits to Piet’s studio. It would take a lot of work to identify all such buried debts.

Given the huge body of material dedicated to Piet Mondrian’s life, thought and art, the reader may well ask if there is any need for still another substantial study of the artist, especially since Piet’s friendships already come up in the existing literature. Friendships could come in several guises. It could be nearly lifelong, based on a formative bond, as with Albert van den Briel, or on near-boundless admiration, as with Michel Seuphor. It could even be rooted in very personal affinity, as with Wim and Tonia Stieltjes. Most often, however, it was established during the formation of the De Stijl movement. One thing one learns is that Piet could not abide negative comment on his theoretical publications about his Neo-Plasticism, especially as published by Theo van Doesburg and Bob Oud, but even then he proved to be conciliatory, ready to reinstate personal ties. What matters in the present context, however, is that not one of Piet’s other friendships was substantially like that with Louk and Ella Hoyack, which we here undertake to study closely for the first time. Our intention is to present a new and detailed illustration of Piet Mondrian’s capacity for sustained and caring friendship. In addition, his commentary on Louk’s publications of 1929 to 1933 add up to a vital early compendium of his ideas about art and life.

THE SPARSE HOYACK LITERATURE

In marked contrast to Piet Mondrian, Louis August Hoyack has attracted almost no attention. A massive attempt to redress the balance was my *Piet Mondrian’s Sufi Friends Louk and Ella Hoyack* (henceforth Horn 2017). The inclusion of Mondrian in the title was an obvious ploy designed to deal with the fact that

² Weber 2024, pp. 356-359.

almost nobody cares about Louk and Ella whereas almost everybody dotes on Piet. However, the book's coupling of Piet Mondrian and the Hoyacks did the painter no favour. The information concerning his life and thought became altogether buried in masses of material concerning the philosopher. As neither the publisher nor the printer preserved a pdf, the book appears to have had only limited distribution. Though it found a North American distributor, Ross Publishing LLC of New York City, it had apparently not reached Nick Weber by the early twenties.

I believe, however, that Weber did in fact spot the book. He wrote that "Ella Hoyack was a radiant woman who liked to be photographed in bathing suits", which at once reminds us of the illustration showing Louk and Ella on the beach at Bergen aan Zee (fig.57), which featured on the dust jacket and as fig. 20 of the book. Weber also introduced the Hoyacks as the owners (as opposed to the tenants) of a villa (as opposed to the upper floor of a building) in Saint-Cloud and "houses on the Côte d'Azur and the North Sea."³ The house (not houses) on the Côte d'Azur postdated the years that Piet and the Hoyacks socialized in Paris. Nor did they ever own a home on the North Sea. It all suggests that Weber gleaned poorly digested impressions from the illustrations of *The Sufi Friends of Piet Mondrian*. His deficient view of Ella led him to represent her as "an elegant and playful bon vivant" who was superficial compared to her more intellectual and "spiritual" husband.⁴ Hopefully the present study will put paid to such misrepresentation of Ella and her relationship to her husband as well as to Piet Mondrian.

THE ADJUSTED AIMS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

As important change, the present study concentrates more pervasively and clearly on the Mondrian component of the 2017 book. The new approach still deals with Louk and Ella, but mainly with their importance for Piet as seen through Ella's diaries and the Mondrian-Hoyack correspondence. In the case of Louk's biography, all sorts of irrelevant details have been eliminated,⁵ even as more essential information about his Sufism has been added.

³ Weber 2024, p. 290.

⁴ Weber, p. 291.

⁵ Who, for instance, needs to know which of Louk's circle of gymnasium friends were assigned the female parts of their theatrical performances because their voices were the last to break.

Though Piet and the Hoyacks may have first met in the summer of 1926, their documented contacts extended for only twelve years, from 17 March 1927, when Ella first mentioned the artist in her pocketbook diary for that year, to 5 April 1939, when Piet wrote them a last letter from London. The friendship developed in two stages. First came six years of regular personal interaction. After that followed only rare personal contact but seven years of correspondence. In 1932 and 1933 Piet commented on several books that Louk sent him. Given that Louk lived until 1967 and published profusely right up to the end of his life, with Ella not dying until 1979, it should be clear that the present work deals with only the short phase of their lives that included Piet Mondrian.

It should also be stressed that the present book is still not a study of Piet Mondrian, nor even of an aspect of his life. The books about the artist are primarily concerned with how his experiences and convictions contributed to his growth and productivity as an artist. As a consequence these works tend to be lavishly illustrated. The present book features only one black and white illustration of a work of his (fig. 51), that being because he intended to give it to Ella Hoyack. Even then there is no consideration of its formal aspects or merit. Though Piet painted a lot of the time, that aspect of his life is almost totally neglected here. He is mainly presented as caring friend of the Hoyacks and as commentator on Louk's publications. As a result Piet emerges as someone who had decided opinions about wide-ranging topics like the importance of medicine, and his opinions generally turn out to be more astute than what Louk had on offer.

With interest in Louk Hoyack being limited, why has so much information about him survived in the present study? To put it colloquially, it was needed to explain where he was coming from and what made him tick. At every juncture the material was needed to show how drastically different the two men were in their family background, wealth, social status, upbringing, education, experience and beliefs. However, Piet and Louk were alike in their willingness to separate friendship from differences of opinion. The Sufi healer Mohammed Ali Khan could seem to be an indispensable personal link between Paris and Saint-Cloud, but the friendship was in place well before Louk and Ella introduced Piet to Ali.

The detailed information of this study may still at times seem excessive, but it serves a purpose. For example, the material concerning the frequent travel of the Hoyacks, especially in the Netherlands, is in part of interest because it demonstrates a fundamental difference between Piet and his friends Louk and Ella. Piet also had friends in the Netherlands, but he did not leave Paris to visit them. In contrast, Louk and Ella almost continued to live in The Netherlands. Though only a few friends and one family member looked them up in France, they saw a great many individuals in The Hague, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and elsewhere. We may be sure that they also made the social rounds during Louk's four end-of-the year lecture tours from 1932 to 1935. In addition, they saw Dutch friends in Bergen aan Zee during the summers of 1930 to 1933. The people that come up were family members, old pre-Sufism friends and a some new Sufi acquaintances from Suresnes. Louk and Ella made all sorts of new friends wherever they went, in Paris, Bergen aan Zee, Cagnes, in and around Cannes and in Théoule-sur-Mer. In addition the Suresnes summer schools had an international constituency and centred on Inayat Khan and his family, adding to the variety of the mix. Note, however, that the material is presented in blocks and may simply be ignored by anyone not interest. As an important observation, Louk and Ella apparently never owned an automobile and always relied on public transportation. The same, of course, was also true of their friend Piet.

Piet Mondrian was not at all a networker, as one might expect from someone hoping to promote and sell his art. Interested people had to look him up. Other than for his limited professional correspondence, Piet showed almost no interest in anyone who was not part of the social circle of Flemish or Dutch expats and visitors that he and the Hoyacks had shared in Paris and in his studio. When we look into that circle, it is striking that there was not a single French member. Almost everybody had some connection with art, reaching back to the mid-teens in Laren, Amsterdam or, as with Albert van den Briel, even earlier. If not, they were part of the Paris art scene, including Cercle et Carré. Wim and Tonia Stieltjes were exceptions to the rule, but they somehow bonded with Piet during 1919, even before they moved into 26 Rue du Départ in January of 1920, Piet having left for the Rue de Coulmiers a few months before then. Arthur Lehning might seem to be exceptional as well, but he was the partner of Charley Toorop, a supporter and old connection reaching via the

teens all the way back to her father Jan Toorop in Domburg. As for the Hoyacks, we do not know how they got to know Piet, though we shall see that the Utrecht artist Janus de Winter may have played a part.

The fundamental difference between Piet Mondrian and Louk Hoyack in the extent of their travel explains why a study that is primarily intended to shed light on Piet should be organized according to the itinerary of Louk and Ella Hoyack. However, there was no alternative, given that Piet had no itinerary to speak of during the twelve years of friendship, being limited to Paris. His excursions to Clamart (only once), Suresnes and Saint-Cloud required only a short train ride from Montparnasse. Another difference between Mondrian and the Hoyacks was that they kept the letters from Piet while Piet threw their missives out. We only know what they wrote because Piet referred to the gist of their missives. It appears that Piet received letters, replied to them and then discarded them. It is surprising fact that a man with many important correspondents had no sense of the importance of their letters for posterity. Of course Piet's contacts could have kept copies of their own letters. We must remember, however, that letters were written by hand and that the copy machine was not invented until 1938. People had to use carbon paper to make copies, which was a major bother. Even so, some recipients must have taken the trouble. It would appear, for instance, that Albert van den Briel preserved both halves of his correspondence with Piet Mondrian.⁶

These differences between Piet Mondrian and Louk Hoyack were negligible compared to the chasm between their intellectual convictions. It is there that we learn what was so remarkable about the friendship of Piet and Louk, being that they were good friends at all. Surprisingly the two men had just about nothing in common other than their friendship. Piet was a confirmed Theosophist and was not at all interested in Sufism. For him it was irrelevant, like all current religions, because he believed in a unified society and religion of the future, to be approached spiritually as opposed empirically, as propounded by Madame Helena Blavatsky and as heralded by his own art. At the same time Louk had no interest in Piet's art and ideas. He proceeded beyond Sufism and a smattering of Theosophy to a conviction that though God resides outside

⁶ Van den Briel and Henkels 1988, based in part on two undated manuscripts preserved by Robert Welch and now kept at the RKD.

Creation, His hand is still seen at work within nature, thereby making all abstraction a mistake and dismissing the central pursuit of Piet's life.

Overall Piet was remarkably focused and consistent in his ideas, whereas Louk tended to be far-ranging but also inconsistent, including in his understanding of Inayat Khan and his Message. Nor, surprisingly, the two friends disagreed about almost everything, including politics, society, government, trade, science, medicine, education, urbanization, architecture and art. At times Piet simply ignored Louk's propositions instead of explicitly challenging them. Overall Piet tended to be an optimist who believed in the "march of progress", with everything heading in the right direction despite occasional setbacks, whereas Louk predicted nothing but doom and gloom. The artist would presumably never have bothered to challenge the philosopher's ideas if Louk had not sent him books for commentary.

To conclude this introduction, any reader primarily interested in Piet Mondrian should consult one or more of the several biographies of the artist. Anyone mainly interested in Louk Hoyack should turn to my *Sufi Friends of Piet Mondrian* of 2017. Those readers more interested in Piet Mondrian as caring friend and seeming hypochondriac are better off with the present study. In addition, a third book requires mention, being highly informative for anyone interested in Western Sufism. Its author, Theo van Hoorn, was an Amsterdam accountant who became a Sufi in the summer of 1924, a few months after Louk had been initiated. He composed most of his indispensable memoirs in the tiny village of Vinkeveen during the so-called "hunger winter" of 1944 to 1945. They were published as *Herinneringen aan Inayat Khan en het Westers Sufisme* (Recollections of Inayat Khan and Western Sufism) in 1981, but did not see an English translation, with hundreds of explanatory and amplifying end notes, until 2010. The outcome was a near encyclopaedic overview of Dutch Sufism from 1923 to about 1940, including photos of numerous Sufis, of which only a few are mentioned in the present study. Theo continued to amend his text up to 1955, two years before his death, he continually returned to his three magical summers of exposure to Inayat Khan from 1924 to 1926. Thus Theo described the mainly upper-class Sufi community of Suresnes, including its so-called "Activities", repeatedly amplifying Louk Hoyack's information, especially with respect to Inayat Khan and his "cousin brother" Ali Khan.

CHAPTER I: A CONCISE LIFE OF PIET MONDRIAN UP TO 1912

Piet Mondrian was born in Amersfoort in 1872 as one of four children, including one girl, in a dedicated Calvinist family. His mother's health was poor and his young sister Christien ran the household. They moved to Winterswijk when his father was appointed principal of a primary school there. Piet was introduced to art as a youngster, since his father was a drawing teacher and his uncle Frits a minor artist. His father prepared him for his diploma as elementary school drawing teacher. He then taught at his father's school while working on his diploma as secondary school art teacher with the pedagogue, draftsman, lithographer and painter Jan Braet von Überfeldt, who had moved from Amsterdam to Doetinchem, about 130 kilometres to the East, in 1886, two years before Piet met him. The aging Braet and his wife exposed Piet to a more liberal and spiritual ambient than that of his family, so that he may have ceased to be a dedicated Calvinist.⁷ Piet's earliest work was first exhibited to some success in The Hague in 1890. He received a scholarship from Queen Emma and enrolled in the Academy of Fine Art in Amsterdam.

A DIFFICULT AND UNSTABLE LIFE

Piet's subsequent life until late in 1911, when he first moved to Paris, was not easy. Frequently in dire financial straits, he was forced to do lesser applied work, such as bacteriological drawings and copies of works in museums, as well as to tutor well-to-do Calvinist women, but he also executed some splendid decorative panels. His career had so many twists and turns and included so many friends, colleagues, patrons, supporters and critics that it defies summary. However, Albert van den Briel, whom Piet met in 1899 or 1900, stands out as his lifelong friend, admirer and biographer (fig. 1).

It did not help that Piet became truly peripatetic. Between 1892 and 1912, when he first settled in Paris, he moved at least ten times, with six addresses in Amsterdam. The most important of the three exceptions was Uden in North Brabant, where Piet lived from 1904 to 1906. Oele, again in

⁷ This insight may be deduced from the contribution of Jan Stap 2011.

North Brabant, was where Piet spent the winter of 1906 on a farm together with the young and financially comfortable Albertus Gerard Hulshoff Pol,⁸ and repeatedly, the coastal town of Domburg from 1908 to 1910. In Uden Piet grew close to his friend Albert van den Briel, who was studying forestry in nearby De Peel, and painted the rural surrounding, as well as flower paintings. Domburg attracted a stimulating mix of artists and writers in which Piet felt at home. He also conversed with Jan Toorop, a resident of the city, who painted similar works, though Piet did not include figures in his compositions. Though a recently converted Catholic, Toorop had ideas compatible with Piet's own Theosophical orientation. Though he undertook short journeys to Cornwall in 1900 and Spain in 1903,⁹ he was scarcely exposed to French developments until 1910.

GROWING SUCCESS AS PAINTER

To select only a few other details, Piet had his first exhibition in 1893 but sold little and at low prices. Another exhibition of his work, in the Municipal Museum of Amsterdam, which was financed by Piet and his colleagues Jan Sluijters and Cornelis (Kees) Spoor, took place in 1909. By then he had enjoyed mounting success, with prices increasing from fifty to a thousand guilders from 1893 to 1910. In 1897 he joined the artists' society of Saint Luke to increase his exposure. In 1898, and again in 1901, his poor grasp of anatomy prevented him from competing for the Prix de Rome. That autumn pneumonia forced him to return to his parental home in Winterswijk, where he remained until the summer of 1899. His work of around 1900 was inspired by the impressionist manner of the The Hague school, but he also experimented with other styles, including Pointillism and Fauvism, in search of his own manner. His first works that showed a measure of abstraction dated from 1905 to 1908, following on his Uden period and continuing into his Domburg visits. To reduce the subtleties of his complex development to only two works, we can compare his two versions of *Woods near Oele*, painted during his stay there in 1906 and during a brief visit in 1908, shortly after his first trip to Domburg.¹⁰ We see a clear progression from a relatively traditional view to one with greater

⁸ Weber 2018, pp. 254-277, Deicher 1994, p. 93, reported that Piet had just won the Willink van Collenprijs, but he is nowhere listed as a winner for 1906 or any other year.

⁹ For a photo of Mondrian and Simon Maris in Bordeaux, Janssen 2016, fig. 146.

¹⁰ Weber 2018, figs. 21 and 27.

abstraction and more expressive colours reminiscent of the Fauves in Paris and the Blaue Reiter artists in Munich. Both works, however, excel in their fine expression of mood and light.

THE ADVENT OF THEOSOPHY

Piet's art was related to his independent spiritual and philosophic studies. He formally joined the Theosophic Society on 14 and 15 May of 1908. Theosophy is a religious and philosophical system that was founded in the United States of America in the late nineteenth century by the Russian mystic and spiritualist Helena Blavatsky.¹¹ Mainly based on her writings, it drew from European philosophies such as Gnosticism and Neoplatonism as well as from aspects of Hinduism and Buddhism. The writings of Blavatsky comprise a mass of horrendous nonsense involving a brotherhood of spiritual adepts known as Masters, centring primarily in Tibet, with modern Theosophists attempting, through Blavatsky's writings, to revive a lost ancient religion that would eclipse the existing world religions. Since she held that Aryans (meaning Indo-Aryans) were the most spiritual people on earth, it followed that Judaism and Christianity were relatively less spiritual. However, she praised Judaism and Jews. As for Islam, she wrote in her massive Theosophical Glossary of 1892 that "The Christians abuse the Koran, calling it an hallucination." She classed the Kabbalah with other vital sources of revelation and called for tolerance.

We can't be sure what ideas Piet did or did not embrace. He was presumably mainly interested in concepts potentially useful for the pursuit of a superior art that might herald a better future. As part of that pursuit he studied and annotated the lectures of Rudolf Steiner (fig. 2), which Steiner presented in The Netherlands in 1908, as discussed by Carel Blotkamp, Léon Hanssen and, in great detail, Jacqueline van Paaschen in her *Mondriaan en Steiner* of 2017.¹² Steiner was especially important for Mondrian because he first linked Theosophy and art. Although both Steiner and Mondrian believed in the better Theosophic future, Steiner's approach was all-inclusive, whereas Piet's was single-minded. But Steiner's inclusiveness did not embrace Piet's personal tangent, which he treated with condescension. Any hope of rapprochement was in any case doomed because Steiner was opposed to abstraction. In

¹¹ For a fairly recent overview, Cranston 2003.

¹² Blotkamp 1987, Part IV, and Hanssen 2015, pp. 168-175.

addition Steiner became unfaithful to Theosophy in 1911 and helped found anthroposophy, in essence a retooled version of German Theosophy, in 1913 because he was not reconciled to the attribution of Messianic status to the Hindu teenager Jiddu Krishnamurti (fig. 3). Piet Mondrian had no such reservations. He kept *At the Feet of the Master*, which the boy published in 1910 when only fifteen, within reach until his death.

THE MODERNE KUNSTKRING

In November of 1910, around the time of Piet's last Domburg visit, Conrad Kickert (fig. 11) and Lodewijk Schelfhout formed the ambitious Moderne Kunstkring (Modern Art Circle) movement in Amsterdam, which Kickert intended to host an annual exhibition of progressive art along the lines of the Salons d'Automne in Paris. They invited Jan Toorop, Jan Sluijters and Piet Mondrian to form a kind of exhibition committee. In 1911 Piet participated in their first exhibition, at which works by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque were also shown. Conrad Kickert, who was an autodidactic but innovative artist, was the moving force behind the Modern Art Circle. He was a wealthy, handsome and enterprising admirer of Piet, whom he had got to know well in Domburg. He invited Piet to visit Paris in the spring of 1911, when he introduced him to the artists and intellectuals of the city. He also helped Piet settle in Paris early in 1912, in a building of artist studios on 33 Avenue du Maine. In April of 1912 Piet took over Conrad's apartment at 26 Rue du Départ, while Conrad moved to more spacious quarters at 110 Rue Denfert-Rochereau. In this way Piet became Conrad's tenant during the next seven years. Conrad then included Piet in sundry exhibitions back in The Netherlands and in France. However, he was a contentious person who opposed Piet's move to pure abstraction, thereby undermining the friendship. Though Piet continued to pay the rent, he avoided contact with Conrad.

As for Lodewijk Schelfhout, he was very nearly a Paris resident, as he and his mother had already moved there in 1903. He had an atelier in Le Bateau-Lavoir, a studio complex located on 13 Rue Ravignan (now Place Émile Goudeau) in the Montmartre quarter of Paris, but he returned to The Netherlands in 1913. Piet's appreciation of the Amsterdam Kunstkring exhibition as well as Conrad's invitation to visit and investigate Paris, likely helped confirm his decision to relocate to the more cosmopolitan city. On 20

December 1911, Piet filed documents at the Amsterdam registrar's office to legally reside outside The Netherlands.

SUNDRY ROMANTIC ENTANGLEMENTS

During all those years Piet's romantic interests were disruptive. Early on, in 1902, he fell in love with Diderieke Petronella (Nell) Harrenstein, but her parents thought that the struggling artist was not a solid financial prospect. Nine years later, when already pushing forty, Piet broke off his engagement to the solidly bourgeois Margaretha (Greta) Heijbroek (fig. 15) shortly after he had left Laren for Paris late in 1911, having decided that "the loveliness of it all was but an illusion" and that his art should come first. The break must have been doubly distressing for Greta because it followed on a splendid engagement party, which was attended by Piet's friends Corad Kickert and Lodewijk Schelfhout, who welcomed the prospect of a marriage for their friend Piet Mondrian.

Greta probably did not know that Piet's love life was messy around that time. First came Agatha Zethraeus, a student of Piet who became a successful if conservative painter. By 1907 they were so serious that she believed they would marry. But Piet broke with her in 1908. They kept in touch, however, and she visited him in 1927, so that the Hoyacks could have met her. In January of 1909 came Eva de Beneditty, but her parents, who were wealthy Sephardic Jews living in Amsterdam, prohibited their relationship, which then blossomed secretly, including marathon kisses, until Piet finally let it die late in June of 1909, before he left for that year's visit to Domburg, and after he had picked up with Greta Heijbroek. His romance with Greta also overlapped with his meetings and correspondence with the violinist Aletta Jacoba de longh, but Piet let that relationship peter out shortly after he had dropped both Eva and Greta. It was to Aletta, in a letter that Piet mailed from 33 Avenue du Maine, his very first and temporary Paris address, that he gave his reasons for ending his engagement to Greta:

I expect you heard that I nearly got married last autumn, but fortunately I realized just in time that it was nothing but an illusion, all that sweetness and light. Although I have always lived for my art, the good life also attracts me, which is why I sometimes do things that seem out of character.

Piet was probably engaged in rationalization. His painting ate up a lot of his time, but given his limited production through much of his career, he can hardly have painted or altered works each and every day. His relatively few visitors, extensive correspondence and theoretical writing were mainly confined to the evenings and can't in any case account for numerous days. Of course sickness did knock him out on occasion, and he once lost fully three months due to a burnout-like loss of motivation, but he may also have been a little lazy at times, using his aches and pains as an excuse to take time off. As for any shopping, cooking and cleaning, a wife could have taken care of all that. They could even have explored the streets and galleries of Paris together. In short, Piet could surely have combined his art with "the good life" if that had been his priority.

CHAPTER II: WEATHERING THE WAR AND AFTER: 1914 TO 1927

LAREN AND THE HAMDORFF EXPERIENCE

Laren, a small municipality in the prosperous region called Het Gooi, came to fill an important role in the years that Piet Mondrian was forced to spend in The Netherlands during World War I. After taking pre-war private dancing lessons in Paris, paid for by the generous dr d'Eck, being Marinus Matthijs Ritsema van Eck, a Dutch physician, composer, family man and spendthrift whom Piet invariably called dr d'Eck. Though he had settled on a farm in southern France, near Nice, he kept a pied-à-terre in Paris.¹³ During the war, in Laren, Piet developed his own formal version of the foxtrot which matched his habitual erect posture. This curious style, which caused some amusement, first emerged in Hotel Hamdorff in 1915. This important venue, which we shall have occasion to mention repeatedly, was founded by Jan Hamdorff in 1901 and had become the Laren centre for social action and art (fig. 5).

Despite his resolve of 2011 to give up on a permanent relationship in favour of his art, dancing led to renewed romance in Laren. Piet became engaged to Wilhelmina Agatha (Willy) Wentholt, whom he had met at dance school during the war, when he also danced with her in Hotel Hamdorff. She was to all appearances perfect for Piet, since she was good looking, well-educated, a francophone, interested in art and Piet's writings, of good family (meaning a little welcome money) and a dance lover, but he got cold feet and left for Paris despite his hopes for a family according to the norm. He did not dump her abruptly, however, but continued to correspond with her after his departure for Paris.

SUNDRY LASTING CONTACTS

Laren and its Hotel Hamdorff were also where Piet got to know a couple of like-minded individuals who were later to play a role during the years that he associated with Louk and Ella Hoyack in Paris. We will encounter them in some detail at that time. They included the composer Jacob van Domselaer and his

¹³ For an undated drawn portrait of Marinus Mathijs Ritsema van Eck done by Piet, see Welsh & Joosten, II, 1998, C28.

pianist wife Maaïke van Domselaer-Middelkoop (fig. 7).¹⁴ To be precise, Piet and Maaïke had known each other since 1915, when they were part of an intellectual-artistic circle that convened in Catharine Hannaert's "pension de Linden" in Laren (fig. 6), where Piet lived briefly in 1914, from January until July of 1915, when he also painted there, and repeatedly, though very briefly, after that. It was there that De Stijl movement was conceived. Even more important for the present study was the prolific and promiscuous poet Adriaan (Jany) Roland Holst (fig. 8), here seen in 1904. In her "Herinneringen aan Mondriaan" (Recollections of Mondrian) which Maaïke published in *Maatstaf* of August 1959, she wrote that both Piet and Jany liked to go dancing in Hotel Hamdorff. In 1918 Jany moved to Bergen aan Zee.

It was also in pension de Linden that Salomon (Sal) Slijper (fig. 9) first saw Piet's work in the summer of 1915. Sal was a successful real estate broker and budding art collector. It took Sal six weeks to understand Piet's considered abstraction was preferable to any arbitrary choice of representational subject matter. He soon bought one of Piet's paintings, becoming his staunch friend and Mycenae. In 1916 Sal bought a large farm house in Blaricum (fig. 10), just to the north of Laren, which Piet often visited and where he got on well with Sal's circle of Jewish friends. Sal even had two small rooms added to the back of his home to house Piet's unemployed brother Louis. In June of 1919, Sal saved Piet from ruin by paying him a thousand guilders for all the paintings that he had stored at 26 Rue du Départ for the duration of the war. From then on Sal became the most important collector of Piet's work. They corresponded over the years and Sal repeatedly visited Piet in his atelier. In a letter to the Hoyacks, dated 21 March 1932, Piet located him there on 7 March as a generous donor of birthday flowers.

Sal survived WW II by hiding out in his home in Laren, looked after by his partner and housekeeper Johanna Hamdorff, whom he at last married in 1947. His collection of paintings, hidden away in his attic, also survived the war. When Sal died in 1971, it turned out that he had left 197 works by Mondrian to the Municipal Museum of The Hague. Immediately after the war he was involved in the commemorative exhibition of Piet's work in that museum.

¹⁴ This miserable photograph by an unknown photographer and of unknown provenance, came from Janssen 2016, fig. 214.

THE FOUNDING OF DE STIJL

In 1917 and 1918 Piet contributed about a dozen articles on “De nieuwe beelding in de schilderkunst” (The New Representation in the Art of Painting) in the newly founded periodical *De Stijl*. He continued to produce many more items in 1918 and 1919 under two different titles.¹⁵ In the process he probably consulted *Het nieuwe wereldbeeld* (The New World View) of 1915 and *Beginselen der beeldende wiskunde* (Fundamentals of Pictorial Mathematics) of 1916 by Mathieu Schoenmaekers (fig. 4). This former priest turned philosopher believed in a hidden fundamental structure of the universe which is best approached through “positive mysticism” and best expressed through the imagery of a visual mathematics consisting of circles, ovals and ellipses. Piet soon developed a dislike of Mathieu and, in a letter of May 1918 to Theo van Doesburg, he claimed that he had drawn his own ideas direct from “the Secret Doctrine [of Madame Blavatsky].”

Both Schoenmaekers and Mondrian were confirmed Theosophists and no doubt closely familiar with related theosophical and philosophical sources.¹⁶ In the case of Piet, his theosophical concerns extended to an obsession with balance between what is individual, and therefore isolated, and what is universal. To bring a Theosophic future of harmony and balance closer, this opposition had to be eliminated, beginning with the art of painting. His exposure to Cubism helped Mondrian realize that a painter could free himself of what is personal to arrive at an understanding of the divine intellect, or God, located behind nature. Such a reconstruction was by its very nature abstract, as with his own art. However, the teachings of Madame Blavatsky could not have dictated the actual formal elements of his paintings. And whereas Schoenmaekers thought in terms of circles, ovals and ellipses, Mondrian insisted on the use of primary colours along with black, white and grey, as well as on straight lines conforming to an orthogonal system.

In 1917 Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian founded the De Stijl movement, joined by Bart van der Leek, the Hungarian-Dutch Vilmos Huszár and several others including Piet’s friend, the architect Jacob Johannes Pieter

¹⁵ For a complete bibliography of the writings of Piet Mondrian that were published during his lifetime, see Blotkamp 1994, p. 248.

¹⁶ Blotkamp 1994, p. 111, judiciously reviewed the controversy, with mention of “Mondrian and Theosophy” by Robert P. Welsh 1971, pp. 35-37 and 51.

(J. J.P or Bob) Oud, whom we see in a photo of 1918 (fig. 12).¹⁷ Our only closely contemporary image of Theo dates from about 1915, when he served as sergeant during World War I (fig. 13). Bart had become friends with Piet and had influenced his work the previous year. Piet coined the term Neo-Plasticism in his writings for the concomitant periodical, *De Stijl*. His ideas were warmly received by his colleagues, but Bart left *De Stijl* in 1918 over disagreement with Piet over formal issues, whereas Vilmos followed the next year for unclarified reasons.

In addition there was Peter Alma, who studied at the Academie van Beeldende Kunsten in The Hague from 1904 to 1907 and at the Académie Humbert in Paris from 1907 to 1914. He lived in the studio complex at 26 Rue du Départ, where he became a friend of Piet during the two years preceding the First World War. Peter also got to know Bart van der Leek well in Laren, but in 1917, around the time that *De Stijl* was born, came the Russian Revolution, which brought Peter to embrace a socialist agenda which was incompatible with Piet's Neoplasticism. Peter's earliest non-conforming work evoked resistance from Bart van der Leek, as approved by Piet Mondrian, but especially from Theo van Doesburg. Of all the Mondrian scholars who discussed Peter Alma, only Carel Blotkamp included illustrations of work of 2018 by both Bart and Peter that help understand the issues. Bart's fragmented painting clearly undermined all of Piet's insistence on the predominance of an intersection of vertical and horizontal lines, but Peter's *The Saw and the Goldfish Bowl* presented a more severe problem, since it included actual objects and diagonal spatial recession akin to traditional perspective.¹⁸ Piet was not resentful about such defections. Typically separating ideas and friendship, he remained a friend of both Van der Leek and Alma.¹⁹

Despite Piet's sundry activity surrounding *De Stijl*, he missed Paris intensely and despaired of the war coming to an end. A vital contribution of Nicholas Weber's dissertation of 2018 was that he discussed Piet's feelings of

¹⁷ For a recent account of the complicated founding of *De Stijl*, Faassen and Renders 2017, pp. 117-145 and 162-166.

¹⁸ Blotkamp 1994, pp. 117-122 and figs. 88 and 90. As one learns from the current English Wikipedia posting, Alma's work was depicted in an addenda to number 8 (June 1918) of *De Stijl*. It was there that Van Doesburg aggressively rejected Alma's approach.

¹⁹ Both artists bought paintings from Piet, who gave Peter a painting as wedding present in 1929. There is more on this in Hanssen 2015, p. 54, and his online footnote.

isolation and his depression as revealed by his sustained interest in the writing the French artist Eugène Emmanuel Lemerrier, as published posthumously in English translation in 2017.²⁰ Piet shared this interest with a rare friend and admirer, the Remonstrant preacher and collector Hendrik van Assendelft.²¹ Lemerrier entered the war early on, dealt courageously with its horrors and tried to concentrate on his positive experiences while sharing his evolving feelings in letters to his mother. Piet greatly admired Lemerrier's courage and stoicism, which he adopted as his unique model. To quote Weber: "That embrace of life without fear or fretting, and the new abstract art as a means of communicating, were Mondrian's *raison d'être*."²²

It was in June of 1919 that Piet at last moved back to Paris after an absence of five years. To mark the moment, he decided to once more change his appearance. He had been clean-shaven, with or without moustache and with varying hairdos, until after he had ended his engagement to Greta Heijbroek in 1911 (cf. fig. 15), when he added a full beard. In 1919 he again became clean-shaven, with his hair brushed back and with his forehead balding steadily from the mid-twenties. This was not a frivolous decision. The daily shaving of his dark beard made his morning routine time consuming and remained a nuisance for the rest of his life. Most important is that we learn that Piet was not without vanity and was ever concerned about his appearance.

²⁰ Weber 2018, pp. 512-515. Mondrian's evolving thoughts were recorded in eight letters to Van Assendelft, now all preserved at the RKD. In addition, Weber gave nineteen page references to the posthumous publication of Lemerrier's letters as perused by Piet.

²¹ The RKD informs us in their online Archief Piet Mondriaan that Assendelft bought work by Mondrian, sheltered him in his home in Gouda and edited articles that he published in *De Stijl* in 1917 and after.

²² Weber 2018, p. 515.

CHAPTER III: PIET MONDRIAN AT 26 RUE DU DÉPART BEFORE 1927

Piet Mondrian lived at 26 Rue du Départ (the street of departure) in 1912 and 1913, and again from June of 1919 to November of that year. Piet then relocated to the top floor at the back of 5 Rue du Coulmiers, named after a soft cheese much like Brie, which was a superior venue. Then, evicted from that location sometime late in 1921, Piet returned to 26 Rue du Départ. He remained put until 1936, when he moved to more comfortable housing at 278 Boulevard Raspail until 1938.

The complex at 26 Rue du Départ was situated on a busy and narrow street then located across the road immediately to the north of the Gare Montparnasse. According to expansions of 1898, this railway station formed a broad and complex near rectangular area with four tracks, two central and two flanking ones, all ending to the east of centre, on the side of the Boulevard Montparnasse. Each track had its own two platforms in addition to several subsidiary areas. On the side of the Rue du Départ there were a departures ramp and a “court supérieur” or upper courtyard, with arriving travellers such as Ella Hoyack similarly accommodated on the southern side of the station, across from the descriptively named Rue de l’Arriver. Those visiting Piet therefore had to walk across the station via a passage joining the northern and southern courtyards before arriving across the street from Piet’s studio. The dreary main entrance in its grubby façade (fig. 16) led to an inner courtyard, with Piet’s atelier dwelling on the top floor of the north side, extending via a kink from an old building to a new section, as we see in a photo taken by Alfred Roth in 1928 (fig. 17). One then entered through a doorway in the centre of the old part and mounted a dirty stairwell to Piet’s level. Naturally the proximity of numerous steam trains meant lots of soot and noise, which presented a problem in the summer, with the windows open.

When Piet returned to Paris in October of 1919 he encountered a filthy and gloomy studio. The rent had not increased during the war years, but establishing himself as principal tenant took until December of 1921 and involved major present and future expense. In addition, refurbishing the studio was time consuming, so that he was not able to work for two months. Then

Conrad Kickert, who no longer had a Paris dwelling and found all the other studios at the Rue du Départ occupied, asked Piet if he could rent his small bedroom for himself and his second wife, Geertje (Gée) Kickert-van der Werff. Piet could hardly refuse, given that Conrad's had been his de facto landlord for the past seven years. Though the arrangement initially worked out well, Conrad having changed much for the better and become "his own man once more", it eventually proved unsustainable, as we know from a letter that Piet wrote to Theo van Doesburg and his second wife Hermina (Lena) Milius on 11 October 1919. When Piet left the Rue de Coulmiers and again returned to the Rue du Départ near the end of 1921, he was irritated to see that Conrad had cluttered his studio with his own paintings and antique furniture. Conrad left and his collection of paintings eventually moved via the Stedelijk Museum of Amsterdam to the Gemeente Museum of The Hague.

Piet was also deeply troubled by a lack of income, and could not paint for fully three months. Marinus Mathijs Ritsema van Eck, his faithful supporter, gave up his Paris residence, and vital negotiations with the Paris art gallery owner Léonce Rosenberg, who admired Piet's work, at first floundered for financial reasons. Piet even considered giving up on painting in favour of growing melons in Vleuten with Albert van den Briel or picking olives near Nice with dr d'Eck instead. He frightened his friend Theo van Doesburg with his profound negativity.²³

Piet then entered a motivational impasse, with his production diminishing drastically for about three years. Apparently his very slow theoretical writings and scrounging for money helped fill his time, while an advance of 500 guilders for ten works ordered by Léonce Rosenberg on 2 October 1921 for a forthcoming exposition,²⁴ and a single painting bought in instalments by the Dutch Sufi engineer Theodoor Karel (Th.K. or Kadir) van Lohuizen (fig. 34) staved off bankruptcy. During much of 1922, while still at Rue de Coulmiers, Piet can hardly have been frugal, as he managed to eat in restaurants instead of cooking at home.²⁵ By 1923, however, his production had virtually ceased. Carel Blotkamp wrote that "only two paintings are dated

²³ All this and more in Hanssen 2015, pp. 146-147.

²⁴ Piet told Sal Slijper about the agreement and put him on hold.

²⁵ Here we follow Janssen 2016, p. 113.

1923; not a single painting 1924.”²⁶ It was around that time that his popular flower paintings compensated for the dearth of regular income..

WIM STIELTJES AND ANTONIA MILGENS

Naturally Piet had attracted other visitors before the Hoyacks entered his life. In fact, several of the individuals spotted by Ella had already visited Piet’s studio complex before 1927. One example was the important Belgian abstract and cubist painter Marthe Donas, whom Piet encountered as his immediate neighbour in June of 1919, when he returned to his filthy studio apartment at 26 Rue du Départ. Marthe, who was artistically and personally allied to the adulterous Alexander Archipenko at the time, had contributed to the April number of *De Stijl* under the name Tour d’Onasky.

Piet never warmed to Marthe, who left Paris, seriously ill, in the summer of 1921, but he thoroughly bonded with the prosperous Amsterdam engineer Wilem Marie Emile (Wim) Stieltjes and his partner Gesina Antonia (Tonia) Milgens, who were not yet married at the time. They arrived in Paris in October of 1919 and, after a stint in a ruinously expensive hotel, moved into 26 Rue du Départ. Piet, we know, had moved on to the Rue de Coulmiers by November, leaving his place in the care of Conrad Kickert. That means that Piet and the Stieltjes could have socialized in either location, but it seems more likely that Piet was a guest in their home, where they coddled him, treating him to a home away from home that can hardly *not* have reminded him of the advantages of a traditional marital union. They ordered one of his paintings in February of 1920, which was a blessing given the state of his finances around that time.

Wim is mainly remembered thanks to the dusky Tonia, who has recently enjoyed a kind of apotheosis as a woman who triumphed over her lowly beginnings and brown skin colour to become a prominent activist. Tonia started life as the daughter of a black former slave and employee of a brewery and a white housemaid. Tonia was therefore of mixed race and brown, not black. Being brown carried no great stigma in better circles at the time, witness the aristocratic and rich children from the Dutch Indies who studied at Dutch universities and sometimes remained in the Netherlands as successful professionals and fathered offspring there. The children of Jo Suroto-Meyer

²⁶ Blotkamp 1994, p. 185, or Janssen 2016, p. 116.

and the Javanese prince Raden Mas Noto Suroto, who were particular favourites of Ella Hoyack, were therefore second generation “Indos”. Of course combining the genes of black and white people is likely to yield a darker complexion than will joining brown and white hereditary factors, but the latter outcome is rarely striking and may even be outright sallow and barely discernible. Tonia’s skin was a rich brown and probably worked to her advantage.

It is also easy to over-dramatize the importance of Tonia’s background. The plight of the numerous and largely white poor of Amsterdam was truly horrendous, witness the autobiography of Neel Doff, *Dagen van honger en ellende* (Days of Hunger and Misery), whose mother introduced her to prostitution to secure money needed to feed her large family. Tonia’s circumstances were not nearly that draconian. After a stint in a school for the poor around the time that her father died, Tonia was mainly raised and well-educated in an institute for the blind, where she eventually recovered sight in one eye. Starting as housemaid with Florentinus Marinus (Floor) Wibaut, a powerful international businessman, Dutch socialist politician and Amsterdam alderman, whose wife, Mathilde Berdenis van Berekom, was a dedicated socialist feminist, Tonia rose to become a prominent union leader as head of the *Nederlandsche Dienstbodebond* (Dutch Union of Domestic Servants). Clearly Tonia had some breaks, particularly with respect to her sound education and exposure to the Wibauts, but she mainly owed her success to her exceptional focus and determination.

Tonia had married the photographer Jan de Meijere in 1908, bearing a daughter and son in 1908 and 1910 and divorcing him in 1914. By 1918 she had become the celebrated model of Jan Sluijters and others, who clearly found her combination of warm skin with light makeup (fig. 14) intriguing. In 1919 she at once dazzled Wim Stieltjes when he accidentally encountered her at her Amsterdam address. Possibly Wim was ready for a new love interest, his wife, Judith Maria Paschen, having died on 2 February 1918. Wim took Tonia from Amsterdam, which was still almost a village, to the relatively anonymity of much larger and more cosmopolitan Paris, where an unmarried inter-racial couple would be unlikely to attract attention.

It is in any case doubtful that Piet Mondrian was much interested in Tonia’s background. No doubt her appeal for him was in part owing to her

dusky appearance, since Piet found coloured people attractive and admirable, an orientation that can be related to his love of jazz and the role of Paris as haven for black American jazz musicians during the Roaring Twenties. However, skin colour can't have been everything. Most likely the Tonia whom Piet met in 1919 was strong and self-confident, meaning she had presence, and yet she showed warm and supportive interest in him. He was simply ravished by her person from the moment he met her, so that she came to be essential to his joy of life.

While socializing with the Stieltjes, Piet was engaged in the writing and translation of a fourteen-page brochure entitled *Le Neo-Plasticisme, Principe général de l'équivalence plastique*. Published in Paris early in 1921, it accompanied five of Piet's paintings accepted by Léonce Rosenberg for "Les maîtres du Cubisme", an exhibition in the Galerie de L'Effort Moderne. Piet discussed the work in progress with Wim and Tonia and in a letter to Theo van Doesburg he reported: "They are open for the new but do not know what it is. That way I have had a lot of pleasure from my efforts now and then. They think the idea of the New Depiction grand and just but believe that it will take a long time before people are ready for it." It is a vital passage because it controverts the typically unreliable Michel Seuphor, who promoted Tonia's posthumous reputation in 1956 by claiming Piet had told him that "everything she said was worthy of attention, that she understood his art like no one else did." I believe that Ella Hoyack better fits the bill, since she is known to have helped Piet review and edit his writing on 16 October 1927 and 29 September 1928. As for Tonia, Michel did not specify the date that Piet is to have had in mind.

The Stieltjes also contributed to Piet's modest career as man of letters. Shortly after settling in Paris, he had published a near-delirious essay on his insatiable infatuation with "De groote boulevards" (The Great Boulevards) of Paris in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer* of 27 March 1920. The prose defies faithful translation.

Everything moves on the boulevard. Moving: creating and destroying. Everything creates – who dares destroy himself, again and again? On the boulevard one thing destroys itself into the other, visually. In slow and rapid tempo. Rapid change in the differentiation breaks the tension of the sensuality. Proportion is through abundance. Rapid movement breaks up the massive unity and all particularity. Destruction of the

particular is to arrive at unity – says the wise man. Negro head, widows cap, small shoes of a Parisienne, legs of a soldier, wheel of a cart, ankles of a Parisienne, chunk of pavement, part of a fat gentleman, knob of a cane, piece of a newspaper, base of a street lantern, red feather.

According to Léon Hanssen, who offered the preceding passage in Piet Mondrian's Dutch, "the article is written in a half-cubistic, half futuristic style" that reflects the constant alternation of supporting and opposing fragmentary impressions." According to Hanssen, Piet's conclusion was that "human life on the great boulevards has already been ... transformed into art."²⁷

Not surprisingly Piet's piece was not welcomed by the periodical, but it was successfully pushed by its art editor, none other than Theo van Doesburg. It was then positively discussed by the stellar Dutch author Lodewijk van Deyssel in the May 1920 issue of *De Gids*. To quote Carel Blotkamp, "he thought it a work by a true artist. It provided him with impressions not brought about by the most lively journalism."²⁸ The Stieltjes advised Piet to reply to Van Deyssel, which he did in a letter of 28 June 1920, enclosing a second sample of his writing, entitled "Klein restaurant- Palmzondag" (Small Restaurant – Palm Sunday), which was accepted for publication but delayed indefinitely.

Piet and the Stieltjes remained close until September of 1921 when, having run low on money, they moved back to Amsterdam, where they married on 8 February 1922. Apparently poverty pursued them after they returned to the Netherlands, and they had difficulty adjusting to life there. They did not return to Paris until May of 1925, Wim having inherited a small fortune with the death of his father.²⁹ We will encounter them in Ella's pocket diary for 1927, as well as in the subsequent Mondrian-Hoyack correspondence.

JONKHEER WILLEM FREDERIK ANTHONIE RÖEL

Another early Paris friend of Piet Mondrian, one who arrived in 1920 but did not make it beyond 1924, was *jonkheer* Willem Frederik Anthonie Röell (fig. 19). He was trained as engineer but chose to become a successful journalist and settled with his family in a country home, Villa Mirabeau, in Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, about twelve kilometres to the south of Paris. Willem first visited

²⁷ Hanssen 2015, p. 95. For two more bewildering passages, Weber 2024, pp. 214-215.

²⁸ Blotkamp 1994, p. 134.

²⁹ Hanssen 2015, p. 100, dug up all the information one might want.

Piet Mondrian's studio on the Rue de Coulmiers shortly before he published an article in *Het Vaderland* of 9 July 1920. Piet was still painting flowers at the time, which Willem admired, but he also fully appreciated the importance of Piet's abstract works. We next encounter Willem in Piet's studio in the autumn of 1924, at which time he particularly admired the closely observed water colours of flowers and in an article in *Het Vaderland* of that year, placed them in the context of Neoplasticism, calling them "feminine" and describing the individual blossoms as Mondrian's labour of love and "understood in their deepest essence."³⁰ By then he had published four articles about Piet and his art. A fifth and last article was to appear in *De Telegraaf* of 12 September 1926, six years before his premature death.

Piet Mondrian's water colours of flowers are of sustained interest because they contrast with his other work in that they openly celebrate nature and must have been immediately accessible to a substantial public even as they changed meaning. Weber illustrated a set of two versions of *Dying Sunflower* of 1908,³¹ which he related to Piet's concern about mortality and theosophic notions about the unique personality of individual blossoms and their femininity.³² With the advance of Piet's Neoplasticism in the late teens, the water colours, with their accessible evocation of nature and more varied colour, contrasted strongly with his non-representational works, remaining accessible to a larger buying public and a source of steady income.

If we believe Léon Hanssen, who followed in the footsteps of Willem Röell, Piet took those later flowers very seriously. Hanssen made elaborate claims for the feminine essence of Piet's flower paintings and for his dream of "hermaphroditic unity" of a male with his female counterpart.³³ This unity "comes about by synthesizing the female element of exterior beauty (form) with the male element of inner beauty (content)." In other words, Piet cleverly

³⁰ For a better summary of Röell's words, see Hanssen 2015, p. 151.

³¹ Weber 2018, fig. 28. See also Blotkamp 1994, figs. 29 (oil on canvas, 1908) and 30 (water colours on paper, 1909)..

³² Weber 2018, p. 309. Six years later Weber (2024, p. 105) claimed, dubiously, that Piet "infused each single blossom with a significance consistent with the Christian association of flowers with the Virgin Mary and the other female saints and with Theosophical doctrine, which accords each blossom her own personality." However, Piet never showed interest in Catholicism.

³³ Hanssen 2015, pp. 149-152.

accommodated flowers to his philosophy of art and life. But even if Piet successfully sold this “higher paradox”, as Hanssen called it, to David Shapiro and others, it is certain that Piet’s flower paintings were mainly about money. Hans Janssen calculated that Mondrian’s later flowers were so popular that between 1923 and 1926 he was able to “supplement his income by the equivalent of eight times the annual rent for his atelier.”³⁴

Curiously, despite his chapter-long digression concerning Piet’s evolved flower paintings, Hanssen did not consider possible formal development over the years. Carel Blotkamp rightly observed that compared to earlier flower paintings, the later specimen looked alike and were very nearly insipid potboilers: “The colours are soft and sweet, as with an advertisement for soap and perfume.”³⁵

THEO VAN DOESBURG AND NELLY VAN MOORSEL

Of even greater importance for Piet Mondrian were Theo van Doesburg, whom Piet called Does, and his partner, the pianist, dancer and artist Nelly van Moorsel. Nelly met Theo in 1920 and at once fell in love with him. Her Catholic parents opposed the connection so that she left home around the close of 1920, when Bob Oud and Lena Milius received her in Leiden. Lena, who had married Theo on 30 May 1917, was mainly a bookkeeper but did help edit *De Stijl*. Theo and Nelly did not marry because Lena, who was not in the least resentful, did not divorce him until 31 January 1923. Though Nelly did not marry Theo until 24 November 1928, she nevertheless became known as Nelly van Doesburg. They remained together until his death did them part three years later.

Theo and Nelly Van Doesburg visited Piet Mondrian in Paris at 5 Rue de Coulmiers in 1921 (fig. 18) as part of a lecture tour undertaken by Theo. By that time the theoretical fundamentals of De Stijl had been showing further cracks, the main issue being the introduction of architecture to Neoplasticism. The initiators were Bart van der Leek (who started off with applied art when very young), and Theo van Doesburg. Theo’s efforts met with some success by 1920 and he continued his collaboration with the young and later celebrated Cornelis van Eesteren until 1923. Piet initially showed interest, but for him both

³⁴ Janssen 2016, p. 116.

³⁵ Blotkamp 1994, p. 185 and fig. 133.

before and after De Stijl, the primary function of architecture was to serve as a setting for paintings, with his atelier becoming the focus for his experiments.³⁶ In articles in the March and May 1922 issues of *De Stijl*, Piet argued that architecture did not remotely qualify for inclusion in Neoplasticism, thereby angering Theo van Doesburg and Bob Oud.³⁷

That Piet did not mention Bob, a prominent architect and one of the founding members of De Stijl, is understandable, given that they were good friends. Bob had repeatedly visited Piet in his atelier on the Rue de Coulmiers in 1921, and was helping him sell his paintings. Piet was exceptionally productive in that location, so that he could use help with the distribution of his work. Though Bob gave up his membership of De Stijl, the two men remained friends. We shall see that they still engaged in warm and candid correspondence around 1928. Finally, Theo van Doesburg abandoned the movement in 1923, with Piet following suit, though he remained faithful to the founding ideas of his Neoplasticism.

On 1 February 1924 Theo and Nelly moved to a huge furnished atelier in Clamart, a handsome commune just to the south-west of Paris, where Piet visited them on Sunday, 17 April 1924 and met the German Dada artist Hannah Höch,³⁸ who was not impressed by his work. By that time Theo had openly taken distance from Piet's strategic proposition that an abstract artist may legitimately resort to representational work to secure a living, which, as the envious Theo likely surmised, Piet probably intended to legitimize his lucrative flower paintings. Theo then disgusted Piet when he stated in the July issue of *De Stijl* that he had come to prefer the appellation "Elementarism" over "Neoplasticism". That was when Piet also left *De Stijl*. The defection of his close friend and ally of most of a decade must have hit him hard. The two artists were reconciled in 1930 but were soon at odds once more. Theo was the only colleague whom Piet could not forgive. On 3 April 1930 he wrote to Louk and Ella Hoyack:

In a letter to [Joaquin Torres] Garcia, Van Doesburg has accused both Seuphor and C & C [Cercle et Carré] of all sorts of nasty things, and since the letter has regrettably become public, I have had to write Does that I

³⁶ "De Nieuwe Beelding in de Architectuur", Blotkamp 1994, pp. 136-140, figs. 99 to-106.

³⁷ "Onenigheid met Oud en Van Doesburg", Blotkamp 1994, pp. 146-149.

³⁸ Hanssen 2015, pp. 259-261 and fig. 19.

could no longer associate with him, something I greatly regret, but it would otherwise look as if I agree with him.

Obviously Louk and Ella knew who Van Doesburg was, because Piet did not bother to introduce him. In late February of 1931, Does' severe asthma forced him and Nelly to move to Davos, famous from Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (The Magic Mountain), where he died on 7 March, Piet's birthday. Piet's response to Theo's death was his only post 1924 contribution to *De Stijl*. Lena Milius and Nelly Moorsel attended his cremation together.

TIL BRUGMAN AND OTHERS

Still another early visitor to the Rue du Départ was the brilliant author and linguist Til Brugman, who had known Piet since 1908 and had become associated with De Stijl in a variety of capacities, including as a kind of membership secretary. Piet and Til corresponded over the years, so that we know that Piet kept track of Wim and Tonia after they returned to the Netherlands in 1922.³⁹ Both Carel Blotkamp and Léon Hanssen illustrated a poorly focused photo of Til with Piet in his atelier in 1927.⁴⁰ Piet presumably grasped the opportunity to discuss his Neoplasticism. It was Til who first translated Piet's *L'Art nouveau – La Vie Nouvelle* into English, as published by Hans Jaffé as part of his dissertation of 1956.⁴¹

We also have Paul Florus Sanders, an early Mondrian admirer who had met Piet in 1917 and, as music critic for *Het Volk*, lived in Paris for a full year in 1925. He urged his brother to buy a painting from Piet at a time when the artist was once again virtually destitute. Katherine Sophie Dreier, co-founder of New York City's Society of Independent Artists, visited Piet's studio in 1926 and bought one of his lozenge works. In addition the diary of the Hungarian photographer André Kertész, which was at last published as *Diary of Light* in 1987, mentions four appointments with Piet during 1926.

Last but certainly not least we need to mention Michel Seuphor (fig. 80), a Flemish avant-garde artist and critic who settled in Paris in 1925 and first

³⁹ Hanssen 2015, p. 100, and especially his online notes.

⁴⁰ Blotkamp 1994, fig. 140, who specified 1927, & Hanssen 2015, fig. 20, who proposed 1924. The photo was taken by Hannah Höch. According to Hanssen, it is preserved at the Berlinische Galerie in Berlin.

⁴¹ This edition was superseded by Holtzman and James, 1987.

visited 26 Rue du Départ in the late spring of 1926. He quickly became a good friend of Piet, who called him Nant. In 1956 he became Piet's first, though unreliable, biographer. We will next encounter Michel in Ella's pocket diary for 1928 and in the Mondrian-Hoyack correspondence, from which he emerges as an important connection between Piet and the Hoyacks, which lasted until the summer of 1933 when, as he explained in a lifelong series of ever less trustworthy recollections, he broke with Louk altogether.

CHAPTER IV: A CONCISE LIFE OF LOUK HOYACK UP TO 1927

Whereas one can extract a substantial life of Piet Mondriaan from any one of the monographs devoted to the artist, Louis August Hoyack makes for very slim pickings, with only my *Sufi Friends of Piet Mondrian* of 2017 to fall back on. Known as Louk, he was born in Rotterdam on 5 March 1893 and died in The Hague on 16 February 1967. We have an astonishing amount of information about him, so that the following material can be no more than a summary.

SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND YOUTH

To start with his social background, Louk was a fourth-generation scion of a distinguished family that had made its fortune from a trading emporium named L. Hoijack & Co. It was founded in Amsterdam in 1817 by Louk's great grandfather, Gottfried Ludwig Hoyack, who arrived in Amsterdam in 1812, perhaps to launch a Dutch branch of an already established business, as he appears to have been a man of substance.

Gottfried Ludwig married one Johanna Grave, who bore him four children in five years. Their oldest son was Ludwig Johan August Hoyack, Louk's grandfather after whom he was more or less named. In 1840 their first child and only daughter, Johanna Catharina, married Friedrich Wilhelm Hepner, who was born in Thorn, West Prussia (now Torún, Poland) in 1814. The Hepners soon began to play a major role in L. Hoijack & Co. and eventually ended up running the firm. The last of the Hepner line was one Wilhelm, who was born in 1875 and died on 9 July 1926 in a KLM plane crash over Belgium, which took the life of the pilot and only passenger. As we read in the *Leidsche Courant* of 10 July: "the *heer* W. Hepner, belongs to KLM's most faithful air travellers, who has already completed more than 100 flights. He was on his way to Basel via Paris. He was single and director of the well-known grain emporium Hoyack of Amsterdam." The Hoyacks and Hepners had made lots of money by then, but they had also garnered honours. In 1870, by decree of the King of Prussia, Ludwig Johan August Hoyack replaced Friedrich Wilhelm Hepner as Consul of the German League in Amsterdam. Ludwig was eventually decorated with the prestigious "Orde van de Nederlandsche Leeuw."

Louk's father, Friedrich Carl Hoyack, who was the younger of two sons of Ludwig Johan August, was born in Amsterdam on 3 March 1860 and died in Rotterdam on 3 April 1916. He became a partner in L. Hoijack & Co. in 1884, commencing his duties the next year. Not only did he marry, but he did so brilliantly. His catch was Brigitte Pauline baroness Sweerts de Landas Wyborch, a daughter of Coenraad Willem baron Sweerts de Landas Wyborch, whom he wed in Rotterdam on 24 April 1891. The couple had two children, our Louis August and his sister, Anna Maria Catharina. On 29 April 1920 she married *Meester* [Master of Jurisprudence] Gerrit Pieter van Tienhoven, the patrician director of the Utrecht office of the Rotterdamsche Bank.

As an indication of the prosperity of the family business, the *Leidsche Courant* of 17 September 1917 announced that "the firm L. Hoyack & Co. of Amsterdam has placed a gift of *f.* 10,000 at the disposal of the municipal government there for the benefit of charitable organizations in response to the fact that on 1 July the firm celebrated the day on which it was founded a century before." Ten thousand guilders was a small fortune back then, arguably the equivalent of a few hundred thousand dollars today. As the son of old money and the nobility, Louk had unassailable social status. Because sundry Hoyacks tended to have no children or girls only, inheritances of Hoyack money flowed as if through a funnel into his Louk's lap.⁴²

Louk received a sound classical secondary education at the venerable Erasmiaans gymnasium, or Erasmianum, of Rotterdam. He read voraciously as part of a group of six precocious boys who assigned each other parts in their home theatre, which included plays by Shakespeare, and kept in touch for the rest of their lives. Two of these youths were Hendrik Anthony (Hans) Kramers, who became a world-class theoretical physicist, and Julius Marius (Jan) Romein, Louk's immediate neighbour on Rotterdam's Westersingel,⁴³ who was to become a controversial leftist journalist and then professor of history. Jan's 1951 obituary for Hans first focused on the nature and importance of the group.

It was in those years that we tried to understand Descartes together and that we, in a small club of gymnasium friends--to which beside me, H.P.

⁴² For the circumstances and dates of Louk's inheritances, Horn 2017, p. 11.

⁴³ Jan's parents had limited means and occupied the floor above a piano store located next to the towering edifice of the Hoyacks.

Blok, J. Sj. Brouwer, H. Cramer and L. Hoyack – read as many of the modern classics as possible while, subconsciously, each of us prepared himself for the role that we would have to play later in life. It was our ‘Titanic’ time, in which the triumph of our growing self-awareness was clad in the tragicomical robe of our overconfidence. In the case of Kramers, in any case, we need to add: *apparent overconfidence*.⁴⁴

Yet Hans Kramers did not even attend the same school as the others, graduating from the Eerste Gemeentelijke Hoger Burgelijke School, called HBS, in 1911 instead. In 1912 he took the *staatsexamen* (the national state examination needed for university entrance). Jan Romein, a late starter because of typhoid fever in elementary school and spinal tuberculosis in secondary school, commenced with the HBS and then switched to the Erasmianum, which he left in a huff in 1913 before graduating, because of a quarrel with the principle, and then took the *staatsexamen* as well.

Whereas Jan Romein grew up in a Mennonite family, we have no indication of the roll, if any, religion played in Louk’s upbringing. Though his mother’s ancient family was Protestant, religion is never specified in Hoyack newspaper announcements. Jan was in any case a much better student than Louk. His report cards, which may still be found in the Rotterdam archives, show that he was a less than a mediocre student. He failed twice, thereby forcing his transfer to the Municipal Gymnasium of nearby Schiedam, where he was made to study under the close supervision of its principal. Louk was unhappy in Schiedam and made every effort to stay in touch with his friends, especially Jan Romein, back in Rotterdam.

EARLY PUBLICATIONS OF THE CRITICAL LEIDEN YEARS

After at last graduating, Louk studied at the University of Leiden, like his school friends, registering in Jurisprudence on 17 September 1913. He was to the manor born at this venerable institution, with two family members virtually running the place.⁴⁵ He took his Kandidaats examination (the first major set of

⁴⁴ For much more focused information, see Horn 2017, pp. 53-60, based on Henny Cramer in Molenaar, 1995.

⁴⁵ They were Louk’s uncle, Emile Claude baron Sweerts de Landas Wyborgh, and his cousin, Jacques Henry Leonard Jean baron Sweerts de Landas Wyborgh. Ample Wikipedia information establishes that they were both political movers and shakers.

exams) in Jurisprudence on 17 February 1915, but then apparently switched to independent reading. Louk had published poetry even while in high school, but in university he turned to literary criticism and theory, which he published in two periodicals, *Virtus Concordia Fides*, which was founded in 1912 to cater to the Leiden University community, and *Algemeen Nederlandsch Studenten Weekblad "Minerva"* (General Dutch Student Weekly "Minerva") a Dutch-Flemish interuniversity student newspaper, which Louk served as secretary in 1915, soon becoming its president. He stepped down one year later, but the 1916 *Almanak* of the Leiden Student Union (covering 1915) noted that great progress had been made in consolidating the mandate and circulation of the weekly during his term of office.

On 22 October 1914 Louk opened in *Virtus Concordia Fides* with a substantial piece entitled "Zola" in which he argued that Émile Zola was a genius because he developed the underlying premise of Arthur Schopenhauer and painted with great success the grubby and futile lives of men. He was attacked by Willem Johannes Leyds, a medical student, who derided the arrogant pessimist. Louk's piece is vitally important because it marks his emergence as a contentious author. He had not become a contentious person, however. In fact, he appears by all accounts to have been an engaging conversationalist who felt no need to address or defend aspects of his writings.⁴⁶ That simple fact explains how he made numerous friends over the years.⁴⁷ One of those friends was Piet Mondrian. In fact, the present study is in part an illustration of the two distinct halves of Louk's persona.

Louk's piece of 19 November 1914, entitled "Over Volksliederen" (about Folksongs), which was his response to a paraphrase of Salomon's sexually tinted Song of Songs which Jan Romein had published in the October number.⁴⁸ Louk argued with great eloquence that "folk poetry is the fertile soil from which all other lyricism proceeds." An appreciative Romein responded by dedicating a

⁴⁶ See Horn 2017, pp. 508-509, where I argue that Louk may not even have been truly committed to many of his ever-changing propositions and that he was not even truly serious about his mission as disseminator of the Sufi Message.

⁴⁷ For a list, Horn 2017, p. 6. Missing are inventor Willem (Wim) Stieltjes and his wife Tonia Stieltjes-Milgens.

⁴⁸ Never one to let a topic go, Louk returned to Salomon and his Song of Songs in articles of 1951 and 1952.

song in his heart to “L. Hoyack”. Louk was clearly displaying the agreeable side of his persona in the context of a long established friendship.

Much more typically Louk was a short piece of 28 October 1915, in which he tackled the subject of *tendenskunst* (tendentious art), being art with a message as opposed to art for art’s sake. Louk argued that art with a message can be great, witness Gothic architecture or Bach’s St. Matthew Passion, providing the underlying world view is sufficiently universal and profound. When the zeitgeist is fragmented and infected by ideologies, however, *tendenskunst* is doomed to become crass propaganda. We shall see that Louk came to believe that the twentieth century had an abysmal world view, one that he blamed for what he deemed to be the sterile art of his times.

The third item, which is of most immediate interest, was Louk’s book review of 23 September 1915 of *Het nieuwe wereldbeeld* (The New View of the World) by Mathieu Schoenmakers. Louk argued that Schoenmakers’s venture to reconcile science and mysticism was not to be dismissed out of hand, but that the author was a charlatan who did not know his philosophy or science and lacked “truly great mystical intuition.” Louk was probably right to dismiss Schoenmakers, but it was nevertheless arrogant condemnation, coming from a man who generally ignored science and who never demonstrated great mystical intuition himself.

INDEPENDENT STUDY IN LEIDEN AND AFTER

We recall that Louk studied jurisprudence until 1915, when he likely turned to independent studies. His interests no doubt included all sorts of esoterica, with concentration on metaphysics, as opposed to physics, cosmology as opposed to astronomy, and wide-ranging and, sometimes arcane aspects of history, philosophy and religion. He was presumably exposed to Theosophy, which could explain his interest in Schoenmakers, but it was not a lasting presence in Louk’s writings. Nowhere in his dozens of publications do we encounter the name of Madame Blavatsky or an exposition of her optimistic doctrine of a single superior religion of the future. Whereas Piet Mondrian stuck to his own art-centred version of Theosophy for the rest of his career, Louk rarely committed himself to anything and, to resort to the vernacular, remained all over the place to the end. His conversion to Sufism should have led to a less complex and more introspective personal world view. That it did not was because Inayat as mystic scarcely interested Louk. He instead approached his

mentor as an intellectual. In the process Louk habitually contaminated Sufism with his own wide-ranging interests and ideas.

The death of Louk's father in 1916 gave him the financial independence needed to do as he pleased. On 10 June 1917 he moved to The Hague, where he continued to read widely. One work that Louk almost certainly read was the magisterial *Das Antike Mysterienwesen* (The Ancient Mystery Cults) of 1909 and 1919 by Dr. Karel Hendrik Eduard de Jong. This scholar's grasp of his sources was rock solid but, when it came to interpreting them, he could think much like Louk Hoyack. De Jong began his exposition with the strange ideas of the Austrian Physician Franz Anton Mesmer, known as "mesmerism".

Following the example of Paracelsus, J.B. van Helmont, Fludd, W. Maxwell and others, F. A. Mesmer, who despite his errors and blunders was not a charlatan, attempted to provide a scientific foundation for the belief, originating in ancient times, that illnesses could be healed by a force issuing from a magnet, or one issuing from human beings, which is analogous to that of a magnet. He maintained that there exists an interacting influence between the heavenly bodies, the earth and universally distributed fluid of incomparable fineness which tolerates no empty space and is suited to receive, multiply and communicate impressions of all movement.

De Jong went on to explain how, according to Mesmer, this force of "animal magnetism" may be harnessed through acts of will and with the aid of the manipulation of bodily members and the use of conductors made of wood, iron, or glass. The healing process involves necessary crises in the subject which announce themselves through convulsion or sleep." Like Louk, De Jong simply assumed that intelligent people would believe in astrology and be prepared to approach the most improbable metaphysics with an open mind.

Though Louk became a follower of the Indian guru Inayat Khan almost immediately upon first meeting him early in 1924, this did not mean that he then avoided De Jong, who visited him on 1 December 1925 and 7 April 1926, as recorded in the first two diaries of Ella Hoyack. Worse, Louk still continued to interact with De Jong for three more decades. To understand this we must consider that he was a respectable if controversial scholar with a *cum laude* doctorate in classical languages from the University of Leiden, where he

lectured on Roman religion. And yet he also became lecturer in parapsychology at this prestigious institution in 1940. Obviously such a combination would be unthinkable today.

CONVERSION TO SUFISM AND THREE SURESNES SUMMER SCHOOLS

Louk Hoyack reported on his conversion to Sufism in the so-called Smit-Kerbert Collection, a compilation of personal recollections of Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan (now accessible online) that was assembled by Johanna (Shireen) Smit-Kerbert around 1940 to 1941. Louk wrote that he had travelled from Munich back to The Netherlands early in 1924 to hear Inayat speak, his curiosity having been sparked by *jonkheer* Carel Frederik Eduard (Eetje or Yussouf) van Ingen (fig. 20).⁴⁹ Mightily impressed by Inayat Khan's compact but regal presence, Louk attended a second lecture, which confirmed him in his conviction that "this Easterner blessed by God was the Messiah of these times." Louk's first interview with Inayat, set up by Yussouf, occurred almost at once. Louk soon became Salamat, meaning health, and learned as much as he could from Inayat at the Suresnes Summer Schools of 1924 to 1926, after which the guru returned to India, to die there on 5 February 1927.

⁴⁹ Van Hoorn 2010, fig. 215 depicts Yussouf with his famous actor son Eric Inayat Eduard in Noordwijk in 1926, four years after he became a Sufi.

CHAPTER V: LOUK HOYACK AS LOYAL BUT DEFICIENT SUFI

This chapter establishes at some length that Louk Hoyack was simply not to be trusted to provide a concise, clear and reliable picture of Inayat Khan and his Sufi Message. Louk's early decision to present himself as spokesman for Western Sufism was essentially evidence for a lack of self-knowledge that was to plague him for decades to come, witness his reaction to the translation by Cecile Dorothea (Cile or Manohary) Voûte of Inayat's Khan's *Moral Culture*, which appeared in the February/March 1941 issue of *Het Uitzicht*. We will encounter Manohary and her sister Clara Cornelia (Cor or Gawery) Voûte as pillars of Western Sufism, so that Louk ought to have been more deferential.

The first little chapter of the book is of particular interest with an eye to current world problems. Inayat Khan here takes issue with a certain kind of cosmopolitan tinted ideal of solidarity to the disadvantage of more limited feelings of attachment, doing so to such a degree that he admits to preferring nationalism 'over the mentioned license.' This is a remarkable correction to the instruction of a Teacher who, as mystic, proceeded from a broad universalism. It is true that this remained his final reference point, but his experience of the West taught him to be suspicious of certain immature examples of the fruit of the spirit.

Predictably Inayat's paragraphs in question do not remotely warrant Louk's attempt to claim Inayat Khan for his own Fascistic political agenda. With the 'mentioned license' Inayat meant the folly of looking after one's compatriots while neglecting one's family and the like. His main point, however, was that "It is the one problem of modern society that people limit themselves to the thought of nationalism and do not move beyond that." Louk, we shall see, was obsessed with nationalism, whereas the overall direction of Inayat's life and teachings remained truly international in character. The above quotation shows that Louk knew this at some level, but it had become an inconvenient truth at this stage of his descent into reprehensible folly. Reader not interested in such ideas per se may therefore safely skip the present chapter without missing anything essential to understanding Louk Hoyack's relationship to his friend

Piet Mondrian. On the other hand, readers intrigued by the nefarious workings of the mind of Piet Mondrian's sparring partner are invited to proceed to the last heading of this chapter: "The Insurmountable Problem of Louk Hoyack".

THREE ARTICLES OF 1925 AND 1926

During his first Suresnes Summer Schools of 1924, 1925 and 1926 Louk sought out personal instruction from Inayat Khan, who was by then into the last three years of his life. Where other disciples were looking for practical spiritual guidance and could manage with eight-minute interviews with Murshid, Louk said he found them way too short to deal with his complex questions.

Remarkably, therefore, he managed to misunderstand much of both the spirit and letter of Inayat's teaching. Nevertheless he felt equipped to take on the role of commentator on the Sufi Message. It was this misunderstanding that was to play a subsidiary role in his interaction with Piet Mondrian.

When Louk was not in Suresnes from June to September, he picked up his life in the Hague. One important addition, however, was that he began to lecture and publish on Sufism. On 19 February 1925, several months after the conclusion of his first Summer School, Louk lectured at the Odd Fellow House, on 428 Keizersgracht in Amsterdam on the subject of reincarnation. Then, not long after his return from the 1925 Summer School, Louk published articles in the November 1925, December 1925 and January 1926 issues of *De Tempel*. The long subtitle of this bizarre publication establishes that it dealt with every possible aspect of what we might call New Age thinking, namely "Eastern and Western religion, occultism, spiritualism, theosophy, astrology, Freemasonry, cabbalism, Anthroposophy, psychical research, Rosicrucian cosmology and mysticism." Beating Louk to it was Johanna Classina (Jo or Zulaikha) van Ingen-Jelgersma, who was later to become the widow of Yussouf van Ingen. Her piece of 1924 consisted of an introduction to the Sufi Movement and purported to be a translation of a lecture by Inayat Khan. Apparently neither Zulaikha nor Salamat considered that they might not be doing Inayat a favour by exposing him to such dubious company. Possibly, however, they were not able to find a more mainstream periodical prepared to take on their esoteric material.

In Louk's first piece, entitled "Pier-o-Murshid Inayat Khan en de Soefie Beweging" (beweging being movement), Louk opened by defining the nature of an initiatory relationship, which requires complete intellectual subjugation of a pupil to his spiritual guide. In case anyone should doubt the wisdom of such a

relationship, Louk assured his readers that “all of the East, yes, all of humanity is there to witness that only the spirit of unqualified trust in the one who is spiritually superior has wrought all great things.” Thus a highly debatable proposition was turned into indisputable truth. He went on to observe that “Sufism is therefore mysticism, not occultism.” That was certainly true for Inayat Khan but hardly for Louk Hoyack, who was fatally attracted to the occult. However, Louk described the occult in terms of activities as opposed to ideas.

The soul of humanity does not cry out for a scholar who describes and explains, for a philosopher who expounds and explains, for an occultist who performs miracles and magic, but the times call for a man who again shows us the way to eternal truth [...], for a man whose flaming heart will reawaken the ideal of God in the hearts of men. Such a man is Inayat Khan, raised in British India at the intersection of two cultures that are united in his person, the best and highest that East and West have produced in the course of time,

Earlier Eastern teachers have lacked Western finesse, Louk claimed. “But with Murshid, what a play of definitions and divisions, what fine transitions, what powerful hierarchic syntheses.”

Louk touched on three divisions in the Sufi Movement, “the Church of All, the brotherhood, and the inner school that constitutes the order.” With “the Church of All”, Louk meant what was soon to become known as the Universal Worship. After questioning the need for its ritual, he came to its half-hearted defence: “The Sufi service is therefore a ceremony and those who understand this will gain from it the uplift that her designer intended.” Louk referred to the Universal Worship only rarely, but he apparently assumed that Inayat Khan had designed it for the benefit of his followers (as opposed to questioning a ritual invented by his disciples). As for the brotherhood, Louk remained vague but probably intended the Confraternity of the Message, a repetitive ritual of lasting but relatively subservient importance for Western Sufis. The inner school, which Louk should have mentioned first, is for those who desire the enlightenment and extasy to be gained from mystical discipline. As for another of the recognized “Activities” of Western Sufism, the Healing, Louk did not mention it at all. He therefore offered us an invaluable indication of how the Activities had been developing in the nearly two years since he had

joined the Movement. The Universal Worship and the Confraternity were more or less fully formed, but the Healing was apparently not yet in place, waiting to be sanctioned by Inayat.

Louk's second short piece, entitled "Pir-o-Murhid Inayat Khan on Good and Evil", stressed that there is only one law and that is the law of love."

He who has love in his heart, the Murshid teaches, no longer has need of laws and norms because he himself creates the law for every moment and instance from the fullness of his soul. There are laws and norms because there is no love. Moses gave the Jews the law. What else could he do for a raw and primitive desert people? But Christ, who taught more evolved men, said love your neighbour. Christ is come to fulfil the law [...]. It is for those of higher will and aspiration that Inayat Khan opens the way of love, which transcends the law.

In other words, if we embrace the law of love, the problem of good and evil will take care of itself.

The third and most important of Louk's *De Tempel* pieces, at least in his opinion, was "Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan on the Sufi Movement and the Unity of Religions", which came out in January of 1926. It summarized Inayat's *Unity of Religious Ideals*, which, though not published until two years later, codified but also edited his lectures on the topic. Louk explained that there is unity behind the world's religions, each of which rose and fell, only to be replaced by the next great revelation of history, as suited to the needs and receptivity of a new era. With all the great prophets of history inspired by the same "guiding principle", they are sequential bearers of the same message, being that God is one.

Louk should have known better than to advance the concept of the unity of religions as Inayat's innovation. Presumably his conviction that his murshid's ideas were divinely inspired kept him from looking for antecedents, of which there were plenty, with Annie Besant's *The Ancient Religion* of 1897 as key example. Starting with Helena Petrova Blavatsky, Annie's teacher, the common conviction of a great variety of Theosophical groups and splinter groups was that they professed the true underlying religion that somehow validated all others. Piet Mondrian also belonged to this tradition. Sophia Saintbury-Green, who was the principal architect of Western Sufism, had been a pupil of Annie

Besant and still thought along theosophical lines when she became one of Inayat Khan's leading followers. For her, therefore, the new religion of Western Sufism embodied the unity of religions, whereas Inayat did not intend to found a religion at all. It should also be emphasized that the concept of a cyclical history of religious revelation was certainly his. Murshida Green's particular way of thinking was reflected in Louk's "Guiding Spirit", which was a Neo-Christian restatement of Inayat's Islamic "Guiding Light".

The concept of the unity of religions is arguably both tautological and nebulous. After all it is hardly surprising that when we undertake to strip the world's religions of everything that makes them recognizably Hindu or whatever, they should end up looking much alike. The question is, what would be left for us to look at? For Madame Blavatsky, it was occult secrets. Inayat Khan, by contrast, was scarcely interested in the occult. As with his metaphysics, he was extrapolating from his own mystical experience of the Creator and the "Holy book of nature". In other words, he likely believed that at a fundamental emotional level, experience of the one true God transcends the diverse dogmas and rituals of individual religions. The trouble with such intelligent thinking is that it was much too personal and abstract to sustain a Western religious movement. Murshida Green's solution was to invent the Universal Worship, which replaced all the lost ritual with ritual of her own. Aided by like-minded mureeds (being disciples of Inayat Khan) she placed six scriptures and six candles for the world religions on an altar, with Inayat's candle and small body of autograph work at the centre. Devised in London after Inayat Khan had left for the Continent in 1920, he sanctioned the ceremony in 1921, during a return visit to the city. Louk Hoyack did not much care for the Universal Worship, but he had no problem with a literal interpretation of the unity of religions, which he transformed by claiming that the things specific to them all may be embraced because they don't matter.

He who understands [...] that there is only one religion, there being only one God, will honour God in all forms of religious worship, will see the truth behind all the dogmas and teachings that exist in the world, will bathe with the Hindu in the Ganges, will join the Mohammadean in his mosque, and bow his head before the host with the Catholic.

We can only hope that Louk intended “so to speak”. He presumably did not expect Western Sufis to join Catholics in Holy Communion or Muslims in evening prayer. His proposition was nevertheless related to the ideas of Inayat Khan, who advised his mureeds to stick with their own particular faith, with Sufism as a philosophical supplement.

A PUBLISHED LECTURE OF 1927

We read in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* of Tuesday 13 December that “the Amsterdam centre of the Sufi movement is holding a public Brotherhood on coming Friday at 8 Pm in the great hall of the Dutch Women’s Club, Keizersgracht 580. The *heer* L. Hoyack will speak about the “Philosophy of Sufism”. The *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* of 20 December informs us that Louk had spoken on the same subject the previous evening “in the room of the Sufi order in the Scheepmakershaven (this being the Sufi church of his native city). This time, however, we find a solid summary of the content of the lecture, which was repeated in the newspaper for 21 December. It is well worth quoting in its entirety because it further documents Louk’s complete conversion to Sufism.

The speaker identified a present day tendency to expect to receive answers to every question concerning life; a yearning for insight. In the past the masses had their exoteric religion, while mysticism and philosophy were preserves of a few.

The great world religions were brought to the world by prophets without emphasis on philosophical reflection. Christ, for instance, taught the world about love and self-sacrifice, but gave no philosophical answers. The Sufi message given to mankind by Murshid Inayat Khan is a ray of the same light that shone through the prophets of the past, but the ray is coloured by the spirit of the times, which calls for reflection. The Sufi message is philosophical.

Murshid Inayat Khan was the first prophet to bring philosophy to the world. However, the philosophy of Sufism must not be thought of as a systematically constructed plan. No enlightened soul can ever build a system. A system is the dead precipitation of the living experience of truth. The enlightened soul experiences truth as being above understanding, as rising above what can be expressed. It is a mistake to

think of philosophy as synonymous with a system. The wisdom of an enlightened soul wells up like an inexhaustible fount of inner experience of truth. It was the task of Murshid Inayat Khan to give comprehensible expression to what is above comprehension and experienced individually.

However. The speaker warned against the idea that knowledge, or any pronouncement concerning truth, is an end in itself. The knowledge that we call philosophy is only a means to helping modern man order his powers of thought so as to more easily bring his heart to that purity whereby he can increasingly experience truth within himself.

Surely no journalist could have concocted this convoluted presentation. It must surely be a virtual quotation, as opposed to a paraphrase, of the words of Louk Hoyack. It is curious to hear a philosopher place truth out of reach of any philosophical system, but we repeatedly encounter that basic conviction on the part of our Sufi sage. Clearly Louk's claims for Sufism were extravagantly far-reaching and subjective. Inayat Khan was altogether too modest and realistic to imagine that he had an answer to every question, but disciples like Louk assumed that he did. Remarkably some of them even credited him with having given them superior business or investment advice. Theo van Hoorn for instance, learned in the summer of 1924 that Yussouf and Zulaikha van Ingen had repeatedly travelled from Arnhem to Suresnes to consult Inayat about fiscal matters.⁵⁰ It was Louk's conviction that his Murshid had all the answers, coupled to his elitist assumption that he himself was particularly well-equipped to interpret them, that led him to pontificate about complex social problems that scarcely interested his great teacher. Most worrying is that within a year of Inayat's death, Louk was promoting him as a great prophet, like Christ and the others, only more philosophical, whereas Inayat himself believed that Mohammed brought the last universal message.

THREE MORE ARTICLES OF 1928 TO 1929

Just over two years after the death of Inayat Khan, near the end of a hectic visit of the Hoyacks to the Netherlands, Louk found time for some journalistic outreach. As "our Paris editor" he placed a substantial article about the Sufi

⁵⁰ Van Hoorn 2010, pp. 179-180. The Van Ingens must have bought their tile factory in Woerden not long after that, given that Louk visited them there in the winter of 1927.

Centre of Inayat Khan in the *Nieuwe Leidse Courant* of 3 January 1929, including captivating descriptions of Saint-Cloud and Suresnes. These provided a valuable supplement to Louk's *De Tempel* publications. They were followed by a summary of the universal vision of the Sufi Master who "saw Him [meaning God], in the religions of the Hindus as Wisdom, in Buddha as Compassion, in Zoroaster as Purity, in Moses as the Law, in Christ as self-sacrifice, in Muhammad as Unity, all, the truth in everything" It was Louk's elegant elaboration on Inayat's ecumenical tolerance.

Two days later came a sequel describing Inayat Khan's American and European travels as well as his annual Summer Schools in Suresnes. We encounter a valuable description of Murshid's sitting under a tree, with his disciples lined up waiting to speak to him. This detail is confirmed by a precious photograph from the summer of 1926 (fig. 31). Louk, of course, did not stand in line, needing two hours of his mentor's time. He noted that Inayat never seemed to tire. As he had died of exhaustion almost two years before Louk wrote, it was a chilling observation.

After another two days followed a third substantial contribution that included a description of Suresnes' Lecture Hall and the accoutrements of the Universal Worship, or Sufi religious ceremony, which Louk had already mentioned half-heartedly in the first of his *De Tempel* articles of 1925, where he called it the Church of All, rightly thinking of it as a concession that Inayat Khan had made to his followers. Louk had presumably included it in that trio of publications only for the sake of balance and completeness.

THE RETROSPECTIVE SMIT-KERBERT COLLECTION

Much later, around 1940, Louk Hoyack published a third record of his Suresnes experiences from 1924 to 1926 in the so-called Smit-Kerbert Collection. Unlike his three articles in *De Tempel* and his three pieces in *De Nieuwe Leidse Courant*, which were intended for a general public, the Smit Kerbert retrospective was meant for a Sufi audience. Although published most of two decades later than the *De Tempel* pieces, it was again ostensibly based on the wisdom that Louk had garnered straight from Inayat's mouth in the mid-twenties. We can therefore speak of synoptic Sufi gospels, of which the first two were temporally closer to the source and the third arguably more engaging because it offered a sense of the personal interaction of teacher and disciple.

Louk's Smit-Kerbert contribution establishes that he was bowled over by Inayat's majestic presence, as were numerous other mureeds. Uniquely, however, Louk stressed the importance of Inayat as the key to his personal venture of synthesizing mysticism and reason. He mentioned four topics that he discussed with his mentor. Most importantly, Louk was almost at once convinced that Inayat Khan was "the Messiah of these times" and asked him to confirm that he was in fact the new World Teacher. Murshid is to have answered Louk's question with an evasive "you said it", which Louk interpreted as a circumspect "yes". We have seen that in his second *De Tempel* article, Louk came within a hair of stating that Inayat was the new Messiah. Here, however it was fully out in the open.

We know from the introduction to Theo van Hoorn's *Recollections of Inayat Khan* that other Sufis, such as Murshida Sophia Saintsbury-Green, Catherina Elisabeth (Hayat) Kluwer-Rahusen, Johanna (Moenie) Kramer-van de Weide (who was the wife of the famous and more moderate Amsterdam-School architect Pieter Lodewijk (Piet) Kramer), and more guardedly, Theo van Hoorn himself, were also of the opinion that Inayat Khan was the Messiah of their times. In the case of Murshida Green, Inayat as the new Christ played a particularly literal role in her thinking, complete with miracles, a way of the cross and a descent into hell, but Louk also believed that Inayat embodied the living spirit of Christ, the "Spirit of Guidance". That was his conviction at the time, whereas Inayat believed that Mohammed was the very last of the prophets.

Louk wrote that since he and his fellow mureeds knew that Murshid was a World Teacher, they had a grave responsibility to disseminate his teachings. This notion had little to do with Inayat Khan's own thinking, however. Being an intelligent and realistic man, he did not expect to gain a large following or have widespread impact. He recognized that Sufism, mainly meaning the pursuit of harmony through meditation, was not for everyone. In fact, he and his brothers always attracted friends and supporters who were not practicing Sufis. His own expectations for the future of his Sufi Order were therefore realistically modest.

At the moment when I shall be leaving this earth, it is not the number of followers which will make me proud; it is the thought that I have delivered His [Allah's] message to some souls that will console me, and

the feeling that it helped them through life that will bring me satisfaction.

Significantly, Theo van Hoorn twice quoted this passage in his *Recollections* and yet failed to grasp its meaning, clinging to his own notion that Inayat Khan was deeply concerned about spreading his Message. Here, as elsewhere, we have evidence of Murshid's culturally inculcated inability to speak out bluntly on truly important matters. With most of Inayat's mureeds believing that he was the World Teacher or new Christ, his insistence that "Sufism is not a religion" did not stand a fighting chance.

Although Louk Hoyack fully realized that Inayat Khan was not a systematic thinker and "preached" spontaneously and associatively, he also believed that the substance of the lectures was divinely inspired and therefore infallible. That explains the dangerous opening proposition of the first of Louk's *De Tempel* articles, that the initiatory relationship requires the complete intellectual submission of a disciple to his (or her) spiritual guide. However, that was Louk's conviction. Inayat Khan showed no interest in procrustean relationships. Instead he made his mureeds feel special by taking an interest in each and every one of them. In Louk's case, Inayat is to have told him that "there is something noble in your character, and that is everything", encouraging him "to continue in this direction." The trouble was that Inayat Khan told all his followers to carry on with whatever interested them and was culturally ill-prepared to say "no", with the result that the Activities, including Louk's personal one, flourished at the expense of his esoteric Sufi Order.

Secondly, Louk is to have told Inayat Khan that he understood and embraced his alternative to Theosophic reincarnation. That likely explains Louk's Amsterdam lecture of 19 February 1925. Inayat is to have told him: "I teach these things to all my mureeds, but you have the understanding." Louk explained that "many mureeds could not understand or adequately appreciate the subtle doctrine of 'the meeting of souls', the first because they were not able to correct their Theosophical convictions and the second [the lack of appreciation] because they were trapped in the personal." Louk, however, did not subscribe to Inayat's belief in the meeting of departed souls in the hereafter. He was instead concerned about the meeting of returning and earth-bound souls in the hereafter so as to pass on "prenatal karma", as he explained in his *L'Énigme du destin* of 1933. Obviously anyone "trapped in the personal"

could take a shine to Murshid's afterlife but have no interest in Louk's version of things.

Thirdly, Louk mentioned that "in flagrant contradiction to modern astronomy, Murshid taught that the sun was the centre of the universe and that the stars are in some way dependent in their emission of light on light from the sun." In this connection, Louk quoted Inayat's cryptic communication that "some atoms reflect the light of the sun more, and these are the planets and stars." Louk could have taken such propositions with a grain of metaphorical salt without undermining the essence of Inayat Khan's Message, but he chose to advance them as literal truth, which meant a losing battle with the findings of modern astronomy, which Louk waged with masses of obscurantist non-evidence in his opening books of 1929 and 1930. It was a war that Inayat Khan himself had not felt necessitated to wage. Louk, however, believed that his Murshid was divinely inspired, so that the intuitive notions of an Indian mystic could be expected to take on and refute Western science.

Perhaps most worrying is that Louk tended to oversimplify the cosmography of Inayat Khan, for whom Divine Being, or God, permeates nature but is ultimately located beyond it. That, to resort to current labels, made him a panentheist. Louk, on the other hand, tended to equate Creation and nature. In other words, Louk at times drifted precariously close to outright Pantheism. In addition, Inayat thought of opposites in terms of dualities that are different points on one scale instead of distinct and opposing entities, but Louk eventually succumbed to Christian notions about good and evil as distinct opposites. As for Inayat's conviction that the courses of His manifestation in Creation are analogous to musical vibrational ones, it apparently did not capture Louk's imagination at all. Only once, in his *De toekomst der machine* of 1931, did he allude to people who "vibrate at a morbid frequency" and live "estranged from universal harmony", but he did not include music in this isolated comment.

Finally, Louk quizzed Inayat Khan about his concept of historical process, to which Inayat is to have answered: "Humanity as a whole evolves physically, intellectually and morally, and then it diminishes." A cyclical theory of history is therefore another recurring theme in Louk's writings. Inayat's own theory concentrated almost exclusively on a sequence of religious revelation brought

by six Messengers of God, namely Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed.

At a more molecular level, Inayat Khan generally deplored the pervasive materialism of Western Society but did not engage in detailed social commentary. Starting in the early thirties, in marked contrast, Louk engaged in detailed social criticism concerning just about every aspect of life, agriculture, trade, education and art of his times. The only element that linked this material to Inayat's Sufism was Louk's insistence in his *Wereldziel* of 1932 on education along the lines of the Summer Schools of Suresnes, with emphasis on spiritual maturation under the guidance of an inspired teacher. Unfortunately, Louk also extolled an ideal of a self-sufficient nation state ruled by an absolute monarch or some other autocrat. By 1938 Louk praised the achievements of Mussolini's fascistic Italy, and he moved on to open praise of Nazi Germany by 1940. Had Inayat lived to ripe old age, he would no doubt have abhorred this development.

Inayat Khan and Louk Hoyack further differed in that Inayat, being a Muslim, believed that Mohammed was "the seal of the prophets", whereas Louk thought that the current circumstances called for the new Message of Inayat Khan. Around a decade before his Smit-Kerbert contribution, in his *Spiritualisme historique* of 1932, Louk had fully embraced Inayat Khan's Muslim conviction and openly championed the Koran as the last and also the best Message. The Koran certainly has its moments, but it hardly expounds a law of love.

Clearly Louk was engaged in revisionism around 1941, bringing his position in line with standard Sufi wisdom, which did not include Islam in connection with Inayat Khan. Sophia Saintsbury-Green, for instance, repeatedly mentioned that Inayat brought the best of the East to a troubled West, but she did not know or want to know that the East of her Murshid meant Muslim India. She showed elaborate respect for Maheboob and Ali Khan, but without a hint of their Muslim identity. With respect to Inayat's younger brother Musharaff, "who is almost entirely of the East," Sophia again mentioned India, but not Islam. Inayat Khan's Islamic identity had become the best kept secret of Western Sufism. However, such Sufi thinking only fell back on a widespread tendency of the times to relate Indian mysticism to Hinduism, as when in a letter of 18 August 1932, Piet Mondrian referred, perhaps disparagingly, to

“the great Hindu wisdom” of Inayat Khan. This is hardly surprising given his one-track adherence to Theosophy.

To develop Inayat Khan’s greater Message, as I have called it, required an interdisciplinary approach, if only because his disciples had beseeched him to lecture on a great variety of topics. In addition, Louk rejected traditional philosophy and theology because he believed they were doomed to fail. Not only was he prepared to look for insights in several academic and esoteric disciplines but in line with his own experience with his Murshid, he believed in the kind of superior wisdom that is conveyed through an initiatory relationship, in which the gifted student can sense his intuition and inspiration grow and begin to master the rudiments of mystical experience. To quote from his *Wereldziel* of 1938:

See here the core philosophical source of the future; personal inspiration prepared and developed by mystical teachings and exercises. Instead of long deductions and arguments, [will come] reliance on authority and then verification of what has been accepted through personal observation of life and by intuition. Philosophy therefore becomes truly deductive. Moreover, it becomes applied philosophy in the broadest sense of the term, meaning the application of fundamental truths obtained through teaching or through personal experience to the diverse problems posed by life.⁵¹

However, Louk did not give a single concrete example of how his personal experience confirmed some aspect of the mystical vision of Inayat Khan.

THE INSURMOUNTABLE PROBLEM OF LOUK HOYACK

We have at last arrived at the heart of Louk Hoyack’s fundamental problem. His project to systematize Inayat Khan’s Message was nearly moronic. The obvious problem was that mysticism is by its very nature not at all about reason.

Perhaps unexpectedly Léon Hanssen was particularly insightful in this matter, since we have not been able to identify a personal Sufi connection. Clearly he did conscientious research, as is demonstrated by his extensive summary of

⁵¹ *Piet Mondrian’s Sufi Friends* of 2017, pp. 30-44, includes this quotation on p. 35 as part of a comprehensive study of Louk Hoyack’s entire slate of publications, including many that he wrote well after his friendship with Piet had come to an end. It argues that he was more an obscurantist than a philosopher.

contemporary and recent publications, but he did not emphasize any item or items or reveal a preference.

The Sufism à la Inayat Khan was not in principal antimodern. It confirms mankind of the twentieth century in his striving after happiness, inspiration, justice, power and peace, but he does warn against the misleading way to reach the “five great things”, namely the intellect. Via the intellectual route one does not reach peace and simplicity, but the confused and complicated. Modern man “by preference reads difficult books, he wants mental effort; much thinking, many deeds, many words, and with that he fills his life.”⁵²

Louk was the complete embodiment of such a deluded modern man, except that he did not just prefer to read difficult books but also to write them. It is possible, however, that Inayat was actually thinking of Louk. After all, which mureed would have broached intellectual questions during his or her eight minutes of Inayat’s time? Louk was probably the only mureed vacuous enough to have pestered his murshid with hours of complicated metaphysical and cosmological enquiries.

It is telling that in all his writings, Louk did not once describe or even allude to Inayat Khan, himself, or any other person engaged in meditation. It could well be that he consistently hid an important aspect of his own life. Our only proof, however, is a mention in Ella’s diary entry for 27 July 1928 of his attendance at a Sufi group meditation session called the Silence, or Samadhi Silence in full, this being one of the so called Activities of the Suresnes Summer Schools. Yet the practice and benefits of meditation were absolutely central to the teaching and person of Inayat Khan. Although he no doubt preferred meditating in solitude in the dunes near Katwijk (hence today’s Sufi temple in that location),⁵³ Inayat Khan could meditate in any silent and darkened room, and that in company. Shaikh-ul-Mashaik Mahmood Khan has told me that his uncle Inayat would even meditate on a train and miss his stop as a consequence.

⁵² Hanssen 2015, p. 386. It is not possible to extract his precise source for this important quotation from his long online note.

⁴⁷ For the importance of Katwijk for Inayat Khan and Western Sufism, Van Hoorn 2010, pp. 289-302.

It is one of the surprises of the Sufi *Recollections* of Theo van Hoorn that he actually attempted to describe the experience of the Samadhi Silences led by Inayat, which Theo enjoyed so intensely that he rushed back and forth between Amsterdam and Suresnes to be able to take part in them. After Inayat's very last Silence, Theo undertook to express his gratitude to his mentor. It is a personal, repetitious and intangible passage, especially coming from a man about to return to the pressing demands of his work as accountant, but it tells us more about Sufism than do all of Louk Hoyack's deliberations.

Initially Murshid sits before me, motionless and inscrutable. Then suddenly something happens that may well be considered comprehensible and very natural to the more deeply initiated, but that for me will remain the greatest wonder that I experienced in Sufism. Hardly have I directed my thoughts to everything I have to say to Murshid and to express them through my eyes, and Murshid undergoes a gradual and unmistakable transformation. The intensity with which he at first expressed his thoughts to me, begins to decrease slowly and changes into quiet expression of sympathetic attentiveness and absorption.

And a great wave of satisfaction and gratitude comes over me. I have the feeling that I am fully understood. This gives me the courage to repeat my thoughts that I had been allowed to experience, not to ask for more but to entirely give thanks for what Murshid had given me since we were first together. And I still see Murshid before me as a trusted friend with whom I wished to express the joy concerning unexpected and undeserved happiness.

Then at last I have the feeling that I have said all I have come to say. And because I have already asked too much of Murshid's time, I expect that he will now bring our meeting to a close. But Murshid remains motionless even now. Completely enveloped in deep peace, and I think I understand him.

And then, before closing his eyes, Murshid sends me a long look of farewell. Little do I suspect at this moment that it is a genuine farewell, a farewell until a reunion in a better world.

Theo's kind of deep emotional contact with Inayat Khan is something never recorded by Louk Hoyack. Writing only a year or so before Theo penned most of his *Recollections*, Louk's contribution to the Smit-Kerbert compilation only recalled his lengthy esoteric cosmological and metaphysical discussions with his Murshid. In marked contrast, Theo also wrote that he meditated by the sea in Bergen aan Zee, on the balcony of his Amsterdam home {address} and in the Concertgebouw of that city, transported ported by nature or by music. Inayat Khan would no doubt have approved.

It seems unlikely, however, that Louk spent much time communicating with the Absolute. He avoided boredom by compulsive reading and writing. Much of Louk's incessant production probably involved more intellectual hubris than self-knowledge. For example, he picked up on his fundamental cosmological and metaphysical concerns in an article in *Haagsch Maandblad* of August 1937, which discussed René Descartes. After an appreciative discussion of Descartes' courage and vital contribution to the great tradition of thinkers such as Spinoza, Kant, Locke, Hume, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Herbart, Louk expressed the hope that the Cartesian world view would come around to embracing his own mystical verities. In short, Louk very nearly presented himself as the culmination of centuries of reasoned and innovative thought.

We only encounter the full measure of Louk's compulsiveness in the years after the end of what we could call the Mondrian years. No doubt aided by the proximity of the Royal Library in The Hague and the University Library of his alma mater in Leiden, he churned out eight books, including a volume of aphorisms, and an astonishing number of articles, with eight items only coming out after his death. Equally astonishing is the range of topics, especially concerning the nature and historical development of sundry religious thought. Aside from Inayat Khan, Christ and Mohammed, we encounter Saint Paul, Kritias, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Abraham, Salomon, Toynbee, Sorokin, Teilhard du Jardin, Spinoza and Schilling, in that order, as well as correspondents such as Johannes Jacobus Poortman, Lambertus Antonius van den Linden and his longtime friend Dr. Karel de Jong. His last two books concerned *Spinoza als uitgangspunt* (Spinoza as Point of Departure) and *Schopenhauer, waarheid en dwaling* (Schopenhauer, Truth and Fallacy). Along the way Louk also wrote and translated poetry.

Predictably, given his conviction that the divinely inspired cosmography of Inayat Khan was the ultimate authority, mainstream science is conspicuous by its absence. Louk even managed to confuse the combustion of gas with the flow of electrons in his “Is electriciteit een vorm van vuur?” (is electricity a kind of fire?) in *Uitzicht: onafhankelijk maandblad voor geestelijke stromingen* (Viewpoint: Independent Monthly for Spiritual Currents) of April 1942. Even when not outright obscurantist, most of the material was not particularly urgent or important. Louk, however, simply needed the almost incessant activity of reading and writing to thrive.

It is perhaps even more important to know that Louk tended to pessimism. A pessimistic streak can be traced back to his student days, when he praised Émile Zola for his brilliant grasp of “the grubby and futile lives of men”. We shall see that his social commentary of the early thirties criticized every aspect of the current machine age, arguing for a return to a rural eutopia. By 1935, he had arrived at promotion of virtual dictatorship of the nation state. Nothing about Dutch society of his time, including its art and architecture, education, science, medicine, commerce, etc. met with his approval. With his *Wereldziel* of 1938 he had relinquished all hope for a better future.

Unless I am mistaken, pessimism was foreign to Inayat Khan’s character, just as Piet Mondrian at the very least resisted it, his Theosophy offering great hopes for the future, but it pursued Louk into the grave. In a letter that he wrote to his life-long friend Jan Romein on 2 February 1960, Louk speculated about what new blights might yet be visited on mankind in a post-colonial age, concluding that “there is one thing that one must recognize in all of this, and that is the enormous power of evil in reality, even though one also sees the good triumph on occasion, if [only] after much time and at the cost of infinite exertion.” Even though Louk always continued to present himself as a Sufi thinker, it is impossible to recognize Inayat Khan’s Sufism in such dark ruminations.

The general direction of Louk’s thought is doubly perplexing because he seems to have been a man of decidedly epicurean orientation. Several of the photographs that we have of him show him basking in the sun with friends in Bergen aan Zee or Théoule-sur-Mer. No matter where we look, we find a gregarious man making the best of life. Louk therefore emerges as a kind of split personality, with his friends, including his fellow Sufis, separate from his

reading and writing. Louk must also have seen numerous beautiful sights during his travels. Yet not once in his huge production did he describe or even mention a beautiful vista, not even that of his Villa Boetia. Here again we can compare Theo van Hoorn, ravished by a view of the Mediterranean Sea as seen from the “La Mortola” botanical gardens, located near Ventimiglia, to which he devoted most of three full pages.⁵⁴ Louk did express concern about the threat posed by the heavy traffic of the machine age to the setting of popular touristic sites, but his failure to describe the beauties of a view might have one think that “he was about as sensitive as a plastic toilet seat.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Van Hoorn 2010, pp. 245-248. Theo (p. 335) also mentioned the nighttime view of the Bay of Cannes as seen from Louk’s Villa Boetia.

⁵⁵ The quotation comes from Holden Caulfield, the troubled young hero of J.D. Salinger’s famous *The Catcher in the Rye*, when describing a hated schoolmate.

CHAPTER VI: ELLA CRAMERUS AS PROSPECTIVE WIFE

LOUK HOYACKS MARITAL HISTORY BEFORE ELLA CRAMERUS

By far the most important event in Louk's life was his meeting with Johanna Daniëla Cramerus, known as Ella, his third wife, whom he married on 11 January 1927. Louk had twice married and divorced in The Hague, which was an expensive habit. His first wife, a Flemish refugee named Alice Paternoster, may not have cost him a fortune, but Frederika Maria (Frieda) Hopman, whom he married on 8 June 1923, was no doubt a different proposition. We don't know why Louk and Frieda moved to Munich, but it could well have been that Louk realized that his Dutch currency would go a long way there. Germany was at the final height of the hyperinflation of 1921 to 1923, which was a consequence of the vindictive reparational payments exacted at the Treaty of Versailles after World War I, and which ended by 1924 with the introduction of a stable currency and an influx of foreign credit. Louk was in Munich at the time of the so-called Beer Hall putsch of 9 November 1923, after which Adolf Hitler was tried for treason. Louk's tenacious conviction that Germany was an unfairly persecuted nation and Hitler its visionary champion may well have originated at that time.

Part of the expense of Louk's divorce must have involved the maintenance of his son Hendrik Lodewijk, whom Frieda had borne in Munich on 12 December 1924. With her death in New York in 1932, Louk likely boarded the boy somewhere in the Netherlands, possibly with his sister in Utrecht. We do not know what role, if any, Louk's son played in his life over the years. Hendrik Lodewijk (henceforth H.L.) only resurfaces for us in Uploo, Noord Brabant, on 25 October 1948, when he married Kiddy Lavies, the daughter of Louk's fourth wife, Toos van der Straten, by her first husband. Kiddy's marriage to H.L. did not last and she moved in with Toos and Louk at 10 Madoerostraat in The Hague on 21 August 1952. On 11 March 1955 she remarried with one Gerhard Jan Smit in New York City and moved to Rotterdam, where she died on 9 March 1956.⁵⁶ On 28 January 1966 H.L.

⁵⁶ Kiddy apparently resented H.L., as her *persoonskaart* gives Smit as her only husband.

married one Johanna Francisca van Busselen, who was born in Utrecht on 21 January 1930, about six years after H.L. himself. Both H.L. and his wife were listed on Louk's funeral announcement of 20 February 1967, which means that Ella must have learned about them from Louk. H.L. died in Utrecht on 29 May 1991. His wife died in Nieuwegein, near Utrecht, on 14 January 1992. They had no children, meaning the end of the Hoyack dynasty.

There is a point to this digression because Hendrik Lodewijk played a negative closing role with respect to our story. Ella died in Scheveningen on 12 June 1979, after a fall down the stairs of Verzorgtehuis (nursing home) Strangeduin, located on 59 Gevers Deynootweg, only three weeks after she had moved in. The caretaker, one Bert Alleman, reported that the next occupant of Ella's suite, who was an unidentified female friend of his, found boxes of still unpacked papers and disposed of them because Hendrik Lodewijk refused to come by to examine the material. Who knows what was lost? Fortunately Ella's precious pocket agendas of 1925 to 1928 somehow survived. Ella had presumably dealt more responsibly with her husband's valuable papers upon his death, or else we would not have the many letters that he received from the likes of Piet Mondrian, Jany Holst and Jan Romein.

THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION OF ELLA CRAMERUS

Because she played such an important and sometimes independent role in the life of Piet Mondrian and the Mondrian-Hoyack correspondence, it is necessary to present an indication of Ella's background. Born in Hilversum on 5 April 1891, she was two years older than Louk. She died in The Hague on 8 July 1979, outliving him by more than twelve years. Her parents were Jan Daniël Cramerus, a Hilversum stockbroker who died on 9 April 1892, after whom she was named, and Engelina Catharina Charlotte Donleben, who married in Soerabaya in the Dutch Indies on 12 June 1886. Jan Daniël died in Hilversum sometime shortly before 27 December 1890, a few months after Johanna Daniëla must have been conceived and a little over four months before she was born. On 17 March 1892, Engelina married one Willem de Beijer, who was born in Scherpenzeel in 1850 and died in The Hague on 26 January 1933. Louk and Ella feature in his funeral notice in *Het Vaderland*.

Ella was presumably raised as a member of an extended De Beijer clan. That was to be expected because a brother of her biological father was married to Anna Maria de Beijer, who was a cousin of Willem de Beijer, Engelina's

second husband and Ella's stepfather. Both the De Beijer and Cramerus clans had ample means as well as important connections. Willem's father, Justinus de Beijer, had married Anna Helena baroness Six on 22 April 1847. Similarly, Jan Willem Cramerus' sister, Clara Eugenia, had married *jonkheer* Adriaan Willem Quarles van Ufford on 13 May 1875. In short, Ella belonged to approximately the same social class as Louk, which cannot be said for Frieda Hopman, who was a daughter of a twice bankrupted wallpaper hanger.

As for Ella's schooling, she almost certainly did not attend university. Identifying her secondary school education presents a problem. Whereas Louk's prestige six-year Gymnasium education has survived more or less intact to this day, Ella's alternatives were phased out long ago. She likely attended the five-year HBS, like Hans Kramers. It existed in two streams, namely HBS-A and HBS-B, with the first stressing languages and economics, and the second leaning more to mathematics and physics. Ella was presumably a HBS-A graduate. Both streams included training in three foreign languages, French, German and English, but no Greek or Latin. There is no evidence that Ella studied painting and became a painter, as Léon Hanssen has stated in passing.⁵⁷

THE LEISURELY LIFESTYLE OF ELLA CRAMERUS AND HER FRIENDS

Ella comes into focus thanks to the pocket book diaries that she kept from the beginning of 1925 to the close of 1928, which are now preserved at the RKD in The Hague. Of these four diaries, those of 1927 and 1928 are the most important in connection with Piet Mondrian. Ella wrote her diary entries in pencil, joining sentence fragments with periods but without introductory capitals. She commenced her diaries only two months before she met Louk Hoyack. Ella had married Jan Adam George Gerlo in The Hague on 29 July 1918, divorcing him there on 26 January 1926, a year before she married Louk. Whether it was Gerlo or Ella's parents who financed her modest but privileged lifestyle, is not clear, but she apparently did not need to work and spent much of her time meeting over tea with a few women friends who had ample time for discussing their day and reading. There was Marthe Semey, the sister of Jacobus Fernandus Adolphus (J.F. or Fer) Semey, a gifted Flemish Art Deco painter, interior designer, furniture designer and weaver, who was then associated with H. Pander & Zonen, a once famous furniture emporium.

⁵⁷ Hanssen 2015, p. 388. Weber 2024, p. 290, called her "an amateur painter".

Marthe and Fer were also the parents of a young son named Eric, whom Ella also saw often. The Semeys soon became friends of Louk as well. Early in 1938 he published a highly appreciative article in *Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift* about Fer's designs, which feature warm wood, curves and comfortable pillows and are totally unlike the work of Gerrit Rietveld, with its primary colours and straight lines that were also favoured by Piet Mondrian and that we find in his studio.

Close to Fer Semey was one Julius (Jules) Luthmann. He was a cultivated and well-travelled architect who had opened an office in The Hague in 1923. He is best known for his huge radio transmission tower in Kootwijk. Significantly, Jules was a bachelor. One year older than Ella, he may have been a romantic interest of hers. He continued to drop in her even after she had met Louk. On 14 February, for instance, he visited Ella from 11:30 PM until 2:30 AM, proving she was an emancipated woman by any standard. That he was not remotely handsome⁵⁸ probably did not matter to her, or else she would never have married Louk Hoyack (figs. 57, 70 and 82). Of interest is a trip with the Semeys and "Wouda" to Wassenaar, a wealthy suburb of The Hague, on Sunday 31 April 1925 to have for lunch at Hotel-Restaurant De Kieviet and a meeting with one Piet Wansink. Wouda was an architect who had settled in The Hague in 1916 and designed furniture for H. Pander & Zonen from 1917. He was in their full-time service from 1924 until 1933, when he replaced Fer Semey. It is of interest in connection with Ella and her circle that Henk Wouda and her friend Julea Luthman received honourable mention in 1928 for their design for the League of Nations building. Ella already knew Piet Wansink before she met him in Wassenaar, for he had visited her at 10:30 in the morning of 18 April. Everything indicates that Ella had close ties to an artistic circle.

Another close friend of Ella, and then of Louk as well, was Jo Soeroto-Meyer, the wife of the gifted and prolific Javanese poet Raden Mas Noto Soeroto, and mother of three young children. The first two, Rawindro, who was born in 1918, and Dewatya, born in 1922, were great favourites of Ella, as was Eric Semey, who was also born in 1922. Finally, still another member of her circle was Jeanne (Jen) van Hoytema-Dutilh, about whom we know very little other than that she was born in 1856 and therefore much older than Ella. Jen

⁵⁸ See the photo in the current online Wikipedia entry.

who was childless, had become a widow in 1924, when Hendrik Willem van Hoytema died. It seems that she remained more a friend of Ella than of Louk.

ELLA CRAMERUS' INTEREST IN ART AND ESPECIALLY IN LITERATURE

Ella must have been interested in architecture and interior decoration, as she included information about her room and its accoutrements. She tells us that “the essence of architecture is plasticity. The essence of plasticity is to give shape to space.” Small sketches of fashionable-looking young women and the like indicate that she took an interest in the visual arts in general. More important is that Ella Cramerus read widely. From her diary mentions of the books that she lent to her friends, we are able to extract a picture of her literary taste. One does not encounter canonical works of world or Dutch literature except for Nico van Suchtelen’s Dutch translation of Dante’s *La vita nova*. A scholarly item is *Ausgelöste Klänge* (Triggered Sounds) of 1916 by the Dutch-German historian, literary critic and later Nazi, André Jolles. Its subtitle, *Briefe aus dem Felde über Antike Kunst* (Letters from the Field about Antique Art) reflects the widespread conviction that the art of antiquity provided the foundation for the western tradition. A book entitled *Drie vrouwen ideologen* (Three Women Ideologist), which has proved impossible to trace, suggests a measure of feminism. *C’est la lutte finale: six mois en Russie soviétique* (It is the Final Struggle: Six Months in Soviet Russia) of 1923 by the French left-wing journalist and activist Magdeleine Legendre Paz (or Marx), which Ella lent to her friend Marthe Semey, indicates that some of their many conversations centred on social issues. *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (The Note Books of Malte Laurids Brigge) of 1910, Rilke’s only novel, is an unexpectedly adventurous item. One of its themes, the alienation and inequality caused by large cities and so-called progress, heralds social thought of around 1930, including books published by Louk in 1931 and 1932. Presumably he donated this work to her library. Her diary does not include a single overt reference to religion until Louk brought Sufism to her life.

CHAPTER VII: ELLA CRAMERUS AND LOUK HOYACK AS SUFI COUPLE

Ella Cramerus had met Louk Hoyack by 4 March 1925. She then put him on hold for several months, perhaps while trying to patch up her relationship with Gerlo, but in late November of 1925 Louk broke through triumphantly. They socialized extravagantly and merged their contacts. A shared artist friend was one “de Moes”, most likely Bernard Moes, whom we encounter twice in May of 1926. Moes was a copyist and painter, but also a musician. He visited Louk and Ella in Paris in the spring of 1928, when they saw him off from the Gare du Nord on 21 April. He still shows up in Ella’s diary later that year. It seems likely that it was Louk who contributed Moes to their circle.

More important for the present study was Hermina (Olga or Zus) Mensink. Olga had become a Sufi in the summer of 1924, and Louk had likely met her at that year’s Summer School. She had married her first husband, Bernard Alphonse Rutger (called B.A.R.) Dezentjé, in The Hague on 28 August 1920, when she was only nineteen years old, but divorced him on 29 July 1925, immediately after their journey to the Dutch Indies. She then married Gerhardus (Gerard) Kervel on 3 October 1925, so that the two show up as “the Kervels” in Ella’s diary by the close of that year. The personal connections look almost incestuous. B.A.R. and Louk had already become friends at university. B.A.R. and Gerard probably knew each other from related family enterprises in the Indies,⁵⁹ and the former married Frieda Hopman, Louk’s second wife, on 13 March 1926. Finally, B.A.R. was to serve as witness at the wedding of Louk and Ella most of a year later. In addition, waiting in the wings, was the promiscuous poet Adriaan (Jany) Roland Holst, who was ever yearning for his dear Zus Mensink, the first and lasting love of his life.

In the meantime Louk introduced Ella to the Sufi Centre of The Hague, and on 3 April they attended a lecture by “Mrs Saida v. Tuyl [sic]”, being Henriëtte Willebeek-le Mair, wife of Hubertus Paulus (Sirdar) baron van Tuyl van Serooskerken (fig. 21),⁶⁰ senior Sufis who played an important role in our

⁵⁹ Ella’s first husband, Jan Gerlo, probably shared that background and was also wealthy. He died in Soerabaya on 30 May 1942, most likely as a victim of the Japanese occupiers.

⁶⁰ Van Hoorn 2010, fig. 240, for the couple, 242 and 243 for Saida playing the *vina*.

story. The idea, of course, was to turn Ella into a committed Sufi, which appears to have succeeded brilliantly, since she remained a Sufi for the rest of her life. We learned from her reading that she was not at all religious, so that it was as if the Message of Inayat Khan was being written on a blank slate.

On 6 April Louk showed up chez Ella in the morning, but a “bad quarrel” ensued. They then dined with Zus Kervel, joined by Eetje van Ingen, whom we already know well as Louk’s Sufi friend Yussouf, and Marthe Semey. Ella added: “later more misery with Louk”. Disruptive quarrels of this kind were routine for Louk and Ella. They continued to occur sporadically over the years and generally dissipated within a day or so.

No event was too trivial to be included in Ella’s diary. On 12 April, for instance, she and Louk went to Voorburg (next to The Hague) for “poffertjes”, being a kind of mini-pancakes. On 2 May Ella visited “Mies”. She was Maria (Mies) Haakman, with whom Ella stayed overnight once.⁶¹ On the 9th and 10th Louk journeyed to Utrecht and back by himself, probably to see his sister. In the evening of 22 May Ella was with Jules, with Marthe dropping by briefly. On 24 May she travelled to Noordwijk (on the west coast) with Marthe, Fer, Louk, and an unidentified brother of Jules. On 29 May she went to the House of Lords restaurant and danced with an unidentified “Ate”.⁶² Ella also underwent extensive instruction from a young professional astrologer and sculptor, Wilhelmus Bernardus Vreugdenhil, on 21 April, 6 May, 26 May, 28 May and 1 June, most likely at Louk’s instigation. The last Vreugdehill visit occurred on 25 June, the day before Louk and Ella headed for Paris together.

FELLOW SUFIS, DINING AND CULTURE IN SURESNES AND PARIS

Louk and Ella then attended the 1926 Suresnes Summer School together, that being the third of his Sufi Summer Schools. Louk appears in only two of the surviving annual group portraits of those gatherings.⁶³ The portrait for 1925 has

⁶¹ We know that Mies’ maiden name was Thijssen and that she had married Herman Lucretius Jacques Haakman on 11 June 1904. Born in 1880, she would have been eleven years older than Ella.

⁶² The very old premises were named in 1917 and razed in 1986.

⁶³ Van Hoorn 2010, figs. 123 and 124. For the whole group, Van Hoorn 2010, figs. 119-145. The first two date from 1922 and 1923. The photos of 1922, 1923 and 1924 were taken in the garden of Fazal Manzil, Inayat Khan’s residence. From 1926 on the location was in front of the Lecture Hall (which was completed in 1925), except for 1932, which was taken inside

been lost, as has the photo for 1927, but after that we encounter Louk only in 1929 and 1937. As for Ella, she does not appear in even one of the twelve surviving group portraits. That is particularly surprising for 1929 and 1937, as one would expect her to have been in Suresnes with her husband. The portraits were taken on 5 July, Inayat's birthday. That could indicate that the Hoyacks tended not to show up at the Summer Schools until after that date. Even a mid-July arrival would have left two months until mid-September.

Ella's pocket diary for 1926, describes the location and activities of that Summer School. For instance, Ella was initiated on 20 July by baron Sirdar Van Tuyll, and on 16 August, Louk lectured in the morning and Inayat in the afternoon. Ella appears to have been more vibrant and fashion conscious than most of the matrons and young women in Suresnes. Louk himself told Mahmood Khan, the afore-mentioned son of Maheboob Khan, that his great uncle Inayat used to refer to Ella as "your girl" because he had trouble relating the vivacious and fashionable divorcee to his previous exposure to more sedate and conservative women. Even so, she enjoyed a modest but rapid Sufi career. She was ordained as a full member or Cheraga on 12 September, the day before the 1926 Summer School came to an end. In the meantime Inayat Khan worked to the bitter end, lecturing on 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 12 September, and conducting the last of his exhausting Samadhi Silences on 11 September.

The Hoyacks settled in the Art Nouveau Hôtel Lutetia in Paris. Located at the intersection of the Boulevard Raspail and Rue du Sèvres, it was and remains a luxury hotel.⁶⁴ That the Hoyacks used it as their pied-à-terre for months on end suggests that Louk's finances had recovered from his recent divorce from Frieda Hopman. They met with sundry Dutch mureeds. A key fellow mureed, Floris (Murshid Huzurnaváz) baron van Pallandt (fig. 22),⁶⁵ had tea with them in the evening of 2 July. In the evening of 8 August the Hoyacks visited Floris van Pallandt and on 3 September he visited them until three in the morning. Floris was a Paris-based diplomat and the son of Sarah (Sarojinie) baroness van

the Lecture Hall. All the photos and concomitant information came from the collection of Mahmood Khan.

⁶⁴ The rich pre-World War II history of this hotel, with guests such as Pablo Picasso, André Gide, Peggy Guggenheim, Josephine Baker and James Joyce, makes for fascinating online reading. Truly disturbing are the events during the German occupation of Paris, when Nazi functionaries took over.

⁶⁵ Van Hoorn 2010, fig. 211.

Pallandt, a prominent Sufi who was to become Piet Mondrian's contact person in Suresnes (fig. 24), and also the younger brother of the Sufi sculptress Charlotte baroness van Pallandt, who was to render a bronze bust of Piet's revered therapist, Mohammed Ali Khan. Floris wrote Louk's obituary in *De Soefie-Gedachte*, where he indicated that many Sufis thought that it was a mistake to try to systematize mysticism. However, he also noted that Louk had been the best of friends.

In addition they met four members of the De Vries Feyens family, fellow Sufis, whom Louk presumably already knew from the 1924 and 1925 Summer Schools. Edward (Fazil) de Vries Feyens and his wife Catherina, called Cato (later Cateau), had left Utrecht and settled in Saint-Cloud along with their children, Lodewijk (later Zahir) and Liesbeth or Liesje (later Ratan) after he was ruined by an unscrupulous or incompetent business manager. Lo and Liesje were ten and six years old in the summer of 1926, but we see them as adults in a family photo of 1934 (fig. 26). Louk and Ella spent the evening of 8 August with "de Vries Feyens and his wife", joined by "Palland[t]". That Ella did not call her Cato or Cateau suggests that they had not yet become close friends. On 24 August Louk and Ella had lemonade with the Feyenses.

Adeh (Salima) van Braam, was another frequent contact (fig. 23).⁶⁶ As gifted leader of the Amsterdam Centre, she must have been a rewarding companion around 1926, before her hearing deteriorated alarmingly. Ella talked to Adeh on 16 July. Two days later she talked to Joop, the wife of Yussouf van Ingen, and Adeh before attending a silence run by Murshid. On 19 August she (or she and Louk) spent "the entire day" in Fontainebleau with Adeh and the "Toulon v. d. Koog family." Adeh's sister was married to Meinhard van Toulon van der Koog, explaining the reference. The next day in the afternoon it was "the Feyenses, Adeh, Mary de Haan and Louk and I." This Mary was celebrated by Theo van Hoorn for taking over from Adeh when the latter was incapacitated by her grief at the death of Inayat Khan.⁶⁷

To continue with Adeh van Braam, the Hoyacks took a walk with her on 22 August. On 25 August Ella walked with Adeh while Louk participated in a collective interview run by Inayat in Suresnes. The next day Ella and the Toulon van der Koog family had lunch at Adeh's place: "Then with all of us to the

⁶⁶ Van Hoorn 2010, fig. 223.

⁶⁷ Van Hoorn 2010, p. 233.

Musée Guimet and drank tea on the Champs-Élysées. In the evening with Grietje (Bhakhti) Eggink-van Stolk in the Mureed's house. Later lecture by Saida [van Tuyll] in the [lecture] hall." Five days later Ella and Adeh were in the Café da la Paix in Paris together. The Hoyacks also went to Paris with Adeh and Cato, had lunch with Cato in Duval and dinner in l'Opera in the Chaussée d'Antin. Ella then talked with Adeh after a lecture by Murshid, while Louk was visiting the Feyenses.

Other Sufi friends also joined Louk and Ella on outings. On 22 July they went to Versailles and talked to "Mrs. van Tuyll on the train". On 12 August it was a picknick in Garches, a community just to the southwest of Suresnes, with Louk, the van Tuylls and Van Spengler, followed by Paris, with or without the others. We already know that the Van Tuylls were Sirdar baron van Tuyll van Serooskerken and his wife Saida, whom they must have previously encountered on 3 April 1926, when they attended a lecture by Saida. Van Spengler was *jonkheer meester* Gerard Willem Jan (Shanavaz) van Spengler, who then had tea with the Hoyacks. On the afternoon of 17 August Ella headed for Paris with "Cato, Bella van Egmond and Elsje." Bella was in fact Isabella Aletta Basset.⁶⁸ Ella sat with her in "the Garden hotel" on the evening of 18 August because of a quarrel with Louk. Bella's farewell followed two days later. Elsje must have been Elsje Groutars, who was married to a diplomat clerk whose Sufi name was Aktar and who lived on the Rue d'Argenteuil, around the corner from Maheboob Khan's Suresnes summer home.

Of course Louk and Ella also visited Paris and its surroundings together. On 29 June 1926 they danced at Langer, this being Restaurant Langer on the Champs-Élysées, which advertised in English "tea and supper dances year around." They spent the evening in the Grand Palais. An excursion of 1 July took them to "Versailles and Trianon". On 10 July they visited the Quartier Latin. A day later again, Ella was in the "Bal du Moulin Rouge" with Louk, perhaps the most frivolous of their outings. On 15 July they danced in the Chateau de Madrid, this being a hotel-restaurant located in the Bois de Boulogne. On the afternoon of 10 August they "met Murshid on the train" after

⁶⁸ Bella had divorced Albert van Egmond on 16 November 1920, but must have thought it advantageous to continue with her husband's more prestigious name. Born in 1878, she would have been thirteen years older than Ella.

Ella had visited Adolphe, her hair dresser, and Louk had ordered an overcoat. Adolph's premises were located on 124 Rue Saint-Honoré. Ella mentioned him nine times from 26 February 1926 to 17 September 1928, but there must have been many more such visits over those three years.

The most ambitious of the Hoyack outings took place on 5 August, when they left for Chartres in the morning to see the cathedral and "the enamels of the Church of St. Pierre." They also went on more local outings, such as "tea and dancing" in Saint-Cloud on 6 July and six days later, "wine at the prospect" (*het uitzicht*) of Suresnes, being the Terasse de Fécherey, from which one can enjoy a panoramic view of Paris. An enigmatic entry is "watching dancing couples on the beach" on 13 July, "in honour of *le quatorze Julliet*." Ella must have intended some place on the shore of the nearby River Seine. On the afternoon of 17 July they enjoyed a trip on the "Seine boat", followed by a small beer in "the garden." On 8 August they had tea in La Belle Cycliste in Suresnes.

The Hoyacks remained in Hôtel Lutetia after the close of the 1926 Summer School in mid-September. Their last two months in Paris were punctuated by museums, sightseeing and friends. On 15 September they visited the Louvre. On 17 September they took a tour by carriage to Garches. The next day they enjoyed a Café Liégeois in La Bagatelle in the Bois de Boulognes, where they encountered the Feyens family. Ella met with Cato on 22 and 29 September as well as on 6 and 17 November. On the latter day she dined with her. As a rare negative touch she judged it to have been "a lame day." On 21 September the Hoyacks went to Galeries Lafayette. On 24 September they inspected the Asian art collections of Musée Guimet. "Floris van Palland[t]" had tea with them in the Lutetia at 4 pm of 20 September and again on 1 October. Ella added "later upward" meaning to their room, where they had more tea. On 27 October they even got around to studying the Renaissance and Baroque furniture in the Louvre. A third visit to the Louvre on 12 November was followed by still another row.

Louk and Ella also developed their habit of dropping in on sundry Paris venues for tea, café crème, or café Liégot. On 15 September they again danced at Restaurant Langer, where they had wine, an exceedingly rare choice of beverage for them. On 30 September, after house hunting in the morning, they went on to Cato before heading for Paris, where they drank tea in a Kardomah

coffee shop (a chain that had expanded from England), ending up for more tea at the Lutetia. On 1 October they again went house hunting in the morning and spent the afternoon in some illegible place and the evening in the Rotonde and the Jockey. They ended up having tea with Floris van Pallandt. On the morning of 8 October, they were in the Café de La Paix, followed by lunch on the place Maulbert and another of their quarrels. They also went to the Dutch consulate for Louk's passport as well as to Louk's X-ray specialist. Also of interest is that Ella saw "a market with paintings" on the morning of 16 October.

The Hoyacks also partook of the Sufi events staged by Fazai Mai Egeling in the Sufi Lecture Hall of Suresnes to unite mureeds still in the area. More important is that they socialized with new Paris friends, including an unidentifiable Rani de Kijmoeder (likely the mother of the Kij family) and her unnamed children. Rani first showed up for tea in Saint-Cloud on 9 October. Her birthday fell on 11 October. On 21 October Ella, or Louk and Illa, had tea with "Kijmoeder", eating a sandwich and lingering with her. On 29 October they visited Versailles and then had tea with her. Ella also met with "Kijmoeder and children" on 1 November. On that day someone named Theo de Bouillon was also present. He may well have been the head of the Bouillon de Rouselles family, as later referred to by Ella on 14 July 1927.⁶⁹ They also took a long walk in Saint-Cloud. At 11 AM the next day Ella had an appointment with Adolphe. That evening she talked with the Bouillions in the lounge of the Lutetia. The next day Ella went to Paris with Mrs. Bouillon. A week later, Theiske de Bouillon, presumably Mrs. Bouillon, and Louk went to Kijmoeder to have tea. The afternoon of 14 November was spent with "the Kijkinderen", presumably being Rani's children. That evening Ella danced the Charleston with one Jeffrey in the lounge of the Lutetia. In the afternoon of 19 November Louk met up with Kijmoeder in Paris while Ella went to Lafayette by herself. Louk and Ella dined with Kijmoeder on 21 November, after which they packed their suitcases for the journey back to Holland. Nothing more is heard of Rani after that. That is puzzling to say the least. How can close friends disappear without a trace?

Louk and Ella also saw five films within six weeks, that likely being the highest concentration of cinema of their lives. First, on 2 October, came "a film about Indians, very beautiful." A second, unidentified movie followed on the

⁶⁹ I can find no such family online. The only Théo Bouillions mentioned are young and active. Maastricht has a classy Bouillonstraat, but there is no connection.

afternoon of 16 October in the “Cinéma on the Boulevard”. For the third movie the title is illegible. However, the fourth movie, which Louk and Ella apparently watched with the Bouillons on the afternoon of 4 November, was *La Châtelaine de Liban* of 1926 by Marco de Gastyne, aka Marc Henri Benoist, a French painter, illustrator and later film director. The fifth film, on 15 November, was entitled *La femme en homme* (The Woman Dressed as a Man).

Of course Louk and Ella also investigated the real-estate situation of Saint-Cloud, a wealthy suburb located just to the west of Paris, hence the afore-mentioned house hunting. On 25 September Ella noted “seen homes”. Five days later they looked at homes on the Rue Maréchal and Rue Preschez in Saint-Cloud. On 1 October in the afternoon they examined a “small home” at 143 Rue Maréchal Foch. On 7 October they went “to Bologne [en Seine] for the house.” They had apparently found their future home by 16 November, for on that day Ella wrote “first also to the landlord.” The precise address, proudly announced at the beginning of her 1927 pocket diary, was apartment 3 of 141 Avenue du Maréchal Foch, right next door to where they had looked two weeks before. A quick check via Google establishes that these are currently some of the most expensive apartments of the entire municipality.

THE LAST WEEKS IN THE HAGUE PRIOR TO THE WEDDING

The Hoyacks returned to their family and Dutch friends on 22 November 1926. Two days later they embarked on a hectic schedule, usually with two or more stops a day. Often Ella moved about without Louk. They enjoyed only one relaxing day together and quarrelled severely on another occasion. There were visits to Ella’s parents in The Hague, Louk’s mother in Rotterdam where Louk and Ella spent the night, as well as his sister and brother-in-law in Utrecht, where Louk and Ella spent another night. The friends included the by now familiar Marthe and Fer Semey, including a birthday party for their three-year-old son Herbert, who was eventually to become a sculptor and puppet maker.

The most prominent friend was Jen van Hoytema, who was repeatedly in the company of Isabella (Bella) van Egmond, who had visited Ella in Saint-Cloud from about 17 to 20 August. A more obscure figure was Maria (Mies) Haakman, with whom Ella stayed overnight once.⁷⁰ It is curious that she does not show up

⁷⁰ We know that Mies’ maiden name was Thijssen and that she had married Herman Lucretius Jacques Haakman on 11 June 1904. Born in 1880, She was eleven years older than Ella.

in Ella's diary entries for late 1927 and late 1928. Almost totally obscure remains a Mrs. Van Beresteyn. She may have belonged to the old Van Beresteyn family, known from portraits by Rembrandt. There was also a "Jules", no doubt Ella's architect friend Julius Luthmann. Right from the start there was Mies (Khair) Zoeteman, here seen in a tiny photo of 5 July 1928, holding the infant Mahmood Khan (fig. 27). Khair, whom Ella also called Ky or Kye, was a Suresnes resident who was visiting her parents in The Hague. As daughter of a The Hague ticket collector, Khair was a bit of an anomaly amongst the posh mureeds of Suresnes. Finally there was Lodewijk Johan (Louis) van Ingen, a Leiden University friend of Louk. It was likely Louis who had introduced Louk to his older brother Carel (or Yussouf) van Ingen, who in turn introduced Louk to Inayat Khan.

Of the many social activities of Louk and Ella, two stand out as unexpected. On 7 December, they travelled to Utrecht to visit the lithographer Adrianus (known as Janus) de Winter, here shown at work in 1937 (fig. 28). Only eleven days later Louk and Ella socialized in the Hague with the poet and writer (Dop) Bles. Janus de Winter was an original and now unfairly neglected artist who had long been given to visions or "dream fantasies". Given Louk's persistent hostility to abstraction, Janus' greatly varied work could have been a welcome alternative. That the Hoyacks should have wanted to visit Janus is also hardly surprising, given his reputation as a mystic and his connections with authors such as of Frederik van Eeden.⁷¹ Given the charm of the Hoyacks, they are likely to have become Janus' friends. As for Dop, he was truly a national celebrity in the kind of educated circles in which Louk and Ella moved.

Even so the dates of the visits, so close to the Hoyack departure for France, are puzzling. Possibly Louk and Ella were simply catching up on long postponed visits. On the other hand, the late dates could suggest some connection with Piet Mondrian. Piet and Janus had probably known each other from way back, witness Janus's exhibition in Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum in 1916, that being the same venue in which Piet had shown in 1911 as part of the *Moderne Kunstkring*. We also have a caricatural portrait of Janus drawn by Theo van Doesburg in 1916 to 1917. In short, Janus and Piet were likely old friends. As for Dop, Piet also knew him from before the war.

⁷¹ There is a large amount of information accessible via by Ine Gevers (1985).

Ella first dropped Piet's name in a very brief diary entry of 12 March 1927, but we shall see that the perfunctory wording suggests previous contact. It therefore seems possible that the Hoyacks first met Piet sometime between the summer and autumn of 1926, and that he suggested that they visit the Utrecht painter. Janus shows up in connection with Ella and Piet later, in Ella's 1927 pocket diary. As for Dop, he became of momentous importance for Piet in the late twenties. Even so, unless one assumes that Ella can never have overlooked anything of importance for us in her diaries, there is no compelling reason to assume that Piet had brought Janus to the attention of Louk and Ella.

Louk and Ella spent the remainder of December 1926 and most of the first two weeks of 1927 visiting friends, including Dop, and family, including "mother" (thrice) and uncle "A. [Adophe] Sweerts de Landas Wyborgh" (thrice), with whom they spent a night. They closed the year with a visit to "Van Tuyll[l]". Ella caught the flue and had a tooth pulled. On 1 January 1927, eleven days before their wedding, Louk officially moved from The Hague to Saint-Cloud and joined his mother in Rotterdam. A new chapter of the lives of Louk and Ella was about to begin.

ELLA HOYACK'S SOCIAL AND INTELLECTUAL INDEPENDENCE

On what kind of marriage did Louk and Ella embark? Louk conveniently provided us with his highly conservative point of view in his *Spiritualisme historique* of 1932.

Feminism is the refusal of women to be mothers and wives, the negation of their highest duties and their highest privileges. Coarseness, immodesty and masculinity are the result of the celebrated enfranchisement of women. No civilization of the past has seen the irksome phenomenon of women working like a man in society, struggling like him and with him in economic competition. The idea of chivalry of men towards women, the idea that it is an honour for a man to support his wife, his sister, his daughter, or any other members of his family in this difficult life, has become an odious anachronism. Intellectualism, already bad for men, becomes a curse for a woman. University studies render her an unbalanced creature for life.

Ella had not attended university, which would have met one of Louk's criteria. He supplied most of the money and would have been obliged to take suitable care of her. We know that the couple frequently quarrelled, which need not imply subservience. No doubt the wealthy Hoyacks had servants who took care of the cleaning, cooking and the like, so that domestic drudgery did not pose a problem. Clearly Ella was free to come and go as she pleased. She often made her way to Paris, including to Piet Mondrian's atelier, on her own whenever life with Louk, who was incessantly reading and writing, likely drove her to distraction. She may often have been restless, engaged in maintaining her personal and written contacts with her many Sufi and other friends in Saint-Cloud, Paris, The Hague and Rotterdam, which continually overlapped or alternated. Restlessness, according to Louk, was one of the blights of modern industrial society, so that he may not have been pleased with that aspect of her disposition. At the same time Ella probably did not always agree with her husband's bewildering sequence of ideas, and that is assuming that she actually read much of his work. Indeed, a measure of relaxed discretion must have facilitated the marriage of Louk and Ella.

Ultimately Ella remains of subsidiary importance for the present study. Much of the Mondrian-Hoyack correspondence centred on Louk's publications, and his intellectual pursuits dictated most of their movements. Yet the overall evidence of this study indicates that Ella served as a kind of *éminence grise* behind the friendship of Piet and Louk, helping to make it workable. It is therefore surprising that we know very little that is substantial about Ella. For instance, we know nothing about her Sufism, but she must have been much less inclined than Louk to intellectualize the teachings of Inayat Khan. We don't know whether or not she sometimes profited from the core concern of the Sufi Message with harmony and balance in daily life. Nor do we know anything concrete about Ella's views on life and the future. Piet Mondrian ended his long criticism of Louk's *Tijdgeest* with the recommendation that he consult Ella about the content of his letter, which suggests that he believed she had a mind of her own and might be sympathetic to some of his ideas about life and art. We may venture to guess that she did not share Louk's pervasive pessimism, but did she at all lean towards Piet's optimistic faith in "the march of progress"? We shall see that she appears to have been more receptive to art and artists than her husband. Most importantly, as friend and editorial

assistant of Piet Mondrian, she certainly did not share Louk's dogmatic dismissal of abstraction.

A RICH LIFE TOGETHER IN SURESNES, SAINT-CLOUD AND PARIS

Louk and Ella were again in the Hôtel Lutetia in Paris by 13 January 1927, their apartment in Saint-Cloud not being ready for occupancy. At that time Ella was dependent on her near neighbour Cato, by now Cateau, de Vries Feyens for company. Cateau's family, which we encountered during the 1926 Summer School, included two young children, Lodewijk or Lo and Liesbeth or Liesje. As with the young children of Marthe Semey and Jo Soeroto-Meyer, Ella was clearly fond of them. Unfortunately, to repeat, we have no photo earlier than 1934 of the Feyens family (again fig. 26). From 20 January to 10 February Ella saw Cateau no fewer than fifteen times as a near end-of-the-day ritual that she probably needed to take the place of her The Hague friends and family. Ella's diary also tells us that Cateau and her children tried to help with the preparation of her Saint Cloud residence. The gas was connected on 4 February, with the technicians for the utilities arriving on 10 February. The bookcases and books only arrived on 23 February. Obviously Louk and Ella did not need those to move in. We may therefore assume that they moved from their Paris hotel to their Saint-Cloud residence around 10 February 1927.

The typical Saint-Cloud existence of the Hoyacks lasted off and on for about five years. Louk was usually at his desk, working on one book after another. A saving grace for Ella was that Louk did not type, so that she was not exposed to endless clatter. The Hoyacks made the best of things, however, and took full advantage of nearby Paris, with its rich cultural and social offerings, as they had already done during the 1926 Summer School and during the days or weeks after they had left The Netherlands but before they settled in Saint-Cloud. We know that on 15 February, Ella was at the dentist in Paris while Louk waited at La Rotonde. Other dental appointments followed on the morning of 17 February and the afternoon of 18 February. A film called "de Sheik" in Paris on 25 February, was followed by a sandwich at home. Two days later, after a Thé Chinois in the Hôtel des Capucines, Louk and Ella saw *Maître Balbec et son marie* in the Théâtre de Athénée. This movie had been adapted from a play the previous year. Ella thought it was "heel aardig", meaning quite nice. On the 29th Louk and Ella went to an unidentified restaurant near the Louvre.

There rare mention of the Sufi centre of Paris, which was run by the aristocratic and aging Madame M.C. baroness d' (Shaika Siraja d'Eichthal. However, Ella's diary for the remainder of 1927 mentions her as a person whom Louk and Ella visited and her centre as a place where Louk lectured on occasion. No doubt the centre had become an important focus of their lives once they had settled in Saint-Cloud. Madame d'Eichthal, who belonged to the distinguished dynasty of bankers named Seligmann d'Eichthal,⁷² had attended the Suresnes Summer Schools of 1924, 1926 and 1928, so that Louk, or Louk and Ella, could also have met her there.⁷³ She died in 1929, so that she did not show up in the subsequent Mondrian-Hoyack correspondence.

⁷² The family was originally Jewish but changed religion and was raised to the Bavarian nobility in 1814. I have not been able to confirm the initials M.C., which I found via Van Hoorn 2010.

⁷³ She is seen in five group portraits (Van Hoorn 2010, figs. 119, 121, 123, 125 and 127, with an separate portrait in fig. 205). Theo also reported that Baroness d'Eichthal showed up for a 1925 lecture by Inayat, after which he conversed with her, that he treated her with particular deference, that he lectured in her Paris centre, that she was the French National Representative and that he called her "the backbone of the Movement in France" (Van Hoorn 2010, pp. 186 and 225). In short, she was truly a Sufi player.

CHAPTER VIII: INTRODUCTION TO INAYAT KHAN AND HIS FAMILY

THE ORIGINS AND EARLY HISTORY OF WESTERN SUFISM

Since Louk had spent from mid-June to mid-September of 1924, 1925 and 1926 attending the Sufi Summer Schools of Suresnes, we may well ask what drew him there. The answer, of course, was Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan and his family. During their three summer schools Louk and Ella witnessed Inayat's decline from an impressive man, here seen while on an American tour in April of 1923 (fig. 29), to a physical wreck in Suresnes on 13 September 1926 (fig. 30). Summer School stress, including continuous close attention to his followers (fig. 31), can't fully explain the deterioration, given that he had nine months to recover between sessions. Inayat Khan departed for India late in 1926, but his disciples expected him to return to Suresnes in due time when he died in Delhi on 5 February 1927. Louk Hoyack must have been appalled because this meant an end to his long consultations with his cynosure.

Other Western Sufis were also devastated by the news of Murshid's death. Theo van Hoorn devoted two whole pages of his *Recollections of Inayat Khan* to a meeting of desolate Amsterdam mureeds held two days later in the Van Hoorn home (until 1929) on Amsterdam's Johannes Verhulststraat.⁷⁴ Sirdar van Tuyll, who had come from The Hague with his wife Saida, headed a Sufi Silence and then spoke at length, though racked with grief. Also present were Dien's older sister and physician Lucie van Hoorn,⁷⁵ Adeh (Salima) van Braam, the Voûte sisters Manohary and Gawery, and the architect Pieter (Piet) Kramer with his wife Johanna (Moenie) Kramer-van de Weide and their teenage daughter Ellen, as well as a few others. Several of these mureeds, and especially Adeh van Braam, knew Loek and Ella Hoyack from Suresnes and Saint-Cloud.

Inayat Khan was born in Baroda on 5 July 1882. He was a great Indian musician and mystic, who was primarily trained in the Chisthi school of Islamic

⁷⁴ Van Hoorn 2010, pp. 285-287.

⁷⁵ In August of 1928 Lucie van Hoorn settled at 147 Euterpestraat (from 1945 Gerrit van der Veenstraat), notorious because of the vicious Nazi persecution of Jews. She advertised in Jewish media and attracted Jewish patients. We see Theo, Dien, Lucy and Paul van Hoorn, with his next wife Loes and son Jan Lucas, in a photo of 1954: Van Hoorn 2010, fig. 51.

mysticism. He had a second cousin (called cousin-brother), Muhammed Ali, who was born one year before him and died The Hague in 1958, and two younger brothers, Pyarumir Maheboob Khan, who was born in Baroda in 1887 and died in The Hague in 1948, and Mousharaff Moulamia Khan, who was born in Baroda in 1895 and died in The Hague in 1967. It was with the death of Inayat in 1927 that Ali took on the title of Murshid, while Maheboob became Shaikh-ul-Mashaik and took over the leadership of Western Sufism. Then, with the death of Maheboob, Ali became Pir-o-Murshid and head of the Sufi Order. In all the years that Piet Mondrian knew Ali Khan, however, he usually called him Alighan or else he used a similar botched version of his name.

In 1910 Inayat, Ali and Maheboob left Baroda for America, where they were joined in 1912 by Mousharaff, who had yet to turn seventeen at the time. All the biographical evidence indicates that they were bent on adventure and intent of introducing Indian music to the West. Nor were they entirely dependent on their music, because their journey was subsidized by their family. Performing as the Royal Musicians of Hindustan (fig. 32), they met with considerable success. Although Ali was the oldest member of the group, Inayat was their undisputed leader. Their guide and fellow musician in America was named Ramaswami. Looking from left to right, Ali played the *dilruba*, Inayat the *veena*, Musharaff the *sitar* and Maheboob the *taus*, but they were trained to switch instruments. They did not play what we might think of as Sufi music. Inayat had been a professor of music back in Baroda, and his passion was classical Indian music, which he called “my salvation”.

During the next few years the Khans made their way across America, followed by France and Russia (where Ramaswami stayed behind). As is generally the case with itinerant musicians, they were not choosy about their gigs, so that they accompanied the fantastical Ruth St. Denis in the USA and the equally unauthentic Mata Hari in France.⁷⁶ It should be stressed that except for a very brief phase in San Francisco in 1911, when Inayat taught a first mureed, named Ada (Rabia) Martin, the elements of esoteric discipline, he and his companions were primarily musicians.

Shortly before leaving Russia, Inayat Khan’s American bride, Ameena Begum, née Ora Ray Baker, bore him his first child, Noor-un-Nisa, who was

⁷⁶ See Van Hoorn-Horn 2010, fig. 69, for Maheboob, Inayat and Musharaff with Mati Hari in her garden in Neuilly-sur-Seine on 9 October 1912.

later to become famous as the Resistance heroine called Princess Noor. It was also in Russia that Inayat and his companions made the mistake of grandly renouncing their stipends from home. Although they had probably intended to travel back to India from Russia, they ended up stranded in London for the duration of World War I. Music was hardly wanted, nor were lectures about it, but a small group of wealthy seekers, or mureeds, took charge of Inayat's life. Convinced that he was a great teacher (which he no doubt was), they encouraged him to set up a Sufi Order and to concentrate on public speaking, or preaching as they called it. In addition, Inayat developed streamlined esoteric training for his Western disciples, while teaching a more rigorous version to his two brothers and his cousin-brother Ali Khan.

The problem was that Inayat was poor and had a growing number of dependents with the birth of three more children, two sons, named Vilayat Hidayat, and a second daughter, Khair-un-Nisa. Only Ali had an independent line of business as healer, having been trained in Baroda in the Indian tradition by one Bhailyaji (Beloved Brother), who also taught him wrestling. He was following the example of one "Brother Ramananda", a successful London practitioner in "present and distant divine healing", who advertised in Inayat Khan's small *Sufi Quarterly* at the time. As a consequence of the London situation, there developed what Vilayat's son, Pir Zia Inayat Khan, has called "a hybrid Sufi order", consisting of the Islamic Chisthi mysticism of Inayat Khan combined with the sundry orientation of his leading followers. Whereas Inayat insisted that Sufism was not a religion and explicitly made its benefits available to people of all religions, some of his followers were not pleased with his Islamic identity and resented the inclusion of Muslim activities and festivities in the Sufi Khanka, or headquarters, on Portland Square. This led to a traumatic crisis in the autumn of 1920, which left Inayat and his extended family in debt and out in the street. In 1922, after a couple of false starts in other French locations, Inayat Khan settled in Suresnes, just to the West of Paris.

THE EVOLVED INAYAT KHAN AND HIS CONTINENTAL WESTERN SUFISM

At that point began the continental stage of Western Sufism, with which Piet Mondrian was to become associated via the Hoyacks and Mohammed Ali Khan. One might ask how Inayat's disappointments and trials up to that point influenced his frame of mind and his expectations of the West? Any attempt to answer that question must involve a fair amount of speculation. He was

certainly a caring mentor, as one might expect from a mystic and kind of missionary bringing Eastern wisdom to the West. He had certainly not grown into a determined social critic or reformer. He can hardly *not* have learned that any attempt to challenge the lifestyle and deep-rooted convictions of his wealthy followers was destined to fail. We shall see that some of Inayat's cosmological notions ran counter to Western astronomy. Nor can any of his followers have heeded his proposition that children should not go to school until they have reached the age of nine. Louk Hoyack may have been the only disciple to notice or care, and to insist against all odds that his Murshid was infallible in such matters. Inayat was not at all an intellectual and primarily concerned with the mental balance and spiritual welfare of his followers. Beyond that he was moderate and realistic in his beliefs. He perceived that Western society was often materialistic and lacking in spirituality compared to his native India, but he also admired the energy and enterprise of the West compared to the relative sloth of the East. It must have been his generally positive orientation and his loyalty to his disciples that committed him to the West instead of returning to India, as he was to do five years later.

Once in Suresnes, Inayat's followers organized annual Summer Schools, running from mid-June to mid-September, which focused on his lectures. This phase of Sufism, both in Suresnes and in The Netherlands, lies at the heart of *Herinneringen and Inayat Khan* by Theo van Hoorn. It is important to recognize that Inayat Khan is not to be dismissed as still another Indian guru teaching nebulous Eastern spirituality to Westerners. Most obviously he was a Muslim murshid and not a Hindu guru, and it was first and foremost a rigorous and time-hallowed esoteric discipline, linked uniquely and aristocratically to the discipline of classical Indian music, that he brought to the West in 1910. His near-pantheistic God is as deserving of respect as any other deity in circulation. Nor is there anything implausible about the idea of mystic communication with a God who permeates nature, and it makes intuitive sense that the intricate rapture of music can aid in experiencing mystical transport. That we should seek beauty and harmony from such experiences also makes good sense, for negative thought is the death of spiritual rapture.

It is tempting to examine Inayat Khan's thought in much greater detail, but his many publications are readily accessible online. Clearly Inayat's central concern was to teach his disciples effective meditation. The purpose of

meditation is now generally seen as a way of getting away from daily cares and (to quote Wikipedia), “achieving a mentally clear and emotionally stable mental state.” For Inayat, however, meditation had a higher purpose. Ironically the matter was explained by Louk Hoyack, who did not once describe a meditating Inayat Khan, in his *De philosophie der verveling* (the philosophy of boredom) a Kluwer publication of 1954.

In the tradition of true mysticism, which is not limited to adherents of specific religions to the exclusion of all others, people have of old known the concentration of the spirit, the meditation on a concept, which requires an arresting of mental activity of an exterior nature or anything somehow related to the exterior. To use an image not invented by me: the rippling surface of a pond becomes smooth as a mirror. And thus the possibility arises for the meditating human being to become conscious of the deepest inner activity within us, activity which for the mystical thinker turns out to be the wisdom of our soul, a Divine spark, yes Divine inhabitation. In other words it is that layer in us that partakes directly in the cosmos-embracing Being of the Absolute.

For Inayat, the Absolute, or God, was virtually synonymous with Love. Though ultimately dwelling behind or above his Creation, He is splendidly represented on earth by nature and music. As we have learned, reason, book learning, politics, or social reform did not concern Murshid, who largely limited himself to recommending detachment, patience, toleration, forgiving, forgetting and not wanting too many things as opposed to what we really need, all in the pursuit and attainment of spiritual harmony.

Inayat would no doubt have preferred to concentrate on the rewards of mysticism, but his followers generally had little interest in and aptitude for its pursuit. Thus, through contingent circumstances, including a stretch of dire poverty in London, Inayat was manoeuvred into becoming a lecturer -- or “preacher”, as Louk and others too often called him -- who could be counted on to offer essential insights on each and every topic of interest to his wealthy audience. In this way was born a substantial body of ideas which is at times distinct from the inner Message dear to the heart of Inayat himself. Inayat expected his followers to embrace and spread his core Inner Message, but he did not firmly dissuade them from pursuing their own interests. He tolerated

The Church for All or Universal Worship, with its pseudo Christian altar, accoutrements and ritual, even as his mureeds dragged their heels at implementing his personal dream for a Sufi Temple. At the same he had a wise orientation with respect to the circumscribed place of his Sufism within the daily “outer lives” of his followers. This position allowed Theo van Hoorn to continue his interest in Western music, German poetry and chess after his conversion to Sufism, as we learn from his memoirs. Astonishing for instance, are his near-adoration of the Russian-French World Chess Champion Alexander Alekhine and of the Polish pianist, composer, philanthropist and statesman Ignacy Jan Paderewski, a “Mastermind” and worthy foil for Murshid.

THE CHARMS OF THE SURESNES SUMMER SCHOOLS

There is a fundamental reason why Louk’s publications about the Message of Inayat Khan were seriously deficient. He based most of his comments on his intellectual interaction with Inayat Khan during three summer schools, but it was only in his newspaper articles of the close of 1928 that he briefly described the Sufi grounds of Suresnes with any enthusiasm. What is lacking is any feeling for what life with Inayat Khan was like during Louk’s first three years at the Suresnes Summer Schools. By contrast, Theo van Hoorn described the Suresnes concerts, which featured poems by Inayat, compositions by Maheboob and singing by Mohammed Ali. With respect to Ali’s solo performances Theo added:

Ali Khan was splendid in the tension and climax of his performance of the Largo by Händel, and exceptionally fervent and sensitive in his “Amarilli”, But when he was well-disposed, each and every one of his songs became a revelation unto itself. We never tired of listening to him in awe and gratefully accepted his generosity, so as to enjoy our favourite songs again and again.⁷⁷

Louk presumably attended such concerts, but one would never know. Not until four pages concerning “Inayat Khan en de Westerse Muziek” in *De Soefie Gedachte* of June 1956, did he touch on the matter. Whereas Inayat Khan worshipped music, Ali Khan was an accomplished tenor and Piet Mondrian a jazz lover who linked contemporary music with his hopes for art,⁷⁸ music

⁷⁷ Van Hoorn 2010, p. 199.

⁷⁸ Hanssen 2015, pp. 125-129 and Janssen 2016, pp. 109-111.

appears to have played almost no part in Louk's life. Amongst Ella's many hundreds of entries in her diaries over four years, we encounter only two concerts, one in Rotterdam on 13 December 1927, which was likely classical and a special occasion, and the other in Suresnes on 28 July 1928, which certainly featured Jazz and which Louk and Ella likely intended to please the visiting Piet. It seems unlikely that Louk initiated attendance at any of the other Paris jazz performances enjoyed by Piet and his expat friends. Not once in Ella's diaries do we learn that she and Louk had attended an opera or ballet. Nor do we encounter them listening to any kind of music at home.

Theo also described the amateur theatre performances of Suresnes, which could have Inayat almost falling off his seat with laughter, or instances of the warm camaraderie of Inayat and his brothers and cousin-brother Ali. He also gave a detailed description of Inayat as entrancing and yet instructive story teller. That Louk did not discuss such events was surely indicative of his blindness to the kind of life dear to Inayat Khan and his mureeds. Unlike Theo van Hoorn, Louk did not even discuss what Inayat was like as a lecturer. Nor do we find a description of the intricate goings on during his Samadhi Silences. For anyone wanting to encounter Inayat Khan and the magic of his Summer Schools, the memoirs of Theo van Hoorn, though inevitably flawed on occasion, are much preferable to the writings of Louk Hoyack.

In addition Theo rendered Inayat as a truly humble and accessible man, who could keep a room full of privileged Dutch mureeds waiting for hours on end while he patiently addressed the needs of a bewildered stranger, who was contentious and very slow to understand. Inayat likely also spent hours of his precious time dealing with Louk's questions, hoping in vain to disabuse him of his largely irrelevant orientation. It may well have been that Inayat's deep frustration at the wilfulness of his mureeds, in combination with his concern for each and every one of them, that contributed to the dramatic decline of his health over a few years.

Finally, Louk did not give an inkling of the happiness generated by summers in Suresnes. In his biography of Inayat Khan, which Wil (Azim) van Beek wrote around 1970 but did not publish (in English) until 1983, he recalled the near-ritual of the celebration of Inayat's birthday, and how this commemoration continued after his death. The few Summer Schools that Wil

attended made for some of the happiest days of his life and were ones in which Louk and Ella featured prominently.

When the author recalls Suresnes in the thirties, it is as if a film is being projected, one full of happy memories. A scene appears picturing the first day of each Summer School, when one by one, or in small groups, leaders from all over the world arrived. There were joyful moments of reencounter, laughter was heard and long conversations started as friends would tell each other what had happened since they met the year before.

The mind's eye sees a big group. Louis Hoyack, author of many Sufi books, with his charming wife Ella by his side, is having an animated talk with Azim Kerbert, leader of the centre in Amersfoort Holland, while several American mureeds listen attentively. At a little distance [stand] the sisters Voûte from Holland,⁷⁹ staunch pillars of the teachings to this day, with a few of their pupils. Shaik-ul-Mashaikh Maheboob Khan arrives with Murshid Ali Khan, healer and singer. They are both dignified and silent, and with them is Musharaff Khan, the latter smiling and waving his hand.

We shall re-encounter Wil as a friend and admirer of Piet Mondrian, who became a Sufi most of a decade after Louk. Blond and energetic, he at once became exceptionally active as a wide-ranging member. A journalist and writer, he was also an avid photographer who, as we shall see, repeatedly recorded the appearance of the Sufi Garden of Suresnes in 1933. We know what he looked like from a group portrait of the Summer School of 1934, taken on 5 July (Inayat's birthday), in which he appears smiling in the background, one figure from the right (fig. 25). However, Wil's recollections can be less reliable than his photos. Louk Hoyack wrote only one book about Sufism, being *De boodschap van Inayat Khan* of 1946. Wil was in any case a true Sufi. In the same biography he proposed that Inayat could rearrange the atoms of his body so as to make himself invisible, allowing him to cross a busy London street unscathed.

MOHAMMED ALI KHAN AS LEGENDARY HEALER

⁷⁹ Van Hoorn 2010, figs. 227-229.

All the family members of Inayat Khan are worthy of closer examination but only one, Mohammed Ali Khan is of central importance for our story because he played an important role in the life of Piet Mondrian. It was Wil van Beek who took the iconic photo of Ali (fig. 33). Hans Janssen recognized the importance of Ali for Piet but introduced him as an “Indian physician” and “adherent” (*aanhanger*) of Sufism.⁸⁰ Ali was in fact a close relative of Inayat Khan and enjoyed immense prestige in Suresnes’ Sufi community, both as musician and healer. He was to become the head of Western Sufism with the death of Maheboob Khan in 1948.

The coddled mureeds of Suresnes had plenty of time between the so-called Activities for drinking tea while gossiping or arguing with one another. No doubt their ranks also included a fair number of hypochondriacs. A so-called “Healing Activity” centred on an aristocratic English dowager named Gladys Isabel (Kefayat) Lloyd. However, Kefayat concentrated on faith healing along Anglo-Saxon lines, whereas Mohammed Ali Khan served the needs of the wealthy mureeds with his more applied kind of physiotherapy, both in Suresnes and in The Hague. Ali also remained a professional musician, however, continuing the training in Western music on which he had embarked while still in London. He had become an accomplished tenor by the time he entered the life of Piet Mondrian.

Theo van Hoorn celebrated Ali’s versatility in two wonderful passages, of which the first is easily the more adulatory.

The voice of an archangel, the primeval power of a titan, the pride of a ruler, the inscrutability of an Oriental, the insight of a visionary, the devotion of a saint, the self-control of a yogi, the healing power of a magus, coupled with the disposition of a child and the tenderness of a mother; there you have Ali Khan as we came to know him in Suresnes.

However, the second passage is the more informative:

Mohammed Ali Khan, as he called himself in full, was back then a singer blessed by God, who transported and moved people like few others. But he was also a patient and dedicated healer, for whom no sacrifice was too great for those who entrusted their bodies and souls to his almost

⁸⁰ Janssen 2016, p. 501.

incredible healing powers. Indefatigable and inexhaustibly enthusiastic as singer, he could jubilantly resound with the voice of a trumpet at the Last Judgment. This enthusiasm and passion, once sublimated to his mission as healer, were eclipsed by what he did for his numerous patients from day to day and hour to hour. Within him coexisted the mild humour of the wise, which has risen above the things of this world, and the childlike ebullience of someone who, despite everything, has remained young at heart. This rare confluence of qualities made Ali Khan such an attractive personality, especially in daily communication. In many instances, it could even turn a fleeting greeting, a single handshake or a sympathetic glance from him into a major event in the lives of their recipients.⁸¹

Theo van Hoorn was also determined to show that Ali Khan was a man of the highest moral rectitude, who would never have taken advantage of his exotic looks, great charisma and celebrated massages. Theo recalled that Hermina (Raushan) Mensink, whom we already know as Louk and Ella's The Hague friend Olga, set out to approach Ali as an attractive man as opposed to a dedicated therapist in the summer of 1924, but was reduced to tears when he told her to desist and make better use of her beauty.⁸² It was to this remarkable man that the Hoyacks introduced Piet Mondrian. Whereas almost "incredible healing powers" may sound like hyperbole, Piet would likely have agreed.

Of great importance is a letter that Piet addressed to his friend Bob Oud on 15 August 1928. That date fell well after the middle of the Summer School of that year and well over a year after Piet first showed up in Ella's diaries.

I have now recovered completely because of treatment by an Indian, whom I have found via the Hoyacks. He was temporarily close to St. Cloud (in Suresnes) but is now leaving for India for five months. I write this to you but otherwise keep it to myself because people always laugh at such ways of healing. It did wonders for me, as for many others, and I am most grateful to the Hoyacks that they mentioned him to me. It is a kind of Sequa treatment, stretching of the muscles, etc. Possibly you

⁸¹ Van Hoorn 2010, p. 198.

⁸² Van Hoorn 2010, pp. 201-204. I return to the incident below,

have already heard about him from Van Lohuyzen [sic] (fig. 34), because that man is temporarily living with the Sufi movement.

What Piet meant by “a kind of Sequah treatment” is far from obvious, since the transparently fraudulent and internationally active Sequah Medicine Company of one Colonel Davenport was by then long past history. Nor is Sequah known to have practiced physiotherapy, but instead promoted his “native Indian” Sequah’s Oil and Prairie Flower, an ointment guaranteed to cure all sorts of ailments. Probably Piet intended to convey that Ali offered alternative medicine, with all the notoriety that it might entail. We know that Piet swore by modern medicine as evidence of human progress, so that we can understand that he may have been sensitive on the point.

This was not the first time that Piet mentioned his health to Bob Oud. In January of 1927, when Bob was still distributing his work, Piet let him know that a consignment of his paintings would be delayed because he had been ill since Christmas and had at last been to see a doctor, who had said he had “a touch of arteriosclerosis, and was arthritic, also poor circulation etc. Which explains those thread-like strands in from of my eyes years which I have had for more than two years and which I told you about back then.”⁸³ Obviously, therefore, Ali must have done something more for Piet than stretched his muscles. Not even the most gifted of physiotherapist could have dealt with Piet’s kind of problems with his health. There must have been something psychological involved.

We recall that Theo van Hoorn spoke of Ali’s “almost incredible healing powers”. Similarly, we shall see that the formidable Johan (Karimbaksh) Witteveen wrote about “exceptional spiritual energy.”⁸⁴ And those claims fall well short of the adulatory paragraphs that another eye-witness, Sophia Saintsbury-Green, devoted to Ali Khan in a chapter concerning “The Summer School” in her *The Wings of the World* of 1934.

The brush that shall paint his portrait must be dipped in the warm and glowing colours drawn from the hearts of those whom his hand has brought healing and new life, who have come to him (many after they heard the sentence of death from surgeon or physician) broken wrecks

⁸³ Quoted by Weber 2024, p. 283.

⁸⁴ Witteveen 2012, p. 35. We will return to what was formidable about him.

of humanity, and have gone from him to take up life afresh with the joy of health like a flame within them.

Clearly Murshida Green had descended into outright hagiography. Someone who would likely have endorsed her claims, however, was Ratan de Vries Feyens, whom we have encountered as Lysje and young friend of the Hoyacks in Saint-Cloud. In recollections recorded by Karin Jironet in her *Sufi Mysticism into the West* of 2009, Ratan described a remarkable feat of healing back in 1931, when she was eleven years old, in which Ali saved her from certain paralysis and probable death by absorbing her unidentified illness via a glass of water and spitting it into a washbasin. Without wishing to attribute such ideas to Piet, we must recognize that Ali's charismatic presence somehow invited such weird notions.

That Ali was "temporarily close to Saint-Cloud" means that he was attending the 1928 Suresnes Summer School. Kadir Van Lohuizen was no doubt also in Suresnes for the Summer School. He embraced Sufism in 1924, a few months before Louk Hoyack and about six months before Theo van Hoorn. Though Kadir was based in Rotterdam, his parents then lived immediately next door to Theo on Amsterdam's Johannes Verhulststraat (fig. 34). The five-month journey to India mentioned by Piet was an important family undertaking of 1928 to 1929, which was intended to visit the ancestral home of the Khans in Baroda and the grave of the by then late Inayat in Delhi. In addition there was a plan to marry off Inayat's daughter Noor to Alladad Khan, her first cousin and heir to the fortune of Maula Baksh, the family patriarch. However, the plan was foiled by Amina Begum, thereby opening the way for her daughter's eventual death at the hands of the Nazis. The photo of the event introduces us to the entire Khan family (fig. 36). At the top left stand Alladad, Vilayat, Ali and Maheboob. In the lower row are Chand-Bibi, her husband Aladin Khan-Pathan and Noor-un-Nisa. Sitting on the ground are Khair-un-Nisa and Hidayat.

Piet Mondrian appears to have had no notion of the background and versatility of his exotic physiotherapist. Inversely, Ali must have been at least a little interested in Piet, since Mahmood Khan recalls that his uncle Ali was taken aback by Piet's interest in jazz and African art, which Ali found hard to understand. Piet was probably not interested in Ali's background and family and likely never met Inayat Khan. His only reference to Inayat, which is found in his commentary on Louk's *Tijdgeest*, proves that Piet thought of Inayat as some

kind of hairshirt guru who pursued and advocated a lifestyle of Gandhi-like sobriety. That Inayat was a Muslim and not a Hindu, like Mahatma Gandhi, presumably never occurred to Piet. That Inayat's focus on harmony in life might just have been of help to Piet Mondrian as enrichment to his Theosophist convictions is something he probably never considered. Despite his closeness to the Hoyacks and Ali Khan, and his frequent proximity to the Sufi grounds, he appears to have lacked all interest in Sufistic activities and ideas.

THE CONTEXT OF SURESNES AND ALI KAN'S FAMILY MEMBERS

While Inayat Khan and his family lived permanently in Fazal Manzil, the splendid house (fig. 37) that Nellie (Fazai Mai) Egeling (fig. 38) had presented to him in 1922, and where she helped raise his children, Ali and his brother Maheboob were only summer residents of Suresnes. The rest of the year they lived in The Hague. On 10 June 1924, Maheboob had brilliantly married Geertrui Cornelia (Shadiby Khanim) Van Goens, the prospective heiress of the patrician Dutch Van Goens family, descended from Rijklof van Goens, who was governor of Dutch Ceylon from 1675 to 1680. Maheboob and Shadiby kept a Suresnes home called Ekbal Dawla (fig. 41) on the Rue de La Tuilerie, across from Fazal Manzil. It was named after the Sufi sobriquet of her mother-in-law, *jonkvrouwe* Maria Johanna Florentina van Goens-van Beyma, but they usually lived on 25 Frederik Hendriklaan in The Hague, where Ali joined them and continued his work as physiotherapist. We have photos by Wil van Beek of Maheboob in The Hague in the autumn of 1933 (fig. 39) and with Shadiby, Raheem un Nisa and Mahmood around 1937 (fig. 40). Frederik Hendriklaan was no doubt the location of Dien van Hoorn's treatments and a recurring aspect of Piet's reports to the Hoyacks.⁸⁵

When in Suresnes, Ali resided in an addition behind Ekbal Dawla, but he carried out his healing practice in the so-called Mureed's House, located on the Rue de l'Hippodrome. We have photos of both the front and back of this building (figs. 43 and 44), as well as a shot of the garden with chestnut trees next to it (fig. 42). We can make out the Mureed's house itself in the very background. To the right we see its two-story annex, which no longer exists. The small building to the left, which has also been razed, was where Piet must

⁸⁵ Another photograph (Van Hoorn 2010, fig. 173) shows Musharaff at home on the Rue de l'Avenir in Rueil-Malmaison, a wealthy western suburb of Paris, around 1935.

have spoken to “the Sufi secretaries”, as he mentioned to the Hoyacks in a letter of 16 February 1933.

It was only a short walk from the Mureed’s house to the Sufi Grounds. Piet, however, appears to have studiously avoided both the Sufi garden and activities when consulting Ali. Wil’s van Beek’s photos of the mid-thirties give us a sense of what the Sufi grounds of Suresnes looked like before World War II. One such photo shows an aerial view taken by Wil from the steps of Fazal Manzil in July of 1933, with the Lecture Hall, built in 1925 next to the rue Victor Diederich, in the very background (fig. 45) and the blank wall of the stud farm called the Haras de Longchamp to the right. Theo van Hoorn described the Mureed’s house and its immediate surroundings at some length in his *Recollections*.⁸⁶ Thus we learn what it was like to sit in a loggia in the stifling heat of the summer of 1926, welcoming the late evening coolness and smelling incense wafting in from one of the other loggias.⁸⁷ Theo even discussed the overcrowding, the problems with obtaining a building permit when adding a top floor, and the temporary huts that had been erected on the nearby Sufi grounds to handle the overflow.

We must remember that though 1924 was the first Summer School for Louk Hoyack and Theo van Hoorn, it was Inayat Khan’s third. The expanded housing was needed to accommodate the growing numbers of mureeds that he attracted and that apparently made great demands of his energy. Theo’s detailed descriptions establish that even during first three years that he attended the Summer Schools, they joined numerous individuals of several nationalities. Each of these mureeds had her or his own personality, priorities and even, as with Sophia Saintsbury-Green and Louk Hoyack, agenda. However, all the mureeds were united by their deep attachment to their Pir-o-Murshid Inayat Khan. All the subsequent meetings of the Summer School followed that general pattern.

Piet Mondrian was not interested in Sufism, nor in the Sufi topography and activities of Suresnes. The Mureed’s House probably only mattered to him as the place where Ali Khan treated him. He probably did not even know about the *dépendance* behind Maheboob’s dwelling, in which Ali spent the nights. In fact, Piet was likely unaware of Ali’s background and accomplishments,

⁸⁶ Van Hoorn 2010, p. 263.

⁸⁷ Van Hoorn 2010, pp. 266-267.

including his Summer School performances as musician. Louk and Ella probably got to know Ali well during their numerous months at the Summer Schools, but we would never know from Piet's replies to their lost letters, which concern only the treatment of his ailments.

THE NATURE OF ALI KHAN'S TREATMENT OF PIET MONDRIAN

What, precisely, did Ali's treatments involve? We have the testimony of Theo van Hoorn concerning the massages of his wife Dien in The Hague, as he tried in vain to convince Olga, alias Chitrani, that Ali's treatments involved taxing physical intervention and were not intended for the satisfaction of idle curiosity or the pursuit of sensual pleasure.

I enter and in partial reply tell her that this winter Ali Khan treated my wife when her life was being ruined by uninterrupted pain. At night she did not know whether to recline, sit, or crawl. Just when we had given up all hope, Ali Khan arrived in the country. Twice she then travelled to the Hague and the massages sometimes made her pain worse. When she told this to Ali Khan at the third visit, he smiled broadly and said: 'That is very good, you will soon be well.' And a week later the pain had disappeared as if by magic.⁸⁸

Unfortunately we still do not learn just what Ali did for Dien or Piet. More satisfactory is the testimony of Johan Witteveen in his autobiography of 2012, which he published only seven years before his death.

I was about ten or eleven years old, a skinny boy and physically weak, and often came down with the flu, or other minor ailments. My parents therefore took me a few times on Saturdays to see Murshid Ali Khan, who was renowned for his 'treatments.' These were powerful massages but ones containing exceptional spiritual energy, a healing energy. For example, he would put his thumb in your eye, turn your neck firmly and let it snap, and he did comparable things as he worked on your back. But afterwards you felt as if reborn.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Van Hoorn 2010, p. 202.

⁸⁹ Witteveen 2012, p. 35. It was right around this time, being 1930 to 1931, when he was "about ten or eleven years old", that Johan could have first met Liesbeth (Ratan) de Vries in

Young Johan Witteveen was exposed to the not-so-tender mercies of Ali Khan by his father, Willem Gerrit Witteveen (fig. 35), a city planner and architect known to all three men, Piet Mondrian, Bob Oud and Louk Hoyack. On 14 March 1929 Piet wrote to Bob “And now, very recently, I had a visit from the architect Witteveen, who dropped in on me with the Hoyacks and from whom I also heard about you, that you were again in Rotterdam.” Piet reacted to Bob’s candid negative assessment of his colleague, observing that “naturally the Hoyacks know his better persona, which he must also have; in any case he can put on a show of being agreeable.” It was not the last of Piet’s letter to Bob. In December of 1929 Piet wrote: “The Hoyacks extend their greetings. I am going to them in St. Cloud for New Years. They ask you to stay with them when you come [...].” We have no evidence that Bob ever took Louk and Ella up on that invitation.

Dr. Johan Witteveen became a formidable man, with both legs on the ground and a spectacular career as precocious Professor at the Rotterdam School of Economics, Dutch Minister of Finance, fifth managing director of the International Monetary Fund from 1973 to 1978, and a high-ranking Sufi leader, so that we have no pressing cause to question his recollections. They, remain of interest apart from Piet Mondrian and Louk Hoyack, as with his information about his cousin and best friend Theodoor or Theo van Gogh, who was the grandson of the Theo who was the brother and correspondent of the renowned painter Vincent. However, Ali’s thumb was presumably not in Johan’s eye but in his eye socket, and pushing sideways against the nose. The snapping of the neck sounds like a fairly standard, if controversial, chiropractic intervention. The work on the back remains vague. As for the spiritual energy that Johan attributed to Ali’s treatments, it could be that Piet Mondrian also experienced something of the kind.

Perhaps the most useful information was provided by Piet himself in the letter, quoted above, that he wrote to Bob Oud on 15 August 1928, which proves that it was Louk and Ella Hoyack who introduced him to Mohammed Ali Khan. We also learn there that “stretching of the muscles” was at the essence of Ali’s treatments. It must remain a mystery how muscle stretching could have addressed Piet’s greatly varied ailments. In the letters that Piet sent to the

Suresnes, but they apparently first encountered one another in 1948 at “a meeting of young Sufis”. They married in 1949.

Hoyacks after 1928, we encounter palpitations, a variety of rheumatic symptoms, back pains, a tender nose, prostate pain, urinary problems, water retention, flatulence, high blood pressure, collapsing dentures, influenza, bronchitis and chronic fatigue. Certain is only that Piet swore by the treatments and remained grateful to the Hoyacks for his introduction to Ali. Mahmood Khan recalls that Ali was more of a snob than Maheboob, Mahmood's father, and Musharaff, his uncle, and by preference treated wealthy and titled individuals. We may conjecture, however, that Ali perceived that there had to be something altogether out of the ordinary about Piet, if only because he had been warmly recommended by the Hoyacks. Beyond that Ali presumably knew little or nothing about Piet and his art. They were simply therapist and patient.

CHAPTER IX: THE HOYACKS AS FRIENDS OF PIET MONDRIAN

Ella Hoyack's diaries for 1927 and 1928 provide us with an unique overview of the social activities of Piet Mondrian and his expat circle of friends during those two years. They introduce us to a group of people known to both the Hoyacks and Piet, who assembled in pairs or small numbers in his studio in the afternoons, or in a variety of Parisian venues, especially in the evenings. It should be clear at the outset, however, that Ella's diaries provide an arbitrarily narrow window even for 1927 and 1928. Most obviously, she did not visit Piet every day, nor even every week, so that her encounters were luck of the draw. In addition they do not provide a record for the Hoyacks as a couple. In only two instances, namely on 15 November 1927 and 4 February 1928 is it not clear whether it was Louk and Ella, or Ella, alone, who visited Piet. Most likely Louk was often tied to Saint-Cloud by his reading and writing. In addition, he probably looked up Piet independently.

THE WIDE-RANGING CONTRIBUTION OF ELLA HOYACK'S DIARIES

Ella's diaries for 1927 and 1928 are also of fundamental importance because they are not limited to her visits to 26 Rue du Départ. No effort has here been made to ignore extraneous material. Instead we repeatedly intersperse information about Hoyack activities in Suresnes, Saint-Cloud, elsewhere in Paris and even in The Netherlands in pursuit of a unified chronology for 1927 and 1928. This approach prevents exaggeration of the overall importance of Piet for the lives of the Hoyacks. In addition, widening our view beyond Piet's studio, demonstrates that Louk and Ella generally operated as a couple, and that Piet saw them as such.

On 7 March 1927, Ella wrote, she dropped in on Piet Mondrian. The perfunctory mention of the artist, without a word of introduction, suggests a measure of familiarity, and I have already proposed, but at once questioned, that Louk and Ella may have met Piet sometime in the summer or autumn of 1926. Ella then established or consolidated her friendship with Piet. Her diary entry for 17 March 1927 reads: "paid a visit to Mondrian in the afternoon and afterward drank a café crème (coffee with hot milk) in the Dôme."

On 22 March 1927, however, the Hoyacks returned to the Netherlands. They were in Rotterdam by 24 March and travelled to the Hague with “mother” the next day. On 26 March, having returned to Rotterdam, they visited “de Blauws” and then “uncle Karel” (in fact Carel) Sweerts de Landas Wyborch. The Blauws were *meester* Paul Alex Blauw, his wife Dederica Wilhelmina Blauw-Robinson and their young sons Michiel Frederick and Quinten Joris. Dederika had the curious Sufi name of “Kafia” and had recently become Leader of the Sufi Centre of Rotterdam.

The alternating Sufi and family visits continued well into April of 1927. On Friday 1 April, Ella noted “birthday of Lys de Vries-Feyens to the Hague from Utrecht to Mrs. v. Beresteyn.” The Feyenses were not visiting Utrecht at the time; Ella repeated alluded to individuals living in France. “Then dine with niece Henriette Hoyack in the Passage Hotel, back home to Rotterdam only late in the evening.” The next day the couple headed for the Van Tuylls, with whom they dined., and then for the Van Ingens in Woerden, where they presumably spent the night. On 3 April Louk and Ella dined in Schiedam with “Grietje Eggink”, the wife of Sufi engineer Wim Eggink and the younger sister of leading Sufi Sirkar van Stolk. On 5 April Ella and De Moes bought a dress for her birthday. That night Louk and Ella saw “Voerman Henchel” in Rotterdam’s Tivoli theatre. On 6 April the Hoyacks went to visit Jeanne (or Jen) van Hoytema. The next day they lunched with “Henriette Dinant”, probably Henriette Dinaux, who was to marry Louk’s uncle Adolf a year later, after which they were visited by “Zus”, no doubt Olga Mensink. On 9 April, at two in the afternoon, they visited Dop Bles, it being their fourth meeting with him. Then, in the morning of Sunday 10 April “Louk led the service in the Sufi church.”

April 11 was a varied day, which started in Restaurant ‘t Goude Hooft in the morning. At 2:45 they were with Mrs. van Stolk for “the healing class”, which was presumably held in the Van Stolk residence at 6 Cremerweg in The Hague. Ella added after that “talked to Mrs. Robbertson”, no doubt Kavia Blauw, who must have travelled from Rotterdam for the occasion. Then, on 12 April, Louk and Ella were back with “Dop Bles and his daughter.” There is no mention of a wife because Emilia (Jo) Bles-Thüring had died in 1924. Finally, on Monday 18 April the Hoyacks took the 8:56 AM train back to Paris.

The attraction of such trips from Saint-Cloud and Paris back to Rotterdam and The Hague, of which there were three during 1927 and 1928, must have

been great, especially for Ella. Visits to and from Piet were relatively sporadic and sometimes days or even weeks apart, and the members of his circle were not of her choosing. The Sufi Centre of Paris was mainly of interest to Louk, who lectured there. Her Saint-Cloud contacts centred on Cateau De Vries-Feyens and her family. It was only during the Suresnes Summer Schools that she likely got to interact on a daily basis with a variety of people. The Hague and Rotterdam, and to a lesser degree Amsterdam, Utrecht and Woerden, instead offered a dizzying sequence of encounters with family and friends, whom she often saw twice a day and with whom she had a history.

In the evening of 18 April 1927, having returned to Paris, Ella chatted with Cateau de Vries Feyens. Tea “in the garden” followed on 8 May and visits to and from Cateau and Lysje two days later. Her entry for 21 April reads: “to Paris briefly with Mondrian, then to the Rotonde passport portrait.” From then on the Mondrian connection shows up only sporadically. One high point of the two months preceding the 1927 Summer School was a visit from Musharaff Khan on 19 May.

The Hoyacks saw an unidentified movie on 3 June. In the afternoon of Friday 10 June Ella paid “a brief visit to Mondrian”, followed by tea with Cateau that evening. In addition Janus de Winter re-entered the lives of the Hoyacks. His letters to his brother Johannes or Jo, as found in the De Winter archive at the RKD, prove that he had been in Paris through much of March 1927 and that he had got in touch with Piet by the 27th. Janus’ letters further reveal that he had moved from one miserable room to another and was always strapped for cash. Janus repeatedly visited Jo in Utrecht in April and May of 1927, but he had certainly returned to Paris by 19 June, when Ella noted: “De Winter lunched and dined with us.” Three days later Janus arrived in the morning and dined with the Hoyacks. In the evening the Hoyacks “briefly walked with him in the park.” On the afternoon of 21 June Ella escaped from the Summer School and took a taxi to the Odéon Théâtre to watch another unidentified movie. Shortly thereafter both Louk and Ella went to “Les Montporros in Théâtre Antoine.” Ella thought this film “dismal”. Janus again visited the Hoyacks on 10 July and may have stayed for a few days, for on the afternoon of 13 July Ella “went to Paris with De Winter and Jeanne” and saw the grave of Napoleon.

Jeanne must have been Ella’s The Hague friend Jeanne or Jen van Hoytema. After Ella, Janus and Jen had visited Napoleon’s grave, they “found”

Louk in the Rotonde and were joined there by another The Hague friend, Khair (Mies) Zoeteman (again fig. 27). The next day, in the evening, Ella went with Jeanne and Louk to a place called “Robinet” (likely a restaurant) to watch the annual *Quatorze Juillet* fireworks and talked to Adeh, Khair and the Bouillons de Rouselles. On 18 July Ella was with Jeanne in Lafayette. On 17 July Ella went to a doctor for a “dark spot on leg” and Louk went to Paris by himself in a rage. On 21 July Ella went shopping with Jeanne before sitting in the Rotonde. On 18 August Ella went “to Mondrian in the afternoon, then in the Rotonde, stayed home in the evening.” There were no more Paris encounters with Piet in the next two months, making for only four visits in seven months. In addition, no one but Piet appears to have been present when Ella visited the Rue du Départ.

No doubt Louk and Ella encountered numerous fellow Sufis and attended sundry activities during the 1927 Suresnes Summer School, which came to an end around mid-September. Presumably Ella continued to associate with locals such as Cateau de Vries Feyens. It is important, however, that Piet Mondrian paid a first return visit to Saint-Cloud on Tuesday, 27 September, telling us that a friendship was truly in place. He lunched and dined with Louk and Ella and also took a modest walk with them. Ella concluded that it was “a very cozy day.”

On 1 October, the Hoyacks watched an unidentified film starring Pola Negri. She was a famous Polish actress who managed to triumph in Hollywood as a *femme fatale* of the silent screen and therefore did not require introduction. However, Ella did not bother to jot down which of Paolo’s many movies she had just seen or in which venue she saw it. In the afternoon of Sunday, 16 October Piet Mondrian was again in Saint-Cloud. He read “his piece” to Louk and Ella, stayed after dinner and remained until 10:30 in the evening. It is not possible to relate this “piece” to anything Piet published near the close of 1927.⁹⁰ Possibly he was already working on a very early version of his *L’Art nouveau – La Vie Nouvelle*, which was not completed until October of 1931.

On 26 October Ella visited Piet a fifth time and gave some specific information. “In the afternoon to Mondrian there met the painter Hordijk then

⁹⁰ The first and likely only issue of the short lived periodical *110*, which featured two articles by Piet Mondrian (discussed below), almost certainly came out before October 1927. It appears Piet did not publish anything in 1928.

with Piet to the Rotonde and also back home with him and ate a sandwich and danced a little to his gramophone.” This is the first mention of the record player that Piet had bought second hand that summer. It was far from state of the art, with a pre-diamond sapphire stylus, and hardly did justice to his records. Léon Hanssen amassed an astonishing amount of information about Piet’s record player, record collection, record storage and listening habits.⁹¹ The gramophone was the only source of music in his atelier for though he was a firm supporter of “the march of progress”, he did not own a radio.

Gerard Hordijk was an amiable artist who lived at 88 Rue du Départ, near Piet, from 1927 until 1930, with a stay in the Netherlands in 1928. The two men bonded at once despite their differences, Gerard being a much younger and more conventional painter. It is due to a drawing by Gerard that we know that Piet also danced by himself on occasion. On 1 October Gerard married Margaret Mathews, an American woman of modest means, and moved to a more ample dwelling and studio at 46 Place Jules-Ferry in Montrouge, a suburb to the south of Paris, where their first child, John Gerard, was born on 8 September 1931. One might be tempted to think of a figure such as Hordijk as a supernumerary, but thanks to Marcel Gieling’s catalogue of 2017 we know that he enjoyed much more success than Piet during the Saint-Cloud years of the Hoyacks, but even after 1935, when Gerard had moved to Amsterdam. He and Piet renewed their friendship in New York in the early forties.

On Sunday 30 October 1927, Louk and Ella went to Mme d’Eichthal. Ella did not specify the theatre that she went to that evening but did give the name of the movie: “La blonde et la brune.” The next afternoon Ella again headed for Piet’s studio. She danced with him a little and then ate chestnuts “on the boulevard” before heading home. On 2 November Ella saw “the film Metropolis” in an unidentified venue. It would have helped if she had included a brief response to this controversial item, which was not well received. Of greater interest is her entry for 5 November: “In the afternoon Louk’s lecture in Paris then to Piet Mondrian. Ate soup and apple sauce with him and then to the Cigogne where later also Mrs. Stieltjes, Ernst Leyden, Mr. & Mrs. Van Loon, Eeckhout, Gomperts. Stayed at Piet’s place to sleep and have breakfast.”

We already know that the Stieltjes were Tonia Stieltjes and her engineer husband Wim. Tonia and Wim returned to the Netherlands in September of

⁹¹ Hanssen 2015, pp. 299-307 *passim*.

1921, running low on funds, but by 1925 they were back in Paris, together with Marcella and Jan, Wim's children by his late first wife, Judith Maria Paschen,⁹² and an injection of money inherited by Wim from his father. The Kröller-Müller museum in Otterlo owns an evocative picture of June 1926 showing Wim and what must surely be Tonia dressed to kill in identical garb (fig. 46). Clearly she had adapted to her new wealth and adopted an elegant style remote from the pre-Parisian look that we encounter online. Unfortunately Tonia became chronically ill around the time that she and Wim had gone through their money and that Louk and Ella had left Saint-Cloud for Théoule-sur-Mer. The events and correspondence are discussed below in their chronological sequence.

The Stieltjes were extravagantly hospitable in their fine new residence on the Square de Porte-Royal, entertaining Piet Mondrian, Charley Toorop, the Hoyacks and other artistic and intellectual members of the expat community. In fact, their guests, as listed by Léon Hanssen,⁹³ were largely the same people who also made their way to Piet's studio. And yet not one of Ella's diary entries for 1927 or 1928 mentions a Hoyack visit to the Porte-Royal residence of the Stieltjes. It is a reminder that none of our sources provides exhaustive evidence.

Ernst Leyden was a versatile and unsettled artist who established a Paris studio in 1923 but lived in the city only sporadically. The Van Loons were Hector Elie Henry van Loon and his wife Maud van Loon-Kok. Henry was a journalist who became the Paris correspondent of the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* in 1919 and developed a keen interest in the person and art of Piet Mondrian. Louk and Ella likely got to know Henry and Maud quite well, as Piet's casual references to "the Van Loons" in letters of 22 June and 20 October 1931 confirm. In the former missive Piet invited Louk and Ella to join him, the Van Loons and the Stieltjes in his studio the next Sunday for some collective reading.

Eeckhout may well have been Henry Pierre Leonard Wiessing, a journalist who used the pseudonym F.I.R van den Eeckhout. Wiesing was mainly interested in leftist politics, like Piet's friend Arthur Müller Lehning, but in 1925 he published a small book about Jan Toorop, whom Piet knew well from his

⁹² I have yet to ascertain just how old Marcella and Jan were in 1925, or who had looked after them between Wim's departure from Amsterdam in 1919 and his return in 1921.

⁹³ Hanssen 2015, pp. 100-101.

stays in Domburg and De Moderne Kunstkring in Amsterdam. As Léon Hanssen recounts, Mondrian had been beholden to Wiessing since 1920 when, as editor-in chief of *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*, he had published Piet's essay "De groote boulevards" and paid him an honorarium of a hundred francs. It was Theo van Doesburg (as *Nieuwe Amsterdammer* correspondent) and the Stieltjes who had encouraged Piet to submit his essay. Gomperts is a problem. The Hoyacks likely already knew him in Holland, since Ella's entry for 5 April 1928 tells us that "Coen and Gomperts stayed to sleep with us."

For 12 November Ella recorded seeing "Le roi de roi". As Ella explained in her diary, it was a film about the life of Christ. It is at times not clear if both Hoyacks saw a given movie, or whether it was Ella by herself. She mentioned only six movies for the entire year, which is hardly an excessive number. Nor do Ella's reactions to the movies add up to an insight about her preferences or ideas. On Sunday 13 November, Piet was expected in Saint-Cloud by 3 PM but he was sick and also had house guests.

November 15 was another big day. The morning was spent in pursuit of a passport: "then with Piet. Docter d'Eck was there with his wife. Later Van Rees and the 2 Stieltjes. Stayed for dinner and the rest of the evening." Van Rees was no doubt Otto van Rees, a versatile Dutch avant-garde artist who moved his family from the Dutch village of Deurne to Paris in 1928 and joined Cercle et Carré in 1930. We already know Marinus Mathijs Ritsema van Eck, who had become a great friend and backer of Piet during his pre-war years in Paris and even paid for his dancing lessons. He had settled on a farm in southern France, near Nice, but kept a pied-à-terre in Paris. He continued to be of comfort for the artist after the war. He even helped translate Piet's theoretical work in the second half of 1920, which, as we already know, came out as *Le Neo-Plasticisme* early in 1921. However, dr d'Eck withdrew from Paris in 1922, to Piet's distress. Of modest interest is Ella's mention of dr d'Eck's wife. Rinus van Eck had divorced his first wife, Agatha Quirina Brondgeest in Draguignan on 24 June 1926, after twenty-four years of marriage. Ella's entry proves he must have remarried fairly quickly. That Louk and Ella got to know dr d'Eck well after Ella encountered him and his second wife in Piet's studio, is established by letters that Piet wrote shortly after they had left Saint-Cloud.

On 22 November 1927, so Ella's diary informs us, Louk and Ella once more headed from Paris to Rotterdam and Louk's mother. It is as if nothing had

changed. Two days later Zus Kervel came to visit. The next day they were they were in The Hague, having tea with the Van Tuylls. Two days later again they dined with them. Ella added “Ali Khan there as well.” Of course Ali and Maheboob Khan were at hand because they always lived in The Hague for most of the year. Then, two days on, Louk felt poorly and had to take to bed for a day. On Wednesday 30 November Ella “ate with mama and papa” and then went on to the Notos, where Mrs. Meyer also was. We recall that she was the mother of Jo Noto-Meyer, the wife of Noto Soeroto.

On Friday 2 December Louk and Ella lunched with Henriette Dinaux. The following Sunday Louk lectured in the “Sufi church’. Ella commented “successful”. The next day Zus Kervel and “Ei” [Eetje?] came to visit. On 9 December they were in Woerden with “Joop and Eetje van Ingen”, being Yussouf and his wife, and toured the tile factory the next day. On 13 December, after tea with mama and more tea with Marthe, and an evening concert performance by Hans Kindler, Ella met “Roland Holst”. Louk, we know, had met the poet several months before. The largely forgotten Kindler was a brilliant Rotterdam-trained cellist, who had just returned triumphantly from a thirteen-year career as cellist and conductor in America. The performance that Louk and Ella attended was therefore a kind of triumphant return of the native. The Kindler performance is vitally important, because it is the only time that we catch the Hoyacks at a classical concert. The next day Louk and Ella were back with the Van Tuylls in the Hague, where Saida played the vina or veena, an instrument beloved by Inayat Khan. They then visited “Mahaboob “ [sic] Khan (who lived at 25 Frederick Hendriklaan in The Hague, moving on to Louk’s uncle Carel Sweerts de Landas Wyborgh for the evening.

We already know that Louk presented a public lecture about “The Philosophy of Sufism” in Amsterdam on 16 November (as discussed in the fifth chapter above). On 17 December Louk and Ella dined and spent the night with Dop Bles. Two days later they visited Louis and Jo van Ingen, Jo being Louis’ wife Johanna-van Ingen-Munk. Ella added “van Pallandt also there”, this being the Sufi diplomat baron Floris van Pallandt, whom the Hoyacks knew well from Hôtel Lutetia in 1926. The Hoyacks then returned to Saint-Cloud sometime during the next few days. Ella’s diary entry for 22 December 1927 states “to Paris”. The next day Louk headed there for a lecture, “I did not go along,” Ella commented. “Foul weather. Early to bed in the evening dismal day”. Tea with

Mme d'Eichthal on the 28th and a tea visit from the Feyenses on the 30th must have been equally anti-climactic. It was probably only the various "oosterlingen" (easterners) who attended Louk's lecture of Saturday 31 December,⁹⁴ followed by Piet's overnight end-of-the year-visit, that provided a worthy close of the year.

Moving into 1928, we read for the afternoon of 10 January: "Galerie Lafayette. Then to Piet who was a little ill. From there the Coupole then film with Josephine Baker. After that in the Lapin Agile."⁹⁵ On Saturday 21 January, Louk lectured in Paris in the afternoon. That evening Ella was with Piet in the Dôme". On the afternoon of 30 January she danced with Piet in "le Petit Teddy Rue [de] Caumarten,⁹⁶ home in the evening then early to bed." On 28 January, the afternoon started with a Paris lecture by Louk, "after which first with Piet in the atelier and then to the Dôme with him with Karis and Suvor and another young woman."

The mysterious Karis (also Kharis) must have been a Dutch Sufi of some importance. Suvor was of course the young Michel Seuphor, whom we have already mentioned as visiting Piet's studio by 1926. Very likely it was Piet who introduced Louk and Ella to Michel. The other young woman may well have been the Icelandic Ingeborg Bjarnason, Michel's partner of the late twenties and an accomplished artist in her own right. We see her in the right foreground of a photograph of members of Cercle et Carré taken by Michel Seuphor in his apartment in Vanves (to the south-west of the heart of Paris) sometime in April of 1930 (fig. 47). Louk and Ella must have met Michel shortly after their arrival in Saint-Cloud, as is established by an otherwise undated letter of 1928 that Piet sent to Michel, who was staying at "Villa Bionon, Route de Castellar, Menton A.M. [Alpes-Maritimes]" at the time: " My dear Nant, I have not written to you any sooner because I did not have the address of the Hoyacks. Now, a few days ago, I got it and heard that they were heading your way, so I was again too late. Nevertheless I report their address, in case they were

⁹⁴ These "easterlings" may well have been Tunisian Sufis, whose Islamic orientation, briefly mentioned below, Louk had encountered when staying in Tunis with Ella.

⁹⁵ The references are to La Coupole, Boulevard de Montparnasse (Janssen 2016, fig.80) and Cabaret Au Lapin Agile, 22 La Rue des Saules.

⁹⁶ This venue defies identification. Le Grand Teddy, located at no. 24, had closed in 1922.

detained. You never can tell. It is c/o Mr. B. Lillem – Théoule/A.M.” The address is mainly of interest because it suggests that Louk and Ella were checking out Théoule-sur-Mer four years before they settled there.

As for the Paris friendship of Michel with Piet and Louk, it was no doubt fed in part by his mastery of French, which enabled him to do editorial work for them. Ella’s diaries indicate that Michel’s work for Louk was underway by the winter of 1928, for on 29 February we read that after some dancing with Piet, Ella had gone to La Coupole “where we waited on Sueffort for [the return of] Louk’s book.” Four days later Ella met Louk in La Coupole, where “he was seated with Seuphor.” Finally, Louk and Ella awaited Michel in La Coupole, but he did not show. Possibly “the book” was Louk’s *Retour à l’univers des anciens*, which came out in 1929. It was adapted from the Dutch by Michka de Nicolaÿ, but it may still have needed further work by Michel.

When dealing with the relationship of Michel Seuphor to Louk Hoyack, we face a problem, being a surfeit of questionable evidence. In the last decades of his very long life, Michel repeatedly regaled people to his recollections, which he routinely revised. Events could be altered, reinterpreted, eliminated, or even invented, as when he claimed in 1997 that “Hoyack had shared a studio with Mondrian in Amsterdam.” That is out of the question, since Louk was not an artist and Piet was settled in Paris by 1912, a year before Louk graduated from the Municipal Gymnasium of Schiedam. It is certain, however, that Louk and Ella were truly fond of Michel and treated him well. The artist continued to play an important part in their lives after they left Saint-Cloud for Théoule-sur-Mer in September of 1932.

In the afternoon of 30 January 1928 Ella danced with Piet in “le Petit Teddy Rue [de] Caumartin, home in the evening then early to bed.” For 4 February we read: “in the afternoon Louk’s lecture in Paris with Kharis to Montparnasse. To Piet; there Van Tongerloo Later to the Dôme talked with Kharis.” Georges Vantongerloo, whose Dutch wife Adriana Woutrina or Tine was called Tieske, was an important Flemish member of the avant-garde. Though mainly a painter, he was also active as sculptor, architect, illustrator and draftsman. He studied Fine Art in Antwerp and Brussels, was conscripted into World War I, to be wounded in a gas attack and discharged in 1914. He then fled to Voorburg, near the Hague, where he first exhibited in 1917. By then he had met Theo van Doesburg, Bart van der Leek and Piet Mondrian and

become a co-signer of the first manifesto of the De Stijl movement. He published his “Réflexions” in *De Stijl* in 1918 and 1920. Georges and Tieske settled in Menton, in Southern France, in 1919, but they moved to Paris in 1927.⁹⁷ Both Louk and Ella met Georges on 12 February 1928, when he and Piet showed up in Saint-Cloud to have tea with them.

I have already mentioned 29 February when, after seeing Piet, Ella (or Louk and Ella) went to La Coupole to meet with Seuphor. On 4 May 1928 at 4 pm Ella was at Piet’s place “for the exhibition with Tongerloo, Seuphor - Henri. Then danced on Montparnasse and then in La Cigogne”. Ella closed with “sleeping at Piet’s place.” The presence of the rich and gifted Swiss-American surrealist photographer Florence Henri is of some interest. She joined Cercle et Carré (to be discussed) and is seen leaning on Piet’s shoulder in the portrait of several members taken by Michel Seuphor (fig. 47) and at the far left of a more ambitious contemporary photo taken in Galerie 32 (fig. 48).

According to Michel Seuphor, writing in 1988, he introduced Florence to Piet, that she invaded Piet’s dwelling in May of 1930, remaining there “longer than three months”, and that Piet eventually asked him to tell her to move on: “Please tell her never to come back. She distracts me too much.”⁹⁸ But Michel was notoriously unreliable late in life, and the only evidence for his improbable claim is that she is seen leaning on Piet’s shoulder in that one photograph.⁹⁹ Léon Hanssen conjectured that Florence and Piet had met by April of 1929, when they were photographed together at Galerie Zak, but Ella’s diary proves that they already knew each other by 4 May 1928 (and that Hanssen never perused the numerous diary entries). Ella again encountered Florence and the Vantongerloos in the Dôme on 3 October 1928, proving that she already fully belonged to Piet’s circle by that year.

“The exhibition” that Ella mentioned in passing is also of great interest, since it was Piet’s only exhibition in a Paris venue, which had opened on 20 February. The gallery owner, Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, showed his work in

⁹⁷ This information was gleaned from the current English and Dutch Wikipedia entries.

⁹⁸ This material corresponds to Hanssen 2015, p. 506, who gave neither date nor precise source. I found both, as presented in my bibliography, via the KB catalogue. Note that Janssen 2016, p. 183, repeated Seuphor’s claims as fact.

⁹⁹ Hanssen 2015, pp. 505-508, devoted too much space to dismissing Seuphor and his picture of Piet as a sexually active man. According to Hanssen, recent (but unidentified) research has established Florence’s bisexuality.

combination with that of Nikolas Mathijs (Nico) Eekman. Nico, who had Dutch parents but came from Brussels, was a figurative painter, graphic artist and book illustrator who disliked abstraction, so that the pairing of the two artists was arguably unlikely. However, both were expats and Nico was a highly accomplished artist who enjoyed international success. Although his work showed great development over the years, his style of around 1928 can probably best be seen as part of Flemish Expressionism. Nico had already enjoyed exhibitions and sales even before he settled in Paris in 1921, when he joined Mondrian, Vantongerloo and other members of the Flemish-Dutch community. He met regularly with Piet Mondrian and Paul Signac in their respective studios and at the brasserie La Rotonde in the Montparnasse area. He settled at 6 Square de Port Royal in the XIII^e arrondissement, to the East of Montparnasse, and associated with numerous other now better-known artists. Piet and Nico apparently remained good friends despite their different approaches to art until the threat of World War II had them part. It is therefore surprising that Nico is not once mentioned by Ella in her diaries or by Piet in his letters to the Hoyacks. As with Gerard Hordijk, we see that Piet did not need friends to share his approach as artist.

On 7 May 1928, Ella visited Tieske. Two days later Louk and Ella dined with Georges and Tieske, after which they were joined by Piet. On 17 May the Hoyacks saw an unspecified Charlie Chaplin film in Cinéma Le Cirque. On 2 June Ella was with Piet and the Vantongerloos. "Then sitting with Piet in the Coupole". Two days later Ella looked up Tieske "in the clinic" and was briefly with Piet. On 14 June Louk went "to Nicolai. I to Piet". Louk then came to fetch Ella and they went to the Coupole together. Ella added "met Romijn", presumably Louk's friend Jan Romein. It is a precious indication that the two men had kept in touch since their student years in Rotterdam and Leiden. Finally, on 16 June, she met Tonia and Marcella Stieltjes at Piet's place and then went to the Dôme, "where we encountered Seuphor". As for Tieske "in the clinic", her health was a fluctuating disaster, as we read in Piet's letters of 18 February 1929, 3 April 1930, 7 June 1931 and 26 June 1931.

A JOURNEY TO SOUTHERN FRANCE, INCLUDING MICHEL SEUPHOR

The routine was then interrupted by a Hoyack trip to southern France. Their itinerary can be followed in Ella's diary entries. They arrived in Marseille on 19 June and toured old Marseille in the morning of the 20th. They took the train to

Théoule at 12:30 and then talked to “Boet”, who had a brother named John. The Hoyacks remained in Théoule-sur-Mer the next two days. The 22nd was especially jolly, with bathing and walking in the daytime and dancing and singing in the evening. It must have been then that they took a shine to the location. On 23 June they took the train to Cannes with Boet. The next day they saw St. Raphael and Fréjus, with its Roman arena. On 25 June, presumably back in Théoule, they swam with Boet and were joined by one De Laneyry. Louk and Ella then headed back to Cannes on 26 June. The next day they were back in Théoule and went swimming. In the evening they were joined by an unidentified Thyssen family. For the 28th it was “Boet fam Thyssen”. Somewhere along the way we learn that Boet’s last name was Byland. He and brother John were The Hague residents and not related to the Sufi aristocrat *meester* Willem Frederik Lodewijk (Karamnavaz) count of Bylant.

Then something of greater interest occurred. Ella recorded that on 30 June she and Louk took the bus to Menton, where Michel Seuphor received them. They then “drank and ate with Ingeborg Styn and Seuphor.” They were still with Michel and Ingeborg on 1 July. Two days later they were with one Evert, likely once more in Théoule. They again went to Cannes with Boet on 4 July. It appears that Louk and Ella remained in that area for a few days, which included a visit to Saint Jean-les Pins on 5 July. From 6 to 11 July they repeatedly saw Boet and Evert. Also present were an unidentifiable Gladys Henderson and “the old Henderson”, presumably her father. The Hoyacks then headed West, arriving in Saint Raphael by 12 July. They were Avignon by 13 July and admired the famous bridge, leaving the interior of the palace of the Popes for the next day. From then on it was Nîmes, Le Puy and Vichy, with the usual sights. On 19 July they took the train to Paris. That same evening they visited the Feyenses. None of this would likely have interested Piet, and it mainly serves to demonstrate, if still needed, how totally different Louk and Ella were from him.

THE 1928 SUMMER SCHOOL AND JADWIGA BOHDANOWICZ

By that time the 1928 Summer School had been underway for a full month. There were the familiar locals such Adeh van Braam and Fazil de Vries-Feyens, but also Dutch friends such Youssuf van Ingen, Wim Eggink and his wife Grietje (Bakhti) Eggink-van Stolk, whom the Hoyacks had visited in Schiedam on 3 April

1927, as well as the Sufi pianist Henk Endt, whom Ella called “Ent”,¹⁰⁰ and the architect Piet Kramer. Though he was not a zealous Sufi like his wife Moenie, he spent many hours in the company of Inayat Khan in 1926, designing a temple for Suresnes.¹⁰¹ A maquette of this edifice, in fact a Sufi headquarters or *khankah* in the London tradition, was on display in Suresnes but has not survived. Huzarnavaz also designed the small Sufi “temple” next to Sirdar van Tuyll’s home in The Hague, which has remained in use to this day.¹⁰²

By far the most important visitor of the 1928 Summer School from Ella’s point of view was Jadwiga Bohdanowicz, who continued to play an important role in Ella’s life for many years. Unlike other members of Piet’s circle, she was neither Dutch nor Flemish, but Polish. She was born in Warsaw in 1887 and died in Rome in 1943. She had come from Krakow to Paris in 1924 on a grant from the French government to study with Emile Antoine Bourdelle. Piet first mentioned “the Polish sculptress” in a letter that he sent to Saint-Cloud on 1 November 1929, precisely a month after Bourdelle’s death. As Piet could not correctly spell fairly simple Dutch names such as Tussenbroek, it is understandable that he did not even attempt Jadwiga’s last name. Jadwiga likely started off as a Theosophist, since the Warsaw National Museum has a head of Madame Blavatsky by her. She may only just have discovered Sufism that summer, but she probably remained a Sufi for life. Several of Ella’s diary entries for the remainder of 1928 prove that the two women bonded at once.

Ella’s diary reports that she looked Piet up in the afternoon of 21 July 1928, after which she attended a Silence in Suresnes that evening. That Ella continued her Paris visits right through the Summer School is further supported by her entry for Monday, 20 August, which Ella wrote was the birthday of both Cateau and Tieske. Louk lectured in the morning, “then to Cateau and then Tieske, Georges and Piet. To the Coupole late in the evening. Slept at Piet’s place.” Tiny letters allude to a “quarrel”, which could explain why Louk had not joined, or had left, the party.

¹⁰⁰ For information about Endt as accompanist of Gertrud Leistikow in the Indies, De Boer 2014: 71, 98, 100, though without his dates.

¹⁰¹ Van Hoorn 2010, p. 110, with lots of speculation about its appearance.

¹⁰² It is sad that Bernhard Kohlenbach, in his Kramer monograph of 1994, ignored the architect’s Sufi persona on the advice of his son, the renowned industrial designer Friso Kramer. I am daily reminded of Friso’s success by the hundreds of his mailboxes in use in Nijmegen.

On 27 July 1928, Ella noted that Piet had come to see Ali Khan. He presumably went to the Hoyacks after that, as he was still with them the next day when, in the evening, Ella walked along “les Clôtures” (the periphery of Saint-Cloud) with him while Louk attended Suresnes’ Silence Activity. That last detail is our only proof that Louk took part in the Activities of the Suresnes Summer Schools. That Ella had attended a Silence on her own six days before, suggests that these events were amongst the attractions of Summer Schools that brought Louk and Ella to Suresnes year after year.

Later that evening “Louk and I and Piet descended and listened to jazz in the Impérial”, a stylish brasserie located at 240 Rue de Rivoli, in the heart of Paris. In addition there was Piet’s overnight visit from 30 to 31 July, when he had come to consult his revered healer Ali Khan, as well as on 11 August, when Piet had presumably again been in Suresnes to see Ali, but certainly went on to see Louk and Ella. In the afternoon of 29 September Piet was not in Saint-Cloud in person, but Ella noted that she was editing “the manuscript” for him. This manuscript, like “his piece” of 16 October 1927, may have been an early version of *L’Art Nouveau – La Vie Nouvelle* of 1931. If so, Ella twice made a modest contribution to Piet’s theoretical testament.

On 29 August 1928, Ella wrote: “Been to Piet. There met v.d. Briel, Müller Le[h]ning and Charley Toorop.” We recall that Albert van den Briel and Mondrian became friends in 1899 or 1900, and that it was Albert who encouraged Piet to leave Amsterdam for Uden in 1904. Their friendship lasted for almost forty years, until Piet left Paris for London.¹⁰³ Albert studied forestry, but he was also a collector and water-mark specialist who owned work by Piet and corresponded with him. However, Albert was not an expat but on a visit from the Netherlands. The connection with Charley Toorop also went way back and was mainly via her father, the versatile painter Jan Toorop. Charley and her two sons, Edgar and John Fernhout, were in Paris in the winter of 1921, when she and Piet visited museums together. Charley showed up in Piet’s correspondence with Bob Oud in 1927 because she was negotiating to have two of Piet’s paintings displayed in an Amsterdam group exhibition. On 17 December 1927, Piet told Bob to let Charley know that she would have to settle for just one work. She, too, became a friend of Louk and Ella.

¹⁰³ For information on the later contact between the two men, see Janssen 2016, p. 511, with that author’s typical novelistic presentation, based on Henkels 1988, p. 139.

That Charley Toorop (fig. 49) and Arthur Lehning (fig. 50) showed up together in Piet's studio in August of 1928 was no accident. Arthur had moved in with the divorcee and her three children in Amsterdam in 1927. Arthur and Charley were also in Paris in 1930 and 1931. Although they had their own interests, they remained close until her premature death in 1955. Lehning was a Dutch anarchist, journalist and translator. He was a disciple of the Russian revolutionary anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. Like him, Lehning was anti-militaristic and believed that the state and its subsidiary institutions had to go. He and Piet were kindred spirits compared to Louk, with his great respect for hierarchy, authority, venerable institutions and the like. Piet, however, was little interested in either orientation, and to find both Louk and Arthur among his good friends shows that he did not need to agree with all their ideas.

Hans Janssen's elaborate novelistic reconstruction of Arthur's conversation with Piet in his studio is largely invented but nevertheless informative. However, the following material, in which Piet quizzes Arthur about the current political situation in Germany, is altogether fraudulent, and especially when Janssen assured us that "what was happening in Germany filled him [Mondrian] with horror. It was of a kind of mediaeval tyranny which knew no equal."¹⁰⁴ Janssen's solid documentary evidence was a letter that Piet wrote to the Swiss architect, designer, painter and university lecturer Alfred Roth on 6 March 1933,¹⁰⁵ but the link with Arthur was Janssen's invention. It may also be altogether unrepresentative of the entire relationship of Mondrian and Lehning. In his recollections of 1983, as published by Yve-Alain Bois in 1984, Arthur wrote that he and Piet talked very little. "I remember that one day he said to me in the Dôme, Arthur there's no need to talk much. We understand each other anyway."

On 19 August Ella wrote that Jadwiga had come home with her from Suresnes to Saint-Cloud and stopped to eat and sleep. Boet and John Byland dropped by for lunch on 1 September. On 9 September Ella noted "Boet's birthday". We recall that the Hoyacks had met this then still unidentified pair in or near Cannes on 11 July. They had presumably stopped off in Paris on their

¹⁰⁴ Janssen 2016, p. 474.

¹⁰⁵ Weber 2024, pp. 306-308, stated that Roth had looked up Piet in his atelier in 1922. Closer to Piet was Jean Gorin, whom he wrote on 1 April 1933 (Blotkamp 1994, p. 219) that events in Germany were deplorable but would not last.

way back to The Netherlands. On 7 September Louk lectured in the morning. That evening Jadwiga went home with Ella to dine and later drank tea with one Anne Lyse and with Eric and Dagmar, her brother and sister-in-law. On 9 September the Hoyacks went to the Sufi grounds in Suresnes. In the evening she ate and talked with Jadwiga. Ella reported nothing concerning Anne Lyse, leave alone what Eric and Dagmar were about. On 13 September Ella was at Anne Lyse's place along with Jadwiga. The richest entry was for 16 September: "Jadwiga was with us at 3 PM, To the Universal Worship at Vazi May [Vazal Mai] together. Janus de Winter and Jadwiga dined with us. Jadwiga stayed to sleep." Clearly Janus de Winter was back in town. Ella mentioned that she met him in La Coupôle on 14 September.

In the afternoon of 29 September, Piet was not in Saint-Cloud in person, but Ella was editing "the manuscript" for him. On 30 September Ella went to the movies by herself. She specified between brackets ("Pola Negri in Hotel Imperial"). Pola Negri had also shown up in 1927, and Ella again did not specify the name of the movie. It appears that Mrs. Beresteyn had made her way from The Hague to Paris by 3 October. However, the Hoyacks had another row and Louk went off to see her by himself. Four days later we read that Ella went "briefly to Piet where we met Hordijk, with the latter to the Coupole." Given that "we", that particular visit must have been in the company of Louk. For 12 October we read: "3:30 Piet drank tea with us, remained to eat and sleep. He read out an article."

On 17 October 1928 Ella attended a lecture by Krishnamurti and called the event "A farce" and Jiddu "a clown". She presumably did not know that Piet Mondrian very nearly worshipped the boy. Piet slept over in Saint-Cloud on the night of 26 to 27 October, before heading for the Viking Club with Ella. On the afternoon of 2 November they "went to Janus the Winter to look at his paintings", which hung in a successful exhibition in the Salle de la Fédération des artistes. On 3 November Ella reported on visiting the Dôme bar with Piet, Janus, Jadwiga and an unknown Pole. Finally, on 10 November 1928 Ella was again in La Coupole with Piet and the Vantongerloos.

ENDING THE YEAR IN THE NETHERLANDS

From 21 November to 18 December of 1928 the Hoyacks were again in The Netherlands. Piet Mondrian was well aware of that visit. On 4 December 1928 he wrote to Bob Oud: "Friends of mine who live in St. Cloud (a philosopher,

Hoyack, and his wife) are on a brief visit to Holland and have taken a canvas with them for me because they know of a modern venue in The Hague where they wish to place it and thus sell it." On 19 December 1928, Piet added: "I hope that the efforts of Hoyack in The Hague will succeed." It is noteworthy that Piet kept track of Hoyack travel almost from the beginning of their acquaintance..

As another instance of their close personal contact with Michel Seuphor. The Hoyacks were heading north when they arrived in Antwerp on 12 November. Seuphor fetched them from the station and they spent the night with his parents. Louk and Ella remained in Antwerp for much of the next day, when Michel showed them "a cathedral", most likely the Church of Our Lady, and the Plantin-Moretus Museum. These are fascinating additions to the extensive Seuphor literature, which serve to establish that he and the Hoyacks were truly close friends by the late twenties.

Louk and Ella spent 16 November with "mama" and aunt Henriette before moving on to Dop Bles (who had moved a few blocks to 77 Egelantierstraat), Van Tuyll and a modest dinner with "the Van Andels". Pieter van An del was a The Hague physician who was married to Wilhelmina Cramerus, one of a few daughters of the aforementioned Jan Willem Cramerus. We may recall that Pieter had served as Ella's witness at her marriage to Louk. The next day Louk and Ella moved from "De Moes" to Henriette and then "uncle Adolf" (in fact Adolphe) for tea. Ella did not record that on 19 November Louk had lectured on "Sufism", again at 580 Keizersgracht in Amsterdam. On 20 November they visited "Adee" in Bloemendaal, that being Adeh van Braam, whom we already know well from Suresnes. That night they slept with "the Toulons", being Adeh's sister Charlotte and her husband Meinhard van Toulon van der Koog, whom we know from Suresnes in August of 1926. Louk and Ella remained in Amsterdam the next day, where they ran into "Lohuizen, being Theodoor (Kadir) van Lohuizen, in "de Boer", likely the famous art dealership P. de Boer, which the dealer-collector had opened on the Heerengracht the year before. Kadir had moved from Rotterdam to Amsterdam in 1928, leaving for Bussum in 1937. They then visited Kadir's wife "Mrs. Lohuizen", being Helena Anna Maria (Enne) Lohuizen-Peters. Kadir and especially Enne, were further to the left politically than Louk, but Sufi friendships surmounted such differences. On 23 November Louk and Ella had tea with "mama" and tea with Jeanne or

Jen van Hoytema, enjoyed more tea in the Regina and ate Indonesian food in the Warung Djawea restaurant. On 25 November Zus Kervel came to visit. The next day they met “Witteveen en Azmat” (Faber).¹⁰⁶ Most of a century later Most of a century later Willem Gerrit’s son Jacob recorded in his autobiography¹⁰⁷ that “Azmat Faber, a good friend of both my parents, sometimes came to stay with us. I found that cosy. Then there were often interesting discussions at the dining table about Sufism and the psychology of [Carl] Jung.”¹⁰⁸ We know little about Rijka Christina Catharina Faber other than that she was a Sufi mover and shaker. Like Louk she started as a Theosophist, converting to Sufism a year before him. From 1950 to 1965 she was the first head of the editorial staff of *De Soefi-Gedachte*, and later secretary and member of the National Comité of the Netherlands. She also joined Kadir van Lohuizen on the executive of the so-called Temple Fonds, set up by Maheboob Khan to realize the dream of his father Inayat. Azmat lived in the upmarket villa “Lesterbes-De Vlierstruik” at Wilhelminalaan 1 in Baarn,¹⁰⁹ where Theo van Hoorn went in the summer of 1942 to consult the Smit-Kerbert Collection. The Van Hoorns placed their son Paul in Montessori elementary school at the recommendation of Azmat Faber and Enne van Lohuizen-Peters.¹¹⁰

From several more entries in Ella’s diary we know t we know that Louk lectured at the Rotterdam Sufi Centre on 27 November. The next day he headed for Utrecht by himself, perhaps to visit Janus de Winter or his sister, or to consult his brother in law, the banker Van Tienhoven, about his finances.. On 29 November Louk and Ella again saw “De Moes”, an as yet unidentified individual who had also visited them in Paris, when they saw him off from the Gare du Nord on Saturday 21 April. On 30 November it was the turn of “Shadi[bi] Mahaboob [sic] Khan in The Hague.

Moving into December, the Hoyacks spent the morning of 4 December going “with [Fer] Semey to Polanski”, a baffling reference, and they went to the

¹⁰⁶ Van Hoorn 2010, fig. 45

¹⁰⁷ Witteveen 2022, p. 35.

¹⁰⁸ Carl Jung is mainly remembered as a student of Sigmund Freud. Yet Witteveen 2022, pp. 15-16, discussed the importance of Jung for the development of his own youth and character, as well as for Sufism in general) in some detail.

¹⁰⁹ Van Hoorn 2010, fig. 41 and p. 103. One reads online that the villa was built in 1907 and is now a municipal monument.

¹¹⁰ Van Hoorn 2010, p. 333.

movies with Zus Kervel. At 2:30 in the afternoon they were again with Louis van Ingen. On 6 December it was once more the turn of baron Van Tuyll. For 7 December Ella noted only “ruzie”, meaning discord. Then, five days later she and Louk had breakfast with “Van Spengler”, another Suresnes contact, before going to Asta Theatre, which had still been called Rozentheater until the year before. On 12 and 13 December Ella again met De Moes. By 18 December the Hoyacks were back in Antwerp. Ella then travelled on to Paris alone because she and Louk were once again quarrelling.

THE RECIPROCAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PARIS AND SAINT-CLOUD

The reader will have noticed the almost constant alternation between Paris and Saint-Cloud and, most important, between the reciprocity of Ella’s visits to Piet’s Paris studio and Piet’s visits to the Hoyack residence in Saint-Cloud. The latter visits continued almost to the day that Louk and Ella left that municipality for Théoule-sur-Mer. Piet never forgot his visits to Saint-Cloud. On 18 December 1932, for instance, he waxed nostalgic about their shared Christmases of yesteryear. Similarly, on 3 April 1939 Piet wrote: “This year from London my best wishes for 5 April, the ever-memorable birthday of Ella. The three of us had a fine time in St. Cloud then, right?” Of course Louk and especially Ella must also have continued to visit Piet’s studio and meet with their shared Parisian friends, but with no more diary entries by Ella and with Piet routinely destroying his incoming mail, the record is fragmentary. We are almost entirely dependent on Piet’s letters to the Hoyacks and a very rare mention in a published recollection. As it is, only Maaïke van Domselaer, writing three decades later about a 1929 visit,¹¹¹ located Louk and Ella in Piet’s studio. We may also recall that Arthur Lehning reported that “on several occasions we went dancing, Mondrian, Tonia, Wim Stieltjes and I, in a night café where only negros came and the jazz was all the better,” but Arthur did not specify dates.

The back and forth movement between Piet Mondrian’s Paris studio and the Hoyack dwelling in Saint-Cloud is still another indication that they were prepared to live with and accept each other’s foibles and taste. We can hardly suppose that Louk and Ella loved the uninviting rectilinear furniture of Piet’s studio. Louk, we shall learn, hated what he deemed to be the sterility of the

¹¹¹ Domselaer-Middlekoop, 1959.

Nieuwe Zakelijkheid (new objectivity or, more literally, new matter-of-factness). Inversely, Piet can hardly have admired the bourgeois furnishings of the Saint-Cloud abode of the Hoyacks. Yet he clearly enjoyed his visits there. Just how they whiled away the hours remains a mystery.

CHAPTER X: A SUPPLEMENT TO ELLA'S DIARY ENTRIES

THE PATTERN TO ELLA'S VISITS TO PIET MONDRIAN'S STUDIO

Léon Hanssen, who first published Ella's pocket diaries for 1927 and 1928, attempted to extract a pattern to her visits to Piet's studio.

His atelier was for her a first stop-off point when she arrived at Gare Montparnasse from Saint-Cloud, to then head by herself to a movie theatre or to la Rotonde on the corner of the Boulevard du Montparnasse and Boulevard Raspail. The programme was regularly more elaborate, as on Wednesday 26 October 1927 [quoted above]. If things got late because she had dallied, whether in company or not, in bars or casual restaurants such as La Cigogne, La Coupole, Le Dôme, Café Falstaff, Au Lapin Agile or Chez les Vikings, or had gone dancing in Le Bal Nègre, the Jungle Bar, Le Petit Teddy (all hot spots for the artistic and intellectual jet set of the time), the blonde and energetic Ella slept at Piet's place.¹¹²

Obviously "jet set" is an anachronism, but Hanssen's summary was otherwise inaccurate. He clearly did not find time to peruse all of Ella's tiny and sometimes nearly illegible writing in pencil in the two booklets, which had only just surfaced. The result was perhaps the weakest part of an otherwise exemplary book. Nick Weber clearly also failed to read Ella's notes and was certainly relying on Hanssen.¹¹³ That presumably led him to underestimate the intellectual strengths of Ella by characterizing her as an "elegant and playful bon vivant" and elsewhere, we recall, as "a radiant woman who liked to be photographed in bathing suits." Even Weber's identification of Ella as a painter repeated a mistake on the part of Hanssen.

Although Piet's studio was located next to the Gare Montparnasse, Hanssen only specified the station on the assumption that it had to be Ella's first stop, being right next to her destination. Yet Ella's diary entries establish that she did not as a rule start off at Piet's studio in the morning, when he usually painted. Her visits were in the afternoons and were preceded by all

¹¹² Hanssen 2015, pp. 389-390.

¹¹³ Weber 2024, p. 291, who did not mention Hanssen in a footnote or in his bibliography.

sorts of activities, including shopping and attending Louk's lectures. It was also in the afternoons that Piet often painted some more and attended to his shopping and domestic concerns. Ella's visits would in any case not have been spontaneous. She would probably have arranged her visits via the elaborate pneumatic mail service of Paris, which could allow messages to go back and forth via underground tubes within a day.¹¹⁴

Hanssen also embellished Ella's hangouts. It was at first mainly in Le Dôme that she and Piet's circle socialized. Piet knew that location well, having often visited it in 1912 with his friends Conrad Kickert and Lodewijk Schelfhout. La Coupole was not even an option until 1928 because it only opened on 27 December 1927, but it joined the Dôme as Ella's favourite hangout after that, with a dozen visits before the end of the year. By contrast La Rotonde, La Cignogne and Le Bal Nègre all occur only twice in two years, whereas Au Lapin, Le Petit Teddy, Jungle Bar and Chez le Viking show up only once. Also, Ella's meetings with Piet were irregular occurrences; they numbered only about twenty extending over two years, meaning on average about one a month. No doubt Piet was out on the town without Ella on occasion, but the picture would probably not change dramatically. Most evenings, Piet must have been reading and engaged in his correspondence.

Hanssen's account also did not note how often Piet and Ella danced together, whether in his studio or out on the town. After painting, dancing was Piet's favourite activity, and it was certainly not of the cheek-to-cheek variety but very likely of the somewhat comical formal and erect foxtrot that he had already practiced in Laren by 1915. But though Piet stuck to his own version of the foxtrot, he eventually became besotted with the Charleston, an American dance step that he believed partook of the same spirit as his Neoplasticism. The dance hit its height of popularity just before Louk and Ella got to know Piet, with Josephine Baker performing the dance before an adulatory audience in La Revue Nègre in the Théâtre de Champs Élysées late in 1925 and in the revue *Un vent de folie* (A wind of madness) at the Folies Bergère in 1926. Everyone adored Baker, including Piet, who had a photo of her hanging above his bed. In short, Piet loved Jazz, popular music and dancing, especially with young partners, and he even believed that the new imported black culture, including

¹¹⁴ There is much Wikipedia information online. Saint-Cloud is located immediately behind the Bois de Boulogne and was likely connected in 1912.

the Charleston, when properly performed, had improved the moral tone of presentation at public venues.

It is also important is that Ella normally returned home after socializing in Paris. In most of two years there is evidence for only three nights spent in Piet's spartan guest room on the Rue du Départ, where many other friends also stayed, and on one of those occasions she was likely in the company of her husband. The key is the Dutch adjective "bij", which mean "at" not "with", so that "bij Piet" meant "at Piet's place." The situation could be misinterpreted in light of Hans Janssen's dust-jacket description of Piet as "an artist who had open notions about love and marriage, desired many women and had many love affairs" Nick Weber went so far as to speculate about where Ella might have slept with Piet, whether in the guest bedroom or in Piet's bed in the area behind his working space.¹¹⁵ There is no reason to believe, however, that Piet was a libertine, and the rare female friends such as Tonia Stieltjes, Ella Hoyack and Florence Henri should not be identified as "Mondrian's women."

Another misconception that one could garner from Hanssen is that Piet and Ella danced, snacked and engaged only in small talk, but Ella was interested in art and their talk must sometimes have turned to his work in progress. Ella must certainly have taken closer interest in Piet Mondrian's art and person than her husband did. Her receptivity to abstraction helps explain why Piet relied on her to edit his writings in Saint-Cloud. We also know that he intended to give her a painting, whereas Louk never commissioned even one. Piet had apparently completed the picture sometime in 1929. On 30 June 1931 he reported that "The small painting that I wanted to give to Ella is back, but now Müller Lehning wants to buy it so [I trust] you won't mind if I make you another." Piet sold the picture to Arthur Lehning because he needed the money. Reminiscing in 1983, Arthur claimed that he had bought the painting "for the give-away price of a hundred guilders". Give away or not, this indicates that Piet was planning a substantial gift for Ella. In an undated letter of the first days of April 1932, Piet told Ella that "the canvas that I already promised you will surely come when better times arrive." It appears those better times never did arrive. Fortunately the earlier picture has come down to us (fig. 51), which we also depict with the original frame (fig. 52).

¹¹⁵ Weber 2024, p. 290.

There is also evidence that Ella was more involved with the artistic community of Paris than Louk managed. Around 1947, returned to The Hague, not yet fully reunited with Louk and needing income of her own, Ella became active in the art world. She likely started with Kunsthandel Passage at 33 Passage, in the renowned covered shopping gallery located in the heart of the city. This dealership, which was founded on 23 November 1946, about a year before Ella returned to The Hague, specialized in minor modern artists. More important is that she went on to run the Galerie de Posthoorn, a small but high-power venue for contemporary art located on 39a Lange Voorhout (next door to the still extant Bodega de Posthoorn), which opened in 1954 and closed in 1962.

The expressionist painter Jan Cremer, who is better known for his hilariously rebellious bipartite autobiography *Ik Jan Cremer* of 1964 and 1966, had his first exhibition of his “Peinture Barbarisme”, as he called it, in the Galerie de Posthoorn late in 1958, when he was only eighteen years old. In 2011 he told the painter and writer Diederik Stevens that Ella Cramerus, as manager of the gallery, gave him a letter of introduction to Jeanne Kosnick Kloss, a highly versatile artist and widow of the painter Otto Freundlich, who had been murdered by the Nazis in 1943. Jeanne’s Paris home had become a centre and ersatz exhibition venue for young artists. Her first solo exhibition in Paris was in 1927, at the Galerie Billet on Rue de la Boéti. Ella’s lasting contact with Jeanne could well have dated from around that time. Given that she did not mention Jeanne Kosnick in her pocket diaries for 1927 and 1928, the meeting likely took place sometime in 1929 or a little later.

Aided by my dear and late Sufi friend Jos van den Heuvel, who had once been Jan Cremer’s dentist, I was at last able to contact the artist on 9 December 2015. His hilarious combination of information and misinformation needs to be preserved for posterity.

I have indeed known Ella Cramerus well, and the information is correct. She took pity on me and thanks to her I ended up in the highest artistic circles of Paris. I must root around in my recollections for a moment but that should work out. She was the nude model of many famous artists (including Picasso) and the voluptuous mistress of the dry-as-dust Mondrian. She ran the Galerie De Posthoorn for Frits Begt, where I had my first exposition in 1958. She was getting on a little by then but still an

impressive beauty and you could see that she must have been a splendid girl.

Ignoring Cremer's bizarre claims that Ella had been Picasso's nude model and Piet Mondrian's mistress, the overall evidence of the present study indicates that Ella was more important for Piet Mondrian than her husband. Most obviously, Piet saw more of her than of Louk, at least during 1927 and 1928, and he clearly bonded with her, as is shown by his repeated and even touching concern for her less than robust health. From the start of the Mondrian-Hoyack correspondence, Piet apparently assumed that his health was of interest for his friends, but especially for Ella. It would seem that Louk was never ill for more than a day or two until old age at last caught up with him. Since he believed that sickness arises in the mind and dismissed most of Western medicine as redundant, Louk was an unlikely recipient for letters that often dwelled on ailments and treatments. Though we must consider that he was generally an exacting and unreasonable thinker and yet a relaxed and faithful friend, we may reasonably assume that Piet primarily intended the numerous updates on his health for Ella.

MORE SOCIAL ACTIVITY CENTRED ON PIET'S STUDIO

We have not nearly exhausted the social activity in Piet's studio that is not included in Ella's Hoyack's diaries. We need to discuss a couple of individuals whom Mondrian knew well but whom Ella did not mention. Since Ella's visits to Piet's studio were neither planned nor systematic, it was by the luck of the draw whom she encountered there. One artist very close to Piet was the French painter and sculptor Albert Jean Gorin. He first saw the work of Piet Mondrian and Michel Seuphor in 1926 and met Piet in his atelier the next year, when they became good friends. Albert fully embraced Neoplasticism, so that Piet came to think of him as his best follower. Albert was not a true expat, since his house and atelier were located in Nort-sur-Erdre, a community on the river Erdre north of Nantes, in the Loire-Atlantique department of Western France. However, he and Piet corresponded for years. The Hoyacks apparently never met Albert. Knowing Louk, he would probably have made a point of befriending and visiting him.

There were also half-Dutch expats who are mentioned by Piet but not by Ella, namely the British artist and Mondrian adept Marjorie Jewel (Marlow)

Moss, a short and short-haired figure in masculine clothing, and the conventional and establishment Dutch author Antoinette Hendrika (Netty) Nijhoff-Wind.¹¹⁶ Even though Netty remained married to the poet Martinus Nijhof until 1950, she formed an openly lesbian couple with Marlow. After a hectic romance, settled on 216 Boulevard Raspail, just down the street from number 278, where Piet was to move in March of 1936. Louk and Ella had certainly got to know Marlow before 20 October 1931, when Piet informed them about a crisis in her life. Once again he showed the caring side of his personality.

Yesterday I was briefly with our small Moss, who has fallen down the stairs and had a nasty landing. She has broken a small transverse bone in the spine (spinal cord) and the poor thing thought that she had destroyed her entire back strength. Fortunately everything will turn out well, she lies in bed in a splendid studio with metal furniture. Nevertheless she has money problems because of the crisis.

Marlow was present at the opening of the Mondrian-Eekman exhibition on 20 February 1928 when she first saw Mondrian's work, which turned her life around. Carel Blotkamp related that Piet was "almost certainly" influenced by Marlow's use of two thin parallel lines by 1931 "at the latest."¹¹⁷ Marlow Moss was therefore in part important because she most likely made an important contribution to Piet's development.

As for "the crisis", it refers to the severe economic malaise of the so-called Great Depression, a highly complex development that lasted from 1929 to 1939. It caused massive unemployment and poverty, drastic decrease in industrial production and international trade, and widespread business and bank failures around the world. Natural the commissioning of art also declined, with serious consequences for artists like Piet Mondrian. But even people like Marlow Moss and Louk Hoyack (and no doubt some other financially comfortable Sufis), experienced vexing erosion of their investment income. America, Great Britain and Germany were particularly hard hit by the crisis. In Germany it no doubt contributed to the rise of Nazi Germany in 1933.

¹¹⁶ The story of how Netty first spotted Marlow, as related by Hanssen 2015, p. 495, makes for hilarious reading.

¹¹⁷ Blotkamp 1994, p. 21.

OCCASIONAL DUTCH VISITORS TO PIET'S STUDIO

In addition to the true expats, there were occasional visitors from the Netherlands who found their way to Piet's studio at 26 Rue du Départ. However, most of such figures showed up after 1928. Only two individuals, namely Charley Toorop and Arthur Lehning, visited Piet in 1928 but they only became expats in 1930 and 1931. Two true visitors, whom both Mondrian and the Hoyacks knew well, were Dop Bles and his daughter Lily.¹¹⁸ We already know Piet had known Dop from before 1914 and that Louk and Ella visited him on 18 December 1926. Several such visits to and from Dop are recorded in Ella's diaries, and they even spent a night at his home in November of 1927. In the spring of 1929 Dop took Lily to Paris, where they spent a week with Piet, who showed them a good time, which likely included meeting Louk and Ella. The story of this visit was revealed by Ben van der Velden in a 1972 article in the *NRC Handelsblad*, but it was since lovingly fleshed out by Léon Hanssen, with evocative references to the "budding womanhood" of the twenty-year-old Lily. To make a long story short, Piet proposed to Lily two years later, but father Dop refused to cooperate. Back in those days parental consent was required until a daughter reached the age of thirty! That rule could be circumvented, but it must have been "not over my dead body" as far as Dop was concerned because thirty-seven years separated his daughter from the relatively dilapidated and impoverished Piet.

There can be no doubt that Piet had great hopes for a life with Lily. He must have realized that his decision way back in 1910 to forego the customary marriage and family in favour of work, had meant an enormous loss, one that he hoped to rectify. Once in Paris the two woman especially dear to him, namely Tonia Stieltjes and Ella Hoyack, were both married, and we do not know of romances with other women. Regardless of what we may want to believe about Florence Henri, nothing suggests that she and Piet had long term plans. Piet was in any case not looking for sex but for a conventional family. His proposal to Lily Bles was therefore a now or never move. Hans Janssen related how the artist rearranged and redecorated his studio and even bought a bigger bed and a cradle. He must have shared his disappointment with Louk and Ella, since a postscript to his letter of 7 June 1931 reads: "Greetings to Dop and – or better say nothing to Lily."

¹¹⁸ For truly extensive information, Weber 2024, pp. 318-328.

In addition, the composer Jakob van Domselaer and his pianist wife, Maaïke van Domselaer-Middelkoop, repeatedly looked up Piet but do not figure in Ella's diaries. Piet and Jakob already knew each other in Laren back in 1915, and Piet had warmly received him and Maaïke in Paris in 1922. In her "Recollections of Mondrian" of 1959, she reported on a much earlier visit to the artist:

In 1929 I was with him in Paris one afternoon and encountered the Hoyacks in his atelier. After a while, without saying anything, he turned on a small gramophone (which stood precisely, like a small black surface, on a small white table under a painting, of which it seemed a spatial continuation) and began quietly and precisely to step around the atelier with Mrs. Hoyack. Beyond that the afternoon was rather awkward. I felt something was wrong.

Of course nothing was wrong. Piet and Ella were simply doing their thing. We in any case owe Maaïke solid proof that Louk and Ella did occasionally drop in on Piet together.

A more prominent visitor to Mondrian's studio, whom Ella had already met in Rotterdam on 13 December 1927, was Adriaan (Jany) Roland Holst. Painter and poet had known each other since 1915, when they were both part of an intellectual-artistic circle that convened in Catharine Hannaert's "pension de Linden" in Laren. Maaïke van Domselaer mentioned in her Mondrian recollections that both Piet and Jany liked to go dancing in Hotel Hamdorff. Louk had certainly known Jany since the early twenties. since Jany's diary for 1930 establishes that he lunched with the Hoyacks in Le Coupole on 19 November, starting at 1 PM, and then visited "Mondriaan" from 3 to 4:30. Like Louk, Jany leaned to the political right but gave up on it by 1940, whereas it took Louk longer to see the light. In a letter to Ella of 27 April 1933, Piet conveyed his greetings to Jany. In addition, Jany joined the Van Loons on 14 May 1936 and Conrad Kickert on 14 and 15 May of that year. Jany was also a close friend of his fellow Bergen resident Charley Toorop, who was also a good friend of Piet Mondrian and whom Ella had got to know in Piet's studio on 29 August 1928. Still other individuals who repeatedly visited Piet but whom Ella did not mention were Arnoldus (Nol) Prager, a violinist and composer, and his

wife Marie Françoise Jeanne Prager-Naeije.¹¹⁹ Nol was a brilliant violinist and boy wonder. His colourful life recently became the subject of a modest biography by Hanna Bakker,¹²⁰ which was summarized by Wim Boevink in *Trouw* of 10 November 2017.

He played in various orchestras, performs as soloist. Never money, many women (who had to be well-educated or very attractive) a Parisian period, an apartment in Florence. In Amsterdam, friendships with the sculptor Mari Andriessen and writer Lodewijk van Deysel. As said: never money. He even lived for a while in a hut in an orchard just outside Paris.

Perhaps most important is that Nol had accompanied the renowned expressionist dancer Gertrud Leistikow on many occasions.¹²¹

We know that the Hoyacks must have socialized with the Pragers because Piet included updates about them in letters to Ella of 27 April 1933 and 11 March 1934. In 1994 the Dutch broadcaster VPRO recorded Nol, then ninety-seven years old, reminiscing about his rich life, including what it was like to live on Avenue du Maine and visit Piet on nearby Rue du Départ. According to Nol, the sex life of his friend Piet was “very self-contained.” He hesitated to report but then did tell that Piet had once told him that he was exhausted by strenuous masturbation. We have no reason to doubt this. All men masturbate on occasion, and Piet must usually have sublimated his sex drive in his work. Nol’s proposition is supported by Conrad Kickert’s claim, as recorded by Marty Bax, that Piet was thrice infected with syphilis between 1906 and 1909 and gave up on sexual intercourse after that.¹²² It may also be the most reliable information of Nol’s extensive testimony, given his claims that Piet never went out and that he never saw him with a woman.

Last and arguably least, one individual listed by Hanssen as having dined with the Stieltjes and who certainly socialized with Piet Mondrian, though he and Piet did not go back like some of the others, was Jacques Gans. We know

¹¹⁹ They were both born in Amsterdam and married in Loosdrecht on 8 September 1923, when Nol was 26 and Marie Françoise a year younger. It appears from the record that both their parents were Jewish. Loosdrecht was where Gertrud Leistikow lived at the time. She is not to be confused with Riet Prager, the Dutch French poetess, as in Hanssen 2015, p. 101.

¹²⁰ Bakker 2017. Her title identifies Nol as “a pure blooded Bohemian”.

¹²¹ For the frequent Prager-Leistikow connections, De Boer 2012, 73, 74, 75, 195, 264, 283.

¹²² Bax 1994, p 35. We learn there that Kickert probably had syphilis himself.

from Willem Maas' excellent biography of Gans that the journalist lived in Paris from mid-June 1929 to the spring of 1931. Jacques recorded his Paris experiences in his memoirs of 1982 entitled *Een onaangepast mens* (A Maladjusted Human Being). Certainly Jacques' presence at the dining table of the Stieltjes was a curiosity, since he was more an obnoxious man than a nonconforming one. Aside from being an abrasive figure, he was a notorious sponger, who came to be nicknamed "a tenner" (*een tientje*) because he was perpetually borrowing money from others. In fact, he was the temperamental opposite of Louk Hoyack in that he made enemies, not friends, wherever he went. One might be tempted to ignore Jacques as a supernumerary had he not touched on Piet Mondrian in passing.

Mondrian, still virtually undiscovered back then, lived on the Rue du Départ, next to the Gare Montparnasse, surrounded by the right angles and squares of his canvases. The only round object in his studio was a stove, which was not lit. A reticent man, but when I was able to get him to the café on the boulevard, he loosened up and in the bar of the Jockey [the prestigious Jockey Club de Paris] he even began to dance with an astonished beauty.

It is only the last line that is truly important. Nowhere else do we encounter Piet as lover of both young woman and dancing, engaged in decisive action in a Paris venue. One wonders who paid for the drinks, given that Piet and Jaques were about equally impecunious.

Overall the visitors of Piet's studio were a remarkably coherent group. All but Jadwiga Bohdanowicz, Marthe Henri and Ingeborg Bjarnason spoke Dutch, which was a binding factor for almost all of them. French probably only served as fallback language. In addition the group of visitors appears to have been circumscribed. When we look at the photograph of the international membership of Circle et Carré in Galerie 23 in April 1930 (again fig. 48), only four members, namely Florence Henri, Piet Mondrian himself, Michel Seuphor and Georges Vantongerloo are known to have visited Piet's studio.¹²³ In addition Piet mentioned none of the others in his many letters to the Hoyacks.

¹²³ I am following Hansen 2015, fig. 35, who identified all the participants. His illustration came from Seuphor ed., 1971.

POSSIBLE TOPICS OF DISCUSSION IN PIET'S STUDIO

We have considered what Piet and Ella may have discussed, but what did the other expats and the Dutch visitors talk about when two or a few gathered in restaurants, bars, or dancehalls? Most of us know that little talk is needed in such public venues. As for Piet's studio, the conversation presumably turned to recent experiences, exhibitions and the like. They even gossiped about absent friends. We shall see, for instance, that the Stieltjes expressed concern about the endangered Hoyack finances. Most likely, of course, people talked about their health, which in the case of Piet could have supplied many topics for discussion. In addition Tonia Stieltjes and Tieske van Tongerlo were often sick. Ella had recurring bouts of rheumatism. Only Louk was blessed with robust health. Michel Seuphor must have been healthy during 1927 and 1928., but he was stopped in his tracks by "a very nasty pleurisy" in the early autumn of 1930 and, after two bed-ridden months in Paris, had to repair to Grasse in southern France to convalesce for another four months in what he later called "a kind of camouflaged sanatorium", so that he did not return to Paris until May of 1931. He must then have edited Piet's *L'Art Nouveau--La Vie Nouvelle*, which was completed by October.

By 1930 the effects of the crash must also have been a recurring topic of discussion, posing problems for Piet, whose art was scarcely selling but also for Louk and Ella and Marlow Moss, who were less flush than they would have liked to be, and especially for Wim and Tonia, who were rapidly drifting towards bankruptcy. It seems unlikely that the conversation ever turned to the purpose of Piet's art. To know what he may have expounded on occasion, we must consider that right around the time that Ella first visited Piet's atelier, the artist published two articles that stand out amongst dozens in that they deal with the implications of his art theory for related matters. Both appeared in the short-lived periodical *i10* in 1927. They are "Neo-Plasticisme. De Woning - De Straat - De Stad" (The Dwelling - The Street - The City), in which Piet articulated the implications of his theory for a truly modern environment.¹²⁴ The second

¹²⁴ Of a few related publications, one stands out: "Moet de schilderkunst minderwaardig zijn aan de bouwkunst?" (Must Painting be Inferior to Architecture?), in: *De Stijl*, vol. 6, 1923-1924, pp. 62-61. The answer, of course, was a resounding "no".

was “De Jazz en de Neo-plastiek” (Jazz and Neoplasticism) which explained the connection between Piet’s art and his beloved music.¹²⁵

Louk Hoyack was an exception to the rule in that he and Piet probably discussed the correct approach to visual art in some detail during his independent visits to the atelier. That such discussions took place is implied by Piet’s observation “I thought you knew” when opening his lengthy response to Louk’s ideas about art in his *Tijdgeest*. As for the nitty gritty of Piet’s response, *Tijdgeest* tells us everything we need to know. It must be stressed that Louk certainly did not try to explain the Sufi Message to Piet, who had his version of Theosophy as irrefutable truth of his own. The several books that Louk asked Piet to review only touch marginally on Sufism but instead contain a mishmash of bits of Sufism, Theosophy and, most prominently, Louk’s own ideas. Piet was simply not interested in Sufism, and it seems highly unlikely that he attended even one of Louk’s lectures in the Sufi centre of Paris.

PIET MONDRIAN AS A GREGARIOUS BUT PHLEGMATIC MAN

The plentiful preceding evidence proves that Piet Mondrian was almost always socially active in one way or another. He had such a gift for making friends and nurturing friendships that it seems a miracle that he was able to get any work done at all. It scarcely helped when friends were not in Paris, because his extensive correspondence must have eaten up many hours of his evenings. It is therefore a serious mistake to think of Piet as a hermit, or even a markedly introverted man. It is not until 6 April 1936 that the artist observed to Ella that he was becoming “more and more misanthropic”, but Piet had by then approached normal retirement age. Perhaps the most balanced assessment of Piet’s personality was provided in 2023 by Carel Blotkamp, the nestor of Mondrian scholars, after he had perused all the published information of three decades: “Mondrian had a phlegmatic disposition, he took little initiative, people had to come to him. It did not help that he did not travel. To call him an proficient and successful networker seems to me far from the truth.”¹²⁶ It is roughly what is also to be learned from the present study, but it adds Piet’s capacity for sustained friendship despite differing ideas. And though Blotkamp

¹²⁵ Again Hanssen 2015, pp. 125-129 and Janssen 2016, pp. 109-111.

¹²⁶ Blotkamp 2023, n.p.

rightly mentioned Tonia Stieltjes as an exceptional woman in whom Piet took a deep and lasting interest, we have included Ella Hoyack as a second example.

Certainly Piet's studio should not be seen as some kind of drop-in centre. He did not like visitors to show up unannounced, which he considered selfish behaviour. We know this from a letter that he wrote to Ella on 11 March 1934 (as quoted below), in which he exempted her from his criticism of mutual friends. We may therefore assume that she normally let Piet know when she planned to visit him. Also, as mentioned, she visited Piet only once a month on average. At the same time we have every reason to question the 1983 observations of Piet's friend Arthur Lehning, as voiced in his discussions with Yve-Alain Bois. Arthur stressed Piet's strict daily schedule and that the artist "went out only rarely except to visit exhibitions or in the evenings to go dancing or to drink a little in the Dôme. But even there he lived in his own world, probably reflecting on artistic problems." However, Arthur was not altogether consistent, reporting that "on several occasions we went dancing, Mondrian, Tonia, Wim Stieltjes and I, in a night café where only negroes came and the jazz was all the better." But in his next sentence Arthur contradicted himself, claiming that "Mondrian had nothing of the man of the world about him. One almost never met anyone at his place."

With respect to his last meeting with Piet, which took place in London in 1938, Arthur observed: "Mondrian had not changed at all; he was still just as distant and in essence solitary despite the friends that he had in this artists' quarter of Hampstead." The evidence of Ella's notebooks shows that this is a caricature from beginning to end. The trouble with Arthur was that he thought of his friendship with Mondrian as very nearly unique, so that he had no notion of the rich social life of his friend. Even so, Arthur was much more plausible than Nol Praeger was to be. In addition, Arthur's 1983 discussions added a valuable insight, one that might have applied equally well to Louk Hoyack.

Forced by these discussions to look back on a period of my life that lies more than a half century behind me, I now ask myself for the first time wherein resided the secret of this friendship, back then so self-evident, between two such different individuals. An answer may be that there was from the start an intuitive reciprocal understanding between us.

This answer, of course, is not really an answer. As with Louk Hoyack, who had even less in common with Piet Mondrian, there is no explaining the miracle of enduring friendship.

On average, however, Arthur's memories are not to be trusted any more than Michel Seuphor's revisionist recollections. In 1983, Arthur commented with some condescension on Piet's reaction to one of his own critical pieces, in which he had attacked a boyhood friend, the poet Hendrik Marsman.

I was most surprised by his appreciation for my polemic article against Marsman, not so much because he agreed with my train of thought, for it corresponded on quite a few points with his own (concerning social hierarchy or Catholicism), but simply because he had read it attentively, for Mondrian generally read very little and only eclectically.

We shall see that nothing about Piet Mondrian's reviews of Louk Hoyack's books indicates that he was much interested in social hierarchy or Catholicism, which were much more Louk's concerns. Piet's brothers Louis and Carel converted to Catholicism in 1922 and 1930. Most likely Piet was not particularly concerned with their betrayal of Calvinism. We shall see that he thought of all current religions as undesirable and irrelevant "forms", whereas Louk became explicitly opposed to Catholicism as a historical force.

PIET MONDRIAN'S SURROUNDINGS AND SELF-IMAGE

Ella never described Piet's appearance nor his studio, but one should not think of anything approaching comfortable living quarters. Piet moved things around, so that there are several surviving photographs. The first, which was photographed by Paul Delbo in 1926, shows Piet's stove, which was the only curvilinear feature of his studio (fig. 53). A second photo, taken by an unknown photographer late in 1929, shows the record player, which supplied the music to which Piet and Ella danced (fig. 54). However, Piet frequently moved things around. Léon Hanssen published three photographs by Charles J.F. Karsten, two nearly identical ones of August 1931 and a third of 1933 (fig. 55), which show that his formal pose and dress persevered. Apparently only ten such pictures featuring a humourless, formally dressed and literally unbending Piet Mondrian, cemented the prevailing notion of the appearance of the artist, but

a very recent study by Wietse Coppes showed that the remainder of the four hundred surviving images are more varied and sometimes more relaxed.

However, Piet did not likely receive his circle of friends in the working area of his studio, but in the seating part which also contained his bed, located behind us as we face the stove and around the corner from his record player. I do not know of a single photo of that complicated irregular area. Nor do we have a photo of the small bedroom annex kitchen located several steps down that one had to pass through via a door, seen all the way to our left when facing the stove.¹²⁷ Other than for its bottom, no one appears to have photographed the dirty flight of stairs that guests had to climb before they reached that lower level of Piet's apartment.¹²⁸ As for the oppressive noise and air pollution that plagued Piet on warm days with windows open, we can believe them without needing to experience them.

Piet Mondrian's more formal self-image can be speculatively related to his relationship to the Hoyacks. Louk and Ella probably made a rapid impression on Piet because they were charming but also overwhelmingly upper class. We need to remember that almost everyone in the Netherlands before World War II was acutely class conscious. Servants did not normally get to eat with the family. Nor did bourgeois homes have back doors for nothing. Piet was raised as part of the middle classes, but only precariously so. That he was fully aware of that uncomfortable fact is apparent from what he wrote to his brother Carel on 31 June 1937.

That brother-in-law of Mary [Carel's wife] sounds like an amusing man. He is right in that you do have something of an of an officer about you. I also have a certain 'distinction', but not like you. With you it is as if you have come from 'good family'. Not that we have not. But the position of our old man and lady often had a scrimping quality about it, no? And because of my scrimping life, I have had to remain something of a scrapper. But the intrinsic refinement still creates an impression, what?

What Piet was saying is that his parents often had to watch their pennies to keep up middle-class appearances. Piet had also been necessitated to scrimp most of his life. His association of an officer's bearing with social distinction

¹²⁷ For a floorplan, one that is not easily understood, Janssen 2016, fig. 76.

¹²⁸ See Hanssen 2015, fig. 16, or Janssen 2016, fig. 64.

could be incidental, but I doubt it. Clear is that Piet thought his own intrinsic refinement had somehow transcended his social background, and one could certainly argue that he conceived of the ramrod posture and dark suits of his most formal portraits as emblematic of his innate merit.

In stark contrast, Louk and Ella had never grubbed or scraped a day of their lives. Whenever they threatened to run out of money, another of Louk's inheritances saved the day. We know from Mahmood Khan that Louk was often more casually dressed than his fellow Sufis in Suresnes, radiating the confident upper-class bonhomie of a man who had always had money and important upper-class connections and who had never had to do a stitch of work in his life. We have also learned that the radiant and fashionable divorcee Ella Cramerus stood out amidst the more conservative Sufi women and matrons of the Suresnes Summer School. And the wonder of it all was that this aristocratic couple, who had drifted in as if from another planet, truly liked Piet, recognized his inner distinction, and took a genuine interest in him.

CHAPTER XI - MOVING BEYOND ELLA HOYACK'S POCKET DIARIES

PIET MONDRIAN'S RELIANCE ON ALI KHAN AND OTHER TOPICS

We recall that the Hoyacks introduced Piet Mondrian to Ali Khan late in the Summer School of 1928 and that Piet repeatedly visited them in Saint-Cloud that year. Surprisingly Piet's earliest letter to the Hoyacks only followed after the last of Ella's diary entries. It is postmarked 18 February 1929 and confirms that they already knew each other well by then. Piet had heard from Michel Seuphor that Ella was ill and was writing to cheer her up. He himself had suffered from palpitations due to his "*tube digestive*" and had been to see his physician for advice and medicine. He noted that a healthy mind requires a healthy physique, quoting Ali Khan to the effect that 'the spirit cannot be without the body'.¹²⁹ He wrote that he had been "alone" with Seuphor the preceding day because Ingeborg Bjarnason was also seriously ill. Piet warned Ella to take it easy for a while and offered to come see her. It was freezing in Paris so that he was temporarily without both water and gas and therefore writing by the light of a borrowed oil lamp. The letter is typical for Piet in that it is a kind of potpourri about his health and friends. The only thing missing in this instance was some indication of how his work had been progressing or selling.

From this point on, Piet's letters repeatedly mentioned Mohammed Ali Khan. On 2 November 1929, Piet wrote the Hoyacks that his recent fatigue was in part brought on by "the treatment by Alighan [sic] which is also fatiguing at first." It was probably to satisfy Ella's curiosity that he also reported on the movements of a "Polish sculptress", presumably Jadwiga Bohdanowicz. Apparently the eccentric Jadwiga had been flitting around Montparnasse dressed in green, looking for all the world like a young parrot, and in the company of a tall blond compatriot as her page. A little later she had dropped by his studio at 10:30 in the evening with that "lethargic blond dummy" and a half-inebriated Marcella Stieltjes while he was trying to read "a technical piece of my writing" to Georges Vantongerloo. He informed them that in Paris one did not drop in on people unannounced after the front door was closed, and

¹²⁹ I believe that this is the only time that Piet is known to have quoted Ali.

then sent them on their way. Piet's comment constitutes rare proof that his contacts with his friends were not only expected to conform to temporal parameters but could even be made to answer to firm strictures.

LOUK REACHES OUT TO THE ARTISTS OF PARIS AND BEYOND

Because Ella Hoyack apparently stopped keeping diaries by the end of 1928, we do not have her response to Louk's interaction with the artists of Paris. The degree to which Louk Hoyack was absorbed by the artistic life of Paris is demonstrated by *Cercle et Carré*, a periodical which for three issues joined the avant-garde artists and writers of Paris and the rest of Europe, including Wassily Kandinsky, in still another short-lived and chaotic movement, which was founded in 1929 by Michel Seuphor and Joaquin Torres-Garcia (again seen in fig. 48). Piet Mondrian was of course a prominent participant. The first issue was edited by Michel and dedicated to the opening exhibition. Although Louk was not an artist and did not collect contemporary art, Michel nevertheless presented him as a member of the group, complete with a concise statement of purpose which tells us little about the art on show but which both concisely and incomprehensibly summarized Louk's own intellectual venture: "To establish a metaphysical synthesis of which the sciences and arts are no more than applications and organs. To establish a deductive method thanks to which one does not lose sight of the whole [l'intégrité] in any particular application."

Neither Piet nor Louk had much affinity with other members of the movement. Piet can hardly *not* have noticed that no other artist other than Albert Jean Gorin had followed his lead in depicting the cosmic intellect behind nature through rectangular lines and primary colours. Kandinsky, for instance, was a pioneering abstract painter who believed that his art was somehow awakening an ability to experience both the spiritual and the material in abstract things, in which he saw material and spiritual reality as closely related. Even if this encapsulation is inadequate, we do see that his ideas differed from Mondrian's *idée fixe*. As for Louk Hoyack, he did not address such ideas, since he was opposed to all abstraction.

Louk and Ella were not present at the opening of *Cercle et Carré*, being in North-Africa at the time because of her rheumatism, as we know from a letter that Piet Mondrian sent to them at 65 Rue de Palerme in Tunis on 3 April 1930. In that letter Piet reported to Louk about rheumatism in his left hip and leg, adding that "thanks to Alighan all has ended well." In November and April, Ali

would normally have been in The Hague with Maheboob and young Mahmood. Possibly he visited Suresnes to check on Inayat's four children, of which the oldest, Noor, was still only a teenager. Begum, their mother, had become a virtual recluse after Inayat's death and Fazal Mai Egeling had reached her seventies. Hence they could probably have used some help.

Sadly, the show attracted virtually no visitors other than the exhibitors themselves. Needless to say, there was no public interest because almost no one other than the artists themselves was willing to believe that abstract forms could represent anything more fundamental or interesting than abstract forms. Curiously, considering his public affiliation with Cercle et Carré, Louk Hoyack was not a whole-hearted exception to the rule. Given his great intelligence and close acquaintance with figures such as Piet Mondrian and Michel Seuphor, Louk must have understood the ideas behind their works of art. It is just that he was not prepared to adapt his own point of view to accommodate their convictions.

The question still remains why Louk Hoyack associated with artists whose work he did not like enough to buy and whose ideas he did not like enough to embrace. The attraction for both Louk and Ella may simply have been that the Dutch colony in Paris, as alluded to by Michel Seuphor in his *Évasions d'Olivier Trickmansholm* of 1939, happened to consist primarily of Dutch and Flemish expats interested in culture. Louk no doubt spent long hours in his study in Saint-Cloud and must have needed distraction now and then. Especially Ella must have gone stir crazy at times and have urged Louk to head for Paris, or headed there on her own while Louk read and wrote almost incessantly. Of course they could count on their fellow Sufis during the Summer Schools in nearby Suresnes. For most of the year, however, they were substantially dependent on Paris. The people they met there tended to be unconventional and loved to talk and argue. In short, they were entertaining, and Louk and Ella enjoyed their company. No ideological compatibility was required. Nor was Piet looking for intellectual reinforcement. What likely mattered for him was that his circle was supportive and accepted him as he was.

PIET, LOUK AND THE REMARKABLE DR. JAWORSKI

A final connection between Piet and Louk that is mentioned by Ella in her diary for 1928, though indirect and not connected to his studio, is provided by their distinct approaches to the Polish-French physician and biologist Dr. Hélan

Jaworski. Because both Piet and Louk admired Jaworski, their differing reaction to his ideas is highly instructive. Whereas Piet likely knew Jaworski in person, Louk certainly did. In her diary entry for Saturday 4 February 1928, Ella recorded that she and Louk attended a “Congrès Psycho-Sociologique”, adding “with Jaworski”. Ella clearly thought it a coup for Louk to have become acquainted with the prolific Hélan, as she added “success for him.” On 28 March, Ella mentioned that the biologist lived on the rue du Rocher, where “experiments in mesmerism” were conducted. Louk’s curiosity had presumably been sparked by Carel de Jongh’s exposition of this way of healing. By way of Jaworski, Louk must have met Michka de Nicolaÿ, who was Hélan’s “collaboratrice” for his *La découverte du monde* of 1928. Ella’s diary entries for 17 February, 15 March and 14 May record Louk’s visits to Mlle de Nicolaÿ and therefore provide a precise time-frame for the production of his *L’Univers des Anciennes*, which Michka helped translate from the French. Clearly Louk felt honoured to be received by the prolific Jaworski.

Yet Jaworski had much more of an impact on Piet Mondrian. As noted by Carel Blotkamp (writing with reference to Piet’s *L’Art Nouveau -- La Vie Nouvelle* of October 1931):

He quoted with appreciation the slightly obscure thinker Dr. H. Jaworsky [sic] (about the only non-artist mentioned by name in the book) on the rhythm of ‘interiorization’ and ‘exteriorization,’ which is the life-principle of all organisms. That concept, in which he saw a confirmation of his own theory of the harmony of opposites was according to Mondrian in perfect agreement with the ancient esoteric wisdom with which he was familiar through Theosophy.

Even more important for Piet than Jaworski’s life-principle of interiorization and exteriorization were his ideas on historic periodization, which the biologist published in two very brief articles entitled “Les étapes de l’humanité” in the January and February 1928 issues of *Bulletin de l’Effort Moderne*. What particularly impressed Piet, according to an essay of his which came out in the November issue of the same *Bulletin*, was Jaworski’s calculation that our living planet, or Géon, was not very old, as often claimed, but only “in its seventeenth year”. As Piet quoted Jaworski, whom he calls H. Jaworsky in this instance, “The importance of our seventeenth year is that it leads to the eighteenth, the age

of emancipation, and enables us to foresee future stages.” Jaworski’s “beautiful thought” confirmed Piet in his commitment to the idea of progress, since it allowed ample time for the evolution of mankind to the greater societal balance that Piet believed was currently being heralded by his own new art. Jaworski did point out that the long positive evolution of mankind from its primitive beginnings to the present had known periods of regression to barbarism along the way. That meant that anything that got in the way of Piet’s belief in progress towards a much better future could be accommodated as an unfortunate historical glitch. More concretely, such an idea allowed for the current regression in Germany that Piet lamented on 6 March 1933 in his letter to Alfred Roth.

Despite a few points of correspondence, Jaworski’s specific ideas can hardly have impressed Louk. He did not embrace or even mention Jaworski’s life-principle or his concept of the teenage living earth, or Géon, because they were irreconcilable with his own interpretation of the wisdom of Inayat Khan. Most important is that Inayat’s belief that the sun was at the heart of creation led Louk to construct an improbable theory of inverse evolution that began with the sun worship of early man and led downhill to the spiritual bankruptcy of his contemporaries. As a consequence Louk tended to think of the pre-industrial past as much superior to the present, and of nature under siege as a kind of betrayal of God, whom he tended to situate in nature instead of decisively beyond nature, like Piet but also like Inayat Khan. Louk therefore had no use for abstraction, which for Piet was fundamental to his new art.

CHAPTER XII: PIET MONDRIAN AS CRITIC OF LOUK HOYACK

THE RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS FROM 1929 TO 1933

Louk and Ella were likely back in Saint-Cloud by the end of July 1930 to attend that year's Summer School in Suresnes until mid-September, remaining in Saint-Cloud for the rest of the year. It was early in 1929 that the intensive written interaction between Piet and Louk began. The vast intellectual differences between them are best discussed in connection with Piet's comments on Louk's books. However, their conflicting thought was in some respects irrelevant to the essence of their friendship. First and foremost, the letters with criticism date from less than two years, from 16 April 1931 to 3 April 1933. Secondly, the correspondence includes only a very small part of Louk's huge overall production. What matters in the present context are the books and articles that he published by 1933. We need to list only the items that we know Piet read because he commented on them to Louk, or indirectly, via the artist Michel Seuphor and Arthur Lehning, whom we already know as friends of Piet Mondrian.

Retour à l'Univers des anciens: étude astrologique et philosophique, adapted from the Dutch by Michka de Nicolaÿ, Paris, Bibliothèque Chacornac, 1929.

Le symbolisme de l'Univers, Paris, Chacornac, 1930.

Où va la machinisme? Analyse sociologique des temps modernes suivi de Le Symbolisme dans l'État, Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1931.

De toekomst der machine: sociologische analyse van den modernen tijd, in combination with *Symbolisme in den staat*, a single volume translation from the French by the author, Deventer, A.E.E. Kluwer, 1931.

L'Intelligence créatrice, Paris, Chacornac, 1931

Tijdgeest: een cultuurphilosophische studie, Deventer, A.E.E. Kluwer, 1931.

Spiritualisme historique: étude critique sur l'idée de progrès, Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1931-1932.

Autarkie: een oeconomisch-ethische studie, Deventer, A.E.E. Kluwer, 1932.

L'énigme du destin, Paris, Chacornac, 1933.

Les aubes de l'humanité, Paris, Marcel Rivière, 1933.

That leaves a total of nine books in seven volumes. *Où va la machinisme?* and *De toekomst der machine* are the same work in French and Dutch, but they each consist of two books, which Piet Mondrian rightly treated as such. Piet was more or less forced to comment because Louk kept on sending him his books. Piet tended to ignore a lot of material and to concentrate only on what was of vital importance for him. His tone was at times reluctant and sometimes even outright apologetic, and he finally gave up because he believed he was not getting through to his friend.

The intellectual exchanges between Piet Mondrian and Louk Hoyack did not consist of a confrontation of a follower of Madame Blavatsky with a disciple of Inayat Khan. Where Piet remained fairly faithful to Schoenmaekers and the concomitant convictions of Theosophy in general, Louk took numerous liberties with the thought of Inayat Khan. The potpourri of Louk's resultant ideas ended up in fundamental disagreement with just about everything that Piet believed to be incontrovertible truth with respect to God, the universe, nature, society, the future and, above all, the role of art. But because Louk was truly mercurial in his interests, one benefit of the Mondrian-Hoyack correspondence was that it forced Piet to touch on just about every facet of his own convictions.

One might think that Piet and Louk should have realized almost from the start that they were arguing from fundamentally incompatible premises. In fact, fundamental disagreement had already become inevitable by 1917, when Piet embraced Schoenmaekers shortly after Louk had bluntly dismissed him. But what was Piet to do? It was Louk who, apparently unsolicited, mailed his books to his friend. One also suspects that Louk felt intellectually isolated. It is more inviting to argue with someone who understands but begs to differ, than with someone who does not understand at all.

It is important that neither man allowed his convictions about art or life to interfere with his personal relations. Piet maintained friendships with artists who did not share his ideas about art. That it was Louk Hoyack who introduced Piet Mondrian to Ali Khan demonstrates that the philosopher also did not feel any need to subject his private life to his intellectual convictions. For though Louk firmly believed that sickness originates in the mind, he likely never as

much as hinted to Piet that his numerous ailments might be psychosomatic, and introduced him to Ali Khan instead.

PIET COMMENTS ON LOUK'S *DE TOEKOMST DER MACHINE*

In 1931 Louk Hoyack embarked on a new direction with books that expounded his disapproval of the twentieth century and its world view, a venture that can be traced back to his 1915 essay on "Tendenskunst". Presumably in part a response to the Great Depression, which commenced in 1929, but which he did not explicitly identify. These works belong to the most accessible and controversial part of his oeuvre. They have only a tenuous connection with the social thought of Inayat Khan, who generally deplored the pervasive materialism of Western Society but did not engage in detailed social criticism. However, Piet Mondrian thoroughly disapproved of this new direction in Louk Hoyack's work. We know from his letters to Louk and Ella that Piet suffered acutely under the effects of the Great Depression because people were buying fewer paintings for less money, with no one in Paris buying at all, so that he had trouble paying for fuel and dental care. And yet Piet had the common sense to reject his friend's reactionary and unrealistic response to the crisis.

A letter of from Piet to Louk that is dated 16 April only but that can be placed in 1931 with reference to the whereabouts of the Hoyacks in the spring of 1932 and of 1933, opens both the surviving scholarly correspondence.

Dear Louk, thank you for your letter. The news concerning Ella had me worried. I sincerely wish you the best and hope for a word from you about how things are going. Concerning your book, yes, that is not said in two words. The way you described my view of nature in your last letter is not correct either. I once wrote amongst other things in a periodical: it is precisely because of his great love of nature that the new man does not depict things in nature's way. But I believe that it is fruitless that we talk about it with each other. And especially now, with Ella's illness, is not the right time, what?

The book in question is not specified. However, in a letter to Arthur Lehning, dated 24 June 1932, Piet observed:

Hoyack has again published two books that I find totally wrong. He rightly proceeds from the old wisdom [Theosophy] but applies it to life

altogether incorrectly and thus ends up in conflict with the ‘march of progress’ (e.g., the machine etc.). He truly arrives at truly idiotic conclusions. In politics, for instance, he is an advocate of the monarchy! I have not been able to pick up my own writing. But that will happen. It is diametrically opposed to Hoyack, and yet I like him very much personally.¹³⁰

With “two books” Piet was no doubt acknowledging the *De toekomst der machine* (The Future of the Machine), which consisted of two volumes in one, the second being *Symbolisme en de staat*. Here we see Piet’s tact and discretion in action. He would never have told or written Louk that his conclusions were “truly idiotic”, saving that opinion for his friend Arthur Lehning. Piet’s closing sentences, however, capture the nature of his friendship with Louk, whom he deemed repellent as scholar but engaging as a man.

Not that Arthur is likely to have read *The toekomst der machine* with any care so as to access its idiotic component. The work is often tautological and repetitive and has so many twist and turns that my summary in *Piet Mondrian’s Sufi Friends* runs for eighteen dense pages. Much of the direction of the work can be related to earlier Romanticism, as in “The World is too much with us”, a brilliant sonnet, composed by William Wordsworth around 1802, which criticized the first industrial revolution. No doubt many people around 1930 distrusted the machine and pined for a return to the land. Books that come to mind are *Entre le passé et l’avenir* (Between the Past and the Future) of 1926 by Guglielmo Ferrero and *La rançon du machinisme* (The Ransom of Mechanization) of 1931 by Gina Lombroso.¹³¹ Guglielmo and Gina were married and family friends of Giuliette Roche, the wife of Albert Gleizes. In addition there was *La Crise du monde moderne* of 1927 by René Guénon, who introduced sundry esotericism to the discussion. He left Catholicism early on to become a lifelong adherent of Islam. It could well be that he inspired the spiritual component of Louk’s ideal rural society, as well as the Islamophile orientation of his *Spiritualisme historique*.

Giuliette and Albert lived in Paris from 1919 to 1926 and Piet Mondrian no doubt got to know them well. Juliette was an accomplished painter and

¹³⁰ Previously quoted by Blotkamp 1994, p. 223.

¹³¹ Gina Lombroso’s book is precariously close in date to Louk Hoyack’s *De toekomst der machine*. It is therefore far from certain that she influenced Louk.

writer from a wealthy family, whereas Albert was relatively poor but a truly important artist, theoretician and philosopher, as well as the self-proclaimed founder of Cubism. In 1927, after a short stay in the Ardèche, he and his wife founded a kind of retreat along religious lines for impoverished intellectuals, complete with an outbuilding called Moly-Sabata located across the River Rhône from their home in Sablons.¹³² In a way, therefore, they arranged their lives according to the theoretical rural agenda of their circle.

Louk's definition of the term mechanization is basic to an understanding of *De toekomst der machine*.

In the first place the term mechanization expresses the employment of mechanical power *in the place* of living human power, and secondly the employment of an artificial organization *in the place* of natural and individual initiative on the part of human beings. Thirdly the term mechanization in the societal sense embraces the consequences of mechanization in the most strict sense. [...] Machine and instrument do not differ in degree but in essence."

Louk made allowance for "quasi Mechanical instruments" such as the sailing ship, "which still obey the unforced progress of things and creatures and are therefore assimilated in cosmic harmony." He hastened to assure us that his ideas were not a matter of taste or opinion.

He who would claim that a throbbing engine is as beautiful as a mill turning in the wind, that a car zooming past is as elevated as a carriage drawn by two horses only proves thereby that he vibrates at a morbid frequency [and] that he lives estranged from universal harmony. He is comparable to a person who deems a tavern more elevated than a temple.

Thus Louk, ever a nominal Sufi, brought his ideas into the ambient of Inayat Khan, for whom creation was all about vibration.

Louk did not so much say where mechanization was heading, but that he wanted it to go away because it was materialistic, crass, exploitive and destructive, undermining both employment and spiritual wellbeing. If not

¹³² Moly-Sabata still exists and continues to attract tourist to this day.

checked, mechanization would lead to the triumph of capitalism or Communism and unmitigated disaster. As alternative to the stranglehold of advancing mechanization, Louk advocated an idealized pre-industrial society, with a return to the country and the self-sufficiency of a cottage industry, in which members would spin, weave, sew, bake bread and wash their own linen. Louk also commented on other matters. Diet should be appropriate to the season and region. Stimulants such as tobacco, alcohol, coffee and tea should be avoided. Novels should be replaced by edifying books. Radios are undesirable as they promote mindless laziness, whereas newspapers are the “scourge of modern society.” Hospitals would no longer be needed if people came to realize that sickness is in the mind. Finally, electric light should not be used to turn night into day. All work, including reading, should cease at sunset and give way to spiritual reflection.

In addition a government should have control over money, production, population distribution and even ownership of land and housing. Excessive wealth and large inheritances should be halved “to avoid too great a concentration of capital in private hands.” Inayat Khan is to have recommended this, but Louk does not say where. The community owes five things to its members: housing, food, clothing, medical care and education. In effect, Louk was, at least for a while, an advocate of socialism within a framework of central authority.

One of Louk’s problems was that he wrote associatively and at speed, so that he rarely took time to think and present a lucid argument. For instance, we may agree with his dismissal of alcohol. In fact, wine and “a small beer” are mentioned only twice in Ella’s diaries, whereas a few coffee-based drinks show up only in Paris in the autumn of 1926, but what about tea? What else is there to drink other than water or lemonade? Tea was the drink of preference of the Sufi Garden of Suresnes and the Hoyacks consumed their share of it with their guests and friends in Saint-Cloud over the years. Ella must also have consumed buckets of the beverage during her many evenings with Cateau De Vries Feyens.

Presumably Piet’s reaction was basically the same as ours, being “what on earth?” Most bizarre was Louk’s tenacious insistence that the medical profession was largely redundant because sickness originates in the mind. Progress in some things may be debatable, but that is surely least true for

medicine, which is one field in which indisputable progress was being made in Louk's days and continues to be made to this day. Common sense tells us that even if the dysfunction of brain chemicals, the subconscious mind, or compulsive negative thinking has somehow brought on an illness, a physician, operation, medication, or change of climate may be needed to address the matter.

The baffling thing about the idea that sickness originates in the mind, which seems to be ubiquitous and helps explain most faith healing, is that it was neither a Theosophical nor a Sufistic proposition. Though Louk was able to argue that his Murshid believed that "all sickness has its origins in mental factors", that idea is of no relevance for the treatment of the actual manifestations of specific ailments in the here and now, leave alone for dispensing with hospitals. Louk was often a derivative thinker, but he was his own source in this instance. He presented his argument only in passing in his *De groote ontdekkingsreis* (The Great Journey of Discovery), an undated Kluwer publication that likely came out in 1939: "It happens at spiritualistic séances that the medium takes on the 'persona' of a sick person. For instance that of a tuberculosis patient. The explanation for this phenomenon must be sought in an overshadowing by the deceased one, who [...] apparently still clings to mental impressions of an illness." Louk revealed that he had been obliged to be a closet spiritualist, since he knew that Inayat Khan disapproved of spiritualistic pursuits. In addition his logic was worse than defective, his conclusion being that if tuberculosis can cling to our spirit even after our body has putrefied, it must have originated in the mind and not in the body. Louk also ignored contrary evidence from the ranks of his friends and fellow Sufis. Jan Romein lived down spinal tuberculosis as a boy in Rotterdam, as Louk well knew as his neighbor and close friend, whereas Manohary Voûte and Theo van Hoorn were cured of, respectively, the pulmonary and laryngeal varieties of the disease in Davos. Louk could not have reasonably believed that all three individuals had brought on the problem by negative thinking. Louk Hoyack was often lacking in common sense, deficient in logic, and impervious to evidence that was staring him in the face.

Piet Mondrian ignored Louk's idiosyncratic notions about medicine and disease because he firmly believed in the progress of mainstream medicine, as

shown by his repeated reliance on physicians. He left no doubt with a clear statement in his *L'Art Nouveau -- La Vie Nouvelle*:

Every day we witness the marvelous discoveries and growing profundity of medical science. Here we truly see that knowledge creates happiness. Its progress has already done much to diminish the tragic side of life, to re-establish the state of equilibrium that man must love as he gains other qualities.

The progress of medicine is therefore of utmost importance for mankind. Evidently this progress coincides with the evolution of man, but this requires time!

It was only at the end of his *Toekomst der Machine* that Louk championed the monarchy, as prelude to *Symbolisme in de Staat*. There he returned to his harmonious cosmos as guide to what is needed on earth. In chapters on "State and Government", "Sovereignty", "The Task of Government", "Kingship and Republic", "The Spiritual Hierarchy", "The Law", and "Succession to the Throne" he showed himself to be an arch-reactionary thinker who believed that just as God rules the cosmos, the state should preferably be ruled by a Divine Monarch, one whose function and legitimacy are recognized and valued by his subjects. Once again, Louk's budding fascism will hardly have impressed or even interested Piet Mondrian, so that he can't have felt any need to offer detailed criticism. The assessment that Piet Mondrian communicated to Arthur Lehning was therefore basically sound. His friend Louk was turning into an astonishing Luddite. Even if we do not endorse "the march of progress", as Piet was doing, it is clear that in an open society, fundamental economic developments cannot be halted, leave alone reversed, simply because they threaten our livelihood or, in Louk's case, because we think that they are unethical and do not reflect cosmic justice and harmony.

PIET COMMENTS ON LOUK'S LE SYMBOLISME DE L'UNIVERS

In a letter of 26 June 1931, Piet Mondrian belatedly commented on Louk's early cosmological and metaphysical production. The first work that he received and discussed was Louk's *Le symbolisme de l'univers* of 1930.

Dear Louk and Ella,

Thanks for Louk's letter and the book. Louk says [in his letter]: 'I use the concept of nature, the natural in the sense of the cosmic, universally applicable laws of existence.' If I understand him correctly, I believe that is precisely incorrect. According to my way of seeing things, what is cosmically universally applicable is, so to speak, behind nature and not in nature itself. And that is precisely our great difference. The laws of nature are therefore not universal laws, but other laws that proceed from the great universal law or in time realize it. Your view of things necessarily leads to an incorrect application of the great law, so it seems to me. What do you think? In addition I want to tell you that you do not see God and the Devil (to speak in those terms) as one, in so far as you advance the concept of the Christian church (Roman Catholic and Protestant) without intending to, hence decreasing or lowering your concept of God ... and that is au fond precisely what you do not want to do.

Piet was perfectly clear when he proposed that "what is cosmically universally applicable is [...] behind nature and not in nature itself." However, this criticism of Louk's working premise applies to a few of his earlier books. The more specific clue in this instance is the combination of cosmic laws and a discussion of God and the Devil. Piet must therefore have been commenting on Louk's *Retour à l'univers des anciens* of 1929, with its chapter on "La prétendue cruauté de la nature" (The Purported Cruelty of Nature), in which Louk proposed that "Nature is essentially a paradox. The Unique Being manifests itself in plurality. [...] That has been the unanimous experience of all mystics of all times." Louk argued that God is beyond comprehension in how He combines pervasive solicitude with apparent cruelty. Of course that is pretty much the uncomfortable reality accepted by countless Christians over the centuries, explaining Piet's identification of remnants of Christianity in Louk's duality of God and Devil ("to speak in those terms").

Typical of Piet's approach is that he ignored Louk's turgid obscurantism, which was already announced by the pairing of science and astrology of the title. One encounters the most bizarre propositions, such as that "many mysteries are explained once we understand that everything has a soul Even artificial substances created by a chemist have a personal soul. This signature of things and beings, it cannot be doubted, is a vibration, but not

necessarily one that can be measured in our laboratories.” Louk’s claim that “it cannot be doubted” once more demonstrates his overconfidence and complete lack of even a vestige of common sense. The gist of his ludicrous exposition was that current science almost invariably barks up the wrong tree because it ignores the deeper reality of undeniable mystical truths, including ones expounded by Inayat Khan. Piet instead headed for the one issue dear to his heart: The Great Truth may be mysterious, but it is certainly unified and not located within nature.

PIET COMMENTS ON LOUK’S *RETOUR A L’UNIVERS DES ANCIENS*

Ever in his letter of 26 June 1931, Piet Mondrian went on to praise a third book by Louk Hoyack.

I have already read your last book in copy form, but I would also like to own it because it is so well argued and written, I think. You say that you argue in this book that the development of society deviates ever more from the ‘cosmic laws’ or spiritual order. In my opinion, it deviates only from the natural order, which is a facet of a universal (spiritual) order.

The dangling “I think”, or “denk ik” in Dutch, was one of Piet’s stylistic quirks. By “last book”, Piet presumably meant the most recent, meaning *Le symbolisme de l’univers* of 1930. It is not clear how Piet came by a copy for this work. Most likely, however, he got it direct from his friend Louk. The phrase “you say that you argue in this book” could mean “in this book you say that your argue”, but it more likely refers to a lost letter that Louk had written to Piet about the work, perhaps to accompany the book, in which case the artist was responding to a fragment of the philosopher’s own commentary on the book, and not to the book itself. None of this really matters, however. Although Piet’s point may seem as baffling as his endorsement of the strange cosmography of *Le symbolisme de l’univers*, it is in fact the same one that he had made in connection with *Retour à l’univers des anciens*. He believed the Great Truth to be the universal spiritual order that is to be found behind Louk’s “natural laws” or natural order. The problem, of course, is that Piet never argued the point, keeping it above doubt and discussion. Such an approach was not calculated to sway his friend Louk, who was equally fixed in his fundamental premise.

Surprisingly, we do not have Piet's response to Louk's *L'Intelligence créatrice* of 1931, which is even more important than Louk's earlier works on cosmography and metaphysics. It would be helpful to have his reaction, if any, to Louk's insane theory of evolution from rocks to human beings. Considering that Piet commented on just about every other book that his friend published between 1929 and 1933, it seems likely that Louk also sent him a copy of this volume as well, and that the artist familiarized himself with its contents. Most likely, however, Piet would again have failed to address Louk's potpourri of obscurantist nonsense and have criticized his friend for being obsessed by the laws of nature instead of the Great Truth behind it.

PIET DISMISSES MOST OF LOUK'S TIJDGEEST

In a letter of 27 June, Piet reacted to Louk's *Tijdgeest: Een cultuurphilosophische studie* (Spirit of the Times; a Cultural Philosophical Study), which was probably published in 1931, shortly before *Spiritualisme historique* of late 1931 to early 1932. *Tijdgeest* is largely a continuation of *De toekomst der machine*, with many of the same observations and recommendations but with emphasis on the importance of the nation state. The key to Louk's concerns remained that Western society had been ruined by the triumph of the machine, but to that menace he added the concomitant ubiquity of free trade.

Following on his promise of that broader perspective, Louk opened with the subject of art, arguing that mechanization rules out a beautiful representation of nature. He therefore attacked the sterility of *de nieuwe zakelijkheid* as a reflection of the pervasive lack of spirituality of his contemporaries. In his working assumption that beauty is rooted in nature, Louk hinted at a Sufi component of his thought, for Inayat Khan taught that the spiritual rewards of meditation are best pursued in the beauties of nature. Here it behoofs us to be cautious, however. For Inayat the beauty of nature was one manifestation of God behind nature. For Louk that same beauty was evidence of God's work within nature.

Louk abhorred the use of iron and lead for furniture and praised superior wood instead. But he had numerous other recommendations, including combined sitting and dining areas so that the harmonious family would remain united. That room should have a hearth around which that family can gather, and a spinning wheel for the making of clothes and curtains that are superior to

shoddy store-bought products. Radios should be avoided because music should join the family in their unified living room. Films are trash. Apartment houses have no merit whatsoever, lacking adequate space and other amenities, and can only drive their occupants to dance halls, bars or movie theatres. All touristic and rushed travel should be discouraged, since it only undermines the enjoyment of nature. Cheap railway and airplane travel should be discouraged and no longer be promoted with posters of famous touristic destinations that have become commercial tourist traps.

Louk then went on to his second bugaboo. In his rural economy food would no longer be imported from abroad, which is cosmologically unsound and leads to cut-throat competition for the farmer. With farming and manufacture localized and decreased in scale, fewer trains would be needed. The horse was an essential part of Louk's Utopia because it would serve perfectly well for the limited distribution of food and travel of the future. Straight highways are a horror to be avoided, whereas gravel road would also deter speed maniacs. When push comes to shove people should prefer cozy buses, with their sociable stops at the heart of small communities, over trains, with their monstrous railway stations in major centres.

Not even the mundane bicycle had a place in Piet's rural society, as we learn from a passage that is too delicious not to quote:

The bicycle is a totally redundant instrument, Bicycling is every bit as ungainly as unhealthy. The indignity of a priest on a bicycle proves how inconsistent the balancing act between two wheels is with higher human dignity. In addition, the sexual zone is not intended to be used as a point of support. Bicycling promotes a most unbalanced physical development. It develops the leg muscles at the expense of the chest, which is the least favourable position possible. Even as it promotes laziness, the bicycle promotes an unhealthy sport for the healthy movement of walking.

With any other author one might suspect a measure of irony but, to put it colloquially, irony was not Louk's thing.

Surprisingly, Louk was fairly accommodating to the aeroplane, arguing that it "will slowly but steadily replace the automobile (for specific purposes—well understood, not for relatively short distances)." This bit of common sense, however, is at once followed by the observation that "it is not unlikely that

science will one day invent levitation”, with supporting references to king Rama, Christian hagiography, Ammonius Saccas and the Egyptian pyramids.

Louk further argued for a return to the guild system, the elimination of most international trade, and a transformation of the modern city, with traffic discouraged and the palace of an enlightened but absolute monarch at its heart. Education should be drastically altered, with school commencing at age nine (as argued by Inayat Khan) and memorization and grades exchanged for a search for “true teachers, monarchs of the spirit.” Practical matters such as medicine should be confined to professional schools, with universities reserved for the pursuit of spiritual maturation, along the lines of “the Quranic university of Mohammanan countries”, the Anthroposophical Goetheaneum, with its teaching of the thought of Rudolf Steiner, or the Summer School of Suresnes. In short, Louk argued for the widespread societal triumph of spiritual values, which was never an expectation of his mentor Inayat Khan.

The Dutch have a saying to the effect that “the soup is not eaten as hot as it is served”, and Louk certainly did not always practice what he preached. He himself must have spent endless hours on trains within France and between France and The Netherlands, which he may have rationalized on the premise that he was on his way to and from lectures on his edifying pseudo-religious concerns. And whereas Piet likely visited dance halls and the like regularly, Louk was hardly altogether averse to them. We may also recall that Louk and Ella saw five films in Paris during the autumn of 1926. Louk’s pitch for music in the home is surprising, since we have no indication that it played a part in his life. Elsewhere in his *Tijdgeest* Louk described the ideal school curriculum, but he did not as much as mention music. Finally, his detailed exposure of the middle men and spongers of undesirable manufacture and transportation avoided the category of the rentier, to which he himself belonged.

Piet thanked Louk for his last letter and observed that he was pleased to “see that we have understood each other and that mutual appreciation is in place.” His comments on *Tijdgeest* simply ignored Louk’s endless discussion of the shortcomings of the current Dutch nation state. That can come as no surprise, for Piet was completely unlike Louk. For instance, he loved Paris as it was, including its traffic and noise. We recall that shortly after settling in Paris, he had even published near-delirious essay on his insatiable infatuation with

“De groote boulevards” in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer* of 27 March 1920. For Piet, Paris was a beautiful machine and represented a victory over nature.

Piet consolidated his orientation in his much more carefully considered *L'Art Nouveau – La Vie Moderne* of October 1931, which was not published until 1956. Along the way he destroyed the overall direction of both *De toekomst der machine* and *Tijdgeest*.

By following the evolution of the plastic, we see that it is a great mistake to believe – as many do – that the progress of Western civilization is pushing man to the abyss. In art the perfecting of forms has never destroyed its true nature. Similarly the material and spiritual perfecting of life's diverse forms does not cause the ruin of life but of life's primitive expression.

The perfection of the technical aspect of art was not only essential to its evolution, it was also a means to that end. Equally, the perfection of all technology is an exigency of life. Everything thrives on it, hygiene, science, etc., etc.

The perfection of science is one of the principal ways by which human progress leads to a more equilibrated state. Who can deny the enormous influence of science and technology on international relationships through progress in the use of steam and electricity? And if some of the things that have evolved – such as poison gas – fill us with horror and terror, human evolution will still result. As others have recently shown, such things will eventually abolish war, the very development of weapons will make it impossible. Thus, through concrete achievements real equilibrium will be created.

Piet went on and on in this vein, arguing that the machine is essential to human progress because it frees men from the drudgery of repetitive work, which stands in the way of spiritual growth. Technology is a good thing as far as Piet was concerned: “It is in fact the wrong application of science and technology that renders life unbalanced.” Piet did show some awareness of the dark side of technology, but he viewed the kind of problems continually dwelled on by Louk as aberrations that can be overcome by right thinking and respectful

consultation, leading to a utopian society of goodwill and consensus based on a perfect equilibrium between the material and immaterial sides of life. This evolution runs counter to the more primitive aspect of man, or what Piet called “a natural force that undermines human strength.”

In the Western tradition the word “natural” generally means wholesome and positive as opposed to corrupt, but the word took on connotations of “primitive” in Piet’s private language.

The more human progress asserts itself, the more violently does natural instinct fight against it. For progress involves diminishing the privileges of the natural state. This explains the present hostility to all manifestations of progress and the reactionary efforts in art and life.

These arise from a narrow conception, from a failure to see clearly. People are not aware that despite all its defects – which are simply vestiges of man’s primitive state – the true content of life not only remains intact but sheds its harmful disguises.

We see here, quite literally, Piet’s considered conclusions about art and life, including the dogmatic optimism that he shared with Hélian Jaworski. Armed with our disilluminating hindsight, we know that Piet greatly overestimated the fundamental intelligence of our species, which has been identified as the cancer of our planet. Louk was more realistic, though he thought that the Sufi Message of Inayat Khan might still serve as an antidote. From Piet’s point of view, however, Louk must have been precisely such a narrow-minded and atavistic critic of mechanization. It is well possible that Piet formulated his ideas in part in his response to discussions with Louk between 1927 and 1931.

Piet instead focused on Louk’s notions about the right kind of home, pointing out that his friend was overly concerned with daily life as opposed to eternal verities, so that his “insights are entirely Western and modern”, unlike what one might expect from Eastern wisdom and a follower of “your great master ... who was also an Indian”.

For instance, you write about the lack of storage space in modern homes. Now it seems to me that the Eastern (and correct) position is that mankind should rid itself of property (think of Gandhi and how little he has around him). And thus that culture is good which weans us of

property. Anyway, you will probably have your reasons, but those I can find in your work are not valid for me. Don't be offended by my putting it this way.

On this point, Piet must have misunderstood Inayat Khan, who was an upper-class Muslim who never called on his followers to jettison their bourgeois comforts unless they interfered with their spiritual harmony. On the other hand, Inayat was also a consummate mystic, so that Louk's concern with appropriate furniture and closet space might well have bemused him. Surprisingly, what is missing from Piet's response is any direct critique of Louk's underlying view of the central role of the individual home and family in society, as discussed in *Tijdgeest* but also earlier, in *De toekomst der machine*. We know that Piet's ideas were quite different, as he was opposed to the whole notion of "Home, Sweet Home", leave alone the nurture of spirituality around the family hearth. He had already articulated his modernistic views in relation to his art in his aforementioned article on "Neoplasticisme - De Woning - De Straat – De Stad" of 1927.

Curiously Piet did not comment on Louk's emerging nationalism as evidenced by his desire to curb free trade and the importation of food. In his *L'Art Nouveau- La Vie Nouvelle*, Piet clearly advocated internationalism, relating it to art in his own inimical way:

The rectangular surface of varying dimensions and colour makes visible that internationalism does not mean chaos, governed by monotony, but an orderly and clearly arranged unity. In fact there are very specific limitations in neoplasticism. But those limitations are not truly closed: the straight lines in rectangular opposition to one another constantly cross so that their rhythm continues across the entire work.

Frontiers will need to be clearly delineated but not 'closed'. There will be no customs, no work permits. 'Strangers will not be seen as strange.' These ideas did not address Louk's specific concerns but they nevertheless ran counter to them. It is of course possible that Piet did not even spot Louk's nationalistic sentiments, given that they are buried in a chaotic mountain of ideas.

Piet Mondrian was mainly interested in Louk's notions about art. Predictably he wrote from his conviction that responsible art is no longer representational.

And now for what you say about art in your book. I thought you knew that representation in art has nothing to do with the truly 'ideal', with the true value of art, but, on the contrary, that it is limited and polluted by it. The essence of art comes about only through proportions of line and colour and thus a man-made object may be just as beautiful, or even more so, and even a machine can be art if the utilitarian requirements do not make the perfection of plastic manifestation impossible. This is true of all the things around us and therefore also of the *nieuwe zakelijkheid*. You think all this is inferior to the products of nature, but is not man, who makes these things, also 'nature' and, as you say yourself, its apogee? You will probably say that it is what is deficient in man that makes it impossible for something made by him to achieve the status of art. But despite the imperfection of man, he still has or can have, an intuition of perfection. And through this intuition, the divine in man, he produces what it also produced by the divine in nature. But where this is generally veiled in nature, man can bring it to more pure expression.

Up to this point, it would seem that Piet might just have convinced Louk that an artist may legitimately use his God-given intuition to give "more pure expression" to what is there for all of us to see in nature, thereby opening the door to a greater measure of abstraction within Louk's theory of art. But then Piet bludgeoned his friend with his great and sacred conviction.

And in the process, man is not at all bound to follow nature. On the contrary, the more he deviates from her, the stronger pure intuition, the divine, stands out. And this is true of all of life, for our material and moral surroundings and especially for our own person. It is for this reason dear Louk that I disapprove of much of what I encounter in your books. They could do harm despite your good intentions. Harm to believers, because they are given an incorrect picture of the process of life, and harm to unbelievers because, along with your critique and its application to life, they will also reject what moves you, the very highest, God.

This letter is the most important of the present study because Piet summarized his theory of art in relation to life. Even if his *L'Art Nouveau – La Vie Nouvelle* had not eventually been published, we would still have this brilliant synopsis by his own hand of his ideas about art. On the other hand, it is almost risible to think that Louk's theory of art could have been expected to hold such dangerous sway over believers and sceptics alike. But Piet was a true-believer, and he was articulating what he believed to be incontrovertible truth.

Piet's criticism of *Tijdgeest* demonstrates fundamental facts about his personality and thought. In keeping with the Stoic detachment that he apparently acquired towards the close of World War I, nothing truly excited him until it came to matters fundamental to his art. It was ever only attacks on the premises of his Neo-Plasticism, as with his conflict of 1918 with Bart van der Leek or that of 1923 with Theo van Doesburg, that he became furious and even aggressive. Also, Piet temporarily quarrelled with his old friend and ally Bob Oud in 1922, who had complained that Piet was too rigid. Even Piet's perennial health problems mainly mattered for him because they disrupted his work. Piet merely reported. At no time did he lament or ask for sympathy. As he informed Bob Oud laconically in 2017: "Oh well, I'm getting better now and was able to work all the time, though not as much as usual."

Louk never once drew on Inayat Khan in matters concerning art and abstraction. That may well have been because his infallible Murshid had given him nothing to work with. Although Inayat was a Muslim, he was not an iconoclast, but his disappointing preferences were published only posthumously, in his *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* of 1937. He approved of the broad current called Classicism and loved the Tai Mahal but had little understanding of relatively uncontroversial representational modern art movements such as Impressionism and Expressionism, and he did not mention recent developments such as Cubism or Neoplasticism, including the art of Piet Mondrian. This information is irrelevant, however, since Louk was almost certainly unaware of Inayat's preferences. Piet concluded with schoolmasterly condescension: "Now, Louk, why don't you go discuss this letter with Ella and tell me what you think. I could be mistaken." Of course he did not think he was mistaken, and he probably assumed that Ella could be counted on to reject her husband's hostility to abstract art.

Piet's understandable concentration on art in his comments on both *De toekomst der Machine* and *Tijdgeest* could blind us to the fact that Louk was sometimes almost prophetic when identifying broader problems that seem to have come to undesirable fruition in our times, in which greed has often triumphed, burnout is a ubiquitous problem, nature is everywhere under siege, traffic jams are a daily reality, frivolous international travel abounds, popular tourist destinations are badly overcrowded, food is indiscriminately imported from all over the globe, etc. On the positive side, however, Louk advocated the humane benefits of what was to become the welfare state. However, he invariably undid his more perceptive moments by proposing pie-in-the-sky solutions that would require turning back the clock to a romanticized yesteryear, as implemented by an enlightened autocrat and involving insane undertakings, such as worldwide population distribution. Louk, however, was at least looking at the world and trying to come to grips with complex and inter-related global developments. By contrast, Piet's perceptions were severely circumscribed, much like his views on art. Whereas Louk was a relentless though seriously flawed thinker, Piet was essentially more of a true believer. Though tolerant, he was mainly engaged in proselytizing for his unalterable convictions about art in relation to life. Nevertheless, Piet produced great art that continues to delight us to this day. Louk, on the other hand, produced a huge body of uneven scholarship that has been largely forgotten. Mercifully forgotten, and one could add, to get ahead of ourselves, his growing fascistic orientation eventually made it an odious body of scholarship as well.

We will never know if Louk showed Piet's lengthy response to Louk's *Tijdgeest* to Ella, leave alone what she thought of his ideas. Piet, however, had not changed his basic orientation. In a letter of 4 March 1932, he criticized Louk at length with respect to still another book of his, concluding that he is showing the honesty that one owes a friend.

I have read enough of Louk's book to be able to comment on it a little. As friend I must sometimes regret that Louk at times writes down conclusions which, in my opinion, he does not mean. But the reader is tripped up, and if one did not know Louk, it would create discord. In this way Louk dismisses evolution of the physical and takes into account only evolution of the Spirit. (This is what the book conveys to me). But I know

only too well that Louk does not regress to the idea of most Theosophists, which is neither that of Theosophy, nor of ancient wisdom, nor of the great mystics. At least for our temporary life here, absolute unity is essential. Louk must surely agree with me on this, and he can never have intended an explanation of the Great Truth. Because Louk also writes well, something about this matter is not clear to me. From my point of view what is cosmically universally valid, so to speak, is behind nature and properly [speaking] not nature. That is our great difference

Apparently having been badgered by Louk to clarify his position, Piet appears to have become confused, closing in on one problematic word.

Thus we believe in just about the same thing, but through other minor different positions on things, we arrive at totally different applications to life. With that word 'manifestation' one places nature à part. I am still working on it, and will therefore read it to you when you come. I don't have time right now to work it out.

The problematic essay that Piet was working on was identified by Carel Blotkamp as *L'Art Nouveau - La vie Nouvelle* of October 1931.

Piet did not write as well as his friend Louk. Nevertheless, we can deduce which book he had in mind. Evolution is one of many topics of *L'intelligence créatrice*, but the superiority of spiritual evolution is a main theme of *Spiritualisme historique*. (Historical Spiritualism). If Piet was indeed commenting on that book by March of 1932, it must have come out very early in the year. And indeed, a colophon of the book states that it was at the printers in December of 1931. Of course evolution was an irrelevance; the real issue was once again Louk's slighting of Piet's "Great Truth" hidden behind nature, which does not allow for a body and soul duality.

Curiously Piet ignored the surprising fact Louk had classed him with a select group of people whom he credited with promising initiatives running counter to the spiritually bankrupt age of iron of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Louk wrote that the times had been changing, with signs of a new age of gold that was rearing its head here and there. The winds of change are represented by a courageous few independent and sensitive people who march to a different and fundamentally Theosophical beat than society at large.

It was around the year 1850 that this spiritual revival was first felt. Religious thought other than that of the Reformation already announced itself in the optimism of an Emerson. In 1870 [sic, 1875], Mrs. Eddy published her *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. In 1875 Madame Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Society and gave a religious ideal to many searchers for truth. Since those days numerous free religious movements and spiritualist have appeared to channel the waves of searching. Tolstoy seemed to return to the purity of a primitive Christianity. Steiner oriented science towards an initiatory tradition. [...] Strictly speaking, modern religion has become esoteric.

In the domain of art restlessness has become ever more accentuated since 1880. New avenues are researched, first in impressionism, then in expressionism, cubism and, finally, in the curious synthesis of the latter and theosophical thought, as represented by the neoplasticism of Mondrian.

We therefore learn that, ever an intellectual opportunist, Louk opted to bury his objection to abstraction, including that of his friend Piet, in favour of advancing him as a paragon of the emergence of a new age of gold.

Piet barely commented explicitly on the most controversial aspect of Louk's book, being its detailed defence of Mohammed and his Koran as opposed to Christ and the New Testament. Louk fully embraced Inayat Khan's Muslim conviction that Mohammed was the last of the Messengers of God, and that his message was the best possible one. Louk proposed that the Prophet had been a knight and feminist in his defence of women against the "brutal Arabs" of his time. He further asserted that Islam was superior to Christianity because it was less tainted by racism and more rigorously authentic and monotheistic. He argued that the Koran has the great advantage of being an immediate record of the words of Mohammed, whereas the Bible is encrusted with apocryphal ideas put forward well after Christ's death and further distorted over the centuries. That observation is basically correct, though it ignores a fair amount of posthumous assembling and editing of the words of the illiterate prophet (which explains its scattered presentation).

According to Louk, the Koran made an important contribution by recognizing Christ as an envoy of God but not as His son, "thereby abolishing

the exclusivity in which the Christian world has taken pride.” Louk identified the Trinity, along with the cult of the Virgin and the communion of saints, as lamentable regression to polytheism which could have been avoided if Christianity had not dismissed Islam as damnable heresy. Louk was almost certainly in general agreement with Inayat Khan, who had written in his *Vadan*, which Louk quotes, without giving his source: “It was not the Lord who was crucified, it was his limitation.” As Inayat explained, “If an idol is made of rock by its worshippers, why then should a personality not become a Divinity for the devotees.” In other words, it was not Christ’s fault that Christians deified him. Although Inayat frequently mentioned Christ’s crucifixion, he steered clear of the Resurrection and only circumspectly challenged his divinity, thereby following the Koran by depriving Christianity of its essence for the overwhelming majority of its believers.

We see Louk at his most acute, but it was not what most people, including his fellow Sufis, wanted to hear. That must be why, in his Smit-Kerbert contribution of around 1941, he regressed to representing Inayat Khan as the new Christ and Messenger of love. Of course the pressing question in the context of the present study is, what did Piet Mondrian think of it all? As he wrote in his reply to Louk, he thought a comparison of two competing purveyors of truth, such as Christ and Mohammed, a waste of time. Piet believed in an absolute cosmic unity of wisdom. Although he was not explicit, it was presumably along the lines of the faith of Madame Blavatsky and her Theosophic followers, which taught evolution to a single universal religion of the future.

As he perused the Koran, giving the Prophet the benefit of the doubt at every turn, Louk did not seem to have spotted the aggressive intolerance of Mohammed with respect to all unbelievers, including Jews. This fundamental aspect of the Koran (which still plagues us today) might have tempered his unbridled enthusiasm. However, Louk’s mentor Inayat Khan, who was a model of interfaith tolerance, clearly did not pick up on any problem either. Louk skirted the matter with a backhanded reference to Christianity, observing that “not every Messenger of God can reasonably be expected to have had a sacrificial disposition”, and instead concentrated on the closely argued proposition that the spirit of Islam informed just about every innovation in

Western thought from Carolingian times until the end of the Middle Ages, with orthodox Catholicism the great enemy of progress.

Sometime in the course of 1932 Louk composed his *Autarkie: Een oeconomisch-ethische studie* (Autarky: An Economical-Ethical Study), which was published in 1933. As the title already indicated, Louk argued for the greatest possible independence and self-sufficiency of the nation state in everything from government to trade and food production. This developed ideas he had already raised in his *De toekomst der machine* and *Tijdgeest* in combination with an unrealistic plea for a return to a pre-industrial society. Two things should be stressed. Louk apparently did not send a copy of the book to Piet Mondrian, so that we have no record of his response to the work. However, extrapolating from his comments on other books by Louk, he would have been scarcely interested and certainly not at all impressed by *Autarkie*. Secondly, Louk's argument was based on a non-sequitur, which linked family and state as naturally most dear to people. As so often, Louk misrepresented Inayat Khan, who recognized that our primary responsibility is for the people closest to us, but who never promoted primacy of the nation state, being thoroughly international in his orientation. As a curious slip, Louk had clearly stated in *De toekomst der machine* that only people should move internationally. He allowed for immigration from countries such as The Netherlands and Belgium to more thinly populated places like Brazil and Central Africa when necessary. Obviously such relocation involves loss of country, one of the two sacrosanct components of autarky. The discussion takes up no more than several sentences, but it would appear that, as so often, Louk was not thinking things through.

PIET REJECTS ALMOST ALL OF LOUK'S *L'ÉNIGME DU DESTIN*

On 3 April 1933 Piet reacted to Louk's *L'Énigme du Destin* with his most searching and dismissive analysis of all. With this book Piet was not dealing with Louk's economic dictates, so that he could not ignore whole chunks of material. The topic of this work was Louk's philosophy of history, which invited commentary from Piet.

Dear Louk, My very best wishes for Ella's birthday and may you have a beautiful day. I thank you for having your two books sent to me. The first,

L'énigme du destin, I have already read. In so far as you put in perspective the old wisdom, I think it is splendid: including that exposition on reincarnation and karma. I also seems to me that the explanation of Inayat Khan [sic] is much deeper and closer to the truth -- the unknown -- than the theosophical explanation. I often find that the more people try to explain and popularize the truth, the more they deviate from the truth and, what's more, end up on the wrong track. That is therefore the reason why I can't follow you, so to speak, in the materialization of everything. I thought what you write about the 'ego' is very beautiful, but then everything is lost when you try to personalize 'soul' and 'God'. I know you do this to make things more comprehensible, but for people like me you achieve the exact opposite.

That you wish to return to the old religion seems to me an impossibility and only good for mankind in a primitive state. Just as their early art is dependent on depiction and naturalism., they probably need to see the concept of life in terms of things. But in a later stage of development, it is instead the abstract that seems appropriate. I am therefore almost inclined to say that you underestimate mankind of today. It also does not agree with what Jaworsky [sic] has demonstrated about the growth of mankind. And then that proposition of yours concerning mankind, or the will of mankind, as opposed and hostile to God, can't convince me. I don't see that duality, only contrast without hostility, opposition as creative of unity, meaning fraternité, not hostilité. Yours is the Old Testamentary Protestant doctrine (if Seuphor addressed you as such [...] that seems right to me, but I do not think he intended it as I do), but one for mankind back then, popularized for contemporary use, but not the deeper truth that hides behind it. But in your book you repeatedly touch on the great truth, and it was therefore beautiful for me just the same. Anyway, you are who you are and therefore have your work to do, and that may well be necessary and useful. So, wishes for a good day, with a great deal of cordiality as ever from Piet.

It must have been a source of satisfaction for Louk that his friend Piet believed Inayat Khan's notions about reincarnation were more convincing than anything Theosophy had put forward. Piet's observation is surprising, because he had been a believer in reincarnation, including his own. For the sake of clarity,

reincarnation is the conviction that after death the soul is reborn in a new human body. The great problem, however, is that Inayat Khan did not teach anything resembling Hindu, Buddhistic or Theosophic reincarnation. According to him, departing souls meet in the hereafter, where they get to mature spiritually before dissolving into the Universal Spirit.

Inayat Khan did not intend his ideas to be logical, and I may not even have presented them altogether correctly. Still, we may ask how long we might have to remain on hold until our beloved grandchildren also arrive? As for Theo and his Murshid, the latter would have had to wait for three full decades for his disciple to arrive. And what about the prospects of crass and evil people? Even so, such Sufi ideas can provide great comfort to believers (as can mainstream Christian notions concerning the afterlife), as with Johan Witteveen, who announced on Dutch national television not long before his death that he firmly believed he would soon be reunited with his son Hendrik, his wife Lidwien Heerkens and their daughter Marit, who had died in the notorious crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 over Ukraine on 17 July 2014.

Louk, in any case, was not about to give up on reincarnation altogether. He quoted Inayat Khan to the effect that “Karma is the rhythm of past actions,” which Louk interpreted as the history of prenatal contacts. He proposed that the personal destiny of innocent individuals can be frustrated by negative collective karma passed on in the hereafter by returning souls to earthbound ones. “In all these cases the individual participates in the karma of the group to which he belongs. That is equally why so many Jews have suffered from the bad Karma that the Jewish nation has accumulated over the course of centuries.” Louk was treating Piet to transparent misinformation, pawning off his own improbable theory with the aid of a fake Sufi lineage. To make things worse, he even tried to reconcile Inayat’s thought with arcane astrological considerations at a terrible cost to Sufi credibility. Nor is it clear how Jews could have picked up their collective bad karma during their prenatal existence unless they were ghettoized, so that they only bumped into each other.

That prenatal karma caused Jews to become wanderers bereft of a nation state posed a problem for Louk, whose political thinking had come to revolve around the properly functioning nation state. In the back of Louk’s mind, if I may be allowed conjecture, this had something to do with the rise of international capitalism. An explicit connection between Jews and capitalism

was already laid by Werner Sombart in his *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (The Jews and Commercial Life) of 1901. Sombart argued that the Jews were virtually forced to invent capitalism, having been shut out of most professional pursuits during the Middle Ages. He therefore postulated the existence of a “Jewish spirit”, one that was virtually synonymous with capitalism. This proposition was relatively anodyne because Sombart had not yet turned against capitalism, as he did with his *Die Zukunft des Capitalismus* of 1932. Sombart’s *Deutscher Sozialismus* of 1934 eventually restated his opposition to capitalism in more explicitly nationalistic and anti-Semitic terms. In Louk’s “Staat en volk, oude waarden in nieuwe belichting” (State and People, Old Values in a New Light), which he published in *Haagsch Maandblad* in September of 1942, he followed Sombart’s treatment of “die Judenfrage” almost to the letter. Note, however, that Louk was ever out of touch with reality and concerned with politics in theory and not with racism in practice. Prohibited by his Sufism from direct censure of Jews or any other racial group, Louk appears to have substituted his collective Jewish karma for Sombart’s collective Jewish spirit.

Louk certainly did not denigrate individual Jews in his *L'énigme du destin* of 1933. Piet’s approval of Louk’s bizarre notions about prenatal karma therefore had no implications for the artist’s political convictions. On 6 March 1933, we recall, Piet commented to Alfred Roth on the “mediaeval tyranny” of German society, which only began when the Nazis took power in that year. Owing to Alfred and others, Piet knew that the Nazis would condemn his art as *entartet*, meaning “degenerate”. He fled to London in September of 1938 in the face of looming Nazi aggression. If he heard about the Chrystalnacht of 9 to 10 November 1938, that could only have confirmed him in his belief in the depravity of the Germans and the wisdom of his decision. Certainly Piet and Louk were totally different in such matters. Lacking Piet’s modest German correspondence, Louk seems to have been out-of- touch with events in Germany and did not at all fear Nazi aggression. We shall see that by 1840 he openly justified the German invasion of the Netherlands. Piet had almost nothing positive to say about anything else in Louk’s book.

As always, Piet diagnosed Louk’s pervasive tendency to confuse the sacred and the profane by trying “to locate truth in the context of life.” He here closed in on a related problem, being his friend’s theory of the superiority of

early man and his religion. Piet adduced Hélian Jaworski, who thought of primeval man as primitive man, in the sense of undeveloped, crude and simple, when compared to modern man. Although Jaworski recognized that mankind had repeatedly regressed to barbarism, he saw the overall history of mankind in terms of progress. In basic agreement, Piet believed progress to be ongoing despite occasional regression, preparing mankind for the better theosophical future of Madame Blavatsky, as anticipated by his own superior abstraction.

Whereas Piet believed that Truth (or Creative Intellect, or God) resides outside Creation, the pseudo-Sufi thinker would have had Truth pervading Creation, which he largely equated with nature. He approached the history of mankind in relation to Creation, so that he could reasonably (though not intelligently) propose that mankind had regressed by turning away from a mystical primordial religion, or cult of the Sun. Of course, that is transparent nonsense regardless of where one believes God resides. One would hardly expect primeval man to have worshiped a highly abstract deity of the kind espoused by Louk, one that was not invented until the early twentieth century. Nor, it follows, could mankind have strayed from such worship. Louk, however, believed that he was developing the thought of an infallible Inayat Khan, whereas Piet was thinking as committed follower of the equally inspired Madame Blavatsky.

In addition, as Piet rightly observed, Louk's concern with life on earth, possibly combined with growing pessimism, had somehow led him to embrace typically Christian notions about the will of mankind as opposed to the will of God. Piet was returning to a point that he had already broached in his letter of 26 June 1931, in which he had commented on *Retour à l'univers des anciens* of 1929, where Louk had included the opposition of God and the devil. In that earlier instance Piet had referred to both Protestantism and Catholicism. Michel Seuphor may have specified that Louk's views adhered to Old Testamentary Protestantism because Michel was a devoted Catholic who loved his missal and was probably not emersed in Old Testament doom and gloom, as opposed to Piet, who had grown up with severe Calvinism. Ironically, in his rejection of duality and insistence on "contrast without hostility" and "opposition as creative of unity", Piet had drifted a little closer than Louk to the orientation of Inayat Khan. But there is no need to pursue Louk's Neo-Christian theology any further. In essence, Piet was telling his friend to have the decency

to desist from his convictions and to defer to his own. Despite the tactful complements, this was surely not what our philosopher was hoping for.

Louk must also have sent Piet a copy of *Les aubes de l'humanité* along with his *L'énigme du destin*. We learn this from a letter that Piet wrote to Ella on 27 April 1933: "Will you thank Louk for his brief letter? I have not read the second book in its entirety. I found the way he conceived of history in general to be outstanding. I continue to think about the remainder, or much of it, as I already wrote him about the other books." It was Piet's last comment on a book by Louk. The friendship, however, prevailed.

CHAPTER XIII: THE CALL OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH: 1930-1932

BERGEN AAN ZEE IN THE SUMMER OF 1930

A third Dutch interlude of the Hoyacks was quite different from those of 1927 and 1928 and occurred in the summer of 1930, when Louk and Ella joined a varied group of talented individuals in the small Dutch coastal village of Bergen aan Zee. We have neither a firm arrival date nor firm departure date for the Hoyacks in Bergen aan Zee, but they likely arrived early in June and left around the middle of July to attend that year's Suresnes Summer School, as was their wont from year to year.

We would have no record of the gathering were it not for the photos taken by the distinguished illustrator and graphic designer Martina (Tine) Baanders, or occasionally by someone using her camera, which have ended up in the collection of her great nephew Ambrosius (Broos) Baanders in The Hague. Throughout Broos was able to identify participants from the names written by Tine on the back of the photos or from her numerous letters. A recent publication by the indefatigable Broos supplied detailed information about how the Tine's huge holdings were passed down to him, as well as about Tine's origins as one of eight children of a prosperous contractor and architect and her artistic training at four institutions from 1907 to 1917, as sponsored by her two oldest brothers Herman and Bertus.

Broos did not attempt a full biography of Tine. His account ended with 1931, about halfway through her life. In fact, only the mention of her teaching at the Dagteeken – en Kunstambachtsschool voor Meisjes (Daytime Drawing – and Art Trade School for Girls) of Amsterdam from 1919 to 1955 touched on the rest of her life. Broos mainly presented information about Tine's friendships and romances that played a role in her evolution to lesbianism, which was consolidated with the Amsterdam artist Teun Timmer, her principal partner from 1923 to 1933. Teun, an Amsterdam artist, was wealthy thanks to her step-father, who had made his fortune as planter in the Dutch Indies. Broos surmises that Teun, who was five years younger than Tine, was a full-fledged Lesbian when they met and became partners. Though Tine's Lesbian circle was important because it was way ahead of their time, as Broos argued, it may not

strike all readers as fascinating from beginning to end. Their extensive long distance travel by automobile, which was touched on only in passing, is surely of greater interest. In addition Tine's close friendships with individuals with different background and sexual orientation, including Ella Hoyack, were swept under the carpet.¹³³

The drawing cards of Bergen aan Zee were Theo van Hoorn and his wife Dien, who were loyal Sufis. Theo joined Sufism very shortly after Louk. They rented a dune top villa named "Blinkert" (fig. 56) for the summers of 1929 to 1934.¹³⁴ Theo, of course knew the Hoyacks well from Suresnes, especially in the summers of 1924 to 1926. Very close to the Van Hoorns was the famous German expressionist dancer Gertrud Leistikow. Gertrud and Dien may have met in 1918 in Laren, Gertrud partied and Dien was living at the time. Gertrud and Dien likely also met around 1921 at the Amsterdam Muzieklyceum, located close to the Van Hoorn home on the Johannes Verhulststraat. Around 1928 that institution moved to new quarters on the Albert Hahnplantsoen, very close to the Mozartkade, to which the Van Hoorns moved a little later. The enterprising Gertrud also taught in other venues, but was facing major financial trouble by 1931, when she was no longer performing, so that she was grateful for free room and board with Theo and Dien when teaching in Amsterdam. The van Hoorns often visited Gertrud, her second husband Piet Jongman and their son Igor Bogdan in their comfortable place in Loosdrecht from the mid-twenties to the mid-thirties.¹³⁵

We also encounter Ellen Kramer, who was the oldest child of the Amsterdam-School architect Piet Kramer and his first wife, Moenie Kramer-van de Weide (whom he divorced later that summer). We also saw them in Theo's home on 7 February 1927, when Amsterdam Sufis mourned the death of Inayat Khan. Ellen was taught dancing by Gertrud around that time. As unexpected

¹³³ Baanders 2025-2026, n.p. For the most complete overview of the life of Tine Baanders, see Buskermole 2025, *passim*, who regrettably did not learn about Broos' contemporary material.

¹³⁴ Our illustration comes from Van Hoorn 2010, fig. 28. In the summer of 1935 the Van Hoorns travelled to London for an International Management Congress instead, while boarding Paul in Zandvoort, which he hated: Van Hoorn 2010, pp. 333-334 & fig. 31. In the summer of 1936 they visited Switzerland and the Hoyacks in Théoule, while Paul remained in a boarding house for children in Bergen aan Zee, which he liked: Van Hoorn 2010, p. 335.

¹³⁵ Van Hoorn 2010, pp. 33 and 332. The dramatic story of Paul saved from drowning by Igor is dubious. Apparently the jealous Igor tried to drown Paul.

complement, Harry van Tussenbroek was also around. The presence of Harry would have interested Piet Mondrian, who had first met the celebrated puppet maker long before. In a letter to his friend Bob Oud, dated 31 March 1921, Piet had observed that Harry seemed to have little understanding of “the new”. Yet Piet clearly took a shine to Harry, who became one of his patrons, as we learn from another letter to the Ouds, dated 3 August 1928.

Dear Bob and Annie,

I don't know whether you are back, but I want quickly to thank you for your help with getting the Heer Tusschenbroek [sic] to buy another canvas. I hope that Bob improves and that everything is well with you. I have spent a few days in St. Cloud with the Hoyacks which did me a great deal of good. Do write a postcard sometime about how things are going, if you have time.

Pineau also wants a canvas from me, and Charley Toorop one in September. So things are back on track.

Much cordiality from your friend Piet.

We know that Harry became a good friend of Louk and Ella, becoming a regular in the Mondrian-Hoyack correspondence and meeting them in Bergen aan Zee but also in Saint-Cloud, Cagnes-sur-Mer and Théoule-sur Mer. Harry was a wealthy bachelor who must have valued the charm and hospitality of the Hoyacks. He still appears in Piet's address book of the mid-thirties, ever incorrectly written as Tusschenbroek, when he resided at 89 Lomanstraat in Amsterdam. He remained registered there to the end. He must have been visiting the Hoyacks when he died in their home in The Hague on 6 April 1963.

The several images of this varied and gifted group of friends include a photograph of the tanned and happy Louk and Ella in bathing costumes (fig. 57), an iconic photo that I used back in 2017 for the dust jacket of *Piet Mondrian's Sufi Friends*. It was Dien van Hoorn who took the most important photo (fig. 58), likely using Tine's camera. Ellen Kramer sits next to Theo van Hoorn, who looks seriously overdressed for the occasion. The woman with the formidable profile who holds the infant Paul Van Hoorn, was Gertrud Leistikow. A related photo (fig. 59), possibly taken the same day, shows Dien van Hoorn with her infant son Paul, Gertrud Leistikow and Theo van Hoorn, who has taken off his jacket and tie, and even his shoes, but not his hat. Gertrud, who looks

lovingly at Dien and the infant Paul, is here much better visible than in the first photo, as are the features of Theo. Because Gertrud is seen prominently and well-lit in profile, this is the best image of her known to me., Another photo shows her in the company Tine Baanders to her left, with her son Igor and Ellen Kramer to her right (fig. 60).

Still another photograph shows Harry van Tussenbroek standing to the left of Ella Hoyack, Loes) Bolleman in black skirt or trousers seen from behind, and Tine Baanders, also seen from behind (fig. 61). In addition there is a largely hidden figure between Loes and Tine. Loes again shows up, again seen from behind, in another photo of the summer of 1930, which features, from left to right, Tine Baanders, Ella Hoyack on high heels, Loes Bolleman and Ellen Kramer (fig. 62). We know what Loes looked like thanks to Jacobien de Boer, who illustrated another Baanders photo which shows a party held by the Amsterdam art dealer Aäron Vecht, who called himself Jack Vecht {fig. 63}.¹³⁶ We see the attractive young brunette (who was four years younger than Tine) full face in the right foreground. Ellen Kramer, Tine Baanders and Gertrud Leistikov are seen in the left background of the photo. Gertrud and Tine looked much alike in profile, though Gertrude's nose and chin were even more pronounced. Seen frontally, however, Gertrud was the more conventionally attractive of the two. The difference is even more apparent in a the photo celebrating Gertrud's departure for Malang in the Dutch Indies in 1937 (fig. 64). In the very front, from left to right, are Paul van Hoorn, Piet Jongman, Igor Jongman and Gertrud Liestikov, with Dien van Hoorn behind her just to the right. Tine Baanders stand immediately behind Piet and Igor. Because Gertrud is shown as part of her family, with flowers on her lap, to her side and on the floor at her feet, it is certain that we see her frontally and that she does not look remotely formidable.

Unfortunately we have no photograph of Jany Roland Holst in Bergen aan Zee in 1930. He arrived from Ascona on 27 June. His pocket diary records several meetings with the Hoyacks between 5 and 14 July. They provide us with our only firm dates for that summer, On 5 July it was "Loek [sic] Hoyack" only. On 7, 10, 11 and 12 July it was "the Hoyacks" or just "Hoyacks" only, but for the last two days Jany specified "Ella & Louk". For the 11th we also read "tea with

¹³⁶ De Boer 2015, fig. 120. I believe that the photo could well date from 1935, when Jack junior took over the family business.

Hoyacks and Zusje.” The nicknamed “Zusje” was no doubt Jany’s Zus or Olga Mensink. The reader may recall that Theo and Dien van Horn met Olga at the Summer School of 1924, with Theo calling her Raushan, that Louk and Ella socialized with the Kervel-Mensinks by the close of 1925 and that Zus repeatedly looked them up in The Netherlands late in 1928. By 1930 she had become the mother of the first two of her three children, Anita (born on 26 May 1926) and Gerardus Frederikus (born on 3 March 1930). Her third child, Ernest Willem Frederik, was born on 21 February 1931, three years before his father’s unexpected death on 23 January 1934.

A JOURNEY TO NARVIK IN THE EARLY SUMMER OF 1930

There remains a major loose end with respect to the summer of 1930. Sometime in the middle of June, Tine Baanders, Teun Timmer and Ella Hoyack visited Narvik, the northernmost town of Norway for a Mensendieck conference. On 12 June Helen Kramer, who was living in De Blinkert at the time, posted an amorous letter to Tine in Narvik, where she was presumably expected soon to arrive or to have just arrived. Teun subsequently published three articles describing the journey in the *Autokampioen* of 4, 11 and 18 July 1931. The pieces are immensely informative, including cities, lesser towns, touristic sights, landscape, hotel accommodations, meals and the weather, which varied widely along the way, but they do not mention a single date. At the end of her third piece, however, Teun estimated that they had covered a total of 5,170 kilometres at 350 to 400 kilometres a day. That means that they spent between 10.7 and 12.9 days, or fewer than 12 days, on the entire outing. In addition, the Dutch Motor League (ANWB) had planned their itinerary almost down to the kilometre. That is no doubt how Ellen Kramer knew, when she posted her love letter to Tine in Bergen aan Zee on 12 June, just when the travelling threesome could be expected to be in Narvik.¹³⁷ With Tine and Teun sharing the driving, they managed to cover the formidable distances by keeping long days and taking turns at the steering wheel every forty-five kilometres. Even with no more than a few days spent in Narvik, that would have left fewer than five days coming and going. However, there is no need to try to nail down

¹³⁷ Note that postal service was very fast back then. For instance, Jan Romein posted his marriage proposal to Annie Romein-Verschoor (1977, p. 134) in Leiden in the morning and received her written reply later that day. That was on 14 August 1920.

the precise days; we can safely place the Narvik journey within the second and third weeks of June 1930.

Though Teun did not identify Ella as the third passenger of the Narvik journey, the archive of Broos Baanders contains evidence that she was indeed on the trip. Broos supplied me with a photo, presumably taken by Tine, which shows Ella in the dickey-seat of Tine's Amilcar on a nasty day. Beside Ella projects the baggage which, as Teun mentioned, overcrowded the dickey-seat. She is seen in atypical semi-profile and lacking her habitual smile (fig. 65). Her hat, however, looks identical to the one she is shown wearing near Théoulesur-Mer in October of 1931 (fig. 67). However, this was June, not October. Most likely the photo was taken at the highest point of the journey, near Odda in the Buarbrae, where there was still snow to be seen and where an attempt at filming failed because of a lack of sunlight (fig. 66).¹³⁸ Clearly our photograph shows the same problem. This photo is especially important because it splendidly commemorates three independent young women travelling long distances by car in 1930, an undertaking that Tine and Teun repeated in their respective Amilcars in the summers of 1931 and 1933, making them rare if not unique pioneers of early feminism.

With the Narvik expedition securely placed in the second and third weeks of April 1930, all the photos taken in Bergen aan Zee itself must date from the last week of June to the middle of July of 1930, after Tine Baanders and Ella Hoyack had returned from Narvik and Tine had hooked up with Ellen Kramer. Teun Timmer presents a problem, since she does not appear in even one of those photos. Most likely she was embarking on a relationship with the German painter Dora Castell, who was to replace her as Tine's mistress in 1933. As we shall see, the two pairs of women gathered amiably in Villa Boetia in August of 1931. Apparently petty jealousy was inadmissible within this coterie of lesbians.

We know that the Hoyacks likely travelled back to Paris, Saint-Cloud and Suresnes in the second half of July 1930. No doubt they touched base with Piet Mondrian before long, who may then have heard about Ella's recent demonstration of independence from her husband Louk. Overall, however, the vacation of 1930 had no connection with Piet. Tine, Teun and Loes are not even

¹³⁸ Timmer 1931, p. 1033.

discussed in the standard Mondrian biographies. Nor is Gertrud Leistikow, except for a brief reference by Carel Blotkamp, who pointed out that her expressionistic approach to dancing was totally different from the couple and jazz oriented kind pursued by Piet.¹³⁹ Piet never referred to them in his letters to the Hoyacks. It would appear that they had not mentioned them to Piet, knowing they would not interest him. Had they kept him informed, he would certainly have mentioned Harry and Jany in any reply. This again raises a fundamental aspect of the personality of Piet Mondrian. He was not interested in friends of the Hoyacks unless they had been part of his formative year or had shared his Paris circle of the twenties. The same was true of Piet's connection with Ali Khan, who only interested him as his indispensable therapist.

BERGEN AAN ZEE IN THE SUMMER OF 1931

We have already mentioned a letter from Piet to Louk that can be dated to 16 April 1931, in which Piet criticized Louk's *De toekomst der Machine*. Only the first sentence raised a personal matter: "The news concerning Ella had me worried. I sincerely wish you the best and hope for a word from you about how things are going." On 7 June 1931, Piet again referred to Ella's lingering health problem, which probably involved her recurring rheumatism, and mentioned his newly adopted practice of wearing a smoking to openings, but he also touched on Tieske Van Tongerloo's continued poor health.

A little later Louk and Ella travelled from Saint-Cloud to Bergen aan Zee via Rotterdam, as we can gather from Piet's letter of 26 June, which was forwarded from 9 Zeemanstraat in Rotterdam, where Louk's mother had been living since 1923, to a "Pension Michels" located at 12 Dokter van Peltlaan in Bergen aan Zee. Here again, Piet mixed personal matters with his reviews of *Le Symbolique de L'Univers* and *Retour a L'Univers des Anciens*. Typically, he wrote that he had been to see Mrs. van Palland[t] and Alighan in Val d'Or in connection with his bronchitis, but that they had not yet arrived, so that he had to manage with lots of fresh air and "Sirop Rami", this being a curative cough syrup invented by the pharmacist Jean Fougerat in 1894. With Val d'Or Piet used the then current name for the area to the north of Saint-Cloud, including Suresnes and the Gare du Val d'Or, the railway station from which he would have walked to Ali in Suresnes or to the Hoyacks in Saint-Cloud. We further

¹³⁹ Blotkamp 1994, p. 165.

learn that Louk and Ella were expecting a visit from Harry van Tussenbroek, but Piet also extended his greetings to two Bergen residents, “Domselaer and Maaïke”, being Jacob van Domselaer and his wife Maaïke, whom we have already encountered in Haarlem in 1915 and in Piet’s Paris studio in 1929. As a kind of postscript, Piet further reported that “Tonia has been able to commence her course of treatment”. Only a day later, on 27 June, Piet mailed Louk his lengthy and dismissive review of *Tijdgeest*.

OPINIONS CONCERNING THE HOUSE OF DR. CEES VAN DER LEEUW

In a letter of 30 June 1931, in which Piet also reported on Arthur Lehning’s purchase of the small painting that he had promised to Ella, he reacted to Louk’s description of “the house of v.d. Leeuw”, which must refer to the Rotterdam home of Dr. Cees van der Leeuw, which the architect Leender van der Vlucht had designed in 1928 for the senior heir of the Van Nelle coffee and tea fortune. Piet did not specify just when the Hoyacks saw the house, but it was likely on their way to Bergen, when they stopped by his mother. The starkly modern facade may still be admired at 30 Kralingse Plaslaan or online. However, Louk and Ella must have seen more than just the façade, or else it would have been a very short description.

It is very interesting such a home, but it is after all the old in a new form, looking for personal comfort instead of dissolving oneself [*zichself oplossen*]. As Ella says, not at all neoplasticism. I have all this time been writing about precisely that (namely what is the new). And I believe that this v.d. Leeuw is a theosophist! They are always opposed to it.

Van der Leeuw was indeed a supporter of Khrishnamurti, as was his architect Leen van der Vlucht. We know, however, that Piet was also a Theosophist and admired the boy wonder. He was therefore expressing his disappointment with fellow believers who preferred to rehash the old instead of fully exploring the new. Since we do not have the Hoyack description of the house, we can only guess at Louk’s concerns. However, he was probably not averse to any continuation of the comforts of the old, which he actually championed in his work of 1932. He must instead have hated the house because it embodied the same *nieuwe zakelijkheid* that he was to criticize in a 1937 article on the

Baroque, in which he dismissed Mart Stam's beautiful Van Nelle factory as a sterile low point in architectural evolution.

Piet added that he has read out the Hoyack description of the Van der Leeuw home to Georges Vantongerloo and his wife Tieske, who is "improving slowly." As the ultimate bit of trivia, Piet told the Hoyacks to bring the tea kettle (*fluitketel*) only if they have space for it in their luggage. He added that he had invited the Stieltjes and Van Loons for some collective reading on Sunday. He also expressed hope that the Hoyacks would arrive in time to join their gathering. He must have mailed the letter to Saint-Cloud so that it would be awaiting them upon arrival.

The Hoyacks must certainly have been back in Saint-Cloud by 6 July 1931, attending the Suresnes Summer School, when Piet informed them: "Mevrouw V. Palland[t] wrote me a while ago that Ali Ghan would again be there after 5 July and that she would warn me." We already know this Mrs. van Pallandt as baroness van Pallandt as mother of diplomat Floris and sculptress Charlotte.

INTERMITTANT LIFE IN CAGNES-SUR-MER UNTIL THE SPRING OF 1932

During the autumn of 1931 the Hoyacks stayed in Cagnes-sur-Mer, close to Théoule, and probably relied for companionship on their good friend Harry van Tussenbroek, who settled in the artist colony for years and even had a major exhibition there. An undated letter from Piet to Ella, which must date from 3 April 1932, mentioned that she expected to spend her birthday on the fifth with Louk and Harry van Tussenbroek. A tiny photo that is dated May 1931 on the back (fig. 68), indicates that Jany Holst had already visited Harry in Cagnes most of a year before. It was in the undated missive of 3 April, we may recall, that Piet promised a replacement painting for Ella, one that never materialized. Piet told the Hoyacks that he hoped to see them in June, when they likely did visit him and attended the Suresnes Summer School for that year before returning to Cagnes.

Then, in late October, the Hoyacks probably travelled from Cagnes to Saint-Cloud, hosted Harry van Tussenbroek there, and visited Piet in Paris. The events were discussed by Piet in an undated letter that he sent to Ella and Louk (in that order) on a Tuesday that is not otherwise identified. However, the letter contains several clues as to its date and destination. First, Piet wrote that "Seuphor had corrected half of the booklet," which points to sometime after Michel's return to Paris in May of that year. Secondly, Piet wrote that his stove

had been burning “since Saturday”, meaning it was no longer summer. Thirdly, Piet reported that “Charley is physically well”. As she was in The Netherlands at the time, that indicates that Louk and Ella were not there. Piet also wrote that he had heard from “the sculptress” (meaning Jadwiga Bohdanowicz) that in the beginning you did not like it there”, which confirms that the Hoyacks were not in The Netherlands or, in point of fact, not in Saint-Cloud either. Piet added, “but you have remained there rather long”, which would make perfect sense if Ella and Louk had lingered in Cagnes into the autumn. We further learn that Marcella Stieltjes (Wim’s daughter) had informed Piet that Louk and Ella were expecting “Harry” in November. Piet added, “I had therefore expected you over here already.” Everything points to Tuesday, 20 October 1931 for the letter.

Louk and Ella then continued on to the Netherlands, where they had arrived by 23 November, when Louk once more lectured in Amsterdam. Presumably Piet was not interested in topics such as “Sufism in these Times” and the Hoyacks did not bother to mention the trip to him. The couple then moved back to the Côte d’Azur for the late winter of 1932, when on 4 March, Piet sent his low opinion of Louk’s *Spiritualisme historique*. The stay is also documented by an important letter that Piet Mondrian addressed to Louk and Ella at “Villa François, quartier St. Anne, Cagne[s]-sur-Mer” on 21 March 1932. With the Hoyacks away for the holiday season, Piet had been forced to fend for himself. He did not complain direct to Louk and Ella, but he raised the matter to Arthur Lehning in a letter of 1 January 1932: “Tonia had the flue over Christmas or else I would have been there. I just kept on working and over Christmas as well.” On 21 March he reported to the Hoyacks that he had the flue since 17 March and that his (sixtieth) birthday (on 7 March) was not as pleasant as usual due to a quarrel with Georges Vantongerloo, but also because Louk and Ella were away. However, Piet did praise the birthday festivities in his studio, with lots of flowers, especially from “Slijper”, and greetings from Dutch friends.

Piet’s afore-mentioned letter of 21 March also hinted at a challenging process of adaptation for the Hoyacks: “I am glad that life there suits you. The climate is a great advantage even if you do miss the Parisian ambient.” They must have enjoyed the benefits of the better weather almost at once, as Piet noted that he was pleased to hear that “Ella’s rheumatism is as good as cured.” Apparently Louk and Ella had offered to help Piet over a dip in his finances, as

he wrote: “You also write to me about a gift but now, with this crisis, you really should not do that because you need it [the money] too badly yourself.” Possibly Piet was reacting to something he had heard from Louk and Ella. Finally Piet asked Louk to extend his greetings to dr d’Eck should they see him. That made sense, since d’Eck’s farm was located near Nice, which is a short train ride from Cagnes-sur-Mer.

The Hoyacks were still on the Côte d’Azur during the first days of April 1932, when Piet wrote a brief and undated letter congratulating Ella on her birthday, observing that that she and Louk were “far way” and “in new surroundings”. It was also in this letter, we may recall, that Piet announced his plans, never to come to fruition, to replace the small painting that he had promised to Ella but sold to Arthur Lehning instead.

LIFE IN SAINT-CLOUD AND THE NETHERLANDS UNTIL SEPTEMBER OF 1932

Louk and Ella were probably back in Saint-Cloud around late May of 1932. The occasion is commemorated by a photograph that states on the back: “This is where we lived in 1932.” It features, from left to right, Louk, Ella, Harry van Tussenbroek and a couple of other visitors (fig. 70).¹⁴⁰ Ella is dressed in a bare-sleeved singlet, which would fit with a date in the late spring. The female member of the couple looks like Charley Toorop as we know her from her self-portraits of the time, but the man by her side does not at all resemble Arthur Lehning as photographed in 1929 by John Fernhout, one of Charley’s two sons. The furniture is thoroughly conventional and altogether different from that found in Piet Mondrian’s studio. The reproduction of Rubens’ *Descent from the Cross* might seem surprising. However, Louk was dismissive of the Resurrection and the notion of exclusive redemption through Christ, but he never challenged the historical veracity of the Crucifixion. That was in keeping with the thought of Inayat Khan, for whom Christ was the Prophet who embodied the spirit of sacrifice. It is the only surviving photo of the Hoyack’s Saint-Cloud interior. On the other hand, we also do not have a single photo of the interior of their Villa Boetia.

The Hoyacks were again in The Netherlands during the early summer of 1932, as we learn from a letter from Piet, dated 15 June, which was addressed

¹⁴⁰ This photograph (taken from Horn 2017) did not identify Harry. The presence of Harry van Tussenbroek was kindly pointed out to me by Jacobien de Boer.

to the couple at a “Villa Duintop” in Bergen aan Zee, the coastal village in which they had also vacationed in the summers of 1930 and 1931. As so often, Piet informed the Hoyacks about his health: “About a month ago I once more went to that doctor of Tonia to be examined, but as I already thought, things were not quite in order. But they say I have never looked better, so things will slowly correct themselves and then I will again talk about it with Alighan when he is here once more.”

Piet’s letter of 15 June is of particular interest because he reported on his attempt to join the Freemasons. He gave three reasons why they turned him down. First, they had read his work selectively, or not at all. Secondly, they had not understood his ideas. And thirdly “because I do not *deny* what is above our senses, though I know nothing about it.” Piet was likely alluding to belief in spiritualism, which was an article of faith amongst Freemasons. He must have assumed that Louk would understand and sympathize, not knowing that he was a closet spiritualist.

Louk and Ella must have been in Bergen aan Zee for some time, for Piet wrote them again on 27 June, adding: “I believe I am now getting rid of my old ailment and take a moment to write you about this because through you I met Alighan, who, I believe, has been the primary means of affecting a cure. Of course that doctor of Tonia has also been ‘a means’, but secondary to Alighan, I think.”

On 4 July 1932 Gertrud Leistikow wrote (in German) to her student and friend Jeanne Boekhoudt: “Unfortunately the Hoyacks were not in Loosdrecht last Sunday. Something came up”, which indicates that Louk and Ella were still in Bergen around that date. They had made a point of looking up Charley Toorop in Bergen aan Zee because they knew that this would interest Piet. On 26 July Piet wrote to Saint-Cloud in response: “Yes, those days with Charley must have been pleasant. She is an exceptional woman, even though half of her is stuck in the old.” Here, as so often, Piet did not expect good friends to share his ideas about art and art practice. As for his health, Piet wrote that despite horrendous problems with his teeth and numerous visits to a physician, “thing are at last somewhat normal and in a little while I will also go once to Alighan, who is briefly in Suresnes.”

On 18 August 1932 Piet Mondrian wrote a letter to Michel Seuphor, who was at the farm of dr d'Eck in Nice at the time, waiting for the Hoyacks to show up in Théoule-sur-Mer.

The Hoyacks have returned from Holland. When they were there I corresponded with him about his book *De Tijdgeest* (nice title!!). He also speaks about art there, all of which I find badly conceived, even the great Hindu [sic!] wisdom [of Inayat Khan]. I wrote him that politely, and we have remained friends. Later he returned to Paris with his Dutch editor and wife, who remained for fifteen days. Finally he and Ella came to see me; they were nice as always, but what a glacial friendship! Anyway, they are made of 'ice' and yet they think they possess fire and even light! They invited me to their place, but I did not accept. They remain at the same address, Avenue du M. Foch, 141 III, until September.

The comment comes as an unpleasant surprise, since it threatens to undermine the evidence of the present study, which proves that Piet often sought out the warm hospitality of the Hoyacks. Possibly Piet was reacting to condescension expressed by Louk in a letter, since lost, in which he responded to Piet's dismissal of *Tijdgeest*, but then why would he have included Ella in his condemnation? More likely it was the social ease and unreflective Sufi certitude of Louk and Ella that was their light and that irritated Piet. Both Hoyacks firmly believed that only Inayat Khan was "the way, the truth and the light" of their times. For them Madame Blavatsky and Krishnamurti were simply not in the running.

We must in any case be careful not to take this one observation to a third party too seriously, since Piet could not have dreamed that his words would one day become accessible to a wide public. The comment is in any case also of importance because it once more demonstrated the discretion that was essential to the friendship of Piet and Louk. Piet dealt with aspects of Louk's work with which he disagreed simply by ignoring or downplaying them unless they concerned an issue that was particularly central to his own convictions about art in relation to life. He would presumably never have reproached Louk and Ella about their "glacial" behaviour, but saved the comment for Michel Seuphor instead.

Interesting from the point of view of an historian of Western Sufism is Piet's mention that Louk showed Nico (Salar) Kluwer (fig. 71) and his wife,

Catherina (Hayat) Kluwer-Rahusen, the sights of Paris in the summer of 1932. No doubt they also caught the tail end of the 1932 Summer School in Suresnes. Of course, Kluwer was Louk's faithful publisher, not his editor, as Piet could have learned from three of Louk's books that he had read. Clearly Nico Kluwer who was the head of the Deventer Centre, had no serious problem with Louk's conservative notions about art and life, as it was he who had recently published *Tijdgeest*. In fact, Nico was to publish twenty more of Louk's books between 1934 and his death in 1977, including ones that were only marginally or not at all related to Sufism. Piet Mondrian probably did not know Nico, but Ali Khan certainly did. Like many Sufis, including Theo van Hoorn, Ali stayed at Nico's Villa "Jolijt" in Joppe/Gorssel. He sent his host a portrait (fig. 72) with the semi-literate inscription "To Mr. Nico Kluwer with best wish & kind remembrens."

In another letter to Michel Seuphor, dated Saturday 27 August 1932, Piet wrote: "Tomorrow I will visit the Hoyacks for one day (not for any longer). I will convey them your regards. It appears that they are equally troubled by the crisis, and the Stieltjes have told me that they [the Hoyacks] will figure out how to find some paying guests over there." We already know the gossiping Stieltjes as Wim and his wife Tonia, who was already seriously ill by this time. We also know from a letter that Piet wrote to Michel on 18 August that Louk and Ella were in Saint-Cloud during the second half of the month, no doubt to attend the Suresnes Summer School. Whereas Piet had at first declined to visit them, something must have changed his mind, at least for a day. With "over there", Piet and the Stieltjes must have meant Théoule, and Louk and Ella were presumably hoping to supplement their income by taking in a wealthy boarder or two once they had settled there. Clearly Piet and the Stieltjes knew months in advance about the Hoyacks' move south.

Piet also extended his greetings to Jany Holst and further mentioned that Louk and Ella must be awaiting Harry van Tussenbroek. In addition, Piet asked Ella to report on dr d'Eck, who has not replied to a letter, "so that he is probably once more in a terrible fix." Piet therefore assumed that once in Théoule, Ella would be prepared to travel from there to Nice to check on the physician. It is the kind of thing that one would only ask in the context of friendship. Piet further wrote that he was pleased that Ella liked his work.

At the beginning of September of 1932, Louk and Ella Hoyack left Saint-Cloud and moved to Théoule-sur-Mer. That they may have been planning such a

move for years is suggested by the already quoted letter of 1928 that Piet Mondrian wrote to Michel Seuphor, which gave a temporary Théoule address for the Hoyacks, as well as by their extensive travel in and around Théoule in the early summer of 1928. Most likely they secured a long-term lease for Villa Boetia at the very beginning of 1931, since they sublet the property to Teun Timmer for that year. The Hoyacks then presumably terminated their Saint-Cloud lease on 1 September of 1932. That means that they paid a lot of rent during 1931 and 1932 while they were still living in Saint-Cloud and not yet living in Théoule-sur-Mer, so that Teun's contribution must have been most welcome.

CHAPTER XIV: A VARIED LIFE CENTRED ON THÉOULE-SUR-MER

ELLA'S BERGEN AAN ZEE FRIENDS IN AUGUST OF 1931

Ellas Hoyack's Bergen friends of the summer of 1930 gathered in Théoule-sur-Mer in the summer of 1931, well before the Hoyacks settled there in the early autumn of 1932. We can think of this gathering as a legacy of the 1930 journey to Narvik. Ella must have bonded with her fellow passengers, so that she convinced Louk that they should be welcomed to their southern paradise on the Bay of Cannes.

Tine Baanders and Ellen Kramer showed up at villa Boetia to look up Teun Timmner, who had sublet the place a year in advance of the arrival of Louk and Ella.¹⁴¹ Teun must have travelled south in her own Amilcar, taking her friend and Tine's later partner, Dora Castell, with her. Tine and Ellen were on their way back from Genoa, where Tine's sister Mien Schimmel-Baanders and her husband Wim Schimmel lived, as part of an Italian journey in Tine's Amilcar, that being a journey that Ellen had suggested in her amorous letter to Tine in Narvik the year before. It must be understood that the four women were not expecting the Hoyacks, who were at the Sufi Summer School in Suresnes that month. In addition, their furniture was still in Saint-Cloud, so that the four women would have had to sleep on the floor had not the Hoyacks borrowed a few mattresses to provide emergency accommodation.

A photo likely taken by Tine shows Ellen Kramer sharing a meal with Teun Timmner on the west side of the front balcony of the villa, with an unidentifiable housekeeper serving them a snack (fig. 73). Another photo of the same balcony, one that Broos Baanders very recently presented online (fig. 74), shows Teun singing to Tine. It was taken by Ellen Kramer, as is established by her inscription on the back, which celebrates the love of the couple.¹⁴² The two pictures are in part important because they alone provide us with two clear and certain portraits of Teun around that time.

¹⁴¹ Baanders 2025-2026, n.p., ignored the Hoyack connection and referred to "a house".

¹⁴² "Teun sings for Tine her morning song! Proprio bella!": Baanders 2025-2026, n.p. Ellen may eventually have moved beyond her Lesbian stage. The funeral announcement of her father Piet, who died in 1961, has her married to one Dr. J. Revrink in Aerdenhout.

Still another photograph taken from the same balcony but looking north, shows two Amilcars on the road below villa Boetia (fig. 75). With all four travelers down below, the photo must have been taken by someone else, perhaps the housekeeper, using Tine Baander's camera. It is not easy to make things out because of the considerable distance, but according to Tine's notes on the back of the photo, the vehicle to our left belonged to Teun Timmer. The two women inside are probably Dora Castell closest to us, with Teun behind the steering wheel to her right. The vehicle to our right belonged to Tine Baanders, who is sitting behind the steering wheel, with Ellen Kramer to her left. It helps to know that until well into the thirties, Amilcars had their steering wheel on the right side looking forward. Another photo, again very recently published online by Broos Baanders, shows the same two Amilcars from nearby, with one of them seen from behind (fig. 76). The vehicles can only be identified and interrelated by the shape (straight or rounded) of the windshields, so that we can tell that the left automobile of the first photo is the one seen from behind on the right of the second. The license plate number of the left vehicle (G-64940), though somewhat obscured, is clearly the same as that of Tine's Amilcar on the way to Narvik (again fig. 65). Wearing a long white coat and some kind of decorative headdress, Tine stands next to her vehicle, with her passenger, Ellen Kramer, standing behind its projecting dickey seat and spare tire.¹⁴³ Teun Timmer sits inside the right vehicle, with Dora Castell standing to its right. The two women can be told apart because Teun wore her hair longer than Dora, who also carried a few extra pounds.

Ella Hoyack herself met up with Teun and Dora at Villa Boetia in October of 1931, as is commemorated by several photos, including one of her in wintry garb on the winding road leading from the villa down to Théoule (fig. 67). Tine was not present on that occasion because she taught at the Dagteeken-en Kunstambachtsschool voor Meisjes in Amsterdam during the spring and autumn. To understand this and related photographs one needs a street view of the villa, as seen in a photo likely taken by Tine Baanders in 1931 (fig. 77). Villa Boetia was, and is, a square structure, now surrounded by houses, here seen from the south-west, located well above the Boulevard Saint Hubert, which leads down to the village. It is tempting to Frenchify the name to Boétia,

¹⁴³ The situation is clear from a photograph of Tine's Amilcar seen from the side that Teun published on p. 1006 of Part II of her three *Autokampioen* articles.

but Boetia is correct.¹⁴⁴ The front balcony was raised more than a full floor on square columns, explaining the spectacular view of the sea to the south and our left. The boulevard took a hairpin turn, which is barely visible in the left background of the Baanders photo, and then continued around the back of the villa. We see the gate to the garden of the villa in the middle of this photo. The view took in the bay of la Napoule, with Mandelieu-la Napoule in the left background and Cannes in the distance to the right. It was probably this splendid vista that sold Louk and Ella on the property. Another view (fig. 78) shows Ella in the spring or early summer of 1933, sitting on the road leading from Villa Boetia, which we see in the background, down to Théoule-sur Mer.

MICHEL SEUPHOR IN SEPTEMBER OF 1932

The first guest of the Hoyacks themselves at Villa Boetia was Michel Seuphor. He followed hot on the heels of Louk and Ella. In his “Twenty Slices of Life Recounted by Seuphor”, which the artist published in 1976, the artist recalled how he had arrived at Villa Boetia, strapped for cash, only to discover that the Hoyacks had not yet arrived, leaving a caretaker in charge. That may well have been the woman seen serving Ellen Kramer and Dora Castell back in August of 1931. With his last remaining money the artist took the train to Nice and walked to the farm of dr d'Eck. Unfortunately for Michel the gracious d'Eck had left for America to accompany a patient. In a letter of 17 October 1932 Piet explained the circumstances to the Hoyacks:

You will be surprised to hear that at the end of the journey dr d'Eck took very sick. [It had] something to do with the gall bladder and liver and peritonitis. Anyway, on the edge, therefore, but now recovering. His wife just came to tell me. Terrible for her. She returns to Nice tomorrow. Was here with family. His daughter is nursing him in America. There was no money for her to stay as well. But she hopes that dr d'Eck will soon return to Nice.

This (second) wife of dr d'Eck must have been away in Paris when Michel arrived, and his care was assigned to a disagreeable Russian émigrée who served him a plate of noodles every day for two weeks on end until an ebullient Louk picked

¹⁴⁴ For further explanation and the precise address, Horn 2017, p. 198.

him up by train and carriage in what must have been the first days of September. But though the Hoyacks had arrived in Théoule, their furniture had not, so that Michel, Ella and Louk had to sleep on borrowed mattresses, like Tine, Ellen, Teun and Dora before them. From this time dates a wretched photo that shows Ella and Louk flanking Michel (fig. 69). Once the furniture arrived, the Hoyacks were visiting friends elsewhere on the Côte d'Azur. Seuphor recalled that he had the movers put the furniture in place according to his own insights, which the Hoyacks did not care for but learned to live with, altering it only piecemeal so as not to inconvenience other guests.

On 12 September 1932 the artist sent his mother a letter with a schematic prospect of Théoule, Grasse and Cannes, with Juan-les Pins in the very background and the villa Boetia on its promontory in the centre foreground. Writing in French, Michel reported that Ingeborg Bjarnason had failed to collect 300 francs owed to him in Paris. "I have precisely 50 francs on me," he lamented, "and I will need 300 francs to return to Paris on 22 September. Can I ask you to advance the money until the end of the month so that I will not have to resort to undesirable expedencies? Thanks." The Hoyacks, he explained, are themselves overextended by the expense of the move. Naturally a move of an entire household through most of France can't have been cheap, but the overextension was likely in part caused by the double rent paid in Saint-Cloud and Théoule-sur-Mer during much of 1932.

In his *Les évasions d'Olivier Trickmansholm* of 1939, Michel described the view of Villa Boetia, renaming it in the process.

The Villa des Pins enjoyed a unique location. From the top of the hill that dominated the sea by about one hundred meters, the view took in an immense panorama: the bay of Cannes, the island of Lérins, a great extension of land, with Grasse at the centre, plus – on a clear day – the snow-covered peaks of the Alps.

It is a fine description. In general, however, *Les évasions* is a bizarre proposition, filled with fictive characters and events.

MICHEL SEUPHOR FROM LATE MAY TO LATE JUNE OF 1933

Michel Seuphor again showed up in Théoule sometime in the late spring of 1933. The Letterenhuis of Antwerp owns a wonderful photo of him standing on

the road below and to the west of Villa Boetia, with Michel blocking our view of the villa's gate (fig. 80). The long shadows and Michel's slight squint show that it was late in the afternoon. A much smaller photo shows Michel flanked by Louk and Ella on the balcony of Villa Boetia (fig. 69). On 28 June Piet Mondrian wrote to his friend Nant: "I have heard via Gorin that you are with the Hoyacks, and I am very happy for you that you are for the moment freed of misery." Piet concluded: "Well then my dear friend, good day and convey my regards to Louk and Ella and to Tusschenbrouk [sic]. Holst will have left, I believe. Otherwise it would be a house full of artists!!" We don't know just when Albert Gorin learned about Michel's presence in Théoule, when his letter reached Piet, or how long it took Piet to react. The 28 June of his missive could well mark the end or near-end of Michel's stay with Louk and Ella. As a ballpark estimate, Michel must have been in Théoule from around late May to late June of 1933.

More than four decades later, in his brief autobiography of 1976, Michel recalled his experiences in Théoule.

But in the middle of the summer he once again received an invitation from Louis Hoyack to join him "in order to philosophise together." A money order accompanied the letter and Michel once more board the train for Théoule.

And what befell him there?

Voilà. It quickly became apparent that the philosopher, with his extensive cultivation – he spoke six or seven languages and had read everything – was an adept of National Socialism and obliged Seuphor to read *Mein Kampf* in the original. His fondness of Seuphor, like his admiration for Mondrian, seemed real enough, but that accorded very poorly with his conception of the world. He professed a return to the geocentric universe of Ptolemy and demonstrated that this view was the only possible way to save the world from fatal integration, all seen in a spirit typically retrograde and reactionary, which was not incompatible with that of Hitler. When the philosopher perceived that my ideas were diametrically opposed to his, his friendship turned into glacial indifference, with alms extended with the tips of his fingers.

Louk, however, nowhere argued for a geocentric universe. He followed Inayat Khan and embraced his belief in a heliocentric universe, and that even though

Louk knew it ran counter to modern astronomy. Nor did Louk ever argue that belief in a geocentric universe, or a heliocentric one, is needed to save the world from disaster. Seuphor was simply spouting nonsense.

In 1996, in his thoroughly revisionist interviews with the versatile French journalist Alexandre Grenier, Michel claimed that Louk was at first a companionable host who took him on wonderful walks but then changed into a bully who dictated his sleeping hours, plagued him with a German edition of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and turned him out "without a penny." In stopping Michel from reading at night, would have been implementing one of the seriously lame ideas of his *De toekomst der machine*, which Michel could have read there or, much more likely, have learned about via an amused communication from Piet Mondrian, being that the use of electricity and all intellectual activity, including reading, should cease at sunset to facilitate spiritual reflection. As for *Mein Kampf* as mandatory reading, it had not yet been published in French or Dutch by 1933. Still, that detail arguably accords with Louk's advocacy of autocracy in his recent books. Nevertheless Seuphor's claims were likely slanderous, as he wrote that Louk "completely agreed" with all of Hitler's ideas, including his racist dismissal of France as a "Negroid nation".

Michel forgot to mention his own strident infatuation with Catholicism at the time, a version of Christianity for which, as he clearly stated in his *Spiritualisme historique*, Louk had no respect whatsoever. We will never know what parts of Michel's recollections are trustworthy and just what it was about the prolonged proximity of the two men in one house that caused their friendship to turn sour. It is certainly surprising that Louk may have violated his customary separation of opinion and friendship.

A year later Michel married the devoutly Catholic Suzanne Prasse and settled down with her in a hovel in Anduze, where they remained, with renovations, until 1948. It appears that Piet Mondrian never learned about the breach between his two good friends. There is no mention of Ella in all of this. Michel's alienation from Louk apparently did not involve her, as is established by the fact that she and Michel continued to keep track of each other. According to his recollections of 1997, as published in 2009, Ella visited Michel in Paris after the war. "She had opened a gallery in The Hague and desired my help. But I could not help her from Paris. After two or three years the gallery

closed again.” That gallery, we already know, was Galerie de Posthoorn. Since that gallery closed in 1962, Ella must have been in Paris around 1959.

ADRIAAN ROLAND HOLST AROUND EARLY JUNE OF 1933

Arguably the most important guest of the 1933 season was Piet Mondrian’s “Jany Holst”, being Andriaan Roland Holst, whom Piet knew well. An inveterate traveller, Jany had been in the area before, as is proved by the mentioned photo of him in the company of Harry van Tussenbroek in May of 1932 (again fig. 68), when Louk and Ella were also visiting Harry. Jan van der Vegt, Holst’s most recent biographer, reports that the poet was invited to Théoule by a “rich and eccentric The Hague man”, Loek [sic] Hoyack, to come stay in his Villa Boitia [sic].” Jany’s visit began sometime during Michel’s stay, but he did not leave before him, as Piet Mondrian supposed, for we have a photograph of the two men standing at the front gate of Villa Boetia together (fig. 81). A photograph in the Literatuur Museum in The Hague shows Louk and Jany in swimming trunks and looking tanned (fig. 82). The unexpected pose may have been an invention of Louk, as Jany had little or no interest in anything Eastern.

Whatever the two men talked about, it was probably not Sufism. The poet had met and taken walks with Inayat Khan when both men were guests of André Germain in Étretat, Normandy, in 1924. Unlike Louk Hoyack, however, Jany Holst was not overcome by Inayat’s charisma or by his message of love, harmony and balance, which he deemed to be “platitudinous optimism”. Typically, Jany’s low opinion of Louk’s great Messenger of God does not appear to have impinged on their lasting friendship, which was almost certainly cemented by their shared right-wing political orientation.

A SOCIAL GATHERING AROUND THE CLOSE OF JUNE 1933

A photograph now in the archive of Broos Baanders shows a group of eight people photographed by Tine Baanders on the eastern veranda of Villa Boetia (fig. 83). The photo was likely taken by Tine Baanders in the later summer of 1933, after Michel Seuphor and Jany Holst had left Théoule and before the likely departure of the Hoyacks for the Suresnes Summer School. The occasion included a few of Ella’s Bergen friends, the ubiquitous Harry van Tussenbroek and several unidentifiable people who must have been local acquaintances, recalling that the Hoyacks were somehow able to borrow mattresses back in 1931. Seated in front, from left to right, are Ella Hoyack, an unknown woman,

Teun Timmer and Harry van Tussenbroek. Behind them stand two unidentified men, Dora Castell and Louk Hoyack.

Another photo, taken later in the day behind and to the south-west of Villa Boetia (fig. 84), features several unidentifiable individuals, but we again see Harry, who had taken off his jacket, standing at the upper left. Sitting behind the table is Ella. The man next to her, with dark hatband, is one of the two unidentified men of the earlier photo. Louk, who has turned away from us, sits to the right of the table. Stopped immediately on our side of him, wearing a hat and peeking out at us from the deep shade, could be Teun Timmer, likely using time delay to take the picture. Behind her, again wearing a hat, stands another unidentified man. Despite his dark hatband, he can't be confused with the man in the earlier picture because his flat-topped hat has an altogether different shape. Closer to us, again with hat and wearing a dark spencer, sits the man with light hatband of the earlier photo. The woman sitting closest to us is probably Dora Castell, who was slightly heavier than Teun and wore her hair shorter. The older woman to Ella's right could well be her mother, Engelina Catharina Charlotte de Bijer-Donleben, whose husband Willem de Bijer had died about three months before.

Teun Timmer is likely also seen standing with a thoroughly tanned Ella on the West side of Villa Boetia (fig. 85). Loes Bolleman was also present in the summer of 1933. We see her standing with Ella in front of the chateau of Théoule, which was based on a converted soap factory dating back to the seventeenth century (fig. 86). The dense shadows make it difficult to see the faces without a magnifying glass, but the two women are again identified on the back of the Baanders photo. Other than the Hoyacks and the ubiquitous Harry van Tussenbroek, however, not one of these individuals is likely to have been of interest to Piet Mondrian.

CHAPTER XV: MORE MONDRIAN LETTERS AND CRITIQUES

The Mondrian-Hoyack correspondence continued after the move to Théoule, starting with Piet's mentioned letter of 17 October 1932 concerning the collapse of dr d'Eck in America. Most frequently it is the Stieltjes who show up in the letters. We recall they were Gesina Antonia, called Tonia, her engineer husband Wim, and Wim's daughter Marcella, who must also have become good friends of Louk and Ella in Paris from 1927 to 1932. On 14 October Piet had written to the Hoyacks: "Tonia was able to get away for a week to take the baths in Royat. There was no more money." That letter of 14 October was returned because of insufficient postage, so that it lay around Piet's atelier for more than two weeks and only reached Théoule on 5 November. Piet had added that Tonia's death had followed on 26 October. He further wrote that Wim, Jan and Marcella Stieltjes had buried Tonia at nine in the morning and, after lunching together, decided to head for Piet's studio, "which I naturally appreciated." They then dined together, after which the Stieltjes joined the Van Loons, and Piet, having a cold, went home.

Tonia's death had devastated Piet, who added enigmatically that "Tonia was everything who turned everything into something." On 18 December Piet wrote to the Hoyacks, reacting to the sympathy and sadness that they had expressed and reporting on how Wim and Marcella were coping. He expressed fear that the surviving Stieltjes and the Van Loons might abandon him. In a letter that Piet wrote to Arthur Lehning on 23 December, he wrote: "You may possibly know via Eddy [Fernhout], but regrettably Tonia has died. I now have no one left in Paris." It seems likely, however, that this melodramatic statement at least in part reflected the fact that Louk and Ella had left Saint-Cloud for Théoule-sur-Mer three months before.

ONCE AGAIN MOHAMMED ALI KHAN

Predictably Piet's reference to past Paris contacts included Ali Khan. On 17 October 1932 (in the same gossipy letter in which he informed Louk about dr d'Eck's collapse in America) he wrote that he was achieving greater clarity in his work and had "great faith in life."

Things go well with me, though I am still with Tonia's doctor. I have had three treatments from Alighan, who was exceptionally devoted to me this time in particular. A remarkable man!! Due to his influence the bust of the master has (in my opinion) turned out very well. As you probably already know.

The sculpture had been photographed both with and without Ali next to it, and Piet added that he had written "Mad. V. Palland[t]" for a photo. This can't have been the bronze bust by baroness van Pallandt's daughter Charlotte, which was later in date.¹⁴⁵ This particular bust, which is almost a metre tall and is now in Warsaw's National Museum, is made of patinated plaster, not of stone (fig. 79). It must have been the modello for this work that Louk and Ella admired in the Paris Studio of Jadwiga Bohdanowicz on 17 October 1928. We therefore know that it had taken Jadwiga three years to complete the sculpture. Theo van Hoorn also admired the sculpture and also assumed it was made of stone instead of plaster: "In the Paris atelier of the gifted Polish Sufi sculptress Bogdanowitsch, I encountered a bust of Ali Khan. An immense block of stone provided a masterful recreation of the very essence of his awesome multi-dimensional being."¹⁴⁶

Then, on 18 December 1932, Piet wrote a letter that demonstrated that his loyalty to Ali Khan had survived problems for which the healer had no solution:

I had quite a lot of trouble with my health, but I have great faith in life and the help of Alighan that it has brought me. I do discern progress, but slow. Recently I had to do another series of treatments, three times weekly for a month, after which things were more or less in order. But after that I had to go to a doctor for flatulence. You will understand that it was also difficult financially.

On the back of the missive Piet commented on the "life affirming character" of Ali's treatments. This was the second time that Piet commented on a lengthy course of treatments that had nothing to do with Ali. The first was in a letter

¹⁴⁵ Van Hoorn 2010, fig. 165.

¹⁴⁶ Van Hoorn 2010, p. 198. Note 124 provides plentiful information about the sculpture in its present location.

that Piet had written to Arthur Lehning six days before: “You understand that it takes a long time because it was such an old ailment that I had without knowing it.”

The Hoyacks must have been in the Netherlands during the winter of 1932 to 1933, since *Het Vaderland* of 8 February was to announce that Louk was about to arrive on a lecture tour sponsored by the Dutch Sufi Movement and that he will be speaking about “Autarkie” in The Hague on 16 February. An anonymous journalist encapsulated Louk’s ideas with some enthusiasm and claimed they had raised considerable interest in Holland and France. In addition, an Amsterdam lecture of his, planned for the month of April, had been announced in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* of 7 November 1932. The other Amsterdam lecturers of the 1932 to 1933 series constituted a veritable who’s who of Dutch Sufism. The lectures were convened at 8 PM at 580 Keizersgracht, the same venue used for Louk’s previous talks. None of this would have interested Piet, whose interests only extended to individuals with whom he, Louk and Ella had socialized in Paris from 1927 to 1932. That Piet knew that Louk and Ella were in The Netherlands is proved by a letter of 26 February 1933 that he wrote to Ella. Addressed to Louk’s mother at 9 Zeemanstraat in Rotterdam, it was forwarded to 47 Ouderwijkerlaan in Utrecht, the home of Louk’s sister Anna Maria Catharina and his banker brother-in-law Van Tienhoven. Ever considerate, Piet wrote to extend his condolences on the death of Ella’s father (in fact her stepfather) Willem de Beijer, who had died in the Hague precisely a month before.

In a postscript to the letter of 26 February, Piet again alluded to Ali Khan. The artist raised the issue of a photograph of Ali: “Have you already heard about the photo of Alighan; the Sufi secretaries promised to send me one but I have received nothing. It is supposed to cost about twenty francs.” This was presumably the photograph of Ali taken by Wil van Beek (fig. 33), of which Wil sent Piet a print (now at the RKD) “out of friendship and affection” on 1 November 1934.

On 5 March Piet followed up with a letter congratulating Louk on his birthday.

Dear Louk, That was quite different years ago, no! At least then we were together on the 7th [...]. Now you are probably with your family and no matter how pleasant that may be, you [must] miss the sphere of “our

human striving” so to speak – but I can’t really say that either, since you always have Ella with you. First I wish you happiness in that you possess in Ella the entire sphere of the good old friends, and it is my fervent wish that this may always remain the same (for the rest of your life). In addition much good spiritually and physically and with your work, of which I greatly appreciate the intention even though our points of view diverge. I hope to shake your hand soon when you come by here. If it suits you to spend a night or longer with me, I would also have the pleasure of seeing you for longer.

We see that Piet miscalculated the date of Louk’s birthday by two days, writing on the very day of the event itself. We may also assume, given the letter as a whole, that Piet intended the invitation to stay with him for both Louk and Ella. It is a moving letter that sums up years of friendship and touches on three matters of key importance. First, Piet was explicit about having enjoyed the company of the Hoyacks in Saint-Cloud. Secondly, he made it clear that he envied their stable married life and betrayed a measure of regret at his own lonely life, one that he had hoped to cure by marrying Lilly Bles back in 1931. And thirdly Piet admired Louk’s dedication to his scholarship as part of their common human striving”, even though he had no use for his ideas.

Piet also extended his greetings to Jany Holst and further mentioned that Louk and Ella must be awaiting Harry van Tussenbroek. In addition, Piet asked Ella to report on dr d’Eck, who has not replied to a letter, “so that he is probably once more in a terrible fix.” Piet therefore assumed that Ella would be prepared to travel from Théoule to Nice to check on the physician. It is the kind of thing that one would only ask in the context of friendship. Piet also wrote that he was pleased that Ella liked his work. It is still another indication that Ella’s taste was more developed than that of her husband.

Louk and Ella headed back to Villa Boetia later in March of 1933. On 3 April Piet wrote his annual letter congratulating Ella on her birthday on the fifth and to report to her that the Polish sculptress had lost her state grant for foreigners and had expressed her regrets at having missed Ella when she was last in Paris.

LOUK HOYACK'S INTERACTION WITH ALBERT GLEIZES

Finally Piet wrote in his letter of 5 March 1933 that he had enjoyed Ella's commentary on the dwelling of Albert and Juliette Gleizes in Sablons. His comment is in part of interest because it proves that he already knew the Gleizes well before they left the city in 1926.

It's fun what you wrote about the home of the Gleizes. I can imagine it, judging from their apartment here. I can't understand how such a man can really create new art, But people in general are very complicated, so that there is always much good next to what is contaminated. I already know via Wim Stieltjes that the Pragers are there but believe they can't stay.

We can deduce that Ella had observed that the Gleizes were slobs and that Piet agreed, coming up with a pithy observation about the unpredictable relationship of art and life. The passage offers another rare glimpse of the common sense that Piet expected from Ella as distinct from her husband.

Allowing for letters to go back and forth, we may safely conclude that Louk and Ella visited Gleizes around mid-April of 1933. In a letter of 2 May from Piet to Ella, he asked: "Have you not been too excessively bored at Madam Gleizes'?" Piet no doubt recognized that Louk had not been bored. He and Albert must have seized the occasion of their meeting to talk about a variety of topics, possibly including the ideas of their mutual friend Michel Seuphor, who had previously visited Albert, from whom Michel parted disenchanted and to whom, much later, he attributed Nazi sympathies. Louk and Albert ended up arguing at length about the meaning of words. Albert, who had steadily become more religious since 1918, believed that the fundamental meaning of words such as "space" resides in the Absolute, whereas Louk maintained that they are relative and rooted in ever-changing nature, on which he believed good art must necessarily be based.

Predictably Louk did not convince Albert of his point of view, given that the Frenchman's religious orientation was deeply rooted. Nor did Louk influence Albert's art, which continued to develop his personal approach to cubistic abstraction, with further investigation of the "mobile rotation" of the late 1920's and early 1930's and the adoption of simple grey arcs, which Gleizes argued, give the "form" or unifying "rhythm" to the painting. It should be clear

that none of this would have interested Louk, given his persistent dismissal of abstraction as a legitimate option. Louk probably visited Sablons only out of curiosity and because he needed a change of pace.

PIET CRITICIZES MUTUAL FRIENDS AND CONSOLES AN AILING ELLA

Sometime in the summer of 1933, Louk and Ella were again in Bergen aan Zee, where they stayed with Theo and Dien van Hoorn in Villa Blinkert.¹⁴⁷ The evidence is found in Theo's *Recollections*. He wrote in connection with a Van Hoorn journey to "Sufi friends" in Théoule in the summer of 1936: "Three years before, they had spent a month with us in Bergen aan Zee. We all have fond memories of those interesting and carefree times."¹⁴⁸ The Bergen visit must therefore have taken place after Michel Seuphor had left Théoule. No letter from Piet Mondrian helps pin things down in this instance, which is not to say that the Hoyacks did not keep him informed.

The need for expensive injections apparently had not undermined Piet's faith in his exotic therapist. On 9 August 1933 he again mentioned Ali Khan. "I was constantly very tired and have been with Ali Ghan four times." We learn that Ali had enquired after Louk and Ella and that Mrs. Lange from The Hague has replaced Mrs. Van Palland as Ali's secretary. We already know "Mrs. van Palland" as baroness Sarah van Pallandt, the mother of Louk's diplomat friend Floris and of the sculptress Charlotte. Sixty-five years old by then, Sarah needed to be replaced because of problems with her health (again fig. 24). Johanna (Halima) Lange-Visser was an intimate of the Khans who continued to assist Ali into the fifties, when he often stayed at Sufi Headquarters in Geneva.¹⁴⁹ More important is that Piet informed Ella: "Recently, on Montparnasse, I spoke to the sculptress, but she seems to be having a hard time, alas."

Louk and Ella likely travelled to Paris later in the summer of 1933 to catch part of the Suresnes Summer School of that year. That assumption would take us to mid-September. Louk may then have settled down to more writing. Late that year the Hoyacks again travelled to The Netherlands for still another lecture tour sponsored by the Dutch Sufi Movement. The *Algemeen*

¹⁴⁷ In Horn 2017, p. 202, the Blinkert material is mistakenly introduced in 1932.

¹⁴⁸ Van Hoorn 2010, p. 335.

¹⁴⁹ We know from Piet's address book of the mid-thirties that "Mrs. H. Lange" lived at 6 Waldeck Pyrmontlaan in Wassenaar, just to the south of The Hague, and almost next door to Johan (Karimbaksh) Witteveen, whom we got to know as a young patient of Ali Khan.

Handelsblad of 9 January 1934 announces that “tonight, at 8:45 PM, in the great hall of the Dutch Women’s Club, 580 Keizersgracht, the *heer* L. Hoyack [of] Théoule is to speak about: “Belief in Providence”. In addition, *Het Vaderland* of 10 February 1934 announced that on 12 February, Louk was to speak in The Hague on “The Western Cultural Crisis and Sufism”. Finally, on 13 February, the same newspaper presented a summary of this well-attended lecture, which was again held at 20 Bazarstraat.

The Hoyacks must then have travelled home to Théoule via Paris, where Louk spoke to Piet Mondrian. In a letter of 11 March 1934 addressed to Louk at Villa Boetia, Piet summed up their discussion concerning Albert Gleizes (fig. 87).

I think that what you write about Gleizes, etc. is quite right. With you I feel unity despite our entirely different ways of seeing not only of exterior events and being but also of the inner self. But not with Gleizes. It seems to me that instead of being religious, he is hostile to it, hence his desperate searching in religious forms and institutions – largely incomplete, primitive and in fact obviously mistaken.

I am please to hear that you also sense some of it (namely what is wrong with Gleizes). I know almost nothing about him but I don’t think that I am mistaken.

Also the fact that you also hold to a gradual, albeit extremely slow (and with temporary reversal) evolution of humanity is a great thing because of which I agree with you in essence.

It would be hilarious, were it not so sad. Wanting for once to be truly positive instead of constantly criticizing Louk, and assuming that great minds must think alike when it truly matters, Piet had completely failed to grasp their complete disagreement on this fundamental issue. We already know that Piet persisted in his theosophical faith in the positive evolution of mankind, which he shared with Hélian Jaworski, but that Louk resorted to mendacious elaboration of ideas of his mentor Inayat Khan and subscribed to a decline of mankind from early sun worship to the spiritual corruption of his contemporaries.

Piet closed his letter with the words: “Now Louk, bye. When I have received your book, I will write you once again.” The book in question must have been *Ideën over kunst en schoonheid* (Ideas about Art and Beauty), which was published by Kluwer of Deventer in 1934. We see that Piet was still in

principle prepared to read Louk's work. However, nothing came of it. It was in any case a conservative work that Piet will certainly have loathed if ever he read it. So, most probably, did Tine Baanders, whose progressive graphic designs had affinity with the Amsterdam School but who nevertheless designed the cover for the book (fig. 89). In a second letter dated 11 March 1934, which he addressed specifically to Ella, Piet included acerbic comments about selfish mutual friends in connection with his birthday on 7 March.

I thought we all know that I no longer hold a 'party' but Wim and Marcella still showed up and then even Mrs. Prager because Prager himself could not come (they are again temporarily living with friends on the outskirts of Paris). Stange mentality those people do have. I thought this would trouble them and said that it must be hard on them. She replied to this: "oh, you are never at home by yourself.' Thus [they] only thought of themselves. Anyway, it is the same with Vantongerloo and others. And I find ever more that Wim is not entirely blameless either. I therefore asked them [Wim and Marcella] to come back some other time and they stayed only briefly.

Truly thoughtless were the Van Loons, who were supposed to come by for afternoon tea on the following Sunday but arrived very late, ran off for dinner and left him with an unwanted fried chicken. Piet explicitly exempted Ella from his criticism of their mutual friends: "between us things were always unselfish." The letter presents us with a third example of Piet's discretion. Just as he saved his observation concerning the "idiotic conclusions" of *De Toekomst der machine* for Michel Seuphor, and of the glacial friendship of the Hoyacks for Arthur Lehning, he chose to complain about the selfishness of the Stieltjes and the Van Loons to Ella, and not to the culprits themselves.

The letter of 11 March 1934 also gives us a third indication that the Hoyacks did not have unlimited financial resources, saying that "the surprise enclosed in the letter put me to shame because you do not have all that much yourself." Piet's missive makes it clear that he was expecting Louk and Ella to show up in Paris sometime in November, but Ella took ill well before then. On 26 April 1934, Piet wrote to her at the Clinique St. Nicolas, 2 rue Sergent Bobillot, Cannes. The clinic, which still exists (though parts of it were demolished in 2010), was a general service hospital, so that it is impossible to

ascertain what ailed Ella. In his *Toekomst der machine* Louk had announced to the whole world that he did not believe in hospitals, which he argued are not needed by the spiritually healthy. It would therefore be rewarding to know what ailed Ella and how sympathetic Louk was able to be. However, Louk was a much better man than thinker, and he can hardly have been indifferent to the plight of his wife. Piet, in any case, did not share Louk's stupid conviction and was truly supportive.

Dearest Ella.

I was very pleased to learn, especially from you, that things went well thus far. It is not for your own amusement, therefore, that you are in the "ville des fleurs". You must remember that it sometimes rains over there. And sometimes it rains for a long time, right? In your case it was fully a storm, and storms don't last as long as the rain, so take heart Ella. As you wrote, I have found resignation in life, but we still understand nothing. But 'whys' are wicked. What matters is that we always remain the same, in rain or in sunshine.

Piet then set out to convince Ella that life has been hard on him as well. Although his health was steadily improving, he was still trying to shake of an unidentified ailment that had plagued him for two and a half years. In addition he had a painful ulcer on his palate, caused by nicotine leaking through the mica of his dentures. He was not able to wear them, meaning he could not smoke or even speak. Back on topic, he informed Ella that Charley Toroop had heard about her illness while she was in Paris. If Ella had not already seen her, she soon would. Piet added that Charley was travelling in the company of "Eddy", no doubt her son Eddy Fernhout.

Piet closed with a seeming non sequitur, one that Hans Janssen rightly featured on his dust cover as representing the eloquent essence of the painter's thought: "Well, Ella, we will talk some more when you are here again, right? Yes, I believe that as long as we have not come far enough to live in the present (outside time and space), we experience the beautiful in the knowledge of the steady growth of things." The key is Piet's emphasis on resignation and his assertion that "whys are wicked". Piet was arguing for his fundamental Theosophical conviction that current reversals should not distract us from our eventual better future. Piet added that he has had to pay a fortune

to his dentist, but that he has heard that that Ella had undergone a successful operation of an unidentified kind. In that same letter Piet informed Ella that Wil van Beek intended to publish an article about his work.

Yesterday young van Beek called on me. He had recently written a piece about me for *de Groene* [*De Groene Amsterdammer*]. I don't particularly care for that because it is not all that easy to write about the Neo-Plastique. Anyway, he stands to gain something from it, should it be placed, and I therefore can't dissuade him.

We know that Piet had been formulating his ideas ever since his writings in *De Stijl* of 1917 to 1919, so he must therefore have understood the difficulties faced by Wil, whose article never saw publication.

FURTHER HOYACK TRAVEL AND ASSISTING PIET IN DISTRESS

The Hoyacks presumably spent the next several months of 1934 in Théoule, allowing Ella to recuperate and giving Louk a chance to complete his *Ideeën over kunst en schoonheid*. They must have arrived in The Netherlands early in 1935, because *Het Vaderland* of 22 January features a large announcement of a lecture to be held the next evening at 20 Bazarstraat in The Hague, with "The Concept of Sin in Sufism" as its topic. Starting at 8:30 PM, the price of admission for non-members was a quarter. The paper of 24 January offered a perceptive report on how Sufi notions about sin are less pervasive and severe than those of Christians. We know that Piet Mondrian would not have appreciated this lecture because he believed that concern with sin was a distracting hangover from Protestantism, having nothing to do with Truth. On 6 February Piet wrote to Ella and Louk's mother at 9 Zeemanstraat in Rotterdam. The letter establishes that Louk and Ella were "again" expecting to see Charley Toorop.

On the way back to Théoule, Louk and Ella stopped off in Suresnes, for on 28 March 1935, Piet Mondrian wrote them a letter addressed to a "Pension" located there at 27 rue de l'Hippodrome, that being the so-called Mureed's house. It was in that same location that Ali Khan had treated Piet during past Summer Schools, but it must also have become the Suresnes address of the Hoyacks after their departure from Saint-Cloud early in September of 1932. Piet was in the midst of the greatest health crisis of his life, which had set on

before late February, when an Amsterdam friend, Frederika Theodora (Frieda) Simon, happened to drop in on him and found him close to death. Two years later Piet talked to Maaïke van Domselaer-Middelkoop, who explained the circumstances in her “Herinneringen aan Piet Mondriaan”, which she published in *Maatstaf* in 1959. Frieda was someone Piet had known in his remote past, when they had their theosophical ideas in common. She was to marry the better-known labour activist Simon van de Kieft in 1939. She showed up on Piet’s doorstep on impulse in late February upon returning from Berlin to Paris and its Gâre Montparnasse. Piet was desperately ill and could barely open the door, but Frieda nursed him aback to relative health in about one month. She then continued to share a meal a week with him for about two months, meaning that he did not need to do the shopping himself.

Piet asked the Hoyacks for the address of one Dr. Rutte, whom he expected would cure him in one month with injections and medication. The question indicates that Louk and Ella had introduced him to this physician. He also thanked them for directing him to the Dutch consulate in Paris, probably in search of financial support. Though Piet wrote that they may well have done him a great favour, he thought that thanking him in person could be too awkward. Feeling better, he mentioned that “Suarez” would be visiting him on Monday and suggested that the Hoyacks skip both Sunday and Monday before coming to visit him again. This casual mention of Carlo Giuseppe Suarès, an Egyptian-French writer and painter (and long-standing friend of Jiddu Krishnamurti), who had returned to Paris in 1928, suggests that he was still another individual whom the Hoyacks got to know in Piet’s Paris circle around 1930.

With respect to Dr. Rutte, we have seen that Piet underwent a lengthy and expensive course of treatments back in 1932. However, the specification of a combination of injections and medication in this instance identifies the nature of Piet’s problems. Hans Janssen reviewed some of Piet’s many varied symptoms, such as poor balance, exhaustion, paralysis of both limbs, fierce pains, poorly coordinated movements and thread-like strands in front of his eyes. Janssen rightly and concluded that the artist likely suffered from long untreated syphilis.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Janssen 2016, pp. 643-644, notes 87-90. He likely realized that some Mondrian aficionados might not be ready for a syphilitic artist and hid the information in his endnotes.

The diagnosis had already been put forward by Marty Bax in 1994,¹⁵¹ and was considered and dismissed by Nick Weber in his 2018 dissertation.¹⁵² However Weber overlooked the conclusive evidence put forward by Hans Janssen in 2016, possibly because Janssen buried it in his endnotes. The injections, no doubt the Arsenic-based drug named Salvarsan, were administered eight times a week for a full month. According to Janssen, they were supplemented by orally taken and poisonous mercury salts, which could well have been the medication mentioned by Piet. No doubt he must have suffered, since the intravenous injections were very painful and had aftereffects. Salvarsan worked but only suppressed the symptoms, as we learn from the example of Piet Mondrian. The disease was not successfully treated until penicillin became widely available after Piet's relocation to New York.

The Hoyacks were back at Villa Boetia by 8 June 1935, when Piet wrote: "I hope that you are doing well and that the paying guest has been found." Way back in 1932, Piet had already mentioned to Michel Seuphor that the Hoyacks would need to find a paying guest or two to deal with the Depression. Piet had just written to Charley Toorop, "I will also send the Hoyacks a word. I thought that Ella did not look at all well when they were here." Piet can't have been looking all that great either. He complained about his food and having to do the shopping, and commented on his work and finances. He was cooking for himself and was religiously following Dr. Hay's diet.¹⁵³ Piet added in parentheses, "Frieda Simon no longer drops by."

Piet's continued concern suggests that Louk and Ella were continually living slightly beyond their means. If so, it apparently did not show, for on 19 October 1935, Walter Brandligt, a minor novelist and later Resistance hero, reported in *Zondagsblad van het Utrechtsch Nieuwsblad* on encountering our Sufi philosopher: "Here one also meets the prosperous figure of the Dutch writer Hoyack, who belongs to the permanent residents of Théoule." The meeting was probably not accidental. Anna (Yaquin) Mossel, who was to become Walter's second wife on 12 March 1936, was a devoted Sufi who had regularly attended Suresnes Summer Schools around 1930. She likely got to

¹⁵¹ Bax 1994, pp. 22-42.

¹⁵² Weber 2018, pp. 311-315.

¹⁵³ Janssen, p. 503, mistakenly proposed that Piet gave up on Dr. Hay after Frieda. However, the leaking nicotine suggests that Piet did not heed Dr. Hay to the letter.

know Louk and Ella well enough to drop in on them. Walter and Yaquin settled in the artists' colony of Cagnes-sur-Mer immediately after their wedding.

Piet's letter of 8 June 1935 again did not neglect to inform his friends about their acquaintances of their Paris years. He wrote that he had called on "Miss Moss and Mrs Nijhof", who seemed to have taken a dislike to him: "[I write this] so that you know the situation." Piet was to return to the problem on 10 November 1936.

CHAPTER XVI: TRAVEL, PUBLISHING AND MARITAL DISRUPTION

LECTURING AND JOURNALISM IN THE NETHERLANDS

During the summer and early autumn of 1935, Louk likely composed *De grondslagen der economische autarkie* (The Fundamentals of Economic Autarky), which was to become his most important publication of that year. The book developed some of the ideas of his *Autarkie* of three years before. The big difference, however, is that he had become more strident in his picture of what he deemed to be the inhuman and untenable society of the early twentieth century. Whereas he had previously claimed that only spiritual renewal could save man from himself, Louk now argued that the implementation of autarky “will greatly facilitate the process of spiritual rebirth.” At the same time his emphasis on social coercion in pursuit of autarky had greatly increased. In fact, Louk’s evolved kind of autarky would hardly be possible without an insane strong man at the helm and certainly inconceivable under democratic rule. After all, people were not going to line up to have their urban dwellings razed and be relocated to the eastern provinces of the Netherlands or the empty wastes of Canada. To be fair to Louk, however, he did not think that imposition would be required, autarky (not Communism) being mankind’s inevitable fate given that mechanization and materialism had run their course.¹⁵⁴ That was also true of democracy: “The success of dictatorial form of government in so many countries of the world is [...] a return to natural cosmic fundamentals. Mankind is returning to order, to restraint, to hierarchy. The dictator merely paves the way for the divine monarch.” Louk’s new orientation had nothing whatsoever to do with Inayat Khan’s Sufi Message. He had in fact exchanged advocacy of Sufi spirituality for promotion of fascistic dictatorship.

De grondslagen was still another book that Piet would have hated but one that he probably never read and certainly never mentioned in his letters to Louk and Ella. Similarly, Piet would not have liked Louk’s article “Over de geestelijke betekenis van kostbaarheid en pracht” (“On the Spiritual Meaning of Preciousness and Splendor”), which he published in *Elsevier’s Geïllustreerd*

¹⁵⁴ As follower of Inayat Khan, Louk was obliged to be opposed to Communism because of its resort to ethnic cleansing, religious persecution and the killing of political dissidents.

Maandschrift at the close of the year. It is mainly an appreciative examination of the riches of St. Peter's in Rome. Possibly Louk and Ella first visited Rome in the autumn of 1935. Possibly, too, Louk was inspired to write the piece because Inayat Khan had admired the interior of the huge church.

In the late autumn of 1935 and early winter of 1935 to 1936, Louk and Ella were again in The Netherlands, witness a well-received performance of his on 14 December 1935 for the society *Arti et Industriae* of the Hague, in which he deplored the phenomenon of "Mechanism in Architecture and the Decorative Arts". The *Algemeen Handelsblad* of 23 October 1935 announced that Louk was expected to lecture on "The Meaning of the Concept of Providence" sometime in January of 1936. In addition *Het Vaderland* of 14 January 1936 announced a lecture for the next day on "Nationalisme en internationalisme bezien van het Soefi-standpunt" ("Nationalism and Internationalism seen from a Sufi Point of View"), to be held in The Hague's Sufi House. This lecture, which was clearly related to Louk's 1935 book about *Autarky*, was summarized with obvious care in *Het Vaderland*. Louk apparently started off with sound Sufi sentiments but then pivoted to his by now familiar pitch for rigorous autarky.

TRAVEL VIA SOUTHERN GERMANY AND AUSTRIA TO ROME

During the remainder of the winter of 1935 to 1936, Louk and Ella travelled east into Germany instead of south to Théoule. This journey must have served two purposes. First, Louk got to see the southern German and Austrian Baroque architecture about which he was to publish in *Elsevier's Maandblad* a year later. Louk also got to see at first-hand what life in the Third Reich was like. One doubts that he took the trouble, however, given how warmly he was to embrace the German dictatorship by 1940. Once again it was Piet Mondrian who nailed down the chronology for us. On 3 March 1936 he wrote to Louk and Ella at Pension Thümmel, Köstlergasse, Vienna, noting that "it is great to hear that Louk has been able to get work done there for a while." Letters must have crossed in the mail, because only three days later Piet wrote to Ella at 61 Via Margutta in Rome in connection with her birthday. That was and is the address of Hotel Manfredi, a small luxury hotel on a long street strategically nestled between the Piazza del Popolo and the Spanish stairs. Most likely the Hoyacks stopped off in Rome because Ella wanted to reconnect with her sculptress friend Jadwiga Bohdanowicz, who had presumably moved from Paris to Rome

not long after 9 August 1933, when Piet had reported that “she seems to be having a hard time, alas.” Back in Jadwiga’s days, the Via Margutta was a haven for many artists, so that her studio may well have been located there.

THE SWAN SONG OF VILLA BOETIA AS CONVEYED BY PIET MONDRIAN

The summer of 1936 brought Theo and Dien van Hoorn to Villa Boetia, as Theo van Goorn mentioned in his post-war Sufi memoirs, though without giving the names of his hosts.¹⁵⁵ Their visit may have been the swan song of their stay in Villa Boetia. On 10 November 1936 Piet Mondrian wrote to “L. Hoyack at Châlet Jane, San Salvadour, près de Hyères”, a community located on the Mediterranean sea at about eighty kilometres to the south-west of Théoule.

I was pleased to hear from you two and that you are doing well. Because of pressure I now write back a few words. I also thought I would see you again because you will probably go to Holland via Paris, even if you don’t stay in Paris for long. I have also not seen Harry: possibly he and his family are still in your old home in Théoule. I thought its rental had expired. It is a good thing that the fire this summer ended well and that your stuff was not burned.

It would appear that the Hoyacks had found a wealthy tenant in the person of Harry van Tussenbroek.¹⁵⁶

Piet also let Louk and Ella know that he had been reconciled to Marlow Moss and Netty Nijhoff-Wind, and that something Georges Vantongerloo had said had been responsible for the situation. No doubt Louk and Ella must have wished that Piet had been more explicit with respect to his problems with Marlow and Netty, and just how Georges had precipitated them. As we learn from a letter of 22 March 1932, Piet and Georges had become engaged in a running quarrel by then. In a letter to Jean Gorin, dated 18 November 1936, Piet mentioned that he and Georges kept their distance at openings. The situation could have been related to the financial difficulties of the Vantongerloos. Tieske apparently undertook to supplement the family income by sleeping around. In letter to Tieske of late August 1933, an anguished Georges mentioned four individuals involved, and in a letter of late December,

¹⁵⁵ Van Hoorn 2010, p. 335.

¹⁵⁶ By family, Piet probably meant Harry’s brother Otto and his wife Jo.

he accused her of having given him syphilis back in May. Based on research published by Angela Thomas Schmid most of two decades ago,¹⁵⁷ it is not the kind of thing one finds in Wikipedia entries even today. Not even Georges' understandable separation from Tieske is mentioned.

Piet added a gossipy comment: "Did you hear that Hitler has invited Dr Hay with an eye to public nutrition? It goes to show that all evil also contains good, and that unsympathetic people nevertheless have a good side." William Howard Hay, M.D., was a respected American nutritionist who intended his food-group diet to cure Bright's disease, including his own. Popular to this day, it excluded coffee and smoking and promoted the idea that foods requiring an acid or an alkaline environment in digestion should not be combined. We recall that Piet had sworn by Dr. Hay a year before, whereas he already had no use for developments in Germany by 1933, so that he was in effect pairing complete opposites and simply assumed that his friend shared his negative view of the dictator. It is an indication that Piet had no notion of the direction of Louk's scholarship, which had always been largely irrelevant to their friendship.

We also encounter Piet Mondrian's final mention of Ali Khan in a letter of 10 November 1936. "My work goes well, as do the finances, sort of. My health improves steadily. That is what matters most, right? The treatments with Ali have also helped me. I am so glad that Ella has no more complaints about her health." Piet had apparently still not faced up to what must have been staring him in the face, namely that though Ali's treatments were temporarily uplifting, they did not contribute to his long term physical welfare. Possibly, however, Piet soon saw the light. We have no indication that he again consulted the healer before leaving for London in September of 1938.

Louk must have been near Paris for the Suresnes Summer School of 1937 for, as mentioned, he posed for the annual photograph for that year. We don't know whether Ella was also there, or whether he or the two of them looked up Piet at the time. He was no longer living in the complex on the Rue du Départ, which was demolished in the course of 1936 because of expansion of the Gâre Montparnasse. He was, however, able to move to much more comfortable

¹⁵⁷ Angela Thomas Schmid in Brockhaus and Janssen 2009, pp. 262, 268 and 271; Janssen 2016, p. 487, cited by Horn 2017, p. 177. The catalogue of the KB does not list Angela as one of a few contributors.

quarters, complete with central heating, on 278 Boulevard Raspail.¹⁵⁸ Moving is notoriously stressful and time-consuming. In addition, Piet was buried in work. One indication of a breakdown in communication is that there is no mention of the “diplôme d’honneur” that Harry van Tussenbroek’s puppets garnered at the World Exhibition of 1937 in Paris, at which Tine Baanders won a gold medal in Graphic Design. Finally, mounting tension in Europe had Piet move to London. All of this could explain why he did not write to Louk and Ella during 1937 and 1938.

THE NEGLECTED IMPORTANCE OF *KLINKEND HEELAL*

That same year, 1937, Louk published his *Klinkend heelal* (Resounding Universe), in which he returned to the Sufistic idea of the seminal importance of vibrations. However, he failed to mention that Inayat Khan’s vibrations and sound are analogous to music, a concept that is essential to grasping the nature of Inayat’s harmonious cosmos and the purpose of mysticism. Interestingly, given his love of the occult and almost unlimited credulity, Louk omitted Inayat’s traditional Hindu ideas about sound, including the fundamental tone of the universe in relationship to the resonance of the tubes of the body, which understandably puzzled Theo van Hoorn when perusing Inayat’s *Mysticism of Sound*. We already know that Louk repeatedly ignored the importance of music in relation to life, education and mysticism.

Louk’s following theology shows an atypical degree of unity and concentration as it tells the history of the evolution of the cosmos from its creation to the present. Remarkably, Louk assigned the universe, which is God, a history of personal growth, allowing for a learning curve and including an evolution into cosmic consciousness and eventual perfection that is prototypical for our eventual journey back to God, in accordance with a Hindu concept, Louk added that God may even get fed up and fall asleep, thereby ending the world, only to wake up and start all over again. It is a vision of great scope and imagination, but with its concentration on God and the universe, it had no connection to Louk’s earlier presentation of the sun as centre of the universe and a decline from the spirituality of early man to the crassness of contemporary society. Piet, in any case, would probably have dismissed Louk’s

¹⁵⁸ See Janssen 2016, fig. 238.

new and detailed picture of an erratic and sleepy God as improbable, if not outright offensive.

WERELDZIEL AND THE TRIUMPH OF LOUK'S PESSIMISM

Louk, of course, continued to write books, most notably his *Wereldziel: hoofdstukken eener panpsychistische filosofie* (Chapters of a Panpsychistisch Philosophy), *Panpsychistisch* being a German word according to which the psychic is at the core of all that is true). This book, which was published in 1938, stands out because it announced the triumph of Louk's pessimism. In his *Spiritualisme historique* of early 1932, he had still counted on the Message of Inayat Khan to supplement that of Mohammed and help rescue mankind from its crass materialism and dearth of spirituality, but in *Wereldziel* he proclaimed that he no longer entertained any hopes for a collective salvation for mankind, arguing that the increasingly frenetic rhythm of modern life was taking mankind to mounting disaster and eventual destruction. In his *Klinkend Heelal* of 1937, Louk had proposed that God may fall asleep on us, but in *Wereldziel* he foresaw a final situation in which everything, even the superior realms of the spirits and angels, would perish due to a pervasive exhaustion brought on by the fact that God is no longer able to find satisfying ways of investigating the joy, peace and delight that are His essence. Unexpectedly Louk called on Inayat Khan's *The Soul, Whence and Whither* as authority. Inayat, however, did not intend to be pessimistic, stating only that "the primal silence of the Absolute will return, God will sleep, once to reawaken." In other words, Louk turned abstruse metaphysical speculation into a concrete scenario. Certainly Piet Mondrian would have hated this book.

Louk had also embarked on a series of dozens of articles extending over the next several years. Many of these pieces concern aspects of Sufism, religion, philosophy, cosmography, or metaphysics, but Louk was also laying claim to the status of philosopher of art in four pieces published in *Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift* of 1937 to 1939. The thesis is ever the same, an inferior world view makes for inferior art. Louk's piece on the Baroque is perhaps the most instructive of the lot in that it argues that even the childlike Jesuit Baroque of Vienna's *Karlskirche* has spiritual dimensions that are totally lacking in the *nieuwe zakelijkheid* of Rotterdam's Van Nelle factory. The whole point of Louk's exposition is his closing dig at the spiritual exhaustion of his

contemporaries. It was the *nieuwe zakelijkheid*, we recall, that Piet had defended in his letter of 27 July 1932.

ELLA HOYACK AS SCULPTRESS AND PIET'S VERY LAST LETTER

The next and last of Piet's surviving letters to the Hoyacks, already twice mentioned, was written by him in London and is dated 3 April 1939. It is addressed to 61 Via Margutta in Rome, where Louk and Ella had also stayed three years before and which was probably very near the studio of Jadwiga Bohdanowicz. It is from this letter that we learn that Ella had taken up sculpture, presumably with Jadwiga. Piet mentioned that he had the information from Harry van Tussenbroek and not from Louk himself, who "has not written about it", suggesting that the philosopher may not have been happy about the development. We have a photo from the Hoyack archive at the RKD, which shows a portrait bust by Ella (fig. 88), which was probably her work.). All in all, the evidence suggests that Ella had come to insist on more of a life of her own, so that the centre of the Hoyack household had shifted to Rome from the Théoule villa that they apparently still owned. Ella likely worked with Jadwiga until the death of the sculptress in 1943. Ella's official *persoonskaart* (personal data card) of 1939 specifies two professions for her, "teacher of French" and "sculptress" She had likely greatly improved her French while living in France for twelve years, and there can be no doubt that she took sculpture very seriously.

"HET NIEUWE ITALIË", LOUK HOYACK AS FASCIST AND PHILANDERER

While Ella was sculpting, Louk was enjoying Rome in his own way. He attended a major propagandistic exhibition that extolled the brilliant accomplishments and future of Italy. He was soon to profile himself as an appreciative authority on "Het nieuwe Italië" (The New Italy) in *Haagsch Maandblad* of September 1939. Louk dated the piece to April 1939. In this article, with its inordinate praise of Mussolini, Louk gave concrete expression to his dismissal of democracy in his 1935 book on autarky. In loving detail he painted the independence and prosperity of Italy under its dictatorship. Not long before, over tea in Amsterdam's famous Café Américain, Louk had told Jany Roland Holst that the Spanish dictator, Francisco Franco, had God on his side. No wonder that Louk had still not understood what his friend Piet had figured out

by 6 March 1933, that Hitler's Fascism was heading for outright criminality in Nazi Germany.

Louk was also engaged in research of a more disreputable kind. On 4 June 1939, he wrote a letter to Roland Holst which indicates that Jany had frequented the brothels of Rome, but that Louk was not averse to them either. However, Louk assured his friend that Ella had no reason to complain about her philosophical he-man because "plenty is left over for the practice of the artifices of love by which, in many a marital union, the discord of the day is transformed into nocturnal harmony." Obviously Louk was, or was no longer, a faithful husband. Who knows? Possibly Ella was less impressed than Louk himself by his performance as loving husband, preferring the company of her teacher and friend Jadwiga.

CHAPTER XVII: THE INVOLUNTARY END TO THE FRIENDSHIP

On 21 June 1940, a day before France surrendered to the Germans, Louk and Ella registered at The Hague's Sufi Centre, located at 20 Bazarstraat. That was shortly before Piet Mondrian embarked for New York from London on 23 September. Louk must have signed in for Ella, who chose to head for Rome instead. Louk and Ella were very slow to leave France. The family of Cateau de Vries Feyens, Ella's Saint-Cloud bosom friend, had already registered in the Hague on 27 October 1939. No doubt they feared the prospect of a German occupation, as did Piet Mondrian, whereas Louk actually welcomed it.

LOUK HOYACK'S NAZI PHASE AND TROUBLED LIFE WITHOUT ELLA

Even before he left France in January and March of 1940, Louk had embarked on a series of articles in *Haagsch Maandblad* in which he defended both the intentions and actions of the "virtuous" German invaders. He continued the series in the September and October issues when back in The Hague. Louk argued in detail that Germany had been badly provoked by the "corrupt" capitalistic democracies, notably England and France. The Dutch nation, Louk claimed, had foolishly taken the wrong side and would have to accept the consequences, including the bombing of his own native city of Rotterdam on 14 May 1940.

To make things worse, Louk served as Lector (reader) for the DVK, the *Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten* (Department for Public Education and the Arts), which was set up and munificently funded to help convert the Dutch people to National Socialist values. A Lector would have judged manuscripts for publication, not only for style but also for some content, such as the desired avoidance of the House of Orange, Jews, or Bolshevism. Clearly Louk's ideas and actions were treasonous, but they were relatively anodyne compared to the personal and close collaboration of the English King Edward VIII.¹⁵⁹ It was no doubt because of Louk's treasonous

¹⁵⁹ The popular historical television drama series *The Crown* discussed and illustrated Edward's astonishing guilt in great detail. He actually encouraged the Germans to keep on bombing London.

profile that Theo van Hoorn did not specify who had been his hosts in Théoule back in 1936. We know that Louk's infatuation with Fascism went back at least to 1938. It is vitally important, however, to repeat that his concerns were political, not racial. Any denigration of Jews would have been totally opposed to the ideals of Inayat Khan and Western Sufism.

Of course even Louk was bound to become disenchanted with Nazi Germany. An entry in the Dutch national archives proves that he cancelled his membership of the NSB (Nationaal Socialistische Bond) on 10 June 1941. The high register number (104347) proves that he had joined only recently. Louk had come to see the light by 1942. That the Germans forced Sufi activities underground probably encouraged his change of heart and mind. We recall that it was around 1940 to 1941 that he wrote his contribution to the Smit-Kerbert Collection, proving that Sufi networking did not die out during the German occupation.

Louk's return to his senses was accompanied by extensive and outright scabrous correspondence with Adriaan Roland Holst, with much of it involving Jany's first great love Olga Mensink. On 22 November 1944 Louk legally annulled his union with Ella on the ground of abandonment and, with terrible timing, married his fourth and ill-suited wife, Catharina Petronella (Toos) van der Straten, on 9 January 1946. It was only the death of Toos on 10 October 1959 that opened the way for his remarriage to Ella.¹⁶⁰ Though Toos suffered from depression and was not taken seriously by Louk's fellow Sufis, letters of 11 November and 9 December 1959 to his long-standing friend Jan Romein (fig. 90), indicate that he was distraught by her death and even moved from their shared home to a hotel for a while.

THE COMPLEX PERIGRINATIONS OF ELLA HOYACK-CRAMERUS

Ella did not officially register in The Netherlands until 19 September 1947, when she specified her address as 5 Mozartkade in Amsterdam, the home of Theo and Dien Van Hoorn at that time. Perhaps the situation in the Netherlands was not what she had hoped for. We learn from a letter that she wrote on 10 July 1949 to Igor Jongman, the son of Gertrud Leistikov, that she

¹⁶⁰ Though Louk's marriage to Toos, who suffered from depression and was not taken seriously by his fellow Sufis, letters of 11 November and 9 December 1959 to Jan Romein indicate that he was distraught by her death and even moved from their shared home to a hotel for a while.

had been in Cannes for at least a month, that she had looked after an English boy for some time, and that she had just found appropriate studio space, presumably for her continued work as sculptress. She invited Igor to come visit her in August. Cannes, of course, was very close to Théoule and had been a frequent haunt of Louk and Ella, especially in the summer of 1928. Perhaps Ella was able to rely on contacts that they had made there.

The letter provided rare information about the next several years. It tells us that Ella was in touch with just about everybody. She mentioned Jany Holst's current depression and Harry van Tussenbroek's plans to visit Cannes together with dancer, choreographer and pedagogue Max Dooyes and his wife. Ella then dropped off the grid, staying at various addresses in The Hague in 1952, 1956 and 1958. In 1953, using her maiden name, Ella translated Serge Hutin's *Les sociétés secrètes* from the French. Both the esoteric subject matter and the publisher, Kluwer of Deventer, attest to continued contact with her former husband, which eventually led to their remarriage on 4 May 1960. That date fell around the middle of Ella's important work for Galerie Posthoorn, which ran from 1954 to 1962.

SUMMING UP

The subsequent events in the lives of Louk and Ella make for a long and fascinating story. The material provides a context for Louk's incessant publication and scholarly correspondence, as well as his reconciliation with Jan Romein. Throughout it all he remained a faithful but also unreliable advocate of Inayat Khan and Western Sufism. Once again, however, none of it is relevant to Louk's friendship with Piet Mondrian, who had died in New York on 1 February 1944. However, Piet would have wanted to know that his friend Harry van Tussenbroek died in the Hoyack home in The Hague on 6 April 1963. Communication was ever more difficult during World War II, so that Piet probably never learned that Louk had regressed from Sufi sage to Nazi spokesman. It may seem like a bizarre indulgence to ask if Piet would have forgiven Louk, had he lived long enough to learn the truth. The answer, however, is likely "yes", given that he had rarely taken Louk's ideas seriously.

Certainly Louk Hoyack never forgot his friend Piet and eventually became more hospitable to Piet's essential convictions. One of Louk's aphorisms of 1960 reads: "He who rejects non-representational art because it does not depict anything, proves that he has also failed to understand older art. All art,

including the so-called figurative, turns out to be in essence abstract for those who are knowledgeable.” It is not a true concession, however. Nothing is turned into its opposite through knowledge. The only truth hiding in Louk’s proposition is that representative art generally involves selection and priorities. Even so, Louk may have learned to appreciate the work of his friend, classing him with the most famous Dutch painter after Rembrandt: “How much more could figures such as Vincent van Gogh and Mondriaan have enjoyed life if their death had not preceded their fame! It is one of life’s injustices for which nothing can ever compensate.”

It may sound comforting, but it in no way sums up the gist of the present study. Leaving Ella out of the equation because we know so little about her, we have seen that Piet was pervasively different from Louk, both as man and thinker, in just about every respect. The two men apparently never learned anything from each other. Most important is that Louk did not devote a word of praise to one of Piet’s paintings. In fact, one would never know that he ever saw one of his works.

Yet Piet Mondrian and Louk Hoyack were in some respects remarkably similar. Both men developed their fundamental ideas while mature men instead of merely taking them over from their parents, as have literally billions of other mortals. Concomitantly, neither man was concerned with securing eternal life in some kind of heaven or paradise or turned God into a kind of authoritarian figure who controls our daily existence. Within the broader context of society in general, the friends had a great deal in common in that they both belonged to the very rare category of determined free thinkers. Though neither man was a workaholic, they both organized life around a predominant passion. With Piet it was his abstract art and with Louk his philosophical publications. Both men believed that their work had lasting value. On three occasions, in letters of 5 March 1933, 3 April 1933 and 11 March 1934, Piet wrote that he appreciated Louk’s enterprise even as he usually disagreed with his ideas. Such observations serve to make their friendship less surprising. Of course the charm and hospitality of the Hoyacks helped, as did Piet’s personal bond with Ella, with her ameliorating common sense. Overall, however, Piet was right. He and Louk were kindred spirits who rarely agreed.

APPENDIX: PIET MONDRIAN'S ALLEDGED ANTISEMITISM

Before proceeding with the subject of antisemitism, it should be clear that it can come with varying degrees of severity. Consider, for instance, that Piet Mondrian was raised in a severe Calvinist environment in which Jews were ever the people who had refused to accept Christ. That could explain his concern about the possible Jewish ancestry of his mother. He may well have outgrown such primitive ideas thanks to his mentor, Jan Braet von Überfeldt. If so, he presumably moved on to the ubiquitous idea of his times, namely that Jews were shrewd financial operators even with each other. Yet World War II saw two major strikes in which people risked their lives to protest against the Jewish treatment of Jews. Unreflective antisemitism could even be a relatively anodyne source of amusement. Well after the horrors of WW II, Sampie and Mosie jokes were told in the best of circles, even Jewish ones.¹⁶¹

The specific issue, or non-issue, of Piet Mondrian's antisemitism appeared like a viral outbreak in 2015 with an article by Stephan Sanders entitled "Het antisemitisme van Mondriaan" which appeared in *Vrij Nederland* of 22 May 2015. Some of his evidence came from Piet's comments in a letter to Theo Van Doesburg concerning two promising young dance partners whom he met in Paris in 1922, who were regrettably Jewish but could be counted on to pay their own way. It pays to know that Piet priced dancing second only to painting but could hardly afford dance halls at the time, so that it was advantageous if a partner could pay her own way. As for "regrettably

¹⁶¹ My own experience of the sixties was with the distinguished Haarlem psychoanalyst Jaap Spanjaard, whose wife Ima was a holocaust survivor.

Jewish”, who knows? Piet may simply have preferred young women with whom he felt more at home.

Piet Mondrian’s antisemitism fully reached the mainstream Mondrian literature in an online publication of 2018 drawn from the University of Groningen (UMCG) research database. It presented the customary “Propositions” (Stellingen) of the dissertation of Nicholas Fox Weber, of which the sixth of ten was far reaching and highly debatable: “Mondrian’s anti-Semitism, which he voiced vehemently, while it was at distinct odds with the numerous relationships that he had with Jewish supporters, is an example of his extreme emotional limitations, which need to be considered in relationship to the personal detachment of his art.” That Weber used Piet’s alleged antisemitism as stepping stone to character assassination became clear with the following two of his propositions:

VII Mondrian’s self-portraits are further evidence of the same lack of psychological depths, because he always portrayed himself more as an assemblage of visual elements or as a mask rather than as a person with normal human complexity.

VIII Mondrian’s incapacity for true intimacy with any other human being, which is distinctly clear in all what counts of his so-called personal relationships, is, at the same time that it is a limitation and a sign of a lack of full adult development, a key ingredient to his particular form of his artistic creativity.

With someone like Nicholas Weber as friend, one hardly needs enemies. It is remarkable that his love of Piet’s paintings was able to transcend his professed contempt for his person. His biography is in any case much more sympathetic than one might expect.

“Vehement” is in any case a strong word, and it is hardly borne out by Weber’s dissertation. His only arguably solid evidence was a

postcard that Piet rendered in Uden in 1904. It features a portrait of his landlord, Louis van Zwanenberg which, Weber claimed, greatly exaggerated his Jewish features (fig. 91). The label “Lewieken” is old Brabants for a man who purchases swine and presumably a slighting reference to the sitter’s occupation as cattle dealer. However, Piet Mondrian had absolute no reason to caricature Louis, who treated him very well, supplying him with food and accommodating his atelier in most of his home. More likely the postcard was an ill-conceived but lucrative joke, one that Piet intended to sell well with outsiders, who probably did not even recognize Louis but who did subscribe to ubiquitous notions about Jews as clever financial operators. However, Uden was primarily a Jewish settlement. Presumably, therefore, the postcard was not appreciated by Louis’ neighbours, which would explain why his wife hated the card and bought up as many as she could.

Van Zwanenberg again showed up in Weber’s 2024 Mondrian biography, along with his admitted “bête noire, anti-Semitism”. Weber even speculated about the artist’s possible self-loathing because of his dependence on Jewish patrons. He further claimed that when Piet first met the entrepreneur and art dealer Sidney Janis in 1932, “he was probably on guard because of his inveterate anti-Semitism.” All this is no more than unsubstantiated speculation, which mars Weber’s otherwise important work.

Certainly the presents study does not bear out Weber’s obsession. Only one Jewish supporter shows up, and he is none other than Salomon Bernard (Sal) Slijper, whom we know as Piet’s good friend and benefactor. Not one instance of antisemitism, whether severe or mild, rears its ugly head. Most importantly, nothing suggests “extreme emotional limitations”, be it of Piets life or art. Though Piet was a tenaciously single minded advocate of his Neoplasticism, he was also almost invariably conciliatory with

colleagues who challenged him. He further shewed deep personal concern in the context of serious friendships, as with the failing health of Tonia Stieltjes and his extreme distress at her death. Similarly his touching concern for the health and hospitalization of Ella Hoyack demonstrated true emotional empathy.

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NOTE CONCERNING THE TRANSLATIONS ILLUSTRATIONS AND INDEX

Unless otherwise specified, the numerous translations are the work of the author.

The illustrations are ordered in two basic sequences. The opening group of nineteen images, which primarily depicts individuals and buildings of importance for the development of Piet Mondrian's life and thought, is predominantly drawn from the internet. In most cases the source has been the Dutch or English version of the Wikipedia postings devoted to given artists. The entries may be amplified by the qualification "Mondrian Route" (also "Mondriaan Route"), which concern aspects of Piet's complete itinerary in great detail. A few works are not to be found on the internet. We took one rare photograph (fig. 11) direct from the holdings of the RKD in The Hague. Another image (fig. 7) came from Hans Janssen's *Piet Mondrian*, fig. 214. However, Janssen identified neither the photographer nor the origins of the image. Two items (figs. 10, 11 and 18) came from the RKD. Hanssen's *Piet Mondrian*, fig. 10, featured a portrait of *jonkheer* W.A.F. Röell (our fig. 19), for which Hanssen supplied no information.

The second sequence is closely based on the illustrations of my *The Sufi Friends of Piet Mondrian* of 2017, though without the detailed captions below them, which repeated information also found in the running text. Almost all of these images were drawn from the collections of Mahmood Khan and Ambrosius Baanders, both of The Hague. There are also several pictures of Sufis taken from Theo van Hoorn's *Recollections of Inayat Khan* (our figs. 20, 21, 22, 24, 27 and 31), but they were supplied by Mahmood in the first place. Five more items (figs. 33, 36, 47, 51 and 54) came from the collections of the RKD in The Hague. Two others (figs. 28 and 70) came from RKD Archive Janis de

Winter and RKD Archive Ella Cramerus. Still others came from Rotterdam, Het Nieuwe Instituut (fig. 39), Otterlo, the Kröller-Müller Museum (fig. 46); Michel Seuphor, *Cercle et Carré*, 1971 (fig. 47), Welch & Joosten *Piet Mondrian. Catalogue Raisonné* (fig. 51), The Hague, Letterkundig Museum (fig. 57), the Heirs (Erven) Leistikow (fig. 64); the National Museum of Warsaw (fig. 59); and Antwerp, Letterenhuis (fig. 80). At least a dozen of the items crop up in secondary sources, most often Hanssen's *Piet Mondrian*, but I have always opted for the original sources.

The Index of Names should be self-explanatory. The name of the three central protagonists, Piet Mondrian, Louk Hoyack and Ella Hoyack-Cramerus, crop up more than 3,500 times between the three of them. I have therefore dismissed all three with *passim*.

THE PLATES



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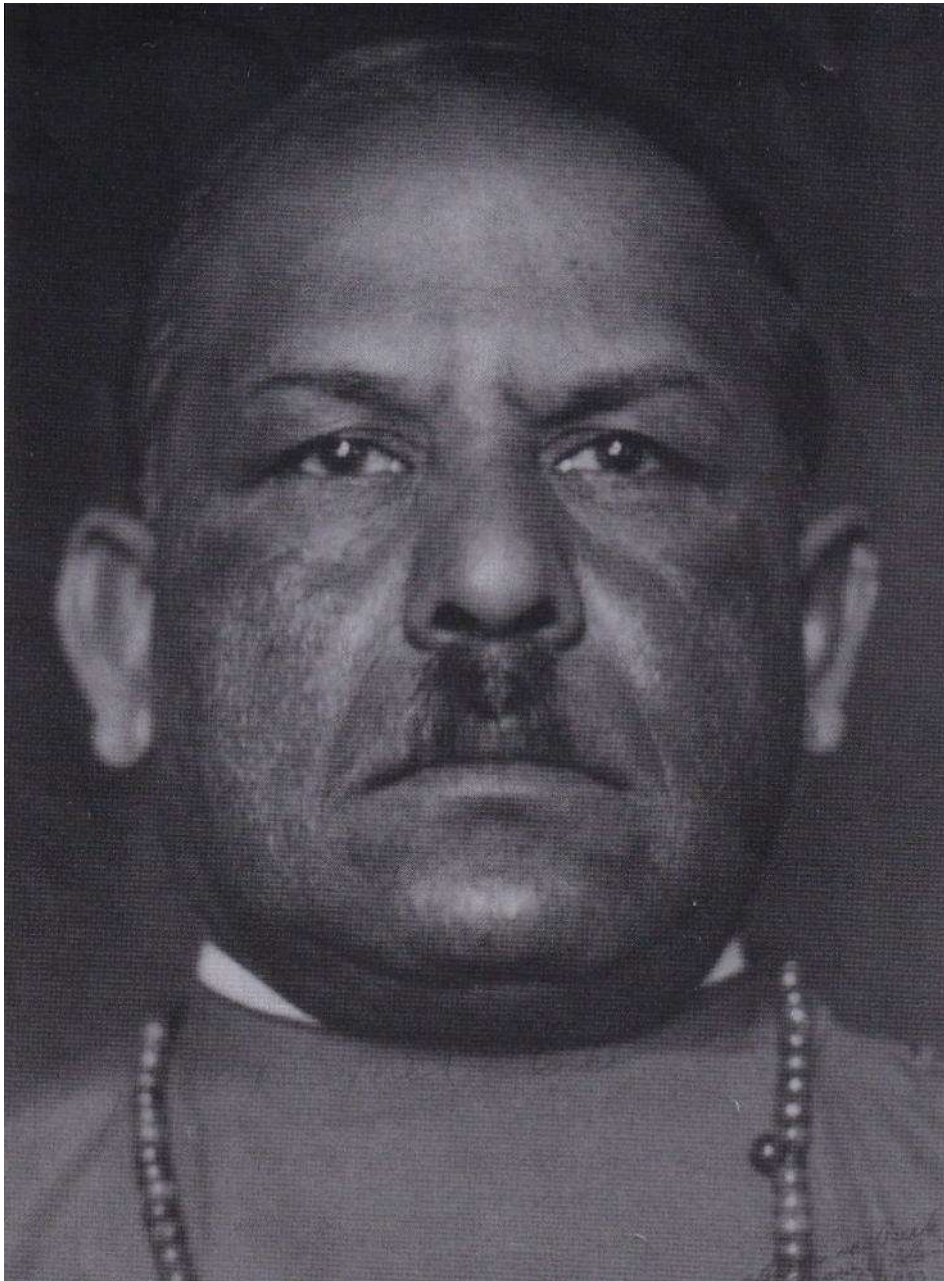
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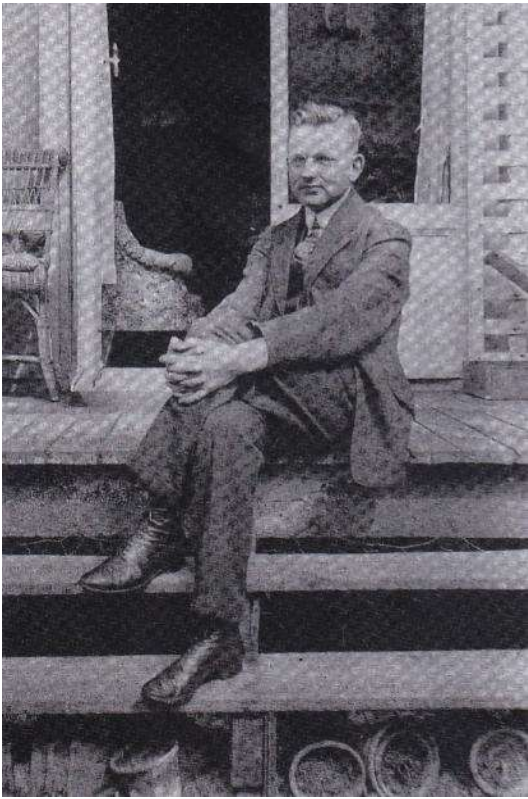


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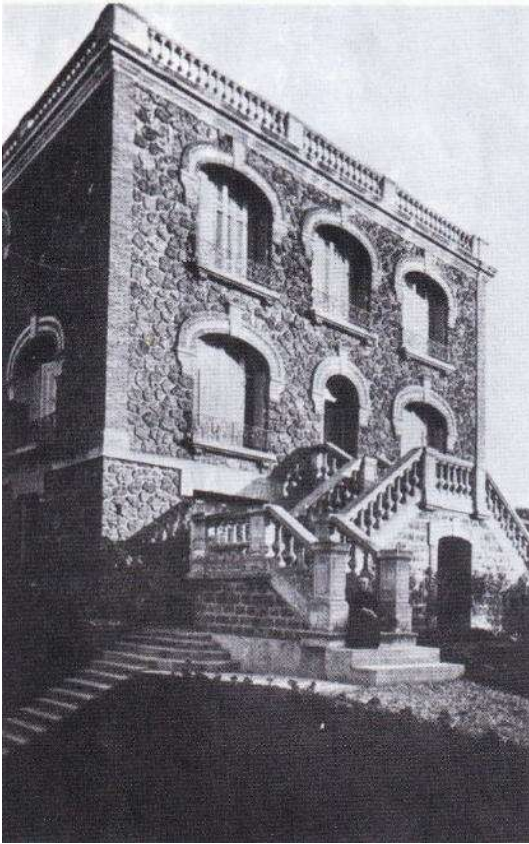


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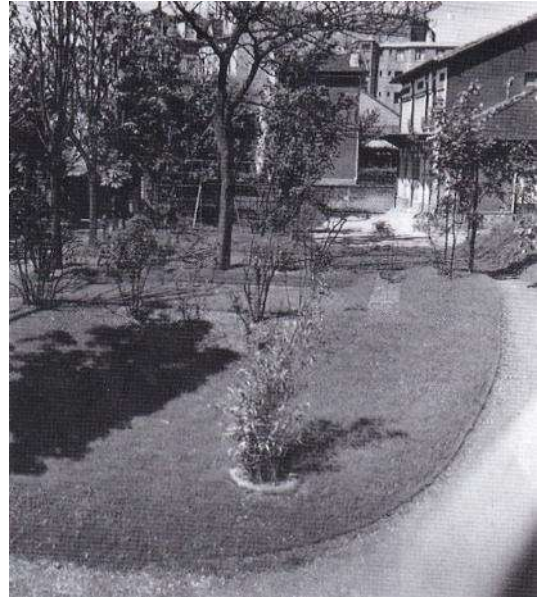
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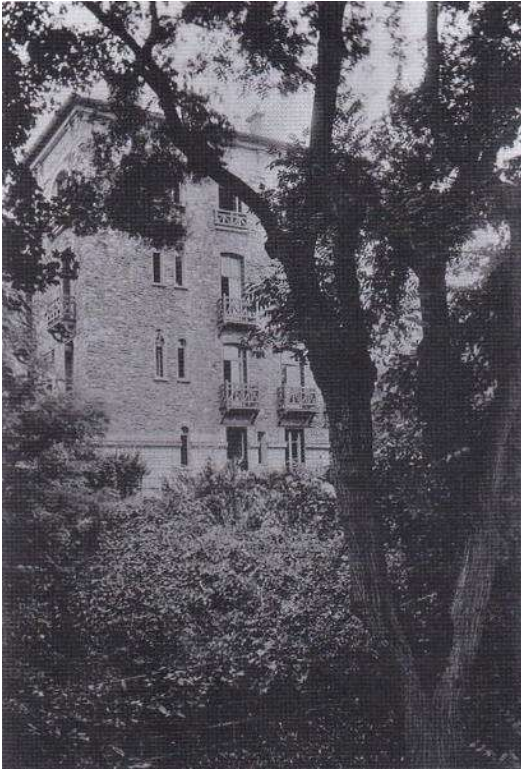
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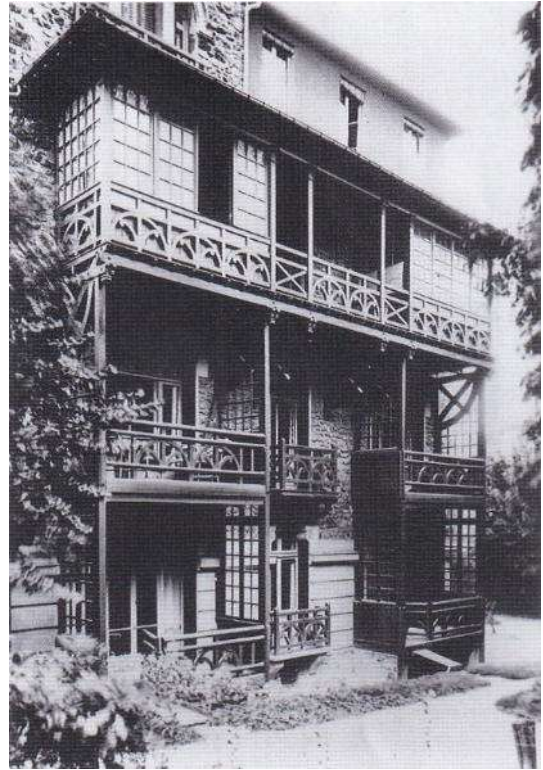
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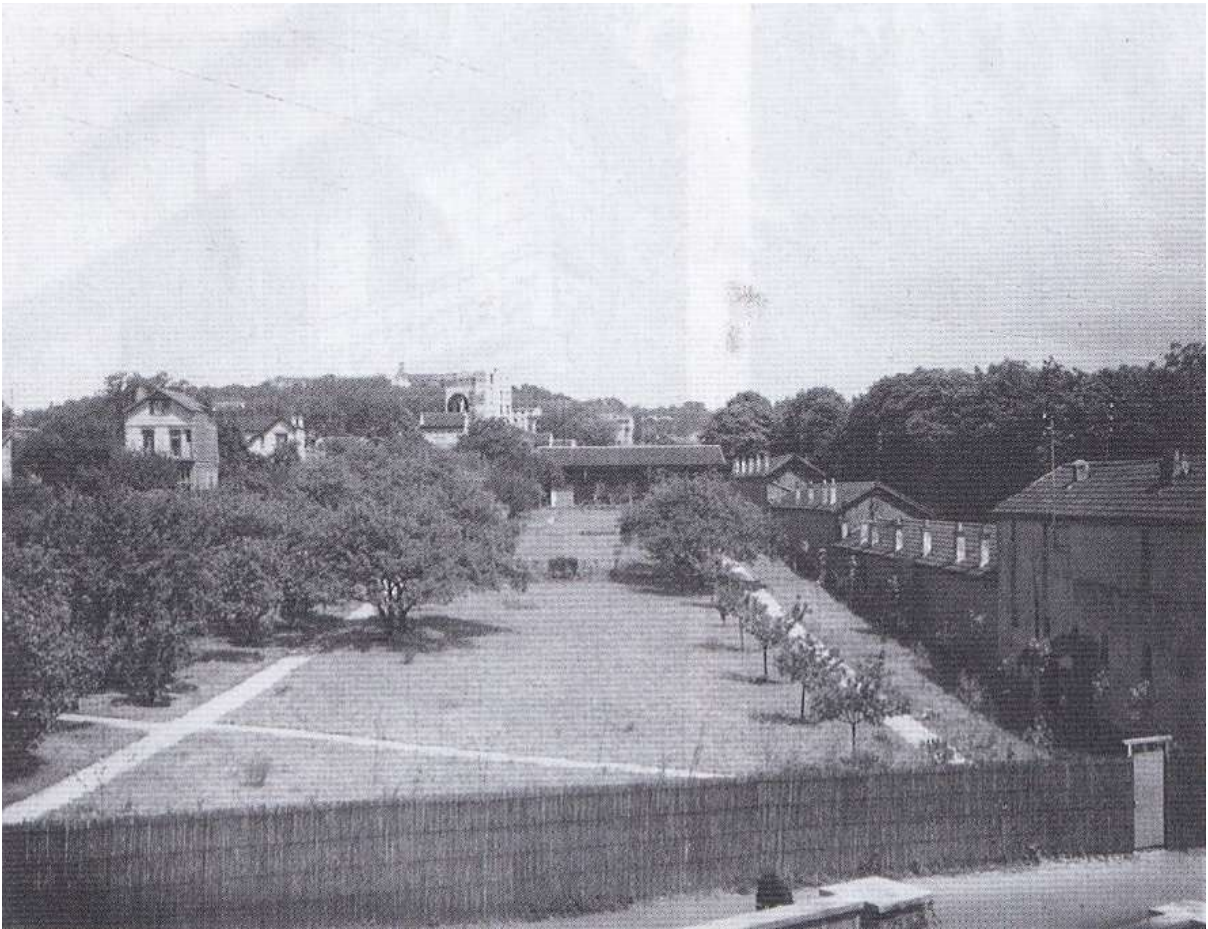
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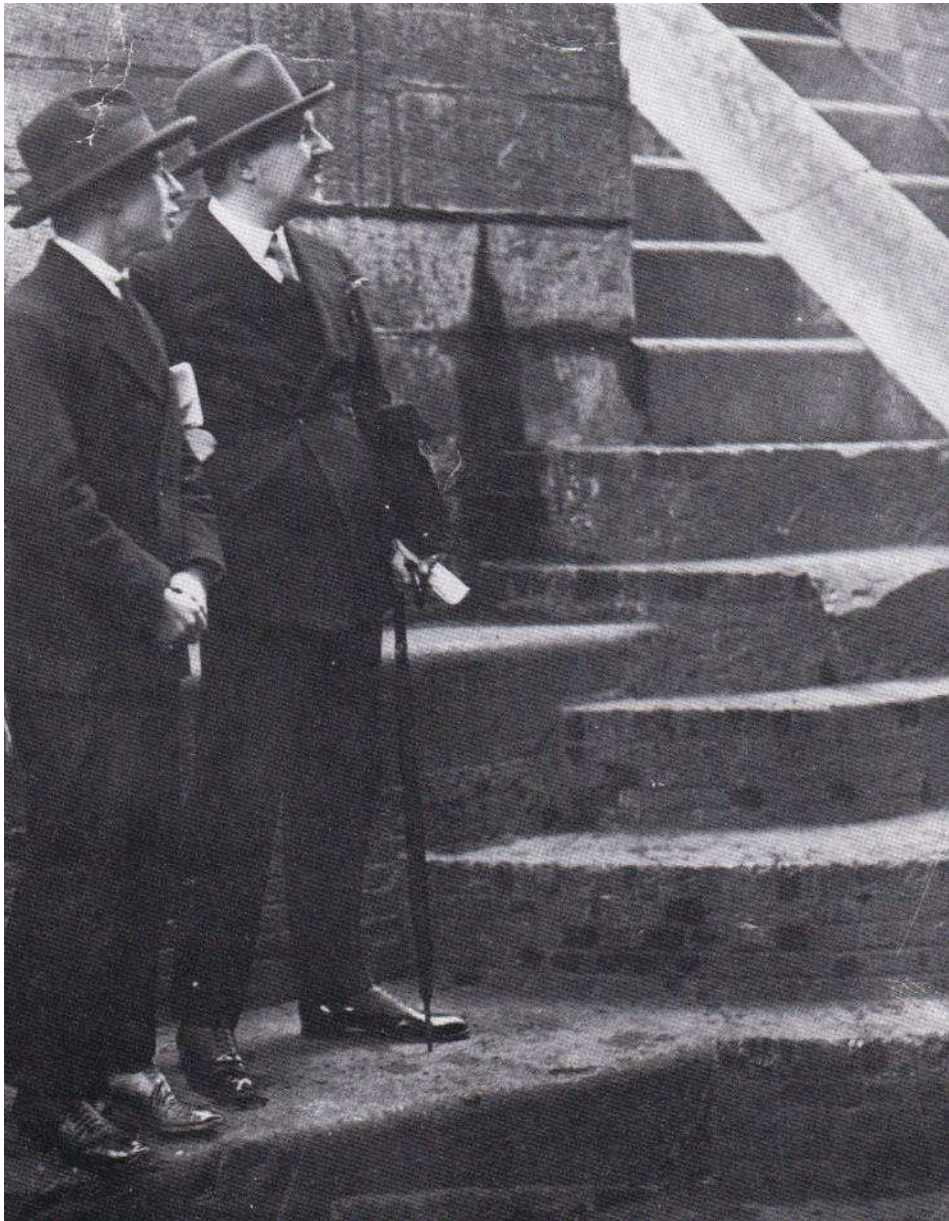


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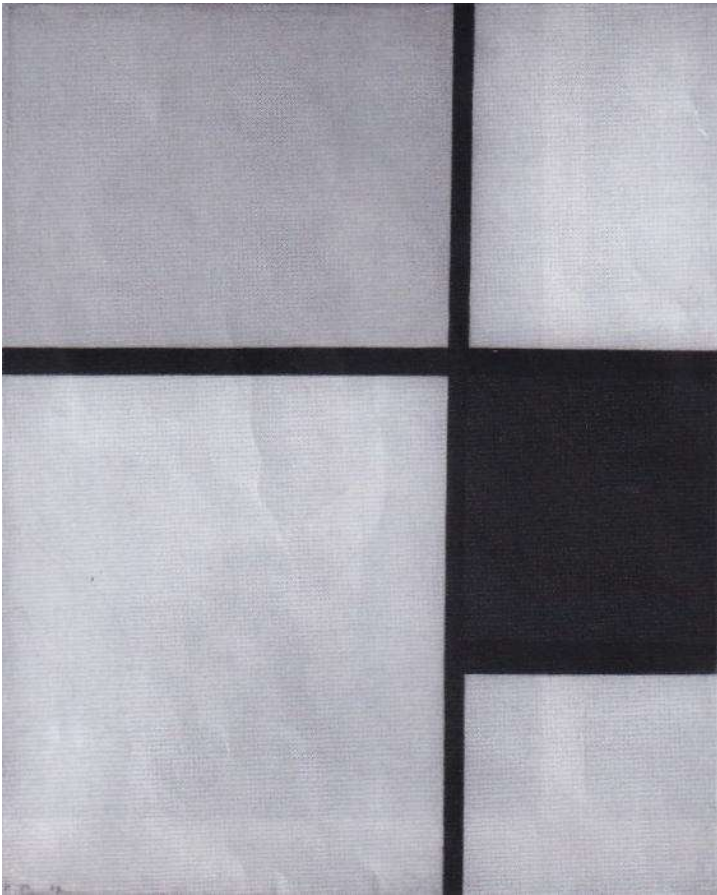




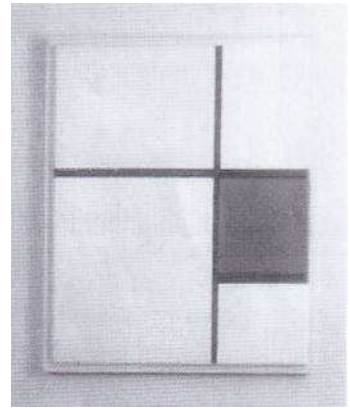
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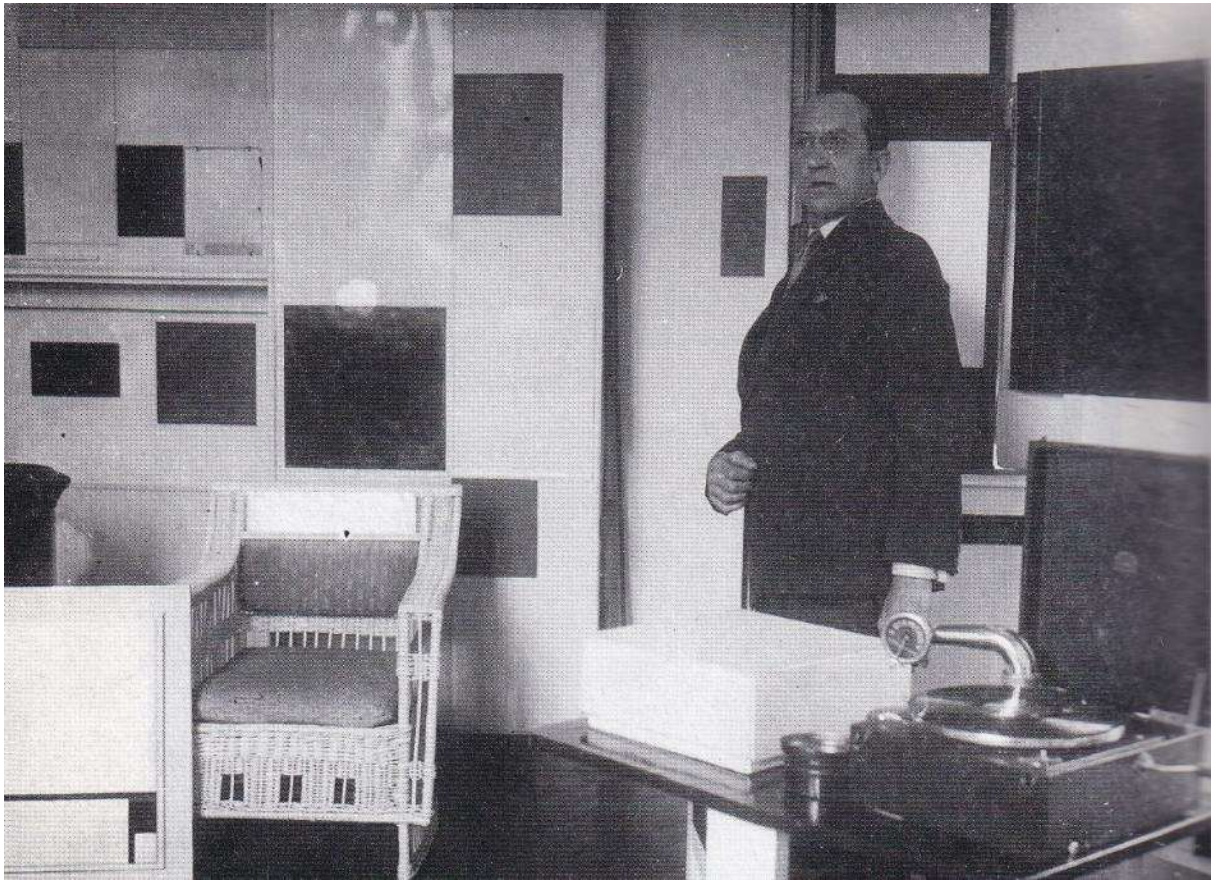


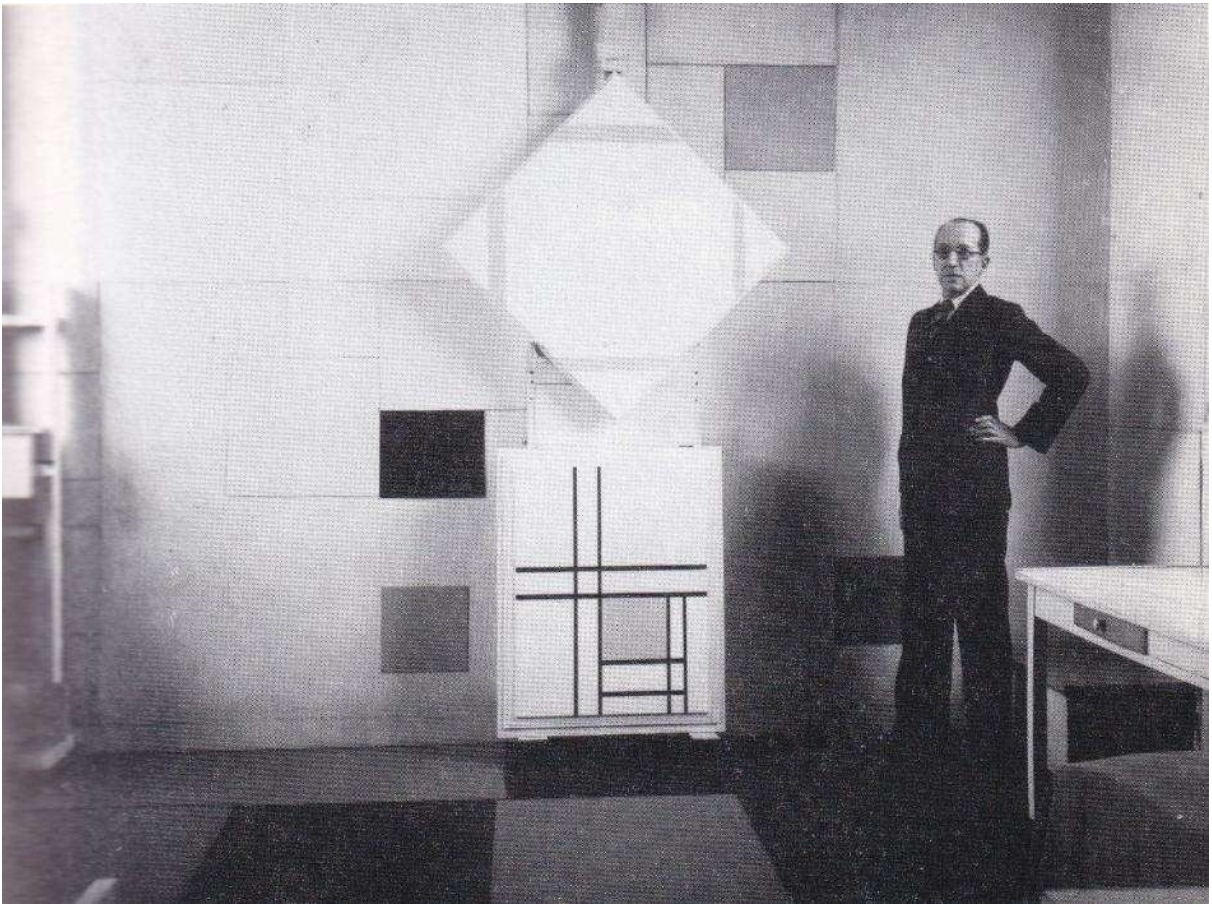
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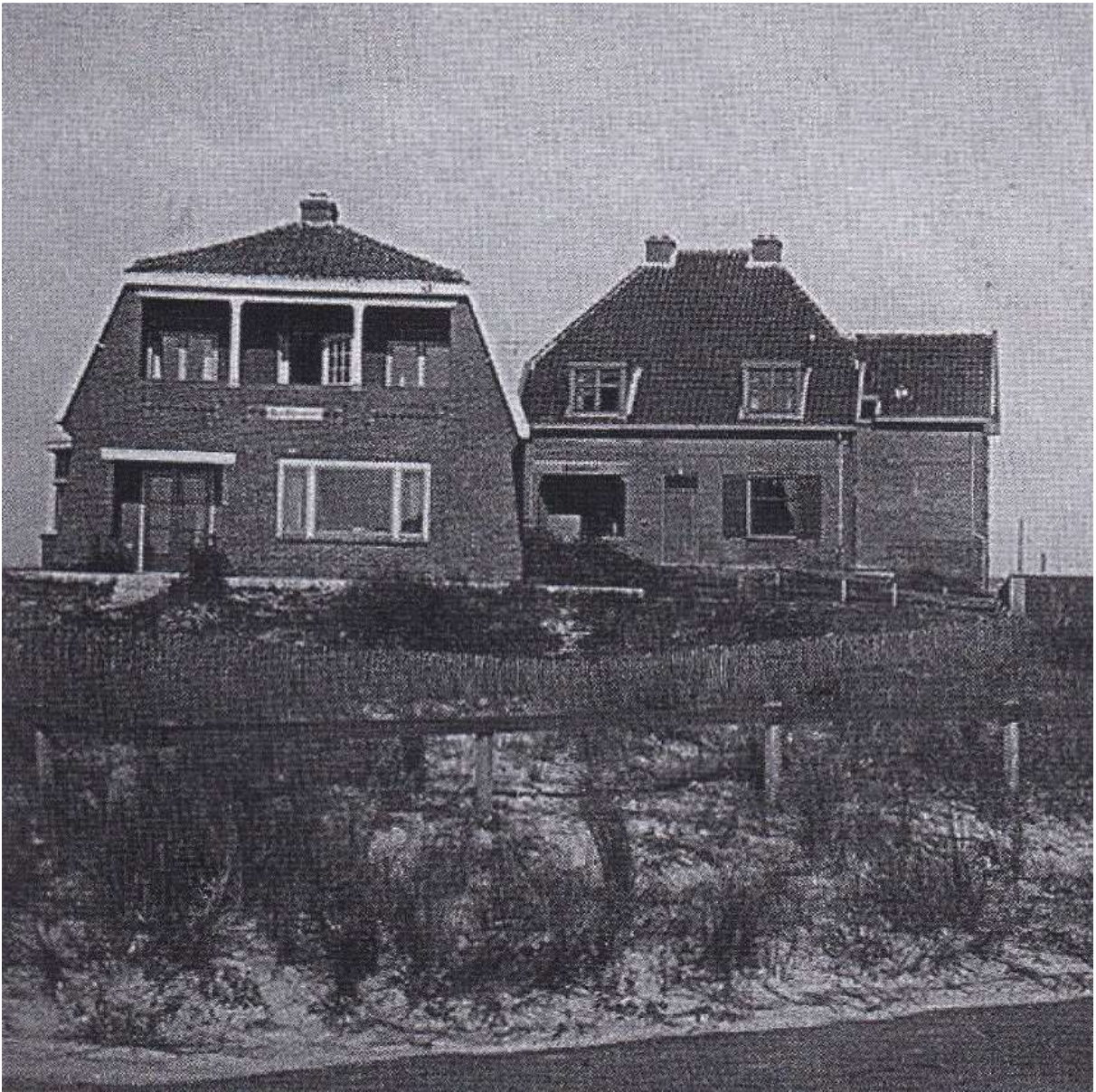


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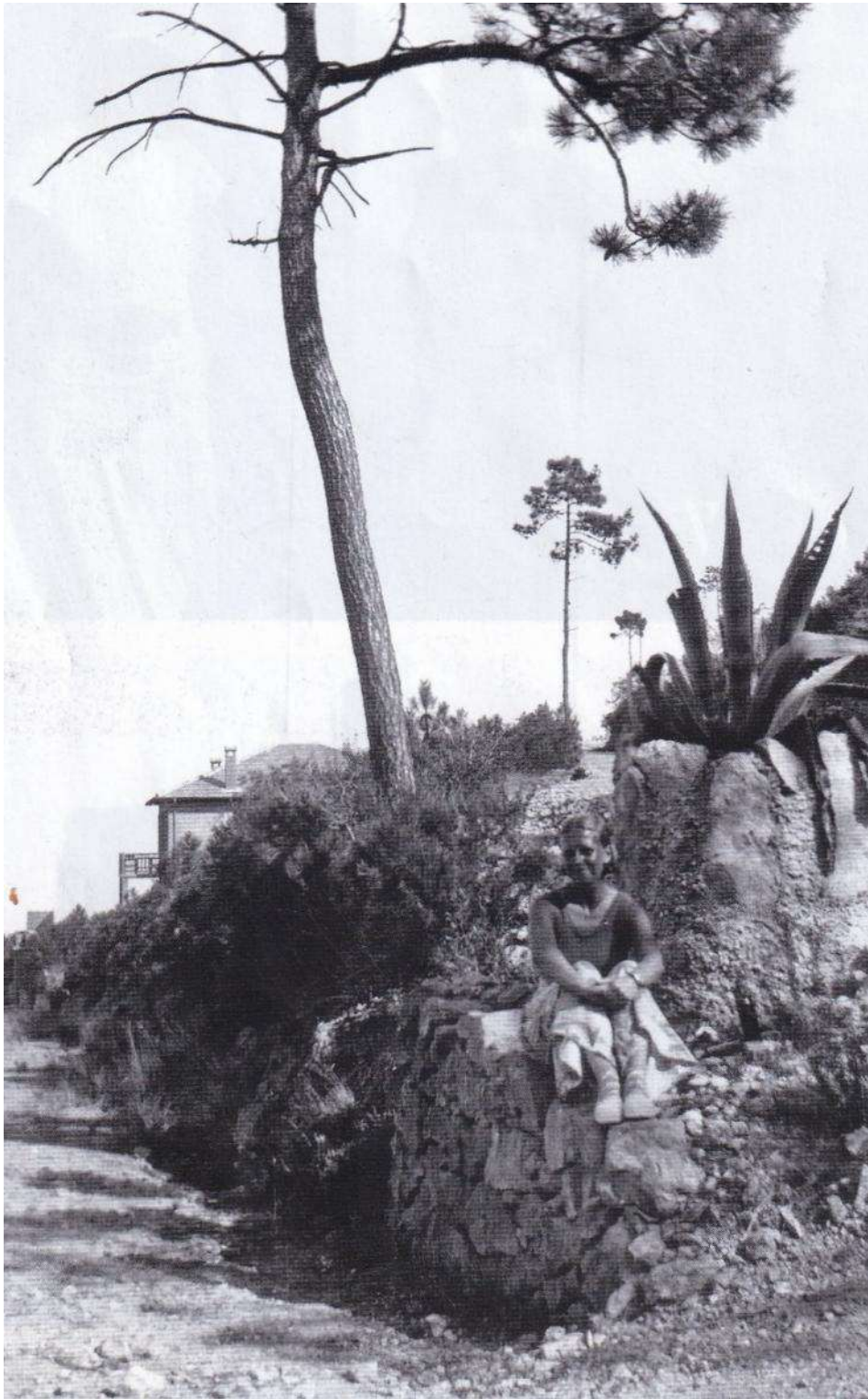




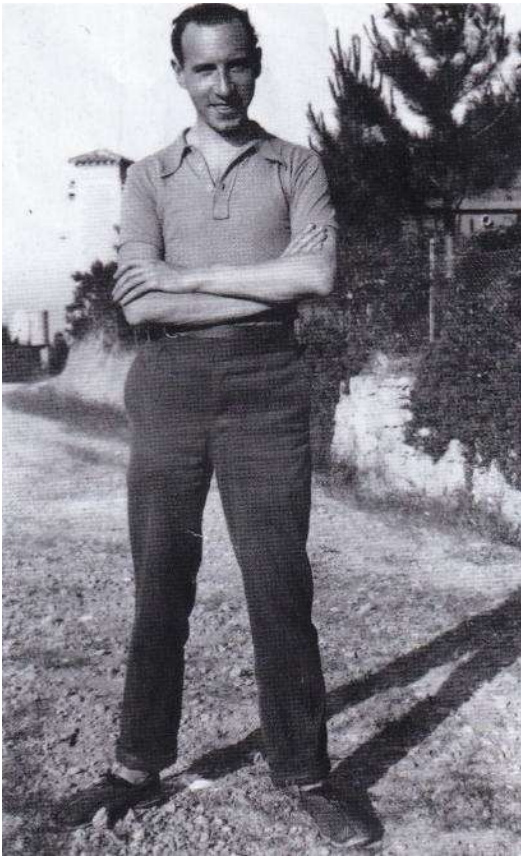




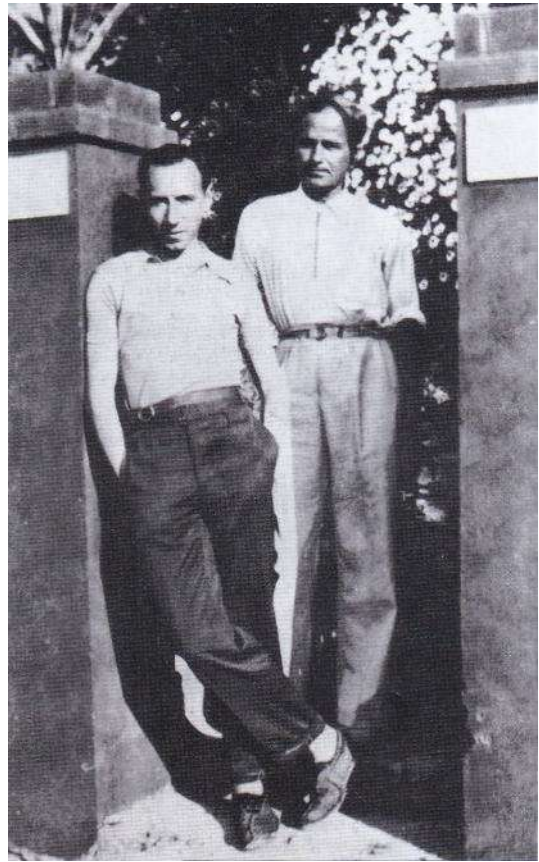




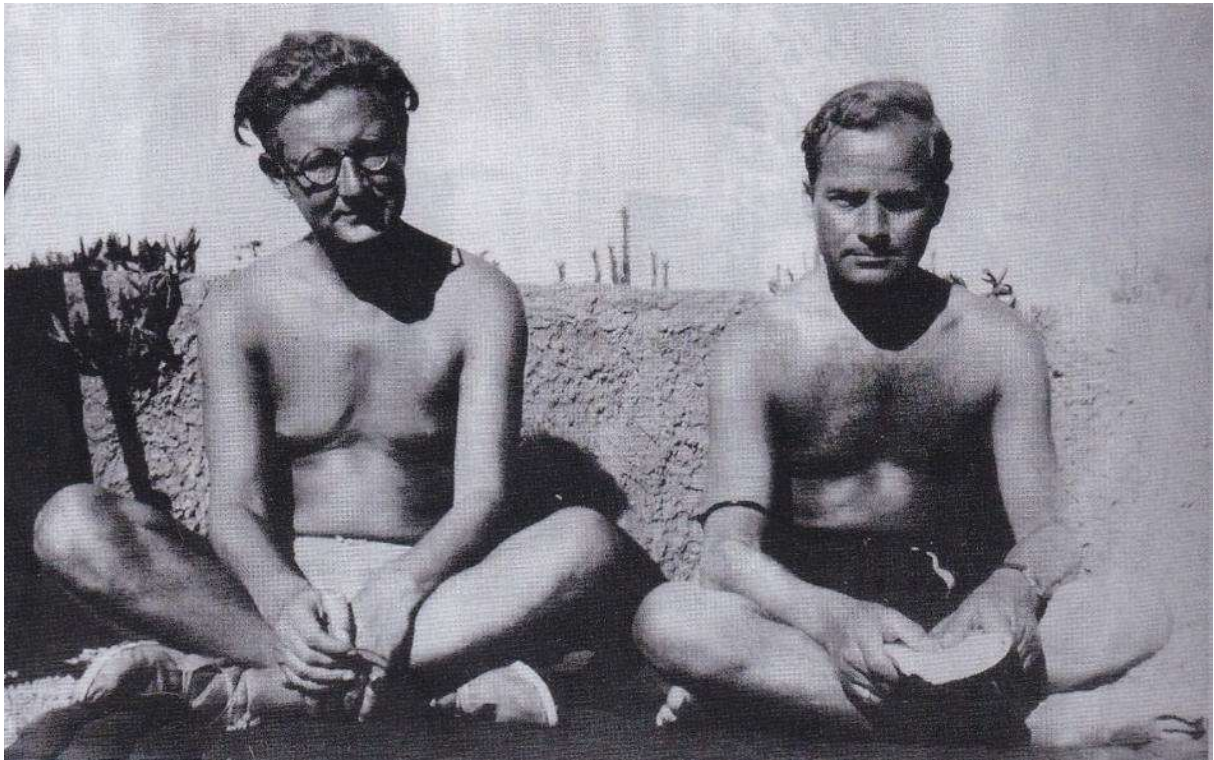




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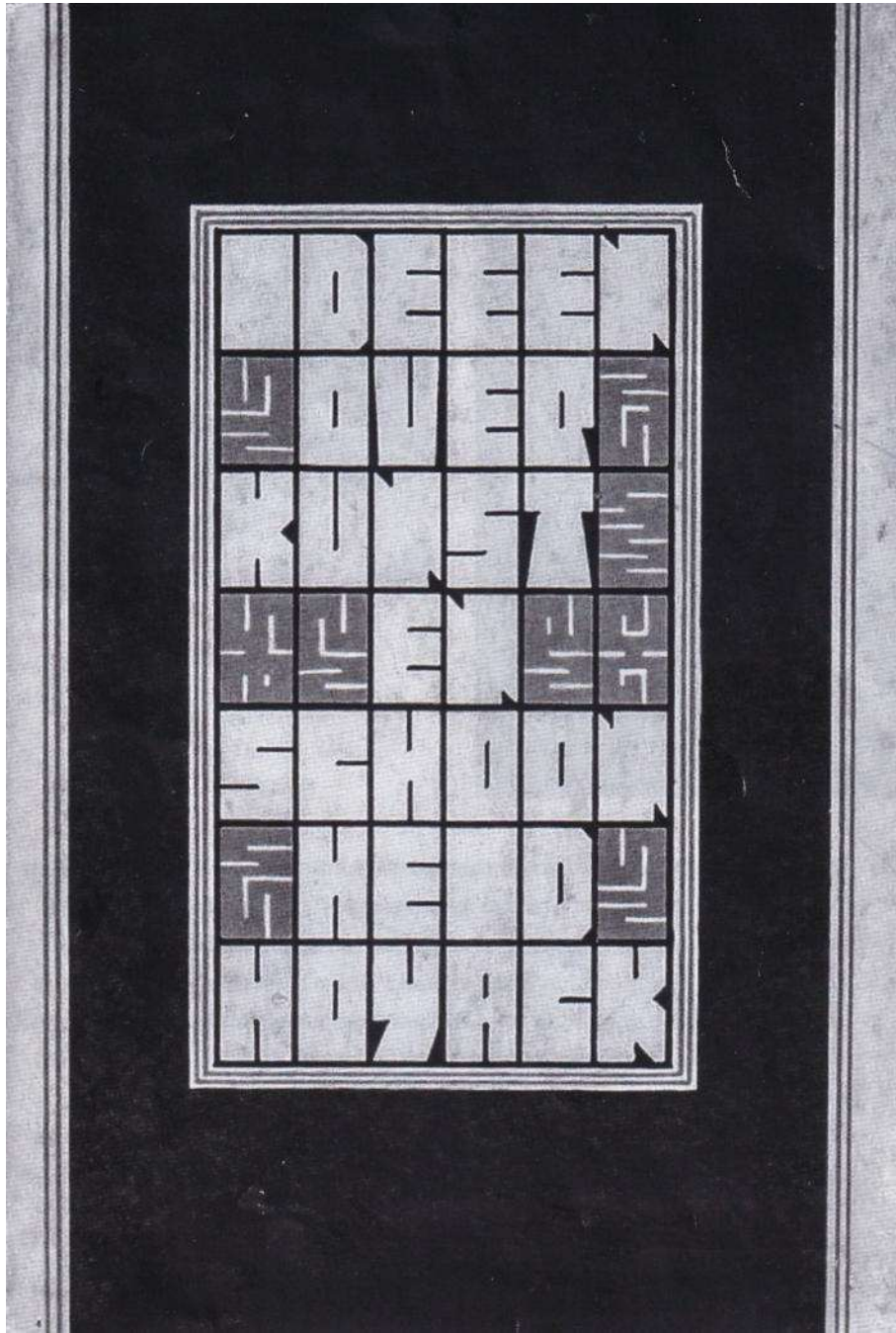


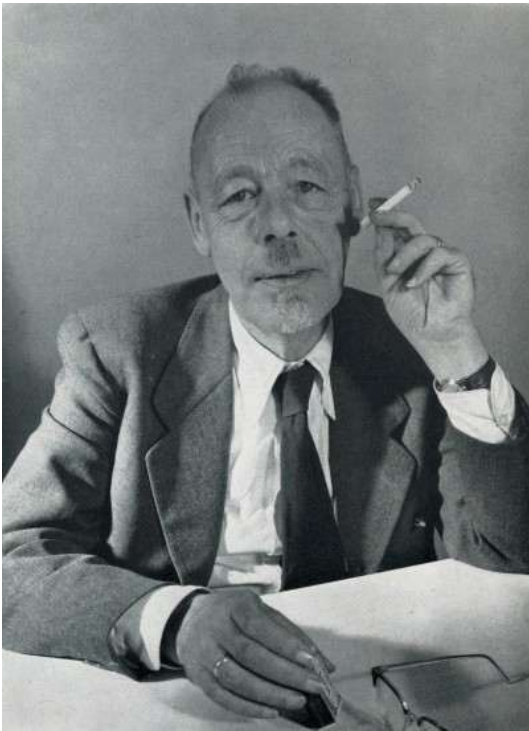


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