

Old Myths and New Forms of Orientalism:
Gauguin, Toorop, van der Leek, and Mondrian

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ABSTRACT

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Mina S. M. Roustayi

More than fifty examples of works by Paul Gauguin, Jan Toorop, Bart van der Leck, and Piet Mondrian demonstrate the significant influence of artifacts, newly revealed since the early nineteenth century, from the ancient Orient, that is, Pharaonic Egypt and biblical lands. The individual interest of these artists is analyzed in four monographic chapters, which indicate enough similarities in their interpretation and use of the ancient motifs to constitute a new departure in Orientalism. Their particular approaches bring out as well particular biographical, symbolic, and iconographic insights into their artistic development.

As a leading symbolist painter, Gauguin pioneered the revival of sacred art involving old and new myths of Orientalism, which were critical also for Toorop, van der Leck, and Mondrian. Characteristically, all four artists assimilated ancient Oriental artistic conventions as a form of primitivism -- a return to original purity -- to create radical images about personal and social renewal. The primordial figured also in the narrative and symbolic synthesis of their art. Stylistically, all of their work became more decorative, two-dimensional, and more compatible with the architectural plane; line and color were released from mimetic servitude,

and a pictographic aspect was added.

Gauguin, Toorop, van der Leck, and Mondrian all integrated ancient Oriental motifs into their work, but each to his own ends. While Gauguin appropriated Achaemenid Persian and Egyptian art, van der Leck studied Egyptian, Assyrian, and Sumerian art, and Toorop and Mondrian relied on Egyptian art. Though Gauguin discussed music as a paradigm in the new art, the musical quality of Egyptian and Assyrian (and even Sumerian) art made a greater impact on the work of the Dutch artists. Likewise, they embraced the social and mural tradition of ancient Oriental art as a model for their own attempts to reintegrate architecture with utopian art.

The dissertation has answered my original question regarding the impact of ancient Oriental art on progressive artists at the turn of the century. The project has also brought surprises, in the form of many unexpected connections between artists and other members of the European intelligentsia, which merit further exploration.

Table of Contents

List of illustrations.....	iii	
List of footnote abbreviations.....	xix	
Acknowledgements.....	xxvii	
Dedication.....	xxxii	
Introduction.....		1
Chapter I: Paul Gauguin		
I. Introduction.....		24
II. Review of scholarship on ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian influences on Gauguin's art.....		25
A. The influence of Persian art.....		25
B. Works with Mesopotamian influences or themes.....		28
C. Egyptian stylistic influences or thematic references.....		29
III. Documentation of Gauguin's interest in ancient Oriental art and his notion of Primitivism.....		34
A. Copies of Persian and Egyptian Art.....		34
B. Ancient Oriental art and Gauguin's notion of Primitivism.....		35
IV. Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian motifs in Gauguin's alter egos.....		38
A. The role of Pre-Islamic Persia in Gauguin's writing: The aesthetic treatise of Vehbi Zunbul Zadi/Mani....		38
B. The influence of Achaemenid art in Study for <u>Self-Portrait, Les Misérables</u>		40
C. Innovation and decadence: the role of ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian motifs.....		47
D. Egyptian stylistic influences in Gauguin's paintings.....		50
V. Conclusion.....		59
Chapter II: Jan Toorop		
I. Introduction.....		75
II. Review of scholarship.....		76
III. Documentation of Toorop's interest in Egyptian art.....		79
IV. Stylistic and iconographic analysis of Egyptian influences on Toorop's work.....		81
V. Conclusion.....		93
Chapter III: Bart van der Leck		
I. Introduction.....		102
II. Review of scholarship.....		103
III. Van der Leck's interest in Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern art.....		105
A. Copies of Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian art.....		106
B. Artist's statements on Egyptian art and new art....		109
IV. The influence of Egyptian and Mesopotamian art		

on van der Leek's work.....	112
A. Universal man.....	112
B. Single figure composition of rider.....	113
C. Group composition with riders.....	115
D. Group composition with single groundline.....	116
E. Multiple groundlines: pinwheel composition.....	120
F. A synthesis of Egyptian and Near Eastern artistic inspiration.....	123
G. Innovation: discontinuous strips of color on white...	125
V. Conclusion.....	126

Chapter IV. Piet Mondrian

I. Introduction.....	132
II. Review of scholarship.....	134
III. The context for Mondrian's interest in Egyptian art...	135
A. Mondrian's statements about Egyptian art, primitive art, primitive man, the Orient, and the utopian mission of art.....	135
B. Concerning art and the spiritual.....	138
C. Mondrian and Steiner.....	138
1. <u>Egyptian Myths and Mysteries</u>	140
2. The thought-picture.....	141
IV. Egyptian Influences in Mondrian's Work.....	142
A. Evolution: Egyptian sources for the style and iconic forms.....	142
B. The intervening years 1911 to 1917.....	149
C. Diamond Paintings 1918-1925.....	150
V. Conclusion.....	158

Conclusion.....	168
-----------------	-----

Working Bibliography.....	177
---------------------------	-----

Illustrations.....	197
--------------------	-----

List of Illustrations*

(asterisk indicates lower left corner)

Chapter I: Paul Gauguin

- | | | |
|------|--|-----|
| I.1 | <u>Study for Self-Portrait, Les Miserables</u>
8 October 1888
Ink drawing in a letter
formerly, Collection of Roger Marx, Paris. | 197 |
| I.2. | <u>Crouching Tahitian Girl</u> c. 1892
pencil and charcoal and paste
55,3 x 47.8 cm
The Art Institute of Chicago. | 198 |
| I.3 | <u>Be in Love and You Will be Happy</u> 1889
painted wood relief
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Arthur Tracy Cabot Fund, 57.582 | 199 |
| I.4 | <u>Oviri</u>
Stoneware; glazed in parts
red and black, H. 74 cms
Signed near the figure's left foot
P G O; inscribed on the front of
the base: OVIRI.
Musée d'Orsay. | 200 |
| I.5 | <u>Guardian Figures</u>
Palace of Sargon II, 721-705 B.C.
Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad)
Gypsum, 15'4"
The Louvre | 201 |
| I.6 | <u>Banquet scene</u>
Wall painting
XVIII Dynasty, New Kingdom
Tomb of Nebamun in Thebes
British Museum BM 37986 | 202 |
| I.7 | <u>The Market (Ta Matete)</u> 1892
oil on canvas
28 3/4 x 35 7/8" (73 x 91.5 cm)
Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland | 203 |
| I.8 | <u>Self-Portrait with Halo</u> 1889
oil on wood
31 1/2 x 20 1/2" (79.2 x 51.3 cm)
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.,
Chester Dale Collection | 204 |
| I.9 | <u>Her name is Vaïraūmati</u>
(<u>Vaïraūmati tei oa</u>) c. 1892
oil on burlap? (91 x 60 cm) | 205 |

Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.

- I.10 The Seed of the Areois 206
(Tee aa no areois) 1892
Oil on burlap
(36 1/4 x 28 3/8" (92.1 x 72.1 cm)
signed and dated center bottom P. Gauguin 1892
Museum of Modern Art, New York.
The William S. Paley Collection.
- I.11 Photograph of Achaemenid lion relief 207
and double bull-head capital from
palace of Darius, Susa, Persia
6th century B.C.
Louvre, Paris
- I.12a Sketch of the double-headed bull capital 208
c. 1887-1889
Album Walter, p. 41 recto
Inv. R.F.30.569 fol 41r
Cabinet de Dessin, Louvre.
- I.12b Photograph of an Achaemenid capital 209
from palace of Darius, Susa, Persia
6th century B.C, Louvre.
- I.12c Sketch of an Egyptian man 210
c. 1887-1889
Album Walter, p. 41 recto
Inv. R.F.30.569 fol 41v
Cabinet de Dessin, Louvre.
- I.13 Engraving of lion frieze from Susa 211
L'illustration 30 October 1886
- I.14 Frontispiece of exhibition pamphlet 212
Exposition de 1889 Missions Archéologiques,
Ethnographiques, Littéraires et Scientifique
at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris.
- I.15 Stele of the priest playing the harp. 213
Third intermediary period
c. 1070-712
Stucco and paint on wood.
H. 29,5 cm.
Louvre, Acquired in 1826, N3657
- I.16 Hathor and Sethos I 214
Wall painting
XIX Dynasty, New Kingdom
1318-1304 B.C.
Louvre, acquired in 1826
- I.17 Be in Love and You will be Happy 215

- sketch in Gauguin letter to van Gogh
van Gogh Museum
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- I.18 Egyptian hieroglyphs 216
written in reverse
note the hand and two snake signs
- I.19 Study for Vaïraūmati tei oa 217
Letter to Sérusier, Papeete,
March 23, 1892.
- I.20 Puvis de Chavannes 218
Hope 1872
oil on canvas (27 7/8 x 32 1/4) 70.7 x 82 cm)
Musée du Louvre, Paris
- I.21 Female Mourners 219
painted relief
Theban Tomb of the vizier Ramose
Dynasty XVIII, New Kingdom
- I.22 Breton Calvary 1898-1899 220
woodcut
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1936
- I.23 Christmas Eve 1902-1903 221
oil on canvas
H. 0,72 x L 0,83
signed
Private collection.
- I.24 Mother and Two Children with Cattle 222
c. 1900
monotype, transfer drawing
in black and brown on paper
585 x 450 mm (3/4 x 17 1/2)
signed
Private collection, France
- I.25 Herded Cattle 223
New Kingdom wall painting
British Museum 37976

Chapter II: Jan Toorop

II.1	<p><u>The Sphinx (Souls Around the Sphinx)</u> 1892-1897 Black chalk, pencil and wax crayon on linen 126.0 x 135.0 cm Haags Gemeentemuseum, inv. T1-X-1931 (on loan from H. van Warmelo)</p>	224
II.2	<p><u>The Three Brides</u> 1893 Pencil, black and coloured crayon 78 x 98 cm Signed and dated bottom right: J. Th. Toorop 1893 Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo</p>	225
II.3	<p><u>Angels Bearing the Eucharist</u> 1923 Black chalk with colour, 41.5 x 41.0 cm Signed and dated bottom right: J. Th. Toorop 1923 Private Collection</p>	226
II.4	<p><u>Three Generations</u> 1927 Watercolour, 32.0 x 24.0 cm Signed and dated bottom left: J. Th. Toorop 1927 Private Collection</p>	227
II.5	<p><u>Courtiers</u> Tomb of Haremhab New Kingdom XVIIIth Dynasty Saqqara</p>	228
II.6	<p>Three women and attendant Tomb of Nakht, New Kingdom VIIIth Dynasty Tomb 52, Thebes</p>	229
II.7	<p>Sketch for "<u>La femme éternelle</u>" (<u>O thou, my spirits mate</u>), 1891. pencil on cardboard, 162 x 205 signed and dated, J. Th. Toorop 1891 inscribed 'O, Though my spirits mate, Schets voor La Femme Eternelle.' Coll. Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo</p>	230
II.8	<p>Great Sphinx of King Khephren Old Kingdom IVth Dynasty, c. 2500 B.C. Limestone Giza</p>	231

II.9	Cécile, <u>Thebes, Luxor,</u> <u>view of the palace gates</u> 1798-1801 Watercolor Paris, Musée du Louvre	232
II.10	David Roberts, <u>Great Entrance</u> <u>of the Temple at Luxor</u> color lithograph in <u>Egypt and Nubia</u> 1846-1850	233
II.11	Cécile, <u>Perspective de l'Égypte,</u> <u>d'Alexandrie à Philae</u> Frontispiece for <u>Description de l'Égypte</u> (1809-1822) Engraving	234
II.12	Michel Rigo, <u>The Sphinx near the pyramids</u> engraving in Vivant Denon <u>Voyage dans la Basse</u> <u>et la Haute Égypte</u> 1802	235
II.13 a,b	The Great Sphinx at Giza Two engravings <u>Description de l'Égypte</u> vols. V, plates 11 and 12	236-237
II.14	Maxime du Camp <u>Le Sphinx vu de face</u> , 1850 11.1 x 16.8 <u>Égypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie</u> <u>...en 1849, 1850, 1851</u>	238
II. 15	<u>Female Mourners</u> , New Kingdom Tomb of Ramose wall painting Reign of Amenophis III, (1411-1375 BCE) XVIIIth Dynasty Thebes (No. 55)	239
II.16	Colossi of Memnon in Thebes Amenophis III, 1391-1393 B.C. New Kingdom, XVIIIth Dynasty Thebes	240
II.17	Study for <u>The Sphinx</u> pencil, red, green and blue crayon 86 x 143 signed J. Toorop, and inscribed 'aan mijne groote Eugenie'[?] Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	241
II.18	<u>Woman with Snakeheads and Sylphids</u> formerly collection H. J. Donkers, Nijmegen.	242

II.19 Study for "The Three Brides" 243
 Pen and ink, blue and yellow chalk on
 yellowed, lined paper
 18.6 x 26.0 cm
 Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

II.20 Las Vegas Airport 244

Chapter III: Bart van der Leck

III.1	Study <u>Head of an Assyrian</u> undated watercolour 215 x 143 mm unsigned and undated Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	245
III.2	Head of winged figure wearing a Diadem, Reign of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.) Northwest Palace, Kalhu Austen Henry Layard, <u>Monuments of Nineveh</u> , plate 92	246
III.3	<u>Warriors Fighting in Chariots</u> pencil, pen and ink, and washes in water-color on paper 39 x 28.7 cm unsigned and undated Private collection	247
III.4	Warriors Fighting in Chariots Reign of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.) Northwest Palace, Kalhu Sir Austen Henry Layard, <u>Monuments of Nineveh</u> , plate 27	248
III.5	Study of <u>Amenophis II and His Governess</u> pencil and watercolor on paper 39 x 28.4 cm unsigned and undated Private collection	249
III.6	E. Prisse d'Avennes copy of Amenophis II and His Governess Tomb of Ken-Amun, Thebes Dynasty XVIII, New Kingdom Atlas de l'art égyptien, pl. II.53	250
III.7a	Study for <u>Composition 1916 no. 2</u> (formerly known as <u>Man with Cows</u>) charcoal on paper 78,5 x 117 cm Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	251
III.7b	Study for <u>Composition 1916 No. 2</u> gouache on paper 11,5 x 17 cm unsigned Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	252

III.7c	Study for <u>Composition 1916 No. 2</u> gouache on paper 75,5 x 111,5 cm unsigned Krölller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	253
III.7d	Study for <u>Composition 1916 No. 2</u> 1916 gouache on paper 83,3 x 120 cm unsigned Krölller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	253
III.7e	<u>Composition 1916 No. 2</u> 1916 casein on masonite 76 x 116 cm signed on the back BVD'16 no. 2 Private Collection	253
III.8	Agricultural scene Tomb G 6020 Old Kingdom 2571-2134 B.C.	254
III.9	Agricultural scene Mastaba of Ti Old Kingdom ca. 2450 B.C. Saqqara	255
III.10	Hornless Cattle Old Kingdom 2571-2134 B.C. Lepsius, <u>Denkmaeler</u> , ii. 9	256
III.11	<u>The Sower</u> 1921 Canvas 16 1/2 x 12 1/2" signed and dated Krölller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	257
III.11 a	Vincent van Gogh <u>The Sower</u> 1889-1890 Oil on canvas 80.8 xx 66 cm Stavros S. Niarchos Collection, London	258
III.12 a	Nebamun New Kingdom painting Reign of Tuthmosis IV 1401-1391 British Museum 50702	259
III.12 b	Guardian figures Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad) Palace of Sargon II, 721-705 B.C. Gypsum, 15'4"	260

	The Louvre	
III.13	<u>Hussar on Horse</u> 1902 drawing 40 x 22,5 signed and dated Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	261
III.14	<u>Courier</u> c. 1913 Caseïne on asbestos-cement 56 x 65 cm unsigned and undated Mrs. A.R.W. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar-Aarse, The Hague	262
III.15a	Assyrian Horsemen Pursuing a Man on a Camel North-West Palace, Kalhu (Nimrud) Layard, <u>Monuments of Nineveh</u> pl. 57 British Museum	263
III.15b	Dress ornaments Layard, <u>Monuments of Nineveh</u> pl. 50	264
III.16	<u>The Horseman</u> c. 1918 oil on canvas 94 x 40 cm unsigned and undated Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	265
III.17	Captives Constructing a Temple of Amun Tomb of Rekhmire, Thebes Dynasty XVIII Prisse d'Avennes, <u>Atlas de l'art égyptien</u> pl. II.59	266
III.18	<u>Four Arabs</u> undated Pastel and watercolor on what? 26.9 x 52.2 cm Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	267
III.18 a	Bart van der Leck Five sketches of donkeys and riders Zaccar Sketchbook 1914 Pencil and watercolor Kröller-Müller, Otterlo	268
III.19	<u>Arabs</u> 1915 signed and dated on the back BvdL '15 casein on asbestos cement 31 x 57 cm. Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	269

III.20	Spoil of a Captured City with Eunuchs Taking Count Tiglath-Pileser III, 744 - 727 B.C. Layard, <u>Monuments of Nineveh</u> , pl. 58 British Museum	270
III.21	<u>Study for Composition 5</u> c. 1917 Gouache 65 x 159 cm J.P. Smit, Amsterdam	271
III.22	<u>Study for Composition 5</u> 1917 signed and dated Gouache, 65 x 150 cm J.P. Smit, Amsterdam	272
III.23	<u>Study for Composition 5</u> 1917 signed and dated Gouache 61 x 150 cm J.P. Smit, Amsterdam	273
III.24	<u>Composition 5</u> 1917 signed and dated oil on canvas 64 x 152 cm Private Collection	274
III.25	<u>Composition 6</u> 1917 signed and dated oil on canvas 59 x 147 cm Ellen en Jan Nieuwenhuizen Segaar	275
III.26	<u>Study for Composition 6</u> Gouache 68 x 131 cm J.P. Smit, Amsterdam	276
III.27	<u>Study for Composition 6</u> Gouache 625 x 121 cm J.P. Smit, Amsterdam	277
III.28	<u>The Sick One</u> 1912 oil on canvas 90 x 120 cm Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague	278
III.29	Ashurbanipal and his Queen in the Garden Ashurbanipal's palace Nineveh, c. 645 B.C. Bonomi, <u>Nineveh and Its Palaces</u> , 401	279

III.30	Figure holding a vase New Kingdom, 1500-1450 Tomb of Rekhmire (no. 100) Thebes	280
III.31	<u>The Accident</u> 1913 signed and dated oil on canvas 90 x 120 cm Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	281
III.32	Guardians of a doorway in Ashurbanipal's palace British Museum, 118911 Gadd, <u>The Stones of Assyria;</u> <u>The Surviving Remains of Assyrian Sculpture</u> <u>and their Recovery and Their Original</u> <u>Position</u> , 1936	282
III.33	<u>Looking at Prints</u> 1915 Casein on fibrociment, 50 x 117 signed Bvdl '15 Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	283
III.34	Stele of Hausvorstehers Sesostris Middle Kingdom Antiquities Museum, Leiden Former collection of J. D'Anastasy	284
III.35	View of the South Wall ca. 1422-1411 B.C. Tomb of Nakht (no. 52) Thebes.	285
III.36	<u>Study for Looking at Prints</u> pencil, gouache, 62 x 134 mm not signed Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	286
III.37	Study for <u>Looking at Prints</u> c. 1915 Gouache Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Smit.	287
III.38	<u>Mason's Aid</u> 1914 paint on fibrociment 50 x 51 signed and dated BvdL'14 Municipal Museum, Amsterdam	288
III.39	deleted	
III.40	<u>The Beggars</u> 1914 oil on asbestos	289

	60 x 43,5 cm, signed and dated BvdL'14 Haags Gemeentemuseum	
III.41	Ur-Nanshe and his family seated for a banquet king of Lagash and builder of temples Early Dynastic plaque from Telloh c. 2500 Limestone, height 18 1/2" Louvre, Paris	290
III.42	<u>Study for Fire Insurance</u> pencil and gouache Krölller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	291
III.43	<u>Study for Life Insurance</u> 1914 pencil and gouache Krölller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	292
III.44	<u>Composition 3</u> (<u>Leaving the Factory</u>) 1917 Canvas, 95 x 102 cm signed and dated on the back "BvdLeck no. 3'1917 Krölller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	293
III.45	<u>Leaving the Factory</u> 1908 ink 133 x 202 mm signed Bottom right BvdL 1908 Krölller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	294
III.46	<u>Leaving the Factory</u> canvas 120 x 140 cm signed bottom right BvdLeck'10 Museum Boymans van Beuningen, Rotterdam	295
III.47	Study for <u>Composition 3 and 4</u> information not available	296
III.48	<u>Study for Composition 3 and 4</u> information not available	297
III.49	<u>Study for Composition 3 and 4</u> information not available	298
III.50	<u>Study for Composition 3 and 4</u> information not available	299
III.51	<u>Composition 4 (Leaving the Factory)</u> 1917 canvas 94 x 100 cm signed on the back: BvdLeck '17 no.4 Krölller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	300

III.52	Mondrian <u>Composition no. 10 (Pier and Ocean)</u> 1915 canvas 33 1/2 x 42 1/2" Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	301
III.53	Mondrian <u>Composition in Line (Black and White)</u> 1916-early 1917 42 1/2 x 42 1/2" Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	302
III.54	<u>Composition no. 1 (Noortje)</u> 1916 caseïne on asbestos cement 50 x 45 cm Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo	303

Chapter IV: Piet Mondrian

IV.1	<u>Evolution</u> 1910-1911 oil on canvas 178 x 85 c,, 183 x 87.5cm, 178 x 85 cm Haags Gemeente Museum, The Hague	304
IV.2	Mertites and Khennu c. 2400 B.C. painted limestone, h. 69 cm Saqqara, Old Kingdom, National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden	305
IV.3	Chaldean Diagram in H. P. Blavatsky <u>Isis Unveiled</u> vol. II foldout after p. 264	306
IV.4	<u>Study of a Female Nude</u> chalk, charcoal, and wash 86 x 42 cm Haags Gemeente Museum, The Hague	307
IV.5	H. J. M. Walenkamp, <u>Enlightened Figure</u> c. 1895 watercolour on paper 61.5 x 44 Nederlands Architectuurinstituut, Rotterdam	308
IV.6	The priestess Imertnebes c. 1900 B.C. wood, painted and inlaid h. 48 cm Thebes, Middle Kingdom National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden	309
IV.7	The priestess Toui Wood of accacia or carob tree 34 cm Thebes, New Kingdom Musée du Louvre, Paris	310
IV.8	<u>Sea (Starry Sky Above the Sea)</u> 1914 Charcoal/paper 51 x 63 cm Blok 241 Seuphor 497, c.c. 237 Haags Gemeente Museum	311

- IV.9 Proportionate Diagram 312
in H. J. M. Walenkamp
"Vóór-historische wijsheid,"
Architectura 41 (October 8, 1904), 334.
- IV.10 Lozenge with Grey Lines 1918 313
Carmean Diamond cat. # 1
diagonal 47 5/8 "
oil on canvas
signed and dated
Haags Gemeente Museum, The Hague
- IV.11 Elemental Geometry 314
Babylonian Clay Tablet
Babylonian, c. 1700 B.C.
Trustees of the British Museum, London
WA 15285
- IV.12 Diagram of Star-Clocks 315
Carl R. Lepsius, Denkmaeler Aethiopien
Part III, vols VII & VIII, pl. 228.
- IV.13 Composition in Black and Gray 316
(Lozenge with Gray Lines) 1919
Carmean Diamond # 2
diagonal 33 1/4"
oil on canvas
signed and dated
Philadelphia Museum of Art,
Louise and Walter Arensberg collection
- IV.14 Composition: Bright Color Planes 317
with Gray Lines 1919
Carmean Diamond # 3
diagonal 33 1/16"
oil on canvas
signed and dated
Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo
- IV.15 Composition in Diamond Shape 1919 318
Carmean Diamond # 4
diagonal 26 3/8"
oil on canvas
signed and dated
Rijksmuseum, Kröller-Müller, Otterlo
- IV.16 Diagonal Composition 1921 319
Carmean Diamond # 5
diagonal 33 1/4"
oil on canvas
signed and dated
The Art Institute of Chicago
Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.

- IV.17 Diamond Painting in a Square with Red,
Yellow, and Blue 1921-1925 320
 Carmean Diamond # 6
 diagonal 56 1/4" x 56"
 oil on canvas
 signed lower right
 National Gallery of Art
 Gift of Herbert and Nannette Rotschild 1971
 Washington, D.C.
- IV.18 Composition with Two Lines 1931 321
 Carmean, Diamond #13
 diagonal 114 cm
 oil on canvas
 signed and dated
 Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam
 on loan from the Municipality of Hilversum
 The Netherlands
- IV.19 Composition with Four Yellow Lines 322
 1933
 Carmean, Diamond #14
 diagonal 113 cm
 oil on canvas
 signed and dated, lower left
 Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague
 Gift by admirers of the artist, 1933
- IV.20 Composition in Line (Black and White) 323
 1916-17
 oil on canvas
 42 1/2 x 42 1/2
 signed and dated lower left
 title inscribed on the back
 Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo
- IV. 21 Triptych arrangement of Mondrian 324
 paintings Dutch Artists' Circle Exhibition
 Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam 1917

Abbreviated footnote citations

Introduction

- Europa -- Europa und der Orient: 800-1900, exh. cat. (Berlin: Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, 1989)
- Egypt in Western Art -- Egyptomania: Egypt in Western Art 1730-1930, exh. cat. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994).
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Chapter I: Paul Gauguin

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Dedication

To Mehri Ahanin and Mir-Hadi Roustazad, my parents

To Edith Porada and Theodore Reff, my mentors

To Alexander and Ariana Anderson, my muses

Introduction

Among the questions that generated my topic were: Did ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern art provide innovative European artists at the turn of the century with pictorial alternatives to mimetic representation? How did they use it? What assumptions about the ancient art are reflected in their thinking, choices, and modes of representation? These questions led me to find little known aspects of Orientalism -- the legacy of the ancient Orient in fin-de-siècle France and Holland.

Historiography

For the most part, Orientalist studies in art history examine realistic paintings of the customs and the people of the Orient, the landscape and the monuments, the mythology and the history, biblical and fictive scenes. Most exhibitions and publications on Orientalism present pre- and post-Islamic subjects and images together, fusing the distinctive cultural and aesthetic entities. The earlier era had in fact developed over three millennia before the advent of Islam in 622 A.D. It carried associations of primordial beginnings, biblical and

classical times, whereas Islamic art and culture represented also a flourishing artistic culture, magic carpets, and living cultures in Egypt and the Near East, whose ancestors fought the crusaders.

The legacy of the ancient Orient is an integral part of the European tradition, intricately woven into its cultural fabric through esoteric, classical, and biblical sources. Though nineteenth-century Europeans discovered other civilizations, none came close to the ancient Orient in psychological, ethical, and spiritual significance.

Europeans were better acquainted with ancient Egypt than with the ancient Near East, because unlike the visible Pharaonic ruins, Mesopotamian and Persian sites remained buried until the nineteenth century. The visibility of ancient Egyptian monuments and the recurrence of Egyptian revivals since the Hellenistic period, during the Renaissance and the Baroque, meant greater familiarity with ancient Egypt than with the Near East.

Napoleon opened the flood gates of a new era in archaeology, with his impressive 1798 grand military expedition to Egypt. For accompanying his Egyptian campaigns was a large cultural and scientific corps of luminaries exploring many encyclopedic aspects of Egypt. Napoleonic inaugurated extraordinary opportunities to excavate in the ancient Orient and an era where archaeological discoveries and concessions were coveted trophies among the colonial rivals. France,

England, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy tried to outdo each other in collecting and studying antiquities from the ancient Orient. Both hieroglyphic and cuneiform writing were deciphered, and the silence of the ancient texts was thereby released.

The intellectual and artistic impact of the ancient Orient has recently emerged in interdisciplinary publications on Orientalism.¹ Edward Said's book Orientalism was important in dismantling the assumed truths of Orientalism.² His work inspired me to examine cultural assumptions underlying borrowed artistic motifs and subject references to the Orient.

My approach differs from that of dissertations produced in the last two decades by Hannelore Künzl, Fereshteh Daftari, and Frederick Bohrer, though we have in common an interest in the influence and reception of ancient Oriental art. Künzl's thesis, "Der Einfluß des alten Orients auf die europäische Kunst besonders im 19 und 20 Jahrhundert" (Cologne University, 1973), examines the influence of ancient Near Eastern art -- separate from Egyptian or any other Asian art. She traces a continuous Occidental interest in themes and artistic motifs from pre-Islamic Near Eastern art and architecture of Syria/Palestine, Mesopotamia, Persia, Anatolia, excluding Egypt in nearly six hundred European examples from medieval to contemporary times. While the huge time span of her topic may seem a handicap, Künzl's study is a valuable overview.

Daftari's dissertation, "The Influence of Persian Art on

Gauguin, Matisse, and Kandinsky" (Columbia University, 1988), examines the effect of Persian art, both pre- and post-Islamic, on three modern artists. She finds more (and more specific) pre-Islamic influences on Gauguin than on Kandinsky and none on Matisse, and a surprising degree of interest in, and ingenious use of, Islamic Persian art by all three artists.

In "A New Antiquity: The English Reception of Assyria" (University of Chicago, 1979), Bohrer explores the public reception and government support of Assyrian excavations in nineteenth-century Britain by discussing the involvement of Parliament, the reaction of the Royal Academy, and the installation of Assyrian artifacts in the British Museum. While Bohrer notes Mesopotamian images in 19th-century British art and architecture, his dissertation emphasizes social history rather than aesthetic concerns.

Selection of artists

The aesthetic legacy of ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern art among progressive European artists remains an untold story. Inevitably, given the popularity of Oriental themes and the remarkable quality of monuments from ancient Egypt and the Near East, many artists felt their influence and thus came under consideration for this dissertation. My original list numbered eleven: Georges Seurat, Paul Sérusier, Gustav Klimt, Ferdinand Khnopff, Frantisek Kupka, Franz Marc, Vassily Kandinsky, Paul Gauguin, Jan Toorop, Bart van der Leck, and

Piet Mondrian. In the end, the last four had the most substance for the monographic study presented here.

Each of these four artists met my fundamental criterion of integrating -- not just copying or merely illustrating -- ancient Egyptian and/or Near Eastern motifs into an original aesthetic synthesis.³ In so doing, these artists produced a subtle new form of Orientalism. Theirs went beyond surface appearances of things Oriental to inspired transitions from mimetic representation to degrees of abstraction in order to express their brand of universalism. I found unpublished material that documents van der Leek's and Mondrian's interest in Egyptian or Assyrian art. Corresponding motifs in images by all four artists were found in ancient Oriental art.

The prominence of three Dutch artists Toorop, van der Leek, and Mondrian and only one Frenchman Gauguin in this dissertation was curious. That the four selected artists of different temperaments, backgrounds and divergent styles would have in common such archaic sources of inspiration may be surprising. What else did these artists have in common? My angle shows new insights into the personal significance of many enigmatic images and aesthetic developments. Moreover, the prominence of Dutch artists is a reminder of the long-standing Orientalist tradition in Dutch art and publishing since the seventeenth century,⁴ and calls attention to the early concerted efforts by modern Dutch artists to transcend realistic art.

The artistic and intellectual concerns of the four artists reveal an obscure nexus of personalities and ideas within the international Symbolist subculture. Acknowledged leader of Symbolist painters, Gauguin emphasized art as original synthesis and primitive art as model rather than mimesis of academic art. His direction opened valuable options for the social and artistic aspirations of the three Dutch artists in question.

Parameters

Geographically and chronologically, this dissertation is limited to influences from pre-classical and pre-Islamic art in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia. This is not to deny continuity in subject matter and formal motifs between pre- and post-Islamic art, but rather to focus on the distinctive art in Egypt and the Near East and its aesthetic impact among progressive artists spanning the period from 1880 to 1920.

The "ancient Orient" to the Graeco-Romans, the Bible, and later European culture was first this region of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia, before European explorers ventured farther east on the Asian continent. In accordance with the Eurocentric nature of my topic, I have decided to use the Orientalist phrase "ancient Orient." Despite the rich and distinctive artistic heritages in Egypt and the Near East that evolved over three millennia, cross-cultural contacts blended artistic traditions that Europeans associated with Egyptian or Assyrian art. Unlike Egyptology, Assyriology designated the

study of diverse ethnic cultures, separated by mountains, deserts, and rivers.

Why the four decades in Europe that I have chosen to focus on? The simple answer is that ancient Oriental motifs appeared in Gauguin's work from the mid-1880s. He was the first not just to admire the art but to integrate Achaemenid- and Egyptian-inspired decorative conventions of color, form, and line. And 1921 marks the year the last of the four chosen artists, Mondrian, formulated Neo-Plasticism. The chapter on him will show the importance of Egyptian motifs for the transition to abstraction at the end of World War I.

During these four decades, European interest in cross-cultural subjects and recognition of the aesthetic value of non-Western, pre-Renaissance, and especially medieval art increased greatly. The expressive options needed for the new art broadened, as reported by Maurice Denis, leader and chronicler of the Nabis:

The reaction against naturalism, which grew strong around 1889, is at the source of the theories, paradoxical models and most of the systems which have taken place in the arts over the last fifty years. Without doubt the taste for nature, the love of the real that the Impressionists had brought to such a high level of refinement, was not abolished by that. But, on the whole, it is towards ideological constructions, towards the abstractions that the arts of imitation ...were superseded by the new doctrines.⁵

New concerns in art coincided with unprecedented opportunities for artists to see large numbers of artifacts from around the world without ever leaving Europe. The mystery, adventure, and exoticism surrounding the archaeologi-

cal discoveries of ancient Egypt and the Near East appealed to the romantic spirit of nineteenth-century Europe.

Ancient Oriental art on view and on sale in Europe

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, enterprising diplomats, adventurers, and scholars from France, England, Germany, and Italy sent shiploads of art treasures and architectural monuments from major archaeological sites in Egypt and the Near East to Europe. The antiquities market thrived in Italian cities and in Paris, where noteworthy museum and private collectors from all over Europe bought or sold often entire collections on a wholesale basis. The National Antiquities Museum in Leiden, Holland, had its own agents, who assembled a world-class collection of Egyptian art by the mid-nineteenth century, when other major collections in Paris, London, Berlin, Florence, Turin, and Rome were also forming.

Universal expositions, a staple of the second half of the nineteenth century for exhibiting international commercial and industrial products, also showcased cultural and scientific achievements of the colonial powers. These nations protected their vested interests in Egyptian and Near Eastern antiquities through diplomatic channels. The French government "annually assigned archaeological, literary, or scientific missions to artists, scholars, residents or mere travelers," according to the Ministry for Public Education and the Fine Arts. The latest harvest of such missions since 1878 were on

view in a special exhibit in the Palais des Arts Libéraux at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris.⁶ The frontispiece for the brochure [I.14] displays the multicultural array of exotic arts and architecture from around the world, including the palace facade of the Achaemenid king Darius behind the Nike of Samothrace in the center, and several statues of Gudea, the Babylonian ruler and builder, in the lower right.

Although the ancient lands of Egypt and the Near East continue to yield the material culture of bygone civilizations, including the forgotten Sumerians, by the 1880s innumerable sites had been not only excavated, but also dismantled and looted, largely for lucrative sales in the West.

Popular appeal

Fortunately, the early explorers painstakingly recorded and illustrated the art and architecture, landscape and people, flora and fauna in encyclopedic folio editions and other publications,⁷ which European artists, such as those discussed here, consulted. Widespread coverage in periodicals kept the European public informed with illustrated reports of such explorations. The Europeans who made the discoveries were celebrities, who in addition to their scholarly publications wrote popular articles, novels, travelogues, biographies, and at least one stage work⁸ about the ancient Orient.

And thus, what was at first the province of antiquarians and philologists, became accessible to broad audiences and for private study. Amateurs and students took classes in the

religion, mythology, history, anthropology, archaeology, art, and architecture of ancient Egyptian and/or Near Eastern cultures at universities in England, France, Germany, and Italy. European and American men and women, scholars and travelers, toured the ancient sites. Since the 1870s, Baedeker published guides to Egypt and adjacent sites with articles by German Egyptologists, notably Carl Lepsius, who lectured on special tours in Egypt, such as the one Charles Blanc attended.⁹ He and other influential authors on aesthetics -- Owen Jones, Humbert de Superville, and Jan van Vloten¹⁰ (in Holland) -- discussed and illustrated ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern art, architecture, and decorative arts.¹¹

The appeal of ancient Oriental aesthetics:

An early champion of the pictorial qualities of Egyptian art was the German Benedictine monk-artist Father Desiderius Lenz. His aesthetic canon taught, at the School of Sacred Art at Beuron, Germany, sought nothing short of renewing ecclesiastical art based on ancient Egyptian art. Lenz wrote a treatise of his precepts in 1865, shortly after his profound experience of Egyptian art in museums in Munich and in Berlin.

He was not the first Catholic to consider Egyptian art of sacred significance for the Church. In his influential books, *Anasthasius Kircher*, the preeminent seventeenth-century Jesuit authority on Egypt was the first to incorporate and expand the esoteric significance of Egyptian art and hieroglyphs in Catholicism; for he believed in the fundamental unity of a

"God-centred universe, dominated by a timeless emanation of divine truth, pervading it as an elementary dynamic force."¹²

Although both Kircher and Lenz viewed Egyptian art as timeless and embodying universal truths, their interests were different. While Kircher was concerned with the symbolic meaning, Lenz studied the pictorial qualities of Egyptian art -- its elemental forms and musical nature. These conveyed the sacred and mystical beyond anything in Christian art, according to the monk who disparaged medieval and especially Gothic art as too sentimental. Lenz urged a return to a hieratic art made up of basic geometries, the building blocks he believed God used to create His universe. Architectonic by nature, the monumental art Lenz visualized would reduce ecclesiastic art to universal theological concepts acceptable to other religions besides Christianity.¹³ Despite accolades from Pope Leo XIII and Kaiser Wilhelm II and commissions in Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Prague, the Church opposed the publication of Lenz's canon in toto.¹⁴

Instead it appeared as a secular booklet in 1905, translated into French by the Nabi painter and confidant of Gauguin, Paul Sérusier, and with an introduction by Maurice Denis.¹⁵ By then, Lenz's aesthetic canon was already known among the Nabis in Paris and other artists working in Vienna, Munich, and Amsterdam, who were exposed to Desiderian art, either through Sérusier or Jan Verkade, a Dutch former Nabi and now Benedictine monk working with Lenz.¹⁶ Though some

criticized Desiderian art as too radical, cold, and geometric, others found it unrivaled in imparting the spirit of repose in God,¹⁷ "a character of eternity and immutability," and "an ascetic and contemplative sensation of God's power."¹⁸

Lenz's taste for the linearity, geometry and monumentality of Egyptian art as a model for utopian art is an important precedent for its similar appeal among the four artists of this dissertation. The idea of oneness and world unity is central to their work and is a fundamental reason for their use of ancient Oriental motifs in their images. Yet just as important are the differences between Lenz and the four artists. They were more inventive and had greater freedom to express the idiosyncrasies of their soul or psyche.

Whether spiritual or social, their invented myths and original styles fulfilled the promise of art presaged by Richard Wagner in 1880:

One might say that where Religion becomes artificial, it is reserved for art to save the spirit of religion by recognising the figurative value of the mythic symbols which the former would have us believe in their literal sense, and revealing their deep and hidden truth through an ideal presentation. Whilst the priest stakes everything on the religious allegories being accepted as matters of fact, the artist has no concern at all with such a thing, since he freely and openly gives out his work as his

own invention.¹⁹

The new role of the artist Wagner described indicated a loss of faith in the Church and neo-religious stirrings at this time, which involved ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern archaeology in more than one way. For the unearthed cuneiform and hieroglyphic texts from the ancient Orient were finally decoded, bringing into question ancient history based on biblical and classical sources. Moreover, new chronologies proposed by archaeologists and geologists, together with Darwin's influential theory of evolution, undermined the already diminished credibility and influence of the Church.

Alternative explanations of the spiritual and physical evolution of humans proposed by revived occult and related doctrines used newly revealed archaeological material from the ancient Orient, for those primordial traditions were sacrosanct sources of esoteric wisdom. The internationally popular Theosophical Society, co-founded by the notorious Helena Blavatsky and affiliated writers, made ancient Egypt and the Near East germane to contemporary concerns. Edouard Schuré, the poet Gerald Massey, the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner, and the architect H. J. M. Walenkamp were some of the intermediaries who influenced the thinking of the artists I discuss.

Another prominent personality in the fin-de-siècle occult movement was Sâr Josephin Péladan, the infamous art critic, novelist, and founder of the Rosicrucian salon in Paris.

Péladan mixed Catholicism with Egyptian and Near Eastern symbolism and cultivated an Assyrian alter ego in his novels and in real life by giving himself the title Sâr. Not only did his aesthetic theories influence Albert Aurier's criteria for Symbolist painting,²⁰ but his writings were read in Dutch cultural circles before his 1892 lectures in The Hague and in Leiden. In Leiden he was a guest of H. P. Bremmer, the art advisor of the Kröller-Müller collection and early promoter of Mondrian and van der Leek.²¹ Toorop, DerKinderen, and Roland Horst became cult members and joined other international artists, including Khnopff and Jean Delville, in the hand-picked group exhibition at the first Rose & Croix salon of that same year. The Sâr also impressed Walenkamp, who joined the Dutch Theosophical Society in 1897.

Erudite and prolific, Blavatsky's and Péladan's fanciful syntheses incorporates copious, if historically inaccurate, interdisciplinary information. Their books and lectures referred extensively to the esoteric wisdom of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Aryans, Assyrians and Persians, citing supportive evidence discovered in Egypt and the Near East. Blavatsky titled her two famous books Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology (1877) and The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy (1888), in keeping with the Society's charter to encourage comparative studies in these fields. Her references to the expanding field of sciences added a

scholarly and progressive veneer to the arcane universal theories of Theosophy. The wording of Blavatsky's subtitles calls attention to the vogue for interdisciplinary and cross-cultural studies.

By 1874, Holland was among the earliest countries to have four university chairs for the comparative study of religion.²² Theosophy made inroads among progressive Dutch artists and architects by the 1890s.²³ The "internationalist, pacifist, and socially progressive" message of Theosophy influenced reformist and utopian thought.²⁴ These concerns were particularly topical in Holland, where artists and architects had debated the social and moral role of art for society since the 1880s in a revival of monumental art.²⁵ The widespread appeal of Theosophy and related beliefs, most notably Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy, among the intelligensia appears to lie in its emphasis on personal enlightenment and insight into universal truths within each person, who must then contribute to spiritually advance humanity.

Although Gauguin merely pays lip service to the social purpose of art, and his work is essentially egocentric, social emphasis is crucial to the three Dutch artists and their interest in ancient Oriental art. For much of this art was inherently public: the depictions enveloped the interior and exterior of architectural monuments. To the list of commonly mentioned sources inspiring Dutch monumental or social

art, including Puvis de Chavannes, William Morris, and medieval art, should be added the art of the ancient Orient.

The selected works by Gauguin, Toorop, van der Leek, and Mondrian to be discussed in this dissertation reflect many old positive and negative myths about the ancient Orient. On the positive side are the received truths about the ancient Orient as primal, the cradle of civilization, the dawn of spiritual consciousness and wisdom; and on the negative side are pejorative stereotypes based on biblical and classical sources. On balance, however, the four selected artists valued ancient art as an antidote or counterbalance to Western decadence.²⁶ In this sense, the formal inspiration takes on an unprecedented symbolic value that would recharge their utopian images with primal renewal.

The dissertation necessarily begins with Gauguin, the consummate myth-maker and co-creator of Synthetism, the new style known also as Symbolism. In many ways the other three fulfill Gauguin's dream to free art. His new artistic direction emphasized the artifice of art as a construct of the mind instead of an imitation of nature, and he noted the abstract, cerebral qualities of Egyptian and Persian art as a suitable model for the new art. Many of Gauguin's views on and use of the ancient art reverberate in the work of the other three artists. The Egyptian and Near Eastern components in works by Gauguin and the three Dutch artists contribute to the fundamental synthesis no less in conception than in execution.

Since Gauguin sowed the seeds of a new kind of Orientalism that bore fruit in the work of the other three artists, the chapter on him furnishes the contextual framework for the dissertation.

Hardly known today outside Holland, except among art historians, the subject of Chapter Two, Toorop, was in his heyday a prominent artist, the only Dutch member of the exclusive Belgian art circle "Les XX" in Brussels, and a harbinger of new artistic directions in the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. A gregarious man, prodigiously energetic, he traveled widely and established contacts with people in the arts. In Vienna he was a cult figure, as in Germany, and in France he was a friend of Maurice Denis²⁷ and surely knew Sérusier. Thus Toorop was connected circuitously, to Gauguin, although the latter's relevance to him has not been examined. Toorop invited his foreign colleagues to cultural events and exhibitions at home and abroad, many of which he organized. He knew Mondrian from at least two artists' associations the former headed -- Moderne Kunstkring (1910) in Amsterdam and Walcheren Schilders (1911) in Domburg, where Mondrian periodically vacationed beginning in 1908.

Toorop promoted the arts with missionary zeal, believing in their spiritually uplifting potential for society and dedicating his research in art toward such an end. Although his solutions were unique, his views about the social mission of art and his desire to integrate art with architec-

ture reflect the monumental movement in Dutch art since mid-century that culminated in de Stijl. Chapter Two shows how Toorop's search for a spiritually expressive art, comprised of universal symbols and a linear style that was both musical and decorative on a monumental scale, made Egyptian art an important source of inspiration.

Chapter Three, on van der Leek, another artist not known well outside Holland, offers fresh material concerning the achievement of this artist. Van der Leek developed his distinctive style essentially by studying Egyptian and Mesopotamian art. These sources inspired him to make his own work more reductive, geometric, and architectonic. He abstracted scenes of daily life to a point beyond recognition, reducing the empirical world to geometric abstractions that suggest an ideal of universal equality.

Inherently reclusive and mainly supported by the Kröller-Müllers, van der Leek appeared out of nowhere, according to Mondrian, who had neither heard of him or seen his work before 1916. Their ensuing exchange of artistic ideas benefitted their respective work and the formative ideology of de Stijl. Although Mondrian admitted van der Leek's influence on him, details about their inspiration are controversial. Studying the effect of Egyptian and Mesopotamian art on van der Leek's work does, however, shed light on his artistic development relative to Mondrian's.

Chapter Four describes the importance of Egyptian

motifs for Mondrian, an icon of modernism. Mondrian's interest in ancient Egyptian art confirms the esoteric and autobiographical basis of his utopian ideals and his transition from figurative to abstract art. This chapter discusses the symbolic and pictorial significance of the ancient art for the condensed form and content of Mondrian's primary geometric color compositions, which his writings declare as equivalent relationships to essential universal truths. This chapter also addresses the elusive relevance of theosophy for the utopian content of his work and for the viewing public.

The four monographic chapters detail the Orientalism of each artist, leaving a discussion of the similarities and the differences in their approaches for the conclusion. Each chapter presents the research in more or less the same sequence of introductory comments, review of pertinent scholarship, information concerning the artist's opinion on, and sources for, ancient art, and stylistic and iconographic analysis of selected pictures. If the exclusive concern with ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern motifs creates a misleading impression that those sources were the most important for these artists, such an assumption would be contrary to the ecumenical spirit of their work. Rather, the goal of the dissertation is to report the nuances of ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern motifs in the work of these influential European artists, and to restore an overlooked interdisciplinary facet of art history.

Footnotes

¹Among the more recent publications see: Egyptomania: Egypt in Western Art 1730-1930 exh. cat. (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994); Europa und der Orient: 800-1900 exh. cat. (Berlin: Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, 1989); Jean-Marcel Humbert, L'Egyptomanie dans L'art Occidental (Courbevoie, Paris: ACR Edition Internationale, 1989); Exotische Welten: Europäische Phantasien exh. cat. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Dr. Cantz'sche Druckerei, 1987); James Curl, The Egyptian Revival: An Introductory Study of a Recurring Theme in the History of Taste (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982); R. G. Carrott, The Egyptian Revival: Its Sources, Monuments, and Meaning, 1808-1858 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Nikolaus Pevsner and S. Lang, "The Egyptian Revival," The Architectural Review 119 (May 1956), 242-254; Frank J. Roos, "The Egyptian Style," Magazine of Art 33 (1940), 218-223ff.

² Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage books, 1979).

³ Gustav Klimt too would have met this criterion at least in the Stoclet Frieze in Vienna. M. E. Warlick found a brief but important Egyptian phase of Klimt's work in the frieze. According to her, he updated the myth of Osiris and Isis into an allegorical painting, portraying himself as Osiris and a composite of his lovers as Isis. M.E. Warlick, "Mythic Rebirth in Gustav Klimt's Stocklet Frieze: New Considerations of Its Egyptianizing Form and Content," Art Bulletin 74 (March 1992), 115-34.

⁴ Europa, 739-758. Many of Anasthasius Kircher's books were published in Amsterdam, for example.

⁵ La réaction contre le naturalisme, qui s'est affirmée aux environs de 1889, est à l'origine des théories, des formules paradoxales et de la plupart des systèmes qui se sont succédé dans le domaine des arts depuis cinquante ans. Sans doute, le goût de la nature, l'amour du réel que les Impressionnistes avaient porté à un si haut degré de raffinement, n'a pas été aboli pour cela. Mais, dans l'ensemble, c'est vers des constructions idéologiques, vers des abstractions que les arts d'imitation ou soi-disant tels ont été entraînés par les doctrines nouvelles. Maurice Denis. Paul Sérusier, sa vie, son oeuvre (Paris, Floury, 1942), 37.

⁶ Ministère de l'Instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts.

Exposition de 1889. Missions Archéologiques, Ethnographiques, Littéraires et Scientifiques (Paris: Librairies-Imprimeries Réunies, [1889]).

7 Prominent among the numerous works are those by Dominique Vivant Denon, Voyage dans la basse et la haute Egypte, 2 vols., (Paris: l'Imprimerie de P. Didot 1802; new edition, 1989-90; La Commission des Sciences et des Arts, Description de l'Égypte, 24 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1809; reprinted. Cologne: Benedikt Taschen, 1994); Ippolito Baldessare Rossellini, I Monumenti dell'Egitto e della Nubia, 12 vols. (Pisa: Presso N. Capurro, 1832-44; reprinted. Geneva: Éditions de Belles-Lettres, 1977); Jean-François Champollion, Monuments de l'Égypte et de la Nubie (Paris: Imprimeur de l'Institut de France, 1835); Karl Lepsius, Denkmäler aus Aegyptien und Aethiopien, 12 vols. (Berlin, Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1849-59; reprinted. Geneva: Éditions de Belles-Lettres, 1972) in ancient Egypt and in the Near East by Claudius Rich, Austen Layard, Paul Emile Botta, Henry Rawlinson, Ernest de Sarzec, Jacques and Jane Dieulafoy; see bibliography for titles.

8 Jane Dieulafoy, Parysatis, a drama in three acts with music by Camille Saint-Saëns (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1890).

9 Charles Blanc, C. Voyage dans la haute Egypte, (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1876), 163.

10 Owen Jones, The Grammar of Ornament (London: Day & Son, 1856), Charles Blanc, Grammaire des arts du dessin (Paris 1867), J. van Vloten, Aesthetica of Schoonheidskunde [Aesthetics or knowledge of beauty] (Deventer: A. ter Gunne, 1865).

11 A study of this literature and the perception of the art and architecture by influential European tastemakers would make an important contribution.

12 Erik Iversen, The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs: in European Tradition (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), 94-99; for Kircher's widespread influence see Christiane Ziegler, "From One Egyptomania to Another: The Legacy of Roman Antiquity," Egypt in Western Art; for Kircher's Egyptian collection in Rome see Enrichetta Leospo, "Athanasius Kircher und das Museo Kircheriano," Europa, 58-70.

13 Charles Chassé, The Nabis and Their Period, trans. by Michael Bullock (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 94. The Jesuit Father Kreitmaier found:

This art does not set out to spread the doctrine by pictorial means, as was the aim of the stained-glass windows at a time when the cathedrals were too badly lit, both from within and from without, for the public -- most of whom could in any case not read -- to follow the service in the missals. The art of Beuron, on the contrary, does not allow itself to moralize or to aim at the conversion of man. Conceived with very noble gratitude to the Deity and their understanding of Him. That is why the high ecclesiastical authorities distrusted the art of Beuron, which was useless as propaganda. Kreitmaier wrote a treatise on the art of Beuron; ibid., 111-12.

14 And eventually Lenz's manuscript disappeared. Ibid., 47, 93, 95, 97.

15 Pierre Lenz, L'Esthétique de Beuron, trans. by Paul Sérusier (Paris: Bibliothèque de l'Occident, 1905).

16 Émile Bernard, Camille Pissarro, Alexei von Jawlensky, Bart van der Leek, and Jan Toorop are some of the artists who were familiar with Desiderian art. Moreover, the School of Beuron artists were invited to exhibit at the Secession Exhibition in Vienna; Chassé, Nabis, 101.

17 Father Kreitmeier quoted in Chasse, Nabis, 112.

18 Ibid.

19 Richard Wagner, "Religion und Kunst", Bayreuther Blätter, (October 1880) reprint of Richard Wagner's Prose Works vol. VI trans. by William Ashton Ellis (London: K. Paul, Rensch, Trubner, 1897); reprinted in Religion and Art (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 213.

20 Robert Pincus-Witten, Occult Symbolism in France: Joséphin Péladan and the Salons de la Rose-Croix (New York and London: Garland, 1976), 80-82, 92-101.

21 Geurt Imanse, John Steen, "Achtergronden van het Symbolisme" Kunstnaren der idee: Symbolistische tendenzen in Nederland ca 1880-1930 (The Hague: Haags Gemeentemuseum, 1978) 27, fn. 51

22 This field analyzes common features in world religions, their laws of evolution, structure, and origins without the esoteric angle of the theosophical interest in world religions. From 1873 to 1885, university chairs for the History of Religions or Religious Sciences were also formed in Geneva, in

France and Belgium; related periodicals appeared in Paris (Révue de l'Histoire des Religions) (1880), in Germany (Archive für Religionswissenschaft) (1898), and in Vienna (Anthropos) (1905), and also international conferences.

23 Mondrian and Jacoba van Heemskerck, and H. P. Berlage, K. P. C. de Bazel, J. L. M. Lawrentis, and H. J. M. Walenkamp.

24 Frederick Crews, "The Consolation of Theosophy," Part I The New York Review of Books 43:14 (September 19, 1996), 27 review of Peter Washington, Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: A History of the Mystics, Mediums, and Misfits who Brought Spiritualism to America, .

25 Caroline Boot and Marijke van der Heijden, "Gemeenschapskunst," Kunstnaar, 36. The revival of monumental art in the Netherlands is associated with the influential catholic architect P. J. H. Cuypers, with Dutch painters Antoon Derkinderen, Roland Holst, and Jan Toorop.

26 This concept of primitive art is different from its controversial tribal meaning in the twentieth century; William Rubin, "Primitivism" in 20th Century Art 2 vols. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 2-3.

27 Toorop inscribed the pastel Desire and Gratification, currently in Musée d'Orsay, "à mon ami Maurice Denis 1893"; Victorine Hefting, "Jan Toorop: Impressionist, symbolist, pointillist," J. Th. Toorop De jaren 1885 tot 1910 exh. cat. (Otterlo: Kröller Müller, 1979), 14.

Chapter I

Paul Gauguin

I. Introduction

Gauguin's interest in the ancient Near East and Egypt is two-fold -- stylistic and thematic -- and it is part of an elaborate personal myth about himself and his mission as an artist. The Egyptian and Persian motifs are also part of a new expressive and spiritual art he advocated¹ that would free artists from the realistic conventions of the Academy. To him, academic art was a dead end, as spiritually impoverished as the Western culture that produced it, and salvation lay in a return to principle guided by the example of the primitives.²

Gauguin ranked Egyptian and Persian art among the highest examples of primitive art, not only because of their artistic merit, but also because of their purity and origin at the dawn of civilization. Such thinking conflates occult notions about Egypt and Persia as the oldest sources of sacred wisdom with the philosophical concepts of Jean-Jacques Rousseau about primitive man. Thus Egyptian and Persian motifs served a dual purpose -- as aesthetic models for anti-

naturalistic art and as symbolic evocations of renewal -- in Gauguin's work. During the course of my research, a pattern emerged in his use of "Oriental" motifs in several self-portraits that indicated a personal significance and an insightful way to study Gauguin's Orientalism.

Scholars note the stylistic influence of and thematic references to Egypt and the Near East in almost three dozen works by the artist, which will be reviewed in section II. But surprisingly few writers examine the symbolic value of the ancient motifs, which his comments in Section III reveal. Gauguin's alter egos as various "Orientals" in his writings and paintings and a few other works are the subject of Section IV.

II. Review of scholarship on ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian influences on Gauguin's art

Vincent van Gogh was perhaps the first to note Gauguin's preference for the Persians in 1888, by reporting his friend's reference to Study for Self-Portrait, Les Misérables 1888 [I.1] as Persian. To van Gogh, Gauguin's distinctive style in the self-portrait was derivative from the art in the Dieulafoy galleries in the Louvre,³ named after the famous couple who excavated pre-Islamic Achaemenid art in Susa, in south-west Iran.

A. The influence of Persian art

The influence of Persian art on Gauguin's art is noted by Fereshteh Daftari,⁴ who corrects Merete Bodelsen's

misidentification of the Achaemenid lion relief in the Louvre as Assyrian. Bodelsen links van Gogh's remarks and these reliefs to the new stylistic feature -- the rendering of the human face and body as a sum of decorative expressive units -- in Study for Self-Portrait [I.1] and again in the drawing Crouching Tahitian Girl, c. 1892 [I.2].⁵

Daftari indicates the influence of Persian ceramics on Gauguin's work in clay, which in turn, as Bodelsen shows, influenced the artist's new style -- cloisonism and synthetism -- in his two-dimensional work as well.⁶ Moreover, Achaemenid reliefs may have spurred Gauguin to introduce color in his relief sculpture, writes Daftari. However, other ancient polychromatic mural and decorative art from Babylon, Egypt, and Assyria may have served as models for the artist as well. And finally, Daftari proposes Near Eastern cylinder seals as a possible source for similar motifs and compositional arrangements in Hina Te Fatou, c. 1891-1893 (Gray 96) and Que sommes-nous?, c. 1897 (Gray 126).⁷

Daftari's study of Persian influences on Gauguin's work does not sufficiently differentiate the pre-Islamic from subsequent Greek, Roman, and Islamic artistic eras in Iran, distinctions many Western readers may not be aware of. It is unclear, for example, whether the aforementioned Near Eastern seals from Persia are pre-Islamic or from the Greco-Roman period, and a similar problem applies to the noted references by Gauguin to Persian religions -- Zoroastrianism, Mithraism,

ple".¹¹ Within this context, his interest in pre-Islamic ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian art is not just a question of style but integral to his concept of the primitive.

Given the scope of Gauguin's Orientalism, this chapter on him is complementary to Daftari's research. While she concludes her investigation on the mystery surrounding the identity of Vehbi Zunbul Zade/Mani, the purported author of a treatise on painting, with the comment: "It is not unlike Gauguin to have identified himself with a persecuted painter-prophet, and, in the guise of an exotic spiritual leader surrounded by his disciples, to have exposed his own theories of art...",¹² my dissertation explores Gauguin's motives for choosing Mani over other personae and examines whether the Achaemenid-inspired style in Study for Self-Portrait has a symbolic value as well.

B. Works with Mesopotamian influences or themes

Gauguin identified the upper left-hand corner of the polychromatic wood relief Be in Love and You Will Be Happy, 1889 (Gray 79) [I.3] as "Babylon pourrie" in his letters.¹³ Jirat-Wasiutynski believes the reference serves to compare the decadence of the West with that of Babylon.¹⁴ Further analysis of this work reveals alternative interpretations with intriguing implications about Gauguin's Orientalism, to be discussed in Section IV.

Ziva Amishai-Maisels attributes a Neo-Assyrian inspiration for the awkwardly clutched animal in Savage

(Oviri), c. 1895 (Gray 113) [I.4], citing the guardian figures [I.5] in the Louvre,¹⁵ from the palace of Sargon II, which Gauguin undoubtedly had seen. Believed to be a self-portrait, Savage¹⁶ represents the symbolic death of Gauguin's civilized self and his rebirth as a "savage" Maori.¹⁷ Although the sculpture would have supported my hypothesis about Near Eastern motifs and Gauguin's primitivism, the alleged Neo-Assyrian inspiration in Savage is too indistinctive for further consideration.

Jirat-Wasiutynski proposes another Mesopotamian inspiration for a work by Gauguin, claiming that the artist derived the round shape of Wood Cylinder with Christ on the Cross, c. 1896-97 (Gray 125) from the Stele of Hammurabi in the Louvre. This is unlikely, because Jacques de Morgan discovered the stele in 1901 and shipped it to the museum sometime thereafter.¹⁸

C. Egyptian stylistic influences or thematic references

While five¹⁹ works by Gauguin reveal Persian and Mesopotamian influences, more than a dozen other images are noted for Egyptian influences. Barbara Landy and Vojtech Jirat-Wasiutynski are among the few to consider the iconographic significance of Gauguin's Egyptian motifs.

Gauguin knew Egyptian art and owned several reproductions of ancient reliefs, according to an anonymous source who reports Victor Segalen found several photographs of Egyptian wall paintings (and of other works of art) in 1938

among the artist's salvaged belongings in Tahiti. Only one photograph of guests at a banquet [I.6] from the painted tomb of the 18th Dynasty official Nebamun in Thebes (BM 37986) was reproduced in Bernard Dorival's article on the reproductions Gauguin owned.²⁰ He notes this image as a source for the artist's painting The Market (Ta Matete), 1892 (W 476) [I.7] because of similarities in the gestures and the poses of the figures and also in the rhythmic organization of pictorial elements.²¹ Christopher Gray adds another reproduction of a Theban wall painting from the British Museum found among Gauguin's possessions, which the writer identifies as the source for motifs in a wood panel carving (Gray 123).²²

Barbara Landy observes the formal correspondences between Gauguin's ceramic pot c. 1888 (Gray 49) -- protruding ears and a swollen stomach belted by a snake biting its own tail -- with an Egyptian limestone statue of Bes in the Louvre. In addition to finding a Peruvian inspiration for the pot, she thinks that Gauguin adapted the caryatid figure of the Egyptian Bes for it, by using the feline tail, an attribute of Bes, as a handle. Furthermore, the writer suspects a symbolic purpose in Gauguin's choice of Bes. The fact that the face on the pot resembles Mme Schuffenecker, a former lover of Gauguin's whom he called a harpy, leads Landy to interpret the ceramic as either a grotesque caricature of Mme Schuffenecker or an expressive metaphor for temptation.²³

In support of her argument, Landy notes the artist's

reference to another (unidentified) pot as the "Cléopâtre pot" and that he was familiar with Barbey d'Aurevilly, Le bonheur dans le Crime, where the adultress-heroine is compared to "la grande Isis noire du Musée Egyptien."²⁴ Landy's observations show precedents linking Egyptian motifs to the theme of temptation, which recurs in Gauguin's Self-Portrait with Halo.

Richard Field adds to the list of works with Egyptian influence, including Her Name Is Vaïraūmati (Vaïraūmati Tei Oa, (W 450) 1892 [I.9]), and The Seed of the Areois (Te Aa no Areois, (W 451) 1892 [I.10]). He also disproves the Egyptian inspiration in Mysterious Water, (W 498) 1892 [and variations on the image in other media, such as a relief carving and works on paper] after discovering an identical image in a photograph of a Tahitian drinking water.²⁵

Although Field records other Egyptian art Gauguin may have seen or owned in reproduction, the information is insufficiently documented to be of use other than to suggest Gauguin's visual repertoire of such art was larger than the surviving evidence.²⁶ Field's sensitive analysis of Egyptian influences on Gauguin's art is purely stylistic, which is surprising, because he considers the symbolic value of other non-Western sources in Gauguin's work, in relation to the artist's thoughts on primitivism, on Polynesian art and religion. Field's opinion that Egyptian art had no symbolic role in Gauguin's imaginary resurrection of Tahiti, "the central theme of [his] most important works in all media and the raison

d'être of Noa Noa,²⁷ needs to be reevaluated in view of contrary indications in three paintings: Her Name Is Vairaümati, The Seed of the Areois, and The Market.

In the exhibition catalogue Gauguin and Exotic Art, Field proposes additional works with Egyptian influence, including the enormous seated idol Hina in Amusements (Arearea), 1892 (W 468), Thanks to Hina (Hina Maruru), 1893 (W 500) and related images, such as the woodcut Thanks (Maruru), 1894 (Guérin 23). «US 1»

²⁸ Field attributes the walking figure, the fish, and the papyrus flower in the woodcut L'univers est créé (Guérin 25) to Egyptian painted pottery and murals.²⁹ He also calls attention to Egyptian artistic traits in Gauguin's illustration of Maori myths.

Amishai-Maisels observes Egyptian motifs in Joan of Arc, c. 1889 (W 329), Ictus c. 1889, Parau Hina Tefatou (Words of Hina to Fatou) 1892, Last Supper 1897, Breton Calvary 1898-1899 (Gu 68) [I.22], Christmas Eve 1902-1903 [I.23], and Mother and Two Children with Cattle 1900 [I.24].³⁰ She notes the Theban painting Cattle [I.25] in the British Museum to be particularly important for the last three works she mentions, and another Theban painting of an unspecified hunting scene in the British Museum as a source for the figure of Joan of Arc. The famous Old Kingdom Red Scribe (N2290) in the Louvre is supposed to be a source for the watercolor Ictus, and the Theban painting of guests at a banquet [I.6] the one for the

gestures of Hina and Fatou in Words of Hina to Fatou [which Gauguin rendered in several versions and in different media]. Amishai-Maisels does not assign a symbolic role to the Egyptian motifs in her otherwise penetrating analysis of Gauguin's religious themes and primitivism.

Among the first to note a link between Gauguin's Egyptian style and spiritual themes is Jirat-Wasiutynski. He proposes a symbolic intention for the hieroglyphic style of Self-Portrait with Halo, 1889 [I.8] to portray Gauguin as a Magus, based on the perceived role of the artist as an initiate by his contemporaries and on the formal similarities with Egyptian art. Jirat-Wasiutynski's hypothesis about Gauguin's self-portrait needs to be reconciled with the conventional interpretation of the self-portrait as Lucifer,³¹ given the explicit symbols of temptation -- the halo, the snake, apples. These issues and other considerations will be discussed in Section IV.

Some of the author's comparisons with Egyptian art are problematic as well. In the absence of a specific Egyptian example or illustrated comparison for the long hair in Gauguin's self-portrait, Jirat-Wasiutynski's observation of the artist's hair as being represented in the manner of a ceremonial wig of Egyptian kings and court officials is too vague to be substantiated. The Egyptians rendered hair as a black and often textured form, as in the painting of Hathor and Sethos I [I.16] from Thebes, New Kingdom, c. 1306-1290

B.C., in the Louvre since 1829.³² Jirat-Wasiutynski's other comparison of the short snake, with protruding tongue held by Gauguin, to the Egyptian hieroglyph for the pharaoh on the Old Kingdom Stele of Djet, Dynasty I, c. 3200-2980 B.C., in the Louvre,³³ is unconvincing, because the museum only acquired it in 1904, the year after the artist died.³⁴ The writer's insight about the snake as a hieroglyphic sign, however, is important for another reason to be discussed in Section IV. And finally, the comparison of Gauguin's unusually rendered hand to that of the goddess Hathor in [I.16] is also unpersuasive.³⁵

More plausible, however, is the Egyptian sculpture of the Old Kingdom official Nekthorheb in the Louvre³⁶ that Jirat-Wasiutynski's proposes as a source for the kneeling pose of Gauguin's ceramic Femme Noire, 1889 (Gray 91).

At least thirty works³⁷ by Gauguin are noted for Egyptian or ancient Near Eastern motifs, which is not surprising in view of the artist's high regard for the Orient.

III. Documentation of Gauguin's interest in ancient Oriental art and his notion of Primitivism

A. Copies of Persian and Egyptian Art.

Gauguin copied Persian and Egyptian motifs on two pages in the Album Walter at the Louvre.³⁸ One shows a double-headed bull capital [I.12 a] from the Palace of Darius at Susa and a detail of the decorative folds around its eye. The capital had been brought to the Louvre [I.12b] and also appears on

the frontispiece of the Exposition de 1889 Missions Archéologiques... brochure [I.14]. At first glance, Gauguin's profile rendering of the ear, horn, and eye, and frontal muzzle of the bull are curiously plant-like forms, whose loose arrangement on the page evokes a rebus.

On the back of this page, and probably chronologically later, he copied the image of an as yet unidentified Egyptian figure [I.12c]. A minimum of lines define the noble profile of a man, and the shading around the lips and nostril suggests that a sculpture rather than a painting was his point of departure.

B. Ancient Oriental art and Gauguin's notion of Primitivism

Gauguin considered Egyptian, Persian, and Assyrian art as Oriental, and Oriental art as primitive art. For him, primitive art appears to be a catch-all for non-Western and pre-Renaissance art and an extension of the savage persona he cultivated for himself since 1887.³⁹ On one level Gauguin's primitivism was in reaction to "civilized" Europe and the Academy, which in his opinion reflected the decadence of Western society;⁴⁰ but on a realistic level, his primitivism was a scrim, an escapist fantasy, and a denial of his alienation, lack of success, and impoverishment.⁴¹

Nevertheless, Gauguin's criticism of the Academy is not to be underestimated, as his repeated caustic remarks about academic painters indicate.⁴² He detested their realistic art, preferring instead to explore the expressive and evoca-

tive potential of line and color.⁴³ Freeing painting from its academic failings became a cause he championed and wished posterity to remember him for.⁴⁴

Gauguin couched his mission in utopian terms, wishing to purify Western art and society with inspiration from the primitive. The notion of the purity of primitive man in contrast to the decadence of European society attests to the pervasiveness of Rousseau's influence in French thought. Gauguin, however, constructed his own mythic primitive, with inevitable inconsistencies. The culture of Brittany (whose inhabitants were Westerners like him), of the pre-Columbian Americas, the Orient, and Polynesia all served as "primitive" sources for Gauguin. He called Cézanne, whom he admired greatly, an Oriental from the Levant.⁴⁵ And he thought that painters of ancient times were happy because they had no Academy.⁴⁶ Which ancient painters did Gauguin mean, one wonders -- Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, or Roman? Artists in all of these cultures followed prescribed aesthetic canons.

For Gauguin the term "primitive" meant primal, close to the origins, uncivilized, savage.⁴⁷ In primitive art he found "sustenance and vital strength," and studying Egyptian art made him feel healthy, whereas Greek art disgusted him, gave him "a vague feeling of death without the hope of rebirth."⁴⁸ The contrast implies that hope for rebirth was to be found in Egyptian art, an important point he reiterates several times.

Later, in Tahiti, Gauguin in effect used Egyptian art to portray Vaïraūmati, the consort of the god Oro in Maori mythology, in the symbolic rebirth of the Maori.

Gauguin viewed Egyptian art as an ideal artistic model for reasons he explained in a speech to Symbolist writers who had gathered in his honor:

Primitive art proceeds from the soul and uses nature. So-called refined art proceeds from sensuality and serves nature. Nature is the servant of the former and the mistress of the latter. But the servant cannot forget her origin and degrades the artist by allowing him to adore her. This is how we have fallen into the abominable error of naturalism which began with the Greeks of Pericles. Since then the more or less great artists have been only those who in one way or another reacted against this error. But their reactions have been only awakenings of memory, gleams of common sense in a movement of decadence which... has lasted uninterrupted for centuries. Truth is to be found in purely cerebral art, that is primitive art - the most erudite of all - that of Egypt. There lies the principle. The only possible salvation from our present misery is a reasoned and frank return to principle. And this return is the necessary action to be accomplished by symbolism in poetry and in art.⁴⁹

In other words, the main advantage of Egyptian art over naturalistic art lay in its expression of the imagination and not the simulation of the natural world. Created by the human psyche at the dawn of time, Egyptian art was closer to the truth and a model for salvation from the erroneous path of Western art. The necessary shift from Greek to Egyptian art as a return to principle was a message that the Symbolist writers in Gauguin's audience endorsed.⁵⁰

It is interesting to note the inaccuracies in Gauguin's notion of Egypt as a primitive ideal. He distinguished Egyptian art from "the arts of fully developed civilizations" of

the West, for example, as if the Egyptian civilization was underdeveloped. For Gauguin, European academic art lacked merit and was repetitive,⁵¹ and he overlooked the fact that Egyptian art could be just as repetitive. In any event, he had changed his mind about Egyptian art by 1897, when he advised his painter friend Georges-Daniel de Monfreid always to look at the Persians and the Cambodians, "and to a small extent the Egyptians."⁵²

Gauguin made many more statements about Egypt and its art than about Mesopotamian or Persian art. But his comments about Achaemenid Persian art are his only recorded comments about abstraction observed in a specific work of art. Impressed by the decorative abstraction of Achaemenid art, Gauguin assimilated it in a self-portrait for reasons proposed next.

IV. Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian motifs in Gauguin's alter egos

A. The role of Pre-Islamic Persia in Gauguin's writing: The aesthetic treatise of Vehbi Zunbul Zadi/Mani

One of Gauguin's earliest alter egos was an oriental painter-teacher, Vehbi Zunbul Zadi/Mani, through whom the artist voiced his own aesthetic principles in a handwritten text, "Tiré du livre des métiers de Vehbi-Zunbul-Zade. Ainsi parle Mani, le peintre donneur de préceptes", c. 1886.⁵³

H.R. Rookmaaker notes analogies between this manuscript and Nietzsche's Thus Spake Zarathustra, published in 1883.⁵⁴ Indeed, Gauguin's subtitle "Thus spake Mani" echoes

the book's title; but, instead of Zarathustra, Gauguin chose another Persian prophet -- Mani. The historical Mani, known as Manes by the Greeks and Romans, was the founder of the Manichaeian religion in pre-Islamic Persia and he was also famous as an artist. Born around A.D. 216 in Ctesiphon, Persia, he preached a new faith, synthesized from Gnosticism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Marcionism, during the reign of the pre-Islamic Persian king Shapur I (A.D. 241-272) of the Sassanian dynasty.⁵⁵ Although the Persian prophet rejected the Old Testament and parts of the New, he claimed to be the "Apostle of Christ" and a descendant of Buddha, Zoroaster, Hermes, and Plato. His lineage is the same as that of the initiates cited in books on the esoteric tradition, such as Edouard Schuré's The Great Initiates.⁵⁶

The name switch from Zadi to Mani in Gauguin's manuscript and the location of the story in the Levant, not in the Occident,⁵⁷ make Gauguin's autobiographical parable relevant to the artist's interest in the pre-Islamic Near East. It is in character for Gauguin to think of art in spiritual terms and to present himself as a martyred messenger of a new art.⁵⁸ He cast himself as Christ in works such as the ceramic Cup in the Form of a Head (c. 1887, Gray; 1889, Bodelsen) and the painted Self-Portrait as Christ in Gethsemane, 1889 (W 326).⁵⁹

Mani, who died a martyr around A. D. 276, was a suitable choice for Gauguin's alter ego. For one, Mani was renowned as an artist as well as a prophet -- an appealing

combination for Gauguin -- and Mani's critical stance toward Christianity would also have appealed to the artist. Furthermore, the prophet's dualist philosophy about the realm of God -- spiritual enlightenment and light -- and that of Satan -- materialism and darkness -- brings to mind Gauguin's dual portrayal of himself as both saint and sinner.

The Manichaeans believed that a corrupt will came about from contact with matter, and this same notion is found in Gauguin's prescription for the new art. It must nourish the soul,⁶⁰ he said, and must be freed from material reality; art was a matter of divine revelation and must not be burdened with the exact rendering of material reality. Gauguin advised his painter friend Schuffenecker that art was an abstraction and that one should extract "from nature while dreaming before it, and think more of the creation than of the result." This was "the only means of ascending toward God in doing as our Divine Master does, creating."⁶¹

Abstraction, therefore, was for Gauguin an expression of divine art, and accordingly he chose a prophet to announce the new art. That he selected a Persian heretic rather than, say, Girolamo Savonarola or any other religious martyr, to be the messenger of the new art may reflect the artist's enchantment with ancient Persia, perhaps because of its legacy in the occult. This manifests itself again, I believe, in Study for Self-Portrait, Les Misérables [I.1].⁶²

B. The influence of Achaemenid art in Study for Self-

Portrait, Les Misérables

Not only did Gauguin present the harbinger of the new art in his treatise as a Persian, but the new style of the study in fig. [I.1] was also inspired by Persian art. He explained to van Gogh and Schuffenecker that he had depicted himself as Jean Valjean, the persecuted protagonist in Victor Hugo's novel Les Misérables. Amishai-Maisels, however, believes that the artist conflated his growing identification with Christ and that of Jean Valjean in the Self-Portrait, Les Misérables.⁶³ While this may be true in the painting, in the study [I.1] he may have initially merged the characters of Jean Valjean and Mani. If, as Amishai-Maisels argues, Gauguin chose Christ as an alter ego under the influence of van Gogh, who had selected the Eastern alter ego of a Buddhist monk for his,⁶⁴ then it seems that Gauguin would have chosen a figure more exotic than Christ. Mani seems a likely candidate: he was Oriental and a martyr, a saint and a sinner, and Gauguin had already used him as an alter-ego messenger of the new art in his above-mentioned treatise.

Stylistic details in the sketch for the self-portrait and Gauguin's comments about it to his friends tend to support this hypothesis about the conflated identities of Jean Valjean and Mani as the artist's alter ego in the sketch [I.1]. In letters to friends, Gauguin writes that he depicted himself as Jean Valjean and that the fictive character's plight as an outcast reminded Gauguin of his own as an

Impressionist painter; he also calls attention to the new stylistic feature -- "complete abstraction" in his words -- around the nose and eyes. "The design around the eyes and nose resembling floral patterns of Persian carpets recapitulate an abstract and symbolic art."⁶⁵

Moreover, thick, adjoining eyebrows are a common Persian feature, and would have been appropriate for envisaging Mani.⁶⁶ If he was representing himself as Mani, then the Persian-inspired style was appropriate for the meaning of the image as an artist struggling outside the academic mainstream; lastly, the non-Western inspiration suited his preferred identity as a primitive.

Although he likened the stylization around the eyes to Persian carpets, actually Gauguin had borrowed the floral pattern from the newly installed lion friezes from the palace of Darius I at the Louvre [I.11].⁶⁷ Gauguin was most impressed by the decorative abstraction of these reliefs:

Why real roses, real leaves? What **poetry** is evoked by **decoration**... It requires a tremendous **imagination** to **decorate** any surface tastefully and an art more **abstract** than the **servile imitation of nature**.
Examine closely the bas-reliefs of the lions in the Dieulafoy galleries at the Louvre. I maintain that enormous genius was required to imagine flowers that are the muscles of animals or muscles that are flowers. All of the **mystic** and **dreamy Orient** is to be found in them.⁶⁸

It is remarkable how many key words in the quoted passage (my emphasis in bold print) are the ones Gauguin used to communicate his new artistic direction to his friends;⁶⁹ they are, I think, a measure of how closely Achaemenid art came to his

ideal.⁷⁰

Gauguin had studied the decorative verve of this ancient art closely, as indicated in his two copies of patterns around the eye of the double-headed bull capital from Susa [I.12a].⁷¹ But exactly when he could have sketched these Persian works is uncertain. Neither he nor van Gogh were in Paris when the Dieulafoy galleries opened to the public in the summer of 1888. Gauguin spent most of that year in Brittany, and was then in Arles with van Gogh, yet the latter was quite specific when he identified the source in the Dieulafoy galleries for Gauguin's self-portrait.⁷²

Gauguin probably heard about the Dieulafoy excavation in Persia when the cargo first arrived in Paris in 1886, and he may have seen the elaborate engraving in L'Illustration [I.13].⁷³ While this engraving shows the floral design of the lion's eye that Gauguin liked so much, most of the other details, including the lion's stunning tail, are inaccurate when compared to the original lions [I.11]. The article accompanying the illustration referred to ancient Persia as "primitive" and described Dieulafoy's expedition as a search for the origins of the decorative arts.⁷⁴ In view of Gauguin's concern with things ancient, Persian, and decorative, he would have noticed the article after his return to Paris from Brittany.⁷⁵

While the sketch for his self-portrait [I.1] marks a new stylistic direction, it was an extension of his experi-

ments with Émile Bernard that led to synthetism or cloisonism a few months earlier in Pont-Aven. However, even at this point Bernard reported that Egyptian, Assyrian, and Gothic art were models for their new art:

It would be the art of our times by virtue of its simplicity....It concerned the reconstruction of a system, a style, like that of the Gothic, the Egyptians, the Assyrians; a type of modern hieratism, adaptable to our architecture and our homes.⁷⁶

Clearly ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian art inspired novel ways to use color, line, space, and compositional arrangement, in addition to the regularly cited sources in Japanese and Medieval art.

The new art -- called Synthetism, Idéist, or Symbolist -- was unofficially on view on the grounds of the 1889 Exposition Universelle in the exhibition "Groupe Impressionniste et Synthétiste" at the Café Volpini.⁷⁷ A model of the facade of the Achaemenid palace of Susa, Persia, was featured at the Exposition Universelle in an ethnographic and anthropological display of treasures discovered by French explorers.⁷⁸ Highlights of this display were depicted in the frontispiece of an exhibition pamphlet [I.14], which shows the palace of Darius in the center, behind the Victory of Samothrace. Perhaps it was this exhibit that inspired Gauguin to write admiringly about the Louvre Achaemenid lions in his review of the 1889 Exposition Universelle.⁷⁹

In sum, Gauguin probably saw the illustration of the lion relief in L'Illustration sometime between 30 October 1886

and 8 October 1888, the date of the self-portrait. Sometime after he returned from Arles in 8 May 1889, he saw the original lion relief in the Louvre, which he reviewed in 4 July 1889.

Gauguin's review also presented for the first time in print his new sensibility in painting and poetry. The Symbolist poets-cum-critics proclaimed him the leading Symbolist painter,⁸⁰ because some, such as Albert Aurier, thought along the same lines as Gauguin. In Aurier's 1891 manifesto for Symbolist painting, he distinguished Symbolism from Impressionism and Realism, and presented five guidelines for the new art, and upheld Egyptian art as an ideal, as Gauguin had done in the previous year. The new art, according to Aurier, was idéiste -- concerned with truth to ideas as opposed to truth to nature; symboliste -- concerned with ideas expressed by symbolic forms rather than illusionistic representations; synthétique -- based on artificial synthesis of plastic elements; subjective -- dealing with expressive rather than mimetic forms; and décorative -- depending on non-illusionistic compositions in the manner of the art of "the Egyptians and quite probably the Greeks and the Primitives."⁸¹

For Aurier the decorative nature and abstract sign language of the new art revealed the primordial idea of an object as in a sublime alphabet of ideographic writing, which he likened to Egyptian hieroglyphs. Idéiste art, he maintained, had to be justified with abstract and complex argu-

ments to "our decadent civilization," because the latter had forgotten all the initial revelation. He valued the new art as authentic and absolute, because it was identical to primitive art, which "was divined by the instinctive geniuses of humanity's first ages."⁸²

The parallel views of Aurier and Gauguin are worth noting for insights about the reception of Egyptian art at the turn of the century. Both viewed Egyptian art as primitive art and as a model for the new art, preferring its anti-naturalistic qualities to realistic art, which they renounced as decadent; and both thought that salvation lay in a return to truth and divine revelation embodied in primitive works of art.

Despite all the discussions about the ideal model of Egyptian art, it is noteworthy that the abstract patterns of Achaemenid art inspired Gauguin before any Egyptian sources. And he considered abstraction a release from material reality and a means of creating spiritual art. Therefore, by casting himself as the painter-priest Mani, he assumed the persona of a divinely inspired Oriental initiate with the pure knowledge of "humanity's first ages." Gauguin in the guise of Mani in Study for Self-Portrait, Les Misérables, would have represented himself as a Persian, a primitive, a prophet of a new spirituality, an outlawed martyr, and an artist. If this hypothesis is true, it would make Gauguin's Persian-inspired new style not only innovative, but symbolically relevant to

the picture as well.

C. Innovation and decadence: the role of ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian motifs.

The following year, Gauguin alluded to the Orientalist myth of Babylonian decadence in another ingenious self-portrait, a polychrome wood relief Be in Love and You Will Be Happy, 1889 [I.3]. Gauguin identified the upper left area as Babylon and the upper right corner as the lair of a lying seducer, and in the center he located the woman he desired. The artist further explained that the fox represents perversity and that the other figures admonish the woman not to believe the demon's luring advice: "Be in love and you will be happy."⁸³

Nude and reclining women appear in the area of Babylon; the head of a brunette, which may or may not belong to the reclining figure, breaks the boundary line and looks toward the large nude in the middle area. Her hand is pulled into Babylon by the demon, who reaches beyond the frame of the right compartment into the one on the left; his left thumb dangles from his mouth and his hand extends into the center area, pointing toward the large nude. Gauguin signed his name on the traversal directly beneath the mask-like face with a broken nose, which identifies the demon as a self-portrait.

Thus Gauguin's alter ego in Be in Love and You Will Be Happy is a demon of temptation and the scene of seduction is Babylon. Of all the places in the world, Babylon would be

a peculiar choice were it not for its pejorative Biblical reputation as a city of sin and decadence:

And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus⁸⁴

In Gauguin's wood relief, it is the demon who is tempting the woman and not the other way around. Perhaps the artist invoked Babylon to create his "own little Sardanapalus",⁸⁵ conflating two popularly represented Orientalist fantasies about sexual excess, violence, and death in that part of the world.

Whatever the specific reasons were, the allusion to "decadent Babylon" appears to pertain to the persona of the artist as a sinner.

The risqué subject and brazen presentation of Be in Love and You Will Be Happy have been compared to Manet's Olympia and Delacroix's Death of Sardanapulus, but the disjunctive narrative and compositional structure of this wood relief, which Gauguin favored as one of his best sculptures, suggest Egyptian and Persian precedents. The tripartite composition in Gauguin's work corresponds to a similar one in the Egyptian 3rd Intermediary Period painted object stele of a priest playing a harp, c. 1070-712 [I.15], in the Louvre since 1826. Both compositions depict unattached body parts in the two small areas at the top and place an inscription above the large central area with two figures; their bodies bracket the composition with the larger of the two in the left corner,

carefully aligned within the rectilinear border; symbolic animals and stylized flowers represent additional similarities.

But there are also major differences between Gauguin's work and the Egyptian image. In the former, the figures are more naturalistic. Gauguin modeled and foreshortened the bodies and posed them in three-quarter views, unlike the flattened, angular figures in the Egyptian painting. Furthermore, Gauguin's composition is crowded and chaotic, while the Egyptian painting is ordered.

Be in Love and You Will Be Happy displays other features in common with ancient Egyptian and Persian mural art, such as the use of color on the wood-relief, though with a different expressive intent.⁸⁶ And finally, the leaf-like patterns on the knuckles of the large woman's left hand bring to mind Gauguin comments about the decorative Achaemenid lion reliefs in the Louvre. Even the disregard for naturalistic scale of the figures may have been reinforced by examples in ancient Egyptian or Near Eastern art, although this quality exists in many other sources as well.

The demon persona of Gauguin in Be in Love and You Will Be Happy is unusually unredeemed compared to his other Orientalist alter egos. Perhaps he offset his indulgence in this picture by his divine persona in Self-Portrait as Christ in Gethsemane, 1889; a sketch of the painting appears below the one for the wood relief composition [I.17] in his letter

to Vincent.⁸⁷ Of the two works, the sculpture is by far the more innovative. Because Gauguin recycled an Orientalist myth but in a novel context and in an original style, also inspired by Persian and Egyptian sources, the wood relief is a notable example of the new Orientalism.

D. Egyptian stylistic influences in Gauguin's paintings

1. Self-Portrait with Halo, 1889 (W 323)

Ancient Egyptian motifs in the unusual style and iconography of this painted self-portrait [I.8] suggest a persona for Gauguin as both initiate⁸⁸ and devil. The allusion to Gauguin exists not only in the face, but also in the snake hieroglyph he holds in front of him. It resembles the cobra rather than the horned viper in Egyptian hieroglyphs encircled in fig. [I.18].⁸⁹ The dark curves of the rearing snake in the self-portrait echo the "G" in the artist's prominent initials on the left, juxtaposing alphabetic and hieroglyphic forms.

Gauguin's disembodied head⁹⁰ and hand may have been inspired by two other hieroglyphs -- of a face and a hand -- which admittedly are not identical to their counterpart in Egyptian hieroglyphs but close enough to show similar underlying concepts. Two hieroglyphs of such faces appear near the crown of the goddess Hathor [I.16] and a cobra hieroglyph is on the far right above the head of Sethos. The hand hieroglyph in this picture resembles the shape of Gauguin's hand in Self-Portrait with Halo more so than the Egyptian way of rendering

hands in their mural art. But the hand hieroglyph is written usually horizontally, unlike the vertical position of Gauguin's hand in the picture. Despite these minor differences between the self-portrait and hieroglyphic texts, an underlying compositional similarity exists in the arrangement of disconnected abstract and naturalistic signs afloat on a flat upright plane.

Gauguin's simulation of hieroglyphs would not have been lost on his circle of friends and acquaintances.⁹¹ He painted the self-portrait in the company of artist-disciples and admirers,⁹² many of whom were familiar with the occult to varying degrees. Among them, Sérusier idolized Gauguin, as his mentor and prophet of new artistic revelations, and founded the Nabiim -- a Hebrew word for prophets -- a group of artists inspired by Gauguin's concepts.

Aurier recognized Gauguin's new style as hieroglyphic and ascribed special powers to the artist,

the man who, because of his innate genius and acquired virtues, can in the face of nature read the abstract significance, the **primordial** and underlying idea of every object, the man who, by his intelligence and his skill, knows how to use objects as a **sublime alphabet** to express the Ideas that are revealed to him, would he truly be the Artist?

Is he not, rather, a genuine scholar, a supreme formulator who knows to write Ideas in the manner of a mathematician? Is he not some kind of algebraist of Ideas, and is his work not a marvelous equation, or rather a page of ideographic writing that recalls the **hieroglyphic texts of obelisks from ancient Egypt?**⁹³

The words and phrases (in bold print is my emphasis) of Aurier's exalted comments tacitly acknowledge Gauguin as an

initiate and his art as divine revelation.

Aurier called Gauguin's new style écriture du signe and stressed its paradigmatic shift from representing the material, exoteric world to expressing the absolute, esoteric reality -- the symbolic Idea -- of worldly objects.⁹⁴ His choice of words -- "ideographic writing" instead of "pictographic writing" -- and his tendency to capitalize "ideas" underscore the "idéiste" or conceptual basis of the new art instead of the facsimile reproduction of objective reality.

Gauguin had already pondered the potential of art as language in 1885,⁹⁵ which is particularly close and often combined in the art and writing of ancient Egypt. It is likely that Gauguin found the Egyptian pictographic forms instructive for him to combine art and language⁹⁶ and further his research in abstraction.

But there still remains the problem of reconciling the proposed identity of Gauguin as initiate with that of him as devil. Given the esoteric context, Hermes seems to be a perfect candidate for Gauguin's alter ego as both saint and sinner. By the sixteenth century the mythic stature of Hermes had grown to such an extent that he was thought to have existed as a real person, a priest or a prophet as ancient as Moses.⁹⁷ The Greeks identified him with Thoth, the Egyptian God of wisdom and inventor of hieroglyphs, but he also came to be known as Hermes Trismegistus or Mercurius.

Spiritualists in the esoteric tradition revered

Hermes as the initiate from Egypt, but Christians feared him as an accomplice of the devil. St. Augustine, for one, called him the confederate of the Devil because of his supposed authorship of a text on magic and for advocating idolatry. Since classical times, Hermes was thought to have authored the practical Hermetica, concerning astrology, magic, and the occult sciences, and the philosophical Hermetica, regarding the creation of the world, matters of the soul, and Egyptian religion. The unquestioned Egyptian pedigree of Hermes validated the Hermetic tradition as authentic, pure, and close to original truth, and Hermes as one of the two ancient sources of arcane wisdom.⁹⁸

Both the controversial reputation of Hermes and his Egyptian pedigree would have appealed to Gauguin as an alter ego, and he would have learned about Hermes from his symbolist friends and Sérusier. The date of this self-portrait is also the year Schuré's influential book, The Great Initiates, was published, presenting Hermes as the initiate from Egypt.⁹⁹ If Gauguin were indeed presenting himself as Hermes Trismegistus, then the Egyptian references in the style and subject-matter would once again be integrated. For to present himself as Hermes, the divine messenger and formulator of pictographic writing, would accord with Gauguin's perceived role as the visionary of the new spiritual art and inventor of a new ideographic expression.

2. Her Name is Vaïraūmati(Vaïraūmati tei oa)

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2. Her Name is Vaïraümati(Vaïraümati tei oa)

1892 (W 450) [I.9]

3. The Seed of the Areois (Te aa no AREOIS)

1892 (W 451) [I.10]

4. The Market (Ta matete) 1892 (W 476) [I.7]¹⁰⁰

The myth of the primordial purity of ancient Egypt also pertains to the symbolic role of the Egyptian-inspired features in Gauguin's Tahitian paintings from 1892, such as The Market, Her Name is Vairaūmati and The Seed of the Areois. Although these hieratic works show the artist's attempts to come to grips with primitivism, according to Field, "they did not attempt the complete integration of meaning, form and nature..."¹⁰¹

On the contrary, the esoteric content of these works reveals Gauguin's careful synthesis of meaning, form, and nature to depict the "primitive" Maori of his imagination. Disappointed at finding neither the primitive Maori nor the unspoiled paradise he had hoped to encounter in Tahiti,¹⁰² Gauguin compensated for the tarnished reality by reinventing the Maori in his art.¹⁰³ The Market represents a scene from daily life, and the other two paintings, Her Name is Vairaūmati and The Seed of the Areois, are based on the foundation myth of the Maori.

Symbolically linking the Maori to the ancient Egyptians may seem far-fetched today, but it was proposed by others in the nineteenth century. Gauguin recounted the story

of Oro and Vaïraūmati in his illustrated manuscript on Polynesian mythology, "Ancien Culte Mahorie" (c. 1893), and he retold it in his autobiographical book Noa Noa, where he credited Tehura, his thirteen-year-old wife, as his source on Tahitian theology.¹⁰⁴ Actually Gauguin's chief reference was J.A. Moerenhout's Voyages aux îles du Grand Océan (1837), whose Maori text and French translation of the Marquesan cosmogony Gauguin copied verbatim into "Ancien Culte Mahorie".¹⁰⁵ The artist omitted Moerenhout's description of the secret cult of the Areois as "an initiation into the mysteries of the god named Oro," which he likened to the secret sects of "the Eleussian mysteries in Greece and of Sais in Egypt (the mysteries of Ceres and Isis)."¹⁰⁶ Another nineteenth-century author, Gerald Massey, a British theosophist and poet, proclaimed Egypt as the birthplace of world myths, mysteries, symbols, religion and languages, including those of "the Hebrew, Akkado-Assyrian and Maori" in A Book of the Beginnings.¹⁰⁷

These authors may have reinforced,¹⁰⁸ if not inspired, Gauguin's decision to depict the renewal of the Areois in Her Name is Vaïraūmati and The Seed of the Areois in an Egyptian style. In addition to linking Vaïraūmati, the progenitor of the Areois, visually and symbolically to ancient Egypt, Gauguin implicitly connected Oro to himself and thereby indirectly to Toth/Hermes.

Gauguin explained in Noa Noa, for example, that Oro

was looking for a wife to create a superior race, a claim that Moerenhout never made in his book.¹⁰⁹ Although the Areois were the most privileged in Maori society, the fictional detail reflects Gauguin's project to resurrect in his art the pre-colonial primitive Maori, who lived harmoniously in beautiful, unspoiled Tahiti. Furthermore, William Rubin notes that the story of Oro's love for the beautiful young Vaïraūmati in Noa Noa echoes an earlier passage, where Gauguin described his own infatuation with his attractive teenage wife Tehura. It is Tehura's face, Rubin notes, that Gauguin portrayed as Vaïraūmati's in The Seed of the Areois. The implication, according to Rubin, is that Gauguin was casting himself as Oro.¹¹⁰ Now, it seems, Gauguin's divine alter egos -- Mani, Christ, and Thoth-Hermes -- culminate in Oro, and once again the stylistic inspiration contributes to the symbolic synthesis of the image.

By Gauguin's own admission to Sérusier, discovering Maori myths in Moerenhout's book overstimulated his imagination:

What religion the ancient oceanic religion. What wonder! It is overworking my mind and all the possibilities will be certainly frightening. If one doubted my old works in a living room, what will they say about the new ones.¹¹¹

Accompanying his enthusiastic report was a sketch for Vaïraūmati [I.19], the central figure in Her Name is Vaïraūmati and The Seed of the Areois, which is clearly Egyptian and

adapted from the Theban banquet scene [I.6], which Gauguin owned in reproduction in Tahiti.

The sketch is identical to Her Name is Vaïraūmati, except for the unidentified man behind her;¹¹² in both sketch and painting, Gauguin portrayed Vaïraūmati in an ordinary setting, smoking a cigarette in front of a hut and a marquesan-inspired sculpture. The prosaic subject of a young girl smoking outdoors is similar to the women chatting in The Market, in contrast to ceremonial theme and iconic nature of The Seed of the Areois.

Although Vaïraūmati is in a virtually identical pose in The Seed of the Areois, Gauguin eliminated the hut, the sculpture, and the man behind her in the earlier painting, and instead placed her in an open, uninhabited, lush landscape. Her face is now in three-quarter view and her proportions are elongated. Replacing the cigarette in her hand is a germinating kernel, an allusion to the new life she bears within and the regeneration of the revered Areois.¹¹³

Such a symbolic young nude in a similar pose and setting brings to mind Puvis de Chavannes's painting Hope, 1872 [I.20].¹¹⁴ While it is tempting to consider Hope as Gauguin's point of departure for the Vaïraūmati paintings, he may well have begun with an Egyptian-inspired figure from the outset and then added details from Puvis' painting, such as the position of the feet, the cloth-covered mound in an open landscape.

The Vaïraümati figure is mostly inspired by Egyptian rather than Puvis' art. Unlike the relaxed pose of Hope, where the young woman leans on one arm, Vaïraümati sits erect with her shoulders, back, leg, and arms axially aligned. While the figure in Hope holds her arms away from her body, Vaïraümati presses hers against her body. Her hands are also rendered in an Egyptian manner: Puvis painted the thumb of the resting hand proportionate to the rest of fingers, while Gauguin drew the black crease of what would normally be the thumb too short, as if it were the little finger. The Egyptians often drew one view for both hands, as in the female mourners [I.21], rather than separate views for each hand; they displaced the thumb and the last digit. Black contours accentuate the rectilinear configuration of Vaïraümati and even the sprout held by Vaïraümati in The Seed of the Areois may be compared to Egyptian precedents, such as the Theban banqueting scene [I.6], where the women hold lotus blossoms. Furthermore, the planar construction of Vaïraümati's shifting frontal and profile views and the parallel relationship of her body to the picture plane is in stark contrast to the volumetric modeling and spiraling movement of Puvis' figure.

In the end, Gauguin's personification of hope is a synthesis of Western and non-Western sources in that Vaïraümati is at once evocative of an archetypal Egyptian figure and of a Western allegorical nude in a landscape. While the Egyptian figurative convention enabled Gauguin to fashion a

decorative composition, the Egyptian style may have an additional significance of linking Vaïraūmati with Isis.

As extraordinary as this linkage may seem, it reflects the monism in Moerenhout's and Massey's theories that connect, in one way or another, the Areois and the Maori to ancient Egypt. In this context, and given Vaïraūmati's pose, she is reminiscent of seated images of Isis, an allusion that makes even more sense as mothers of divine offspring -- the Horus child and the Areois. For that matter, the comparison may be extended to the Virgin Mary,¹¹⁵ because the occult emphasizes the interrelatedness and cyclical nature of life through reincarnation.

Other pictures with religious themes by Gauguin cast Mary as a Maori without evoking ancient Egypt, and later works with Christian subject-matter, such as Breton Calvary 1898-1899 (Guérin 68) [I.22] and Christmas Eve 1902-1903 (W. 519) [I.23] and Mother and two Children with Cattle 1900 (Guérin 23) [I.24], incorporate Egyptian motifs without portraying the Maori.

V. Conclusion

Although Gauguin shows a predilection for New Kingdom art in Egypt and Achaemenid art in Persia, these sources were part of a larger synthesis of other exotic sources, including Japanese, Javanese, Peruvian art and Western art. However, the Egyptian and Persian sources appear to have a special significance for him as revealed by the

self-portraits analyzed.

Except for Be in Love and You will be Happy, the Oriental motifs in Gauguin's work symbolize renewal -- both spiritual and artistic -- as epitomized by the imaginary resurrection of the elite untainted Maori through the intervention of the artist's divine surrogate Oro.¹¹⁶ The Egyptian influence in The Market imparts dignity to the Maori in a quotidien scene and represents the Maori as they used to be long ago, according to Gerald Massey -- akin to the ancient Egyptians.

The idea of renewal by invoking ancient Egypt is also implicit in some of Gauguin's images with Christian themes -- Breton Calvary [I.22], Christmas Eve [I.23], and Mother and two Children with Cattle [I.24] -- since these works date from the time he wrote his diatribe against the Catholic Church. But unlike his self-portraits, these works use Egyptian motifs less ingeniously.

Gauguin's view of Egyptian art as primitive and important for the rebirth of art is an old Orientalist myth Giorgio Vasari mentioned in his book Lives of Artists.¹¹⁷ Gauguin recycled this and related myths about Persia and Babylon in daring new images, whose pictorial inspiration may be traced to ancient Egyptian and Persian sources as well, and made them significant in his theories on abstraction. The combination of old myths and new aesthetic inspirations produced an innovative synthesis and a new departure in the ancient

tradition of Orientalism.

Footnotes

¹He wrote: "Before this canvas I have seen Him, always the same Him, the modern man, who reasons out his emotions as he reasons the laws of nature, smiling that smile of the satisfied man." Paul Gauguin's Intimate Journals, trans. by Van Wyck Brooks, preface by Émil Gauguin (London: Liveright, 1921), 116.

²As noted in the introduction of the dissertation, "primitive" art has a different connotation for these artists from that of the twentieth-century "tribal" meaning; see Rubin, Primitivism, 2-3.

³"Pour ce que dit Gauguin de 'Persan' c'est vrai - Je ne crois pas que mis au musée Dieulafoie [sic] cela choquerait on pourrait l'y mettre sans inconvénient... aux Persans et Égyptiens je préfère les Grecs et les Japonais. Je ne dis pas que Gauguin aie tort de travailler dans le Persan pour cela." Letter from Vincent to Théo van Gogh, c. October 1888 in Victor Merlhés, Correspondance de Paul Gauguin: Documents Témoignages vol. 1 (Paris: Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1984), 255.

⁴Daftari, "Persian Influences", 38 ff.

⁵Merete Bodelsen, Gauguin's Ceramics: A Study in the Development of His Art (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), 186.

⁶Merete Bodelsen, "The Missing Link in Gauguin's Cloisonism," Gazette des Beaux Arts 53 (May-June 1959), 340.

⁷Fereshteh Daftari, "The Influence of Persian Art on Gauguin, Matisse, and Kandinsky, Columbia University 1988. New York: Garland Press, 1991. The footnotes are all taken from the 1988 mss., 81. The numbers after the name Gray in parentheses refer to numbers given in Christopher Gray, Christopher Gray, Sculpture and Ceramics of Paul Gauguin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963).

⁸Daftari notes that pre-Islamic Persian art was on view in permanent museum collections, while Islamic art could be seen in a number of changing exhibitions in Paris. Despite her

extensive efforts to show how Gauguin could have encountered Islamic Persian art in period publications, collections, exhibitions, and sales catalogues, and thereby determine such stylistic influences on his work, she readily admits that there is no conclusive evidence that Gauguin actually saw any of these sources. Daftari, "Persian Influences," 89.

⁹The concept of the Magus played an important role in two books by Balzac, Séraphita and Louis Lambert, which had introduced Gauguin to the esoteric tradition via Swedenborgianism around 1884-1885. For details regarding the cult of the magi, see Jules Huret, Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire (Paris: Charpentier, 1893; reprt. Vanves: Éditions Thot, 1982); Victor-Émile Michelet, Les Compagnons de la hiérophanie, souvenirs du mouvement hermétiste à la fin du XIX siècle (Paris: Dorbon, 1938).

¹⁰Frances A. Yates, Girodano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (London: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 15.

¹¹ Charles Morice, Paul Gauguin (Paris: H. Floury, 1919), 23.

¹² Daftari, "Persian Influences," 58.

¹³ Gauguin's letter to Émile Bernard, probably Pont-Aven, c. September 1889, in Maurice Malingue, ed., Lettres de Paul Gauguin à sa femme et à ses amis (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1946), 167; and Gauguin's letter to Vincent van Gogh, Le Pouldu, c. November 8, 1889, in Douglas Cooper, ed. Paul Gauguin: 45 lettres à Vincent, Théo and Jo van Gogh (Lausanne: la Bibliothèque des Arts, 1983), 162. A small sketch of Be in Love and You Will be Happy appears in this letter and Cooper notes another sketch in Gauguin's above quoted letter to Emile Bernard, which is not reproduced.

¹⁴Vojtech Jirat-Wasiutynski, Paul Gauguin in the Context of Symbolism (New York: Garland, 1978), 180.

¹⁵ Ziva Maisels, "Gauguin's Religious Themes," Ph.D. Diss. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1969, vol. II, 81, fn 91. I am referring to her original dissertation, because the information does not appear in Ziva Amishai-Maisels, Gauguin's Religious Themes (New York: Garland, 1985).

¹⁶ Savage is a synthesis of many sources: its head is thought to have been borrowed from a Marquesan mummified skull; see Gray, Sculpture, 65. And the distinctive pose of

the arms and hands grasping something near its hips have been compared to a Javanese female statue; Barbara Landy, "Shorter Notices: The Meaning of Gauguin's 'Oviri' Ceramic," Burlington Magazine 109 (April 1967), 245.

17 Ibid., 242-46.

18 Jirat-Wasiutynski, Gauguin and Symbolism, 288, fn 2. The author incorrectly identified the Babylonian Stele of Hammurabi as Assyrian.

19 Study for Self-Portrait, Crouching Tahitian Girl, Hina Te Fatou, Que sommes-nous?, Que sommes-nous?, Be in Love and you Will be Happy.

20 Anonymous, "Peinture du XIX siecle," L'Amour de l'art (November 1938), 384. Bernard Dorival, "Sources of the Art of Gauguin from Java, Egypt and Ancient Greece," Burlington Magazine 93 (April 1951), 122; Bernard Dorival, "Further Observations on Sources of the art of Gauguin," Burlington Magazine 93 (July 1951), 237. Victor Segalen's family no longer knows the whereabouts of these photographs, according to Isabelle Kahn at the Service de Documentation, Musée d'Orsay.

21 The W number in brackets after the paintings refer to those in Georges Wildenstein, Gauguin, edited by Raymond Cogniat and Daniel Wildenstein, vol. 1. Catalogue (Paris, 1964).

22 Gray writes that the photograph of the Theban wall painting was in the collection of Mme Joly-Segalen, whose husband had found the other reproductions of other art works that Bernard Dorival had published; Gray, Sculpture, 266. The only other reference to Egyptian art Gray makes with regard to Gauguin's work is pot number 56, where he suggests that the "cat-woman" may be "a sister of the Egyptian goddess of joy, Bastet, whose symbol was the cat," 29.

23 Barbara Landy, "Paul Gauguin: Symbols and Themes in His Pre-Tahitian Works," M.A. Thesis, (Columbia University, 1968), 23-31.

24 Ibid.

25 Field attributes the photograph to Charles Spitz, c. 1880-1890, and is certain that Gauguin owned it, even though it was not published until 1895; Richard S. Field, Paul Gauguin: The Paintings of the First Voyage to Tahiti (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977) 190-91.

²⁶ Gray told Field that Gauguin may have seen the Egyptian reliefs from the British Museum at the Exposition Universelle of 1889 either in the original or in reproductions. Sam Wagstaff attributes the figures in the background of Ta Matete to a reproduced Theban wall painting that Gauguin owned, along with other reproductions of Egyptian art. Ibid., 258. Neither Gray nor Wagstaff reveal their source for this information, although it accords with what the anonymous writer stated in the article cited in fn 20.

²⁷ Ibid., 97. Although he views The Market, Her Name is Vairaumati, and The Seed of the Areois as part of Gauguin's "coming to grips with the problems of primitivism," and "deeper penetration of the Tahitian soul and the past locked in that soul," he misjudges these paintings as "only icons -- whose meaning depended upon an attribute or some artificial quality." Ibid. Field tentatively suggested that the principal deity behind Tehura in Merahi Metua no Tehamana (W 497) may have been based on Egyptian prototypes, although Javanese and Cambodian ones are also likely. The idol can also be seen in Arearea No Varua Ino, 1894 (W 339). Ibid., 194, 292.

²⁸ The name and number in brackets refer to Marcel Guérin, L'Oeuvre gravé de Gauguin (Paris: H. Floury, 1927, 1980).

²⁹ Richard Field, et. al., Gauguin and Exotic Art (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum, 1969), n.p.

³⁰ See Amishai-Maisels, Themes, for illustrations of Joan of Arc, 56; Parau Hina Tefatou, 367-368, Ictus, 404; Last Supper, 442; Breton Calvary, Christmas Eve, and Mother and two Children, 324.

³¹ Denys Sutton, "The Paul Gauguin Exhibition," The Burlington Magazine 91 (October, 1949), 284.

³² Christiane Ziegler, Le Louvre: Les antiquités égyptiennes (Paris: Scala Publications, 1990), 52.

³³ Also spelled Djet, and now it is called Wadji.

³⁴ Ziegler, Louvre, 19.

³⁵ Jirat-Wasiutynski, "Gauguin-Magus," 23-24.

³⁶ Jirat-Wasiutynski, Gauguin and Symbolism, 366 fn 3

37 This number may be higher, given Gauguin's tendency to repeat an image in different media or recycle a motif by inserting it in new compositions.

38 Cabinet de Dessins, Inv. R.F.30.569 fol 41r and 41v, Louvre, Paris; see footnote 71 challenging the dating of the album from 1885-87 to 89.

39 Gauguin's letter to Mette, c. 1887; Maurice Malingue, ed., Lettres de Paul Gauguin à sa femme et à ses amis (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1946), 101.

40 He called the West rotten in his letter to Emile Bernard, June 1890; Paul Gauguin, The Writings of a Savage, trans. by Eleanor Levieux, ed. Daniel Guérin (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), 43.

41 In his letter to his wife the relationship between his primitivism and his sorry state is clearly stated. Letter from Gauguin to Mette, c. 1887; Gauguin, Lettres à sa femme, 100-101.

42 Gauguin deprecated artists who sought formal training as "sullied by the putrid kiss of the École des Beaux-Arts": Gauguin's letter to Schuffenecker, 8 October 1888; Merlhès, Correspondance, 249.

43 Gauguin's letters to Émile Schuffenecker, 14 January 1885, and September 1888, Merlhès, Correspondance, 87-88.

44 Gauguin's letter to Daniel de Monfreid November 1901; Gauguin à Monfreid, 185.

45 Gauguin's letter to Émile Schuffenecker, 14 January 1885; Merlhès, Correspondance, 88.

46 Paul Gauguin, "Notes sur l'art à l'Exposition Universelle," Part 1 and 2, Le Moderniste (4 and 13 July 1889), 84.

47 Amishai-Maisels discusses aspects of Gauguin's concept of the savage in Themes, 122-133.

48 Gauguin, "Miscellaneous Things," part of an unpublished manuscript "Diverse Chose," c. 1896-1897, which follows Département des Arts Graphiques; excerpts published in Gauguin, Savage, 131.

49 Morice, Gauguin, 22-23.

"L'art primitif procède de l'esprit et emploie la nature. L'art soi-disant raffiné procède de la sensualité et sert la nature. La nature est la servante du premier et la maîtresse du second. Mais la servante ne peut oublier son origine, elle avilit l'artiste en se laissant adorer par lui. C'est ainsi que nous sommes tombés dans l'abominable erreur du naturalisme. Le naturalisme commence avec les Grecs de Périclès. Depuis, il n'y a eu de plus ou moins grands artistes que ceux qui ont plus ou moins réagi contre cette erreur; mais leurs réactions n'ont été que des sursauts de mémoire, des lueurs de bon sens dans un mouvement de décadence, au fond, ininterrompu depuis des siècles. La vérité, c'est l'art cérébral pur, c'est l'art primitif, -- le plus savant de tous, -- c'est l'Égypte. Là est le principe. Dans notre misère actuelle, il n'y a de salut possible que par le retour raisonné et franc au principe. Et ce retour, c'est l'action nécessaire du symbolisme en poésie et en art..." Translation from John Rewald, Post-Impressionism, third rev. ed. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1978), 419-420, with changes by Mina Roustayi. Gauguin gave the speech at La Côte d'Or, where the Symbolist poet Charles Morice met the painter for the first time. While Morice dated the event to 1889, and records the speech in his book, Rewald corrects the date to 1890.

⁵⁰ Filiz Burhan demonstrates Rousseau's influence on the Symbolists' view of art as language and of oriental languages as primitive and superior to later Occidental languages, such as French, German, or English. Filiz Burhan, Vision and Visionaries: Nineteenth Century Psychological Theory. The Occult Sciences and the Formation of the Symbolist Aesthetic in France (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1979), 192.

⁵¹ Gauguin, "Miscellaneous Things," Gauguin, Savage, 131.

⁵² Gauguin's letter to Monfreid, October 1897; Lettres de Gauguin à Daniel de Monfreid, pref. Victor Segalen (Paris: Georges Falaize, 1950), 113.

⁵³ See Charles Morice, "Paul Gauguin," Mercure de France, 48 (October 1903), 112; Jean Brouillon de Rotonchamp, Paul Gauguin (Weimar: 1906; reprint 1925), 215; in the back section: "Notes in Letters pertaining to Synthetist Art Theories;" H. R. Rookmaaker, Synthetist Art Theories: Genesis and Nature of the Ideas on Art of Gauguin and His Circle (Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1959), 36-37.

⁵⁴ Rookmaaker, Synthetist Art, 37.

⁵⁵ Marcionism was founded by the early Christian bishop

Marcion, who was born c. 85 A.D. and flourished c. 144. His heretical doctrine led to his excommunication and the founding of his own church of the Marcionites.

⁵⁶Edouard Schuré, Les Grands initiés, esquisse de l'histoire secrètes des religions (Paris: Perrin, 1889), trans. by Gloria Rasberry, The Great Initiates: A study of the secret History of Religions (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 134, 187, 505, 509. Schuré's book is a popular manifestation of the interest in comparative religion and syncretist tendency.

⁵⁷ Here may be the beginning of Gauguin's myth-making tendency, idealizing the Orient; he called Cézanne an Oriental in his letter to Émile Schuffenecker, saying that he too came from the Levant. Gauguin's letter to Émile Schuffenecker, from Copenhagen, 14 January 1885. Merlhès, Correspondance, letter 65.

⁵⁸ This has been discussed by Amishai-Maisels, Themes, 72-108.

⁵⁹ Gray, Sculpture, 182; Merete Bodelsen, Gauguin's Ceramics: A Study in the Development of His Art (London: Faber and Faber, 1964). 29. See B. E. Halsey. "Paul Gauguin: A Study of the Christ Theme in His Art and Thought." Florida State University, 1972, and Amishai-Maisels, Themes for a detailed discussion of the theme of Christ in Gauguin's work.

⁶⁰ "forge your souls...constantly give them wholesome nourishment, be great, strong and noble, "Diverses Choses," Gauguin, Savage, 129.

⁶¹ Gauguin's letter to Schuffenecker, 14 August 1888, Gauguin, Lettres à sa Femme, 134-35, 321.

⁶² This is a sketch for Self-Portrait, Les Misérables 1888 W 239 in the Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. Gauguin drew the Study for Self-Portrait, les Misérables in a letter to Emile Schuffenecker, 8 October 1888, which is now lost, but is reproduced in Merlhès, Correspondance, 248-249. Also see Gauguin's letter to van Gogh, 25 September 1889; Gauguin, 45 Lettres, 243.

⁶³ Amishai-Maisels, Themes, 74-80.

⁶⁴ Amishai-Maisels, Themes, 77. Van Gogh identified his adopted surrogate in a letter to Gauguin, 3 October 1888,

Merhlès, Correspondance, 240.

65 "Le dessin des yeux et du nez semblables aux fleurs dans les tapis persans résume un art abstrait et symbolique." Gauguin, 45 Lettres, letter 33.1 - 33.2.

66 The eyebrows impress Amishai-Maisels as "a sinister oriental quality", which is absent in the final painting, where the floral pattern is much less noticeable. Amishai-Maisels, Themes, 111, fn. 19.

67 Daftari, "Persian Influences," 95.

68 "Pourquoi de vraies roses, de vraies feuilles? Que de poésie comporte la décoration. Oui, messieurs, il faut une imagination formidable pour décorer une surface quelconque avec goût et c'est un art autrement abstrait que l'imitation servile de la nature.

Examinez attentivement au Louvre, dans la galerie Dieulafoi [sic], les bas-reliefs des Lions. Je prétends qu'il a fallu un immense génie pour imaginer des fleurs qui soient des muscles d'animaux ou des muscles qui soient des fleurs. Tout l'Orient mystique rêveur se retrouve là-dedans." Gauguin, "l'Exposition Universelle", 86.

69 For a discussion of the significance of these words for Gauguin and synthetist art see Rookmaaker, Synthetist Art. These words recur in Aurier's article on Gauguin; Albert Aurier, "Le Symbolisme en Peinture: Paul Gauguin" Mercure de France (March 1891), 155-165.

70 Daftari notes Gauguin's interest in the Achaemenid monuments not only as a painter but also as a ceramicist. Daftari, "Persian Influences," 80-81.

71 Album Walter is thought to contain Gauguin's drawings from c. 1885-1887, but the date of the sketchbook ought to be extended to 1888-1889, because of his copies of the Achaemenid capital. The Dieulafoi galleries were not on public view until the inauguration in June 1888, and Gauguin only came back to Paris around Christmas of that year.

72 see fn 3 above. Gauguin left Paris to live in Arles from 20 February 1888 until 8 May 1889. Ronald Pickvance, Van Gogh in Arles (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984), 11.

73 The enthusiastic report announcing the arrival of the cargo drew attention to the enormous dimension and unusual coloring of the lion frieze. P. Laurencin, "La mission de

Suziane," L'Illustration (October 30, 1886), 296. Gauguin may have subsequently seen another illustration of the lion, noted by Daftari, in the published journals of Jane Dieulafoy: "A suse 1884-1886. Journal des fouilles," Le Tour du Monde, 54 (1887), 80ff; Daftari, "Persian Influences," 95.

⁷⁴The reporter praised the collection as "precious not for its monetary value....but for its archeological interest and the light that it throws on some controversial historical points and the idea that it gives of what decoratif art used to be like." P. Laurencin, "La mission de Suziane," L'Illustration (October 30, 1886), 284-285, 296.

⁷⁵The dates of Gauguin's letters to Mette from Pont-Aven, c. October 1886, and to Félix Bracquemond from Paris, c. end of October 1886 indicate his approximate whereabouts at that time; Merlhès, Correspondance, 140-141.

⁷⁶"Ce serait l'art de notre temps par sa simplicité même....Il s'agissait de reconstruire un système, un style, comme en eurent les Gothiques, les Egyptiens, les Assyriens; sorte d'hiératisme moderne, adaptable à notre architecture et à nos demeures." Emile Bernard "L'Ecole Symboliste ou Synthétique," L'Occident, 1902, reprinted in Émile Bernard, Souvenirs inédits sur l'artiste peintre Paul Gauguin et ses compagnons lors de leur séjour à Pont-Aven et au Pouldu (L'Orient, n.d. [1939]), 11-12.

⁷⁷Emile Bernard, "La première manifestation synthétiste," Bernard, Souvenirs, 13-15.

⁷⁸Ministère de l'instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts. Exposition de 1889 Missions Archéologiques, Ethnographiques, Littéraires et Scientifiques. Paris: Librairies-Imprimeries Réunies, [1889].

⁷⁹Gauguin, "l'Exposition Universelle," 84-86, 90-91.

⁸⁰Bernard felt cheated that Gauguin was getting all the credit, since it was he Bernard who had introduced Gauguin to the idea of cloisonnisme, and had arranged the meetings with Paul Sérusier and Albert Aurier, the symbolist critic, Bernard, Souvenirs, 10-12. "Au banquet donné à Jean Moréas j'eus le plaisir de voir réussir mon idée. Paul Gauguin fut acclamé chef de l'Ecole picturale symboliste." Emile Bernard, "Note sur l'Ecole dite de Pont-Aven," Mercure de France (Dec. 1903), 681. Later in Tahiti, Gauguin changed his mind about Symbolism and disassociated himself from it. Gauguin's letter to Daniel de Monfreid, November 1901, Gauguin à Monfreid, 185.

81 Aurier, "Symbolisme: Gauguin", 162-163.

82 Ibid., 163-164.

83 Gauguin's letter to Vincent van Gogh, c. 8 November 1889, Gauguin, 45 Lettres, 285-287; and another letter from Gauguin to Théo van Gogh, c. 20 or 21 November 1889, Ibid., 161-163.

84 Book of Revelation 17:5-6.

85 He wrote this comment years later in Tahiti; Gauguin, Intimate Journals, 87. Gauguin's metaphorical reference to Sardanapulus recycled another Orientalist myth about the sexual decadence of the ancient Near East; this one was not Biblical in origin, as was the stereotype of Babylon, but classical. Ctesias, a fifth-century B.C. Greek historian and physician who lived in the Persian court of Artaxerxes, mentioned Sardanapulus in his book Persica. He described an Assyrian king, who, when besieged by the Medes, set fire to his palace in Nineveh, and burned himself and his courtiers to death. No Assyrian king by that name is known historically; some have identified him as Assurbanipal, while others think that Sardanapulus may have been invented by Ctesias. Over the centuries, in art, music, and literature, the myth of Sardanapulus came to represent debauchery. He was particularly appealing to nineteenth-century Romantics; Lord Byron's 1821 play Sardanapulus inspired Delacroix to paint what is a favorite Orientalist fantasy of sex and violence.

86 Gauguin's letter to Vincent van Gogh, c. 8 November, 1889, Gauguin, 45 Lettres, 285-287.

87 Gauguin's letter to Vincent van Gogh, 8 November 1889; ibid., 285-287.

88 Wojtech Jirat-Wasiutynski, "Paul Gauguin's 'Self-Portrait with Halo and Snake.' The Artist as Initiate and Magus." Art Journal 46 (Spring 1987), 22-23. The author's examples, meant to illustrate that according to Gauguin's contemporaries -- Albert Aurier, Émile Schuffenecker, and Odilon Redon -- Gauguin regarded himself as an initiate and magus, are not as self-evident as the author suggests. Aurier's statements are coded; Aurier, "Symbolisme: Gauguin". It is unclear what leads Jirat-Wasiutynski to interpret Gauguin as a magus in an 1888 drawing of him by Émile Schuffenecker, in which Gauguin holds a cross in front of a woman in flames. The

drawing in Rhode Island School of Design is reproduced in Ronald Pickvance, The Drawings of Gauguin (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1970) pl. 24. Among the suggested sources for Gauguin's self-portrait are Japanese prints and European heraldic and caricatural art; Jirat-Wasiutynski, "Gauguin-Magus," 24.

89 The hieroglyphs in this figure could be written either from left to right or right to left.

90 Daftari notes the motif of unattached heads in Near Eastern cylinder seals; Daftari, "Persian Influences," 108.

91 The Symbolists subscribed to the neo-platonic view, popular during the Renaissance, that hieroglyphs represent a system of ideas, a natural language. For an in-depth discussion of the Renaissance concept of hieroglyphs as divine language, see Thomas Conway Singer, Sir Thomas Browne and "The Hieroglyphical Schools of the Egyptians": A Study of The Renaissance Search for the Natural Language of the World (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1985).

92 Gauguin painted Portrait of Jacob Meyer de Haan (W 317) (Museum of Modern Art, New York) as a pendant to Self-Portrait with Halo, both of which he executed as part of a collaborative project to decorate the inn of Mary Henry at Le Pouldu in 1889. For a reconstruction of the art work inside the house, see Marie-Amélie Anquetil et al., Le Chemin de Gauguin: genèse et rayonnement (Saint-Germain-en-Laye: Musée Départemental du Prieuré, 1985), 118. Charles Filiger, Meyer de Haan, and Paul Sérusier were the other artists involved in the project, and they, especially Sérusier, would have appreciated the esoteric significance of Gauguin's portrait.

93 "Cet homme qui, grâce à son génie natif, grâce à des vertus acquises, se trouve, devant la nature, sachant lire en chaque objet la signification abstraite, l'idée primordiale et supplanante, cet homme qui, par son intelligence et par son adresse, sait se servir des objets comme d'une sublime alphabet pour exprimer les Idées dont il a la révélation, serait-il vraiment, l'Artiste?

N'est-il pas plutôt un génial savant, un suprême formuleur qui sait écrire les Idées à la façon d'un algébriste des Idées et son oeuvre n'est-elle point une merveilleuse équation, ou plutôt une page d'écriture idéographique rappelant les textes hiéroglyphiques des obélisques de l'antique Egypte?" Aurier, "Symbolisme: Gauguin," 160-164.

94 Ibid., 160.

⁹⁵Gauguin's letter to Schuffenecker 14 January 1885, Merlhès, Correspondance, 88; see in bibliography under Egyptian art and writing.

⁹⁶ Feliz Burhan discusses the growing interest in linguistics as an independent field as an important factor in the increasing perception of art as language. Burhan, Vision and Visionaries, 193.

⁹⁷ see footnote 98.

⁹⁸ Hermes Trismegistus and Zoroaster are the two oldest sources of wisdom according to the esoteric tradition. Despite the fact that seventeenth-century scholarship debunked the erroneous dating of the Corpus to pre-Christian times, nineteenth century authors such as Schuré and Eliphas Levi [pseudonym for Alphonse-Louis Constant] revived the mythic association of Egypt with the occult tradition of the mysteries, the initiation rites, and esoteric cults. Yates, Hermetic Tradition, 1-61.

⁹⁹ Even if Gauguin had not read the book, he would have heard about it through Sérusier, who may have known Schuré personally at this time. In any case, this was a widely read book in the occult revival and is still in print today.

¹⁰⁰ L. - J. Bouge, a former governor of Tahiti, translates the title to mean that the women did not want to go to the market, in "Traduction et interprétation des titres en langue tahitienne inscrits sur les oeuvres océaniques de Paul Gauguin," in Gauguin, sa vie, son oeuvre (Paris, 1958), 161-164, cited and discussed by Field, First Voyage to Tahiti, 88-93.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 74 -75, 88-97.

¹⁰² Gauguin expressed his disappointment by the following comment: "Was I to have made this far journey, only to find the very thing which I had fled?" Paul Gauguin with collaboration of Charles Morice, Noa Noa 1893-1897, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques; trans. by O.F. Theis (New York 1919), intro. by Alfred Werner (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1957), 7. The corrupting influence of the West on the Maori is evident in the following remark:

"Thus we are witnessing the spectacle of the extinction of the race, a large part of which is tubercular, with barren loins and ovaries destroyed by mercury. Seeing this leads me to think, or rather to dream, of the time when everything was absorbed, numb, prostrate in the slumber of the primordial, in

germ." Gauguin, Intimate Journals, 97.

103 In real life, Gauguin became the self-appointed advocate of the Maori and their primitive ways against the changes imposed on them by the clergy and the colonialists.

104 Gauguin, Noa Noa, 93, 114.

105 Paul Gauguin, "Ancient Culte Maori," mss. c. 1893, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts Graphiques, F 10.755; René Huyghe, ed., Ancien Culte Mahorie, facs. ed. (Paris: La Palme, 1951), 26.

106 Jacques-Antoine Moerenhout, Les Voyages aux îles du Grand Océan I (Paris: Arthur Bertrand, 1837), 484.

107 Gerald Massey, A Book of the Beginnings... 2 vols. (London 1881). Gauguin had read Gerald Massey's pamphlet Le Jésus Historique (1896), which contained excerpts from the last chapter of a later book by Massey, The Natural Genesis; or, Second part of the Beginnings, containing an attempt to recover and reconstitute the original origins of the myths and mysteries, types and symbols, religion and language, with Egypt for the mouthpiece and Africa as the birthplace 2 vols. (London 1883). Gauguin quoted and copied extensively from this book in his own manuscript "The Modern Spirit and Catholic Spirit". For detailed analysis see Amishai-Maisels, Themes, 400-475. Although scholars, particularly Danielsson, Andersen, and Amishai-Maisel, note Gauguin's familiarity with Massey's work, no one has written about it as reinforcing Gauguin's syncretism and his use of Egyptian art to depict Maori mythological themes. Bengt Danielsson, Gauguin in the South Seas (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 210-211; Wayne Andersen, Gauguin's Paradise Lost (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), 242-243.

108 Massey and Moerenhout were not the only ones to compare Maori mythology to that of the ancient Near East and Egypt. Edward Shortland noted that the creation stories of the Maori and that of the Aryans, Egyptians, and the Phoenicians were similar; however, Massey's discussion was the most detailed. Edward Shortland, Maori Religion and Mythology (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1882).

109 Moerenhout's account of the myth does not mention Oro's intent to create a superior race. However, the Areois were the most privileged among the Maori and received preferential treatment everywhere they went.

110 William Rubin and Matthew Armstrong, The William S. Paley Collection (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 53. I am grateful to Mr. Rubin for letting me see his manuscript before it was published.

111 "Quelle religion que l'ancienne religion océanienne. Quelle merveille! Mon cerveau en claque et tout ce que cela me suggère va bien effrayer. Si donc on redoute mes oeuvres anciennes dans un salon, que dire alors des nouvelles." Gauguin's letter to Sérusier, 25 March 1892, in Paul Sérusier, A.B.C. de la peinture (Paris: Librairie Floury, 1950), 58-60.

112 Rubin, Paley, 53.

113 In "Ancien culte Maori", Vaïraūmati's pregnancy is more notable.

114 Puvis' picture was evidently significant for Gauguin, because he carried a reproduction of it with him to Tahiti, copied it in a drawing that was published with a poem by Charles Morice in Mercure de France (1895) and then used it again in the painting Nature Morte à L'Espérance (1901).

115 The parallels between the motifs of Isis and Mary were recognized long ago even outside the esoteric tradition, see E. A. Wallis Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians: or Studies in Egyptian Mythology (London 1904; New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 220 - 221.

116 In a way, Gauguin's mission is ironic, because Gauguin, who was very ill, spread disease among the Maori.

117 Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the Artists, vol. 1, 2nd edition 1568, translated by George Bull, (London: Penguin Books, 1971), 25-31.

Chapter II

Jan Toorop

I. Introduction

Jan Theodoor Toorop experimented with different modes of representation, but only his Symbolist¹ works from the eighteen nineties are truly innovative. Two important pictures -- The Sphinx (Souls Around the Sphinx), 1892-1897 and The Three Brides, 1893 [II.1 and II.2] -- and related sketches present thematic and stylistic links to the legend and art of ancient Egypt. Less inspired borrowings from Egyptian art appear in his later pictures -- Angels bearing the Eucharist, 1923 and Three Generations, 1927 [II.3 and II.4]. As in his Symbolist images, the Egyptian appropriations are thoroughly integrated in the twenties as well, but the style is realistic. The similarities to Egyptian art in these works may be detected in the austere monumentality of the rigidly aligned and overlapping profiles and in the repetitive uniformity of the sharply delineated hair, features, and contours, which together with the crossed arm gestures are comparable to New Kingdom art, such as the courtiers from the tomb of Haremhab [II.5] and the three women from the Tomb of Nakht [II.6]. However, the realism of the late images by Toorop and their diminished inventiveness² precludes them from the parameters of this dissertation.

Despite Toorop's documented interest in Egyptian art, it is difficult to trace specific sources of inspiration in his Symbolist work. Such influences blend into an eclectic synthesis of Eastern and Western inspiration to produce an ecumenical style for the universal themes in his work, such as good and evil, life and death, spirit and matter, and mind and body.³ Proposed comparisons with Egyptian art in this chapter serve to illustrate the potential role of Egyptian art in Toorop's "new research in line"⁴ to make it "spellbinding."⁵

The mysterious, elongated figures and linear verve in Toorop's work bring to mind Art Nouveau, and the Egyptian connections in his work reflect the Egyptian revival in the 1880's and 1890's among Dutch artists and architects.⁶ For Toorop, Egyptian art appears to serve a primordial role to create a sense of time and to impart universality to his art by presenting archetypal motifs and pictorial alternatives to academic art. I propose that the combination of figurative and abstract signs in Egyptian art would have presented a viable option for him to combine the two in his work; that the inherent verticals and horizontals in Egyptian art, which he admired,⁷ presented a visual structure for his dualistic themes; and finally, that the rhythmic linearity of Egyptian art inevitably contributed to the development of his innovative "sound lines".⁸

II. Review of scholarship

Only Bettina Polak and Robert Siebelhoff note a

symbolic and stylistic link with Egyptian art in Toorop's Symbolist images. Their findings lead to further insights into Toorop's stylistic and iconographic development and into his so-called "Orientalist sphere of thought", that medley "of spellbinding signs."⁹ Most writers discuss Far Eastern influences on Toorop; partly Chinese, he was born and raised in Indonesia, and he acknowledged the formative effect of those heritages and that of Japan.¹⁰ This chapter examines the role of ancient Egypt in Toorop's iconography and style and the implications for his Orientalism.

Polak finds Egyptian motifs in three of Toorop's images, and Siebelhoff proposes Egyptian inspiration for Toorop's new style. In a sketch for La femme éternelle [II.7], Polak thinks that the obelisk is Egyptian, and that the head is based on the Great Sphinx at Giza.¹¹ To most, the resemblance to the Egyptian precedents is clear, but others find discrepancies. It is not apparent, for example, that the head belongs to a sphinx, at least not to the sphinx as it appears today [II.8]; in Toorop's sketch the form around the head resembles hair more so than a nemes; the ears and recumbent body of the Egyptian sphinx are absent from Toorop's; by contrast, Toorop's sphinx has a distinctive nose, which is notably missing from the Great Sphinx; and finally neither the Great Sphinx nor other Egyptian sphinxes come to mind with an obelisk near them.¹² These differences create some doubt and questions of whether the head in front of the obelisk is an

evocation in Toorop's work of Egypt and will be addressed in Section IV.

The Sphinx [Souls Around the Sphinx] [II.1] has two more Egyptian motifs, according to Polak -- the hard-to-see seated figures in the dark background and the sphinx. The former she believes to represent Egyptian priests; and the latter, the Great Sphinx at Giza.¹³ A comparison of the two sphinxes [II.1 and II.8], however, also reveals their dissimilarity, most notably in gender, which will be discussed in Section IV as well.

Polak documents attributes or qualities that Toorop specified as Egyptian in The Three Brides, 1893 [II.2] in his writings; a uraeus-like headdress with entwined snakes was to make the material bride on the right evoke Cleopatra, and the eyes of her retinue were made to look Egyptian as well.¹⁴ Polak enumerates altogether six appropriations of Egyptian art in three of Toorop's works.

The style of The Three Brides, particularly the seraphim,¹⁵ remind Siebelhoff of Egyptian wall paintings, but no formal comparison with Egyptian art is proposed. He confirms Toorop's interest in Egyptian art with more documentation in the artist's notebooks. In addition, Toorop's signatures in the registration book for the Museum of Antiquities in Leiden suggest to Siebelhoff that Toorop visited the Egyptian collection,¹⁶ which is likely though not certain, because the museum displays Etruscan, Greek, Roman, Medieval, Dutch,

and German artifacts as well.

III. Documentation of Toorop's interest in Egyptian art

Toorop's rambling thoughts are difficult to translate, at times allegedly even confusing to him and to his listeners. Whenever possible, he would play the piano instead,¹⁷ hoping that music would convey the meaning of his pictures better than words. Music was an important paradigm for his art, and I believe that the rhythmic linearity of Egyptian art provided means to enhance stylistically the expressive power of his symbols. His struggle to formulate signs and a pictorial expression to reveal his all-encompassing concept of the symbol is best described in his own words. He tried "various ways of bringing together the great being, doing, feelings and ideas out of Pan-nature [Al-natuur: 'the totality of that which is'] into one great shape, severe and expressive [sprekend] in line, shape and color, which I call symbol."¹⁸

In his diaries Toorop praised the power of line and color in Egyptian art to produce psychological and psychic effects,¹⁹ and while from an Egyptological point of view it may seem odd to impute such qualities to Egyptian art, his perception corroborates the potential role of Egyptian art in Toorop's attempt to represent intangible auras, sounds, smells, as well as concepts of good and evil. A basic correlation exists in the way line, shape, and color form mimetic and

non-mimetic signs in Toorop's symbolist work and in Egyptian art, and in the way such signs serve pictorial, symbolic and phonic roles in both cases. Superficial differences aside, the combination of abstract and representational signs depicts tangible and intangible concepts²⁰ in both Egyptian art and Toorop's work, especially in his most successful endeavor, The Three Brides.

Other references to Egyptian art in his journals and papers document where and what he saw and his reactions to it. Toorop's visual repertoire of Egyptian art must have been fairly large, judging by his writings and visits to the British Museum in London, the Egyptian Museum in Berlin, and the Jacobson collection in Copenhagen,²¹ and other opportunities during his extensive travels in Europe.²²

A journal entry from c. 1896, where Toorop admires "the old-Egyptian low reliefs and high reliefs and those large bright sculptures of a man and a woman next to each other,"²³ shows his familiarity with the world class Egyptian collection in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. Elsewhere in his journal, Toorop observes the simplicity of the enormous proportions and the strong horizontals and verticals in Egyptian art. He viewed the square implicit in the grid of ancient Egyptian art as an archetypal form.²⁴ Toorop traced the beginning of art four or five millennia ago to Egypt, and believed that the cult of Isis transmitted the artistic tradition to future generations.²⁵ Polak thinks that Toorop bor-

rowed this idea from The Great Initiates by Schuré,²⁶ although Isis as guardian of sacred wisdom²⁷ was no secret among Toorop's fellow "Les XX" artists in Brussels and among Sâr Joséphin Péladan's coterie in Paris, to which Toorop briefly belonged.²⁸

The name of Father Desiderius Lenz,²⁹ the founder of the School of Beuron, in Germany, appears several times in Toorop's papers, and their positive perceptions of Egyptian art concur.³⁰ Lenz championed Egyptian art as a model for the renewal of sacred art, and he also considered Egyptian art to be psychologically expressive³¹ and conducive to religious feelings, due to its inherently musical harmonies and mathematical relationships.³²

Whether it was through Lenz or other intermediaries, the musical value of Egyptian art for Toorop's "sound lines" needs to be considered, even though the enormous influence of Charles Henry's dynamogenic theories on art must have affected Toorop as well. He knew Seurat's work and painted in a Neo-Impressionist manner prior to, during, and after his Symbolist period, but Toorop's interest in Charles Henry's theories remains an open question. Although Henry's scientific orientation differs from Toorop's intuitive mysticism, both of them explored analogies between painting and music and the expressive potential of color and line to produce emotive effects in the viewer.

IV. Stylistic and iconographic analysis of Egyptian

influences on Toorop's work

A case for Toorop's tendency to present the negative polarity of good and evil with motifs evocative of ancient Egyptian art may be argued in the sketch for La femme éternelle ("O, though, my Spirit's mate") 1891 [II.7]. Already at this early stage, these motifs appear in juxtaposition to a positive concept represented by the young woman. In the absence of a finished picture titled La femme éternelle in Toorop's oeuvre,³³ it seems likely that the sketch pertains to the eternal feminine bride in the center of The Three Brides.³⁴

The semi-nude femme éternelle in the sketch [II.7] appears on a mound of open and closed, scent-puff-emitting flowers; the frieze of lotus flowers at the base of the scene is a common Egyptian decorative motif. Curious telegraph and railroad lines³⁵ separate the young woman from an obelisk and colossal bust on the left. In the dim background are steeples, spires, and church facades. The obelisk and bust look incongruous in a setting that is reminiscent of Dutch towns. Row houses in front of the ocean appear in other pictures, such as Katwijk 1892, where Toorop lived from 1890 until 1892,³⁶ but the obelisk and monumental head are of course figments of Toorop's imagination.

Precedents for colossal heads, but not sphinxes, in conjunction with obelisks exist in depictions of the unexcavated statues of Ramesses II in front of his pylon in

Luxor by Cécile (Thebes, Luxor, view of the palace gates 1798-1801 [II.9]) and by David Roberts (Great Entrance of the Temple at Luxor [II.10] for his book Egypt and Nubia, 1846-1850). Colossal heads and obelisks appear in illustrations of assembled principal monuments, such as the frontispiece of Description de l'Égypte 1809 [II.11]. Notice the head in the middle ground of the engraving, buried in sand up to its neck; the shape of the head, eyes, and lips are hardly recognizable as that of the Great Sphinx. It is rendered similarly in The Sphinx near the pyramids [II.12] by Michel Rigo in Vivant Denon's Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte in 1802. Two more images of the sphinx in Description... [II.13 a,b] reveal other subjective discrepancies, which were common until the exact appearance of the sphinx was documented in photographs, such as the one by Maxime du Camp, c. 1850 [II.14].

These and other artistic renderings of a half-submerged sphinx address the doubts raised earlier in section II and make it plausible for the colossal bust and obelisk in Toorop's sketch to allude to Egypt. Since Toorop never visited Egypt, he had to rely on the copiously illustrated Egyptological tomes that had mushroomed since the publication of Description.... In any event, an iconographic connection to ancient Egypt in Toorop's work makes sense on account of his documented interest in Egyptian art and in universal symbols.

In the sketch for La femme éternelle, the obelisk and disfigured bust contrast with the wholesome young nude;

her central and illuminated position render the ruins marginal, lurking in the dark behind the delicate nude, who looks at the viewer. Similar antithetical juxtapositions recur in The Sphinx and in The Three Brides as well.

The androgynous sphinx in the picture with its namesake [II.1] forms a structural and narrative opposition to the couple on the globe in the foreground. Auke van der Woud believes that this couple represents a self-portrait of the artist and his wife,³⁷ and that the enigmatic drawing is autobiographical.

Reclining on extended paws and sporting a nemes-like shape around its head, the sphinx in Toorop's work has an element of caricature absent from the abraded but monumental dignity of the Great Sphinx in Giza. A slight Adam's apple on the muscular neck of Toorop's sphinx contrasts with the coquettish feminine features -- exposed breasts, down-cast eyes, delicate nose, puckered mouth, and lack of eyebrows -- which produce an effect quite different from the one in Giza.

The burdensome presence of the breasted sphinx in Toorop's work, however, is more Greek, because Egyptian art rarely depicts the sphinx with breasts.³⁸ Moreover, the oppressive power the sphinx, indicated by its bared claws and the crushed beings of a lower order beneath it struggling with the mystery of life,³⁹ brings to mind the Greek myth of Oedipus and the sphinx. The combination of Egyptian and Greek traits can be viewed as part of Toorop's attempt to find sym-

bols for universal themes that transcend temporal and cultural barriers. Indeed, Heinz Demisch regards the ubiquitous sphinx as archetypal.⁴⁰

A third and contemporary allusion may have been to Sâr Josephin Péladan, which would explain the caricatured representation of the sphinx. Although the sphinx motif is common in nineteenth-century art and literature, the connection to Péladan has intriguing implications in Toorop's work.⁴¹ The dates of The Sphinx (1892-1897) span Péladan's 1892 lecture tour in the Hague, when Toorop met him,⁴² and the annual salons of the Rose-Croix that the Sâr sponsored in Paris over the next five years. During these years Toorop at first endorsed and submitted works to the 1892 Rose-Croix Salon,⁴³ but then rejected the Sâr's teaching by 1896, calling "the entire movement of the Rose + Croix in Paris" an immoral "bunch of impotents" of "abominable decadence."⁴⁴ The prominence of the sphinx in Toorop's picture brings to mind the importance of the androgyne and the sphinx in Péladan's novels L'androgyne 1891 and La terre du sphinx (Egypt) 1899.⁴⁵ The latter is an account of his 1898 voyage to Egypt, which was a spiritual journey to the ancient (pre-Islamic) country.⁴⁶ For him the sphinx represented the quintessential masterpiece of Egyptian art and an icon of the Mysteries,⁴⁷ and his book ends with a scene in which Péladan spends the last night of his trip talking to the Great Sphinx about the secret doctrine.⁴⁸ But Péladan also paid homage to the Greek myth of the sphinx

in his play l'Oedipe-Roi 1897,⁴⁹ and presented the version by Sophocles as a prologue. The sphinx and its variants gracing the title pages of the Sâr's publications identify it closely with Péladan.⁵⁰

If such is the case, then the caricature of the sphinx in Toorop's work may lampoon Péladan, whom the artist had come to dislike. Toorop's disdain was also shared by the French press. It parodied Péladan as a seducer of women, and mocked his outlandish persona as Magus, occult leader, and descendant of the ancient Babylonians⁵¹ to be a charlatan's ruse.⁵² Such notoriety suggests that the mysterious women with raised arms and closed eyes near the sphinx are the Sâr's idolaters. Their distinctive grouping and outstretched arms bring to mind Egyptian motifs of mourning women, depicted in a New Kingdom wall painting [II.15]. Delineated rather than modeled, both groups appear in overlapping layers within an impossibly shallow space; their mostly homogeneous appearance and trance-like state distinguish them from other groups in each picture.

The third Egyptian motif is the faintly visible seated couple next to a gothic church and a Buddha figure in the dark background.⁵³ The monumentality of the seated pair, compared to the church, brings to mind the oft-reproduced Colossi of Memnon in Thebes [II.16]. Seated figures are common in Egyptian art, but only pharaohs and gods of ancient Egypt were commemorated in gargantuan sculptures. In this context,

the religious significance of the figures in the background of The Sphinx could allude to ancient Egypt, which along with the other two monuments allegedly reflect Toorop's spiritual path that included Buddhism, the Occult, and Christianity.⁵⁴

The vulture may count as a fourth Egyptian motif. As one of the oldest motifs in Egyptian art and hieroglyphs, the perched vulture is an emblem of Nekhbet, the goddess of the South. Among her multiple roles as a protective deity, Nekhbet represents primal mother nature and guardian of the Underworld, and is thus associated with death.⁵⁵ The prominent vulture with a reddened beak in Toorop's picture, however, suggests a malevolent symbolism -- as a devourer rather than protector of corpses -- contrary to its benevolent role in Egyptian art. Whether Toorop knew about the Egyptian symbolism of the bird but still decided to use it as a grim specter of death is debatable.

A fifth Egyptian motif -- the pyramid -- also has occult connotations, and it appears in a study for The Sphinx [II.17], in the same place where the sphinx dwells in the final work. The study depicts a morbid individual on a mound of skulls, which contrasts with the spiritual elation of those in the foreground of the final picture. The changed outlook between the study and the final work may reflect the artist's own improved disposition through his involvement in Catholicism.⁵⁶

Also different from the study is the unusual space

in the final The Sphinx. The spiritual condition of the figures is externalized by the verve of lines and by their location. Toorop described the process of spiritual evolution as "floating" to a higher level,⁵⁷ but in this picture the spiritually elevated appear below the oppressed. Also unconventional is the symbolic value of the pictorial space, which goes counter to that of the upper and lower areas and of vertical and horizontal orientations in Western religious art. The vertical direction of those under the sphinx in The Sphinx seems to suggest encumbrance, while the horizontal in the flowing tresses of the foreground figures convey elated buoyancy.

Toorop's new linear style replaces volumetric mass and illusionistic space with a novel ethereal region of sound lines. An underlying grid provides an axial structure for the orchestration of sound patterns. The pictorial field is divided into three horizontal areas in The Sphinx, symbolizing the physical, spiritual, and sequential stages of the religious drama. In the murky background is the only visible terra firma, to judge by the clouds on the upper left, the trees, and the bank around the lake with two swans.⁵⁸ The darkness of this region is suggestive of the distant past. The rest of the space is more difficult to determine, although the globe of the earth under the couple in the foreground appears to be viewed from outer space.

The three horizontal areas are connected with

transitional elements. The swans in the background lead to the spatially ambiguous middle ground, where the sphinx, the vulture, and victims of materialism pre-side. Below the suppliant women and to the left of the sphinx is a field of higher aspirations, where a bearded ascetic, nuns, four mystical roses, and an angel playing the lute appear.⁵⁹ The vulture and the nudes under the sphinx direct the eye to the foreground, where positive spiritual forces freed from the sphinx and earthly battles dwell.⁶⁰

The angel with the lute and the man with the lyre indicate the celestial significance of music. Lutes are common in images of angel concerts, and the lyre is an attribute of Orpheus, Apollo, and even Christ.⁶¹ The man on the globe assumes a familiar pose of the dead Christ. By evoking the personae of Christ and Orpheus and Apollo for his self-portrait as the man on the globe, Toorop's created allegorical self portraits in the guise of spiritual luminaries akin to Gauguin's discussed in Chapter I.

In addition to the tangible instruments, the iconography of the lute and lyre conjures the intangible sense of hearing, which Toorop developed with sound lines. The abstracted patterns of sound waves add an emotive dimension to the composition and to line. The dual role of line to define material objects and to convey abstract concepts also characterizes the use of line in Egyptian art and may explain Toorop's impression that such art is psychologically express-

ive. The mourner motif [II.15] and the courtiers from Haremhab's tomb [II.5] exemplify the descriptive, rhythmic and fluid lines in Egyptian art, and even though the intervals, patterns, and orientation of Toorop's lines produce different cadences from those in Egyptian art, the underlying concept of line is similar.

The hybrid symbolism and the expressive style of The Sphinx are developed further in The Three Brides [II.2]. The scene takes place in contemporary times, according to Toorop,⁶² but the brides are timeless. The composite persona of the "material" bride in the guise of Cleopatra on the right is juxtaposed to the "innocent virgin" in the center and the "mystical" bride in nun's garb on the left.

Of the three brides, the multiple personae of the material bride is the most developed and intriguing. Besides identifying her as Cleopatra, Toorop also discloses her other femme fatale identities in his writings and by her attributes in the picture. At one point he refers to this bride as "Hetaera of Aphrodite Pendamos" [sic],⁶³ an obscure reference to Aphrodite as goddess of love and of prostitution. In addition, the platter of blood and viperous snakes summon references to Salome and Medusa as well.⁶⁴ Medusa also appears in Woman with Snake Heads and Sylphids [II.18], a study believed to be for The Three Brides.⁶⁵ The composite femme fatale identities of this bride accentuate the evil seductress and they represent different eras --Egyptian,

Greek, and Biblical, and the modern period -- results in an archetypal figure of evil.

Toorop, however, emphasizes the Cleopatra persona of the material bride by portraying her as a powerful Egyptian Queen, complete with her uraeus and subjugated dominion below her, to her left. They hold an urn, presumably containing the blood of her ruthlessly murdered adversaries, which accords with the myth of Cleopatra. The artist also specified that her diaphanous dress and necklace of skulls are meant to present her alluring, avaricious, and deadly character.⁶⁶ Angrily distracted, she ignores the large platter of liquid poured from the large urn, while her hissing uraei express her displeasure at the divine sound lines from the bells.⁶⁷

Another study for The Three Brides⁶⁸ [II.19] links the Cleopatra-figure with the slain sphinx, which reveals Toorop's pejorative use of Egyptian motifs. For while the forces of good eliminate the sphinx in this study, the personification of materialism recurs as the Cleopatra-figure in the final picture.⁶⁹ In the study [II.19], the androgynous sphinx with bowed head lies defeated near the bottom of the drawing; seraphim plunge their daggers into its body and blood oozes from both ends. The blood from its head seeps into a hole with three skulls, from which three disembodied figures arise with upraised arms, on the extreme right. The pooled blood in the rear of the sphinx flows by a tree enlivened with figures and flowers.

The extended lines from the figurative motifs create a profusion of abstract patterns, rhythmic movement and dynamic energy, which may convey the intangible forces of "pan-nature" Toorop sought to express. Also represented are universal oppositions -- life and death, fear and hope, good and bad --⁷⁰ in ascending and descending lines from the axis of the sphinx. The rising lines define the uplifting, positive forces -- the radiant choir, the ethereal seraphim, the uprising spirits, and the animated tree -- while the lines below the sphinx show the downward forces of decline and death. The thorny maze of chaotic earthly existence⁷¹ in the middle ground overpowers two brittle beings -- one near the trunk of the tree and another left of center, below the chorus at the top. The long arm of a camouflaged envoy on the right reaches toward one of the ensnared victims. Born by the sacred sound lines of the bell to the right,⁷² and crowned with three singing choir members, the messenger seems to offer deliverance from the sphinx and the thorny vines and partakes in the antithetical forces combating the sphinx.

The abstract, decorative, and expressive role of line is fully orchestrated in The Three Brides. Toorop explained the nuances of the sound lines as functioning "either as scenery or ornamental filling."⁷³ But a symbolic significance of line is also suggested in the horizontal alignment of "that weak world doomed to eternal matter"⁷⁴ next to the Cleopatra-figure. The horizontal line also defines the

sphinx, death, and decline in the study [II.18]. Thus the connection between the sphinx and Cleopatra is also implied by the symbolic value of the horizontal line in both the study and the final The Three Brides.

The sound lines of the brides and their followers and the enormous bells in the upper corners of the picture produce other abstract patterns. The attendants of the "material bride" emit "shrill, voluptuous and piercing laughter and shrieks," that rise "upward in ascending lines against the ideal spiritual and mystical sounds"⁷⁵ of the bell tied to the crucified hand of Christ on the right. The gnarled sound lines of the chorus of the "mystical bride" rise up only to "fall down again exhausted and beaten, producing a weary hymn to their struggle against evil."⁷⁶ Meanwhile, the "eternally feminine" bride stands amidst the two sound currents; her innocence is as ephemeral as the butterflies around her, for before long she will fall prey to the spiritual anguish of material forces, or resist by becoming a nun.⁷⁷

V. Conclusion

Three Brides and The Sphinx both illustrate the old and the new, the negative and the positive polarities in Toorop's Orientalism. Egypt served as an archetypal locus, a fount of figurative motifs and stylistic expression for Toorop's spiritual allegories. While the role of Cleopatra, the sphinx, and the mourning women recycle trite myths of Orientalism and reveal a pejorative slant in Toorop's

"Orientalist sphere of thought," the Egyptian stylistic inspiration in his sound lines represents the positive extreme. It is the unique combination of subject references and linear inspiration that characterizes his Orientalism.

Old myths are put to new use -- as archetypes -- to express what Toorop considered universal forces of good and evil, shaping the psychological drama of humans. He combined personae from different eras, including Egypt, to form composite characters for his timeless subjects.

Egyptian art inspired Toorop to devise non-mimetic settings and means to express intangible universal spiritual forces. The bold, incisive, and repetitive distinctiveness of line in the ancient art emboldened his own and also made his work synaesthetic and especially musical.

In addition, Toorop integrated the axial order of Egyptian art. Vertical and horizontal lines formed an underlying structure for the duality of Toorop's universe in his art. This hidden feature makes him an important predecessor for van der Leek's and Mondrian's achievements in the twentieth century.

Footnotes

¹ A search for universal symbols preoccupied Toorop in the 1890s and he refers to these works as Symbolist in an unpublished interview "conversations in the Studio, 26-27, in Koninklijke Bibliotheek Toorop Collection (K.B.T.C.) C169; quoted in translation in Robert Siebelhoff, "The Three Brides: A drawing by Jan Toorop," Netherlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek, 27 (1977), 243. The writers on Toorop refer to this period in the artist's work as Symbolist as well, Victorine Hefting, Jan Toorop. exh. cat. (The Hague: Haags Gemeentemuseum, 1989), 14.

² Although Toorop gained his widest public success from works during the last two decades of his life, these are deemed as less interesting and more superficial. Ibid., 34-35.

³ Victorine Hefting, J. Th. Toorop De jaren 1885 tot 1910 exh. cat. (Otterlo: Krölller Müller, 1979), 13; Auke van der Woud, "Toorop en zijn Sphinx," in Jan Th. Toorop: de jaren 1885 tot 1910 exh. cat. (Otterlo: Rijksmuseum Krölller-Müller, 1979), 32.

⁴ Toorop letter to Octave Maus, c. 1893, in Phil. Mertens, "De brieven van Jan Toorop aan Octave Maus," Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique: Bulletin 3-4 (1969), 185.

⁵ Toorop letter to an unidentified recipient, The Royal Library in the Hague; quoted in Hefting, Jan Toorop, 1979, 23.

⁶ Stephan Tschudi Madsen, Sources of Art Nouveau, trans. by Ragnar Christophersen (1956; New York: Da Capo Press, 1980), 387, 398.

⁷ Toorop, undated mss. C169 [I], p. 2a, K.B.T.C., The Hague.

⁸ Toorop letter to Antoon Markus, 24 June, 1894. K.B.T.C., The Hague, trans. by Josina Van Nuis Zylstra in Robert Siebelhoff, "The Three Brides: A drawing by Jan Toorop." Netherlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek, 27 (1977), 260.

⁹ Toorop letter to an unidentified recipient, The Royal Library in the Hague; Hefting, Jan Toorop, 1979, 23.

¹⁰ For an English translation of the autobiographical text see Robert Siebelhoff, "The Early Development of Jan

Toorop, 1879-1892." University of Toronto, (Canada, 1973), 29. For Far Eastern influences on Toorop see Jan Veth, "The Three Brides: A Drawing by Jan Toorop," De Nieuwe Gids 8 (February 1893), 432-434; trans. by Josina Van Nuis Zylstra in Robert Siebelhoff, "The Three Brides: A drawing by Jan Toorop." Netherlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek 27 (1977), 258; Hefting, Jan Toorop, 1989, 7-8, 13. In a letter to his friend Henriëtte van Schalk, Toorop discussed his interest in "Indian philosophy, Buddhism and still other things," according to van der Woud, "Sphinx," 32; Siebelhoff, "Early Development," 283-284; Siebelhoff, "Three Brides," 222; Bettina Polak, Het Fin-de Siècle de Nederlandse Schilderkunst. De symbolistische beweging 1890-1900 (The Hague: 'S-Gravenhage: Martinus Jijhoff, 1955), 100, 111-112, 123.

11 Polak, Nederlandse Schilderkunst, 104.

12 Except in Las Vegas airport, see [II.20].

13 Polak, Nederlandse Schilderkunst, 116-117. She believes that the picture indicates Toorop's familiarity with Edouard Schuré's The Great Initiates, possibly through his friends.

14 While the uraeus is a divine symbol in Egyptian art, Polak explains that the snakes in Toorop's drawing are also related to the Serpent in the Biblical Paradise. Polak, Nederlandse Schilderkunst, 121, 123. The multiple reference in Toorop's symbols are probably intentional and part of what makes them universal, as explained below.

15 Siebelhoff, "Three Brides," 231, 232.

16 Ibid., 254, fn 59.

17 These remarks by either Aegidius Timmerman or Henriëtte van der Schak are translated in Siebelhoff, "Early Development", 84. Siebelhoff reiterates the same problem in the translation of Toorop's letter to Antoon Markus in Siebelhoff, "Three Brides," 259. Hefting also has an anecdote about Toorop playing the piano after failing to explain his work verbally. Hefting, Jan Toorop, 1979, 13.

18 Toorop letter to Markus, 24 June 1894 translated in Siebelhoff, "Three Brides," 259.

19 Toorop, unpublished and undated mss. C169 [I], p. 2, K.B.T.C., The Hague.

²⁰The non-mimetic linear and conceptual nature of Egyptian has been described as hieroglyphic, and hieroglyphs are believed to be an offshoot from Egyptian art. Egyptian art uses hieroglyphs to convey abstract thoughts, and certain signs in Egyptian art, such as the ankh sign, serve as amulets for protection and regeneration. Karl Theodor Zauzich-Würzburg, "Hieroglyphen," in Lexikon der Ägyptologie, vol. 2, Wolfgang Helck und Wolfhart Westendorf, ed. (Wiesbaden, 1975), 1191-1196; Erik Hornung, "Bedeutung und Wirklichkeit des Bildes im alten Ägypten," Sonderdruck aus Akademische Vorträge, gehalten an der Universität Basel (Basel: Verlag von Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1973), 35-43; H. Te Velde, "Egyptian Hieroglyphs as Signs, Symbols, and Gods," Visible Religions, vols. 4-5, 1986, 64-67; Henry George Fischer, "L'unité de l'écriture et de l'art égyptiens," in L'écriture et l'art de l'égypte ancienne (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986), 24-46; Richard Wilkinson, Reading Egyptian Art: A Hieroglyphic guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting and Sculpture (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992).

21 Royal Library Mss. TC C169 [I], p. 2a.

²²Zilcken, "Jan Toorop," 116 mentions Toorop's trips to Paris, Florence, and Venice; Hefting dates his first visit to Paris to 1884, Hefting, Jan Toorop (1989), 11. Toorop lived in Brussels intermittently from 1882-1889, when he moved to London. Ibid., 9 and 14. All these cities have major Egyptian art collections.

²³Toorop mss. C170ab-171 c. 1896, K.B.T.C., The Hague, translated in Siebelhoff, "Three Brides," 254, fn 59.

²⁴Toorop, unpublished and undated mss. C169 [I], p. 2a, K.B.T.C., The Hague.

²⁵Toorop, undated mss. C169 [I], pp. 2a-3, K.B.T.C., The Hague, see Polak, Nederlandse Schilderkunst, 117.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷See H.P. Blavatsky, Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology (New York 1877); Pasadena, California: Theosophical University Press, 1976), 24.

²⁸Chapter IV on Mondrian proposes a scenario of Isis revealing archetypal symbols to future generations.

²⁹Toorop repeatedly mentioned Lenz in his unpublished

and undated mss. C169 [I], pp. 3a, 9, 18a; C169 [II], p. 3a; [III], 13a-15; C169 [V], p. 75; C169 [X], pp. 1-3; K.B.T.C., The Hague.

³⁰ The influence of the monk's writing on the artist's work after his conversion to Catholicism in 1905 is noted by J. B. Knipping, Jan Toorop (Amsterdam, 1947), 43-44. Toorop's familiarity with the School of Beuron canon is outlined in Hefting, Jan Toorop, 1989, 34-35. However, Lenz wrote his canon in 1865 (Pierre Lenz, L'Esthétique de Beuron, trans. by Paul Sérusier (Paris: Bibliothèque de l'Occident, 1905), 49) leaving several decades for his ideas to circulate and reach Toorop.

³¹ Both also considered Egyptian art as a prehistoric origin of art. Lenz, Beuron, 20, 25, 26.

³² Ibid., 34.

³³ Polak believes the sketch to be related to The Sphinx, and that the sphinx represents the baser power of woman. Polak, Nederlandse Schilderkunst, 104.

³⁴ Toorop referred to the bride as the eternal feminine in a letter to Markus, 1894, Siebelhoff, "Three Brides," 259.

³⁵ van der Woud, "Sphinx," 35; Polak, Nederlandse Schilderkunst, 104.

³⁶ For a chronology see Hefting, Jan Toorop, 1989, 147.

³⁷ van der Woud, "Sphinx," 44-45.

³⁸ Heinz Demisch, The Sphinx: Geschichte ihrer Darstellung von Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart (Stuttgart: Verlag Urachhaus, 1977), 17.

³⁹ The title for Toorop's essay on this picture was "The Sphinx, symbol of the mystery of life," in "Werken van Van Gogh en Toorop", Voor de Kunst, Utrecht 1898 cited in van der Woud, "Sphinx," 44. The occult tradition also views the sphinx as a symbol of the mystery of life.

⁴⁰ Demisch, Sphinx, 13.

⁴¹ Polak, Nederlandse Schilderkunst, 116.

⁴² Ibid., 100.

43 L'Hétaire and Une Génération nouvelle are the two works listed in Catalogue du Salon de La Rose-Croix, 10 March - 10 April. (Paris, Galerie Durand-Ruel, 1892) in Theodore Reff, selected and organized, Modern Art. Paris (New York: Garland Publishers, 1981), 32.

44 Toorop's lecture was partially published in Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant (June 26, 1896); quoted in Siebelhoff, "Three Brides," 253.

45 Nelly Emont discusses the role of the "androgynosphinx" for Péladan, in "Le mythe de l'androgyné dans l'oeuvre de J. Péladan," in Jean-Pierre Laurant et Victor Nguyen, eds. Les Péladan (Lausanne, Switzerland, L'Age d'Homme, 1990), 90.

46 The Sâr describes himself as a "pélerin des oracles cessés, dévot des rites abolis, vrai citoyen des ruines, l'auteur a évité les vivants pour apercevoir les morts, en quête du seul passé, mettant son effort à ne rien voir de contemporain." Le Sâr Péladan, La Terre du Sphinx (Egypte) (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1899), p. x; he likened Islam to a disease, a leprosy of the spirit, p. vi; remarks about Egypt and the occult are found throughout the book, especially on pp. 2-6 and in the final chapter.

47 Ibid., 329.

48 Ibid., 333.

49 Théâtre de la Rose-Croix: Oedipe et le Sphinx, tragédie selon Sophocle pour servir de prologue à l'Oedipe-Roi (Beauvais, Imprimerie professionnelle, 1897). The play was produced in 1903 at the Théâtre antique d'Orange. Les Péladan, 221.

50 The sphinx appears on the title page of Le Salon de Josephin Péladan, Salon National et Salon Jullian suivi de trois mandements de la Rose Croix Catholique à l'artistie (Paris, E. Dentu, 1890); Josephin Péladan, La Gynandre (Paris, E. Dentu, 1890); and Josephin Péladan, L'Androgyné (Paris, E. Dentu, 1890).

51 Though Péladan felt drawn to Egypt, he considered himself a descendent of the Babylonians and paid homage to Babylon in his books, by naming the characters in all twelve volumes in La décadence latine after babylonian gods. Sar Mérodack J. Péladan. Amphithéâtre des Sciences Mortes: Comment on devient Mage - Éthique (Paris: 1892), p. xv.

52 "Recueil de coupures de presse, de dessins, photographies, etc. relatifs a Josephin Péladan," Péladan archive Ms. 13412, Bibliotheque Nationale de l'Arsenal, Paris. The album has press clippings from Le Figaro, L'Eclair, Evenement, Patriote, Bataillo, and La Croix from the 1890's, but often the dates and pagination are missing.

53 Jan Toorop, "Werken van Van Gogh en Toorop," Voor de Kunst, Utrecht 1898, quoted in Dutch in van der Woud, "Sphinx," 44; also see next fn 54 below.

54 Polak, Nederlandse Schilderkunst, 117, fn 1.

55 E. A. Wallis Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians: or Studies in Egyptian Mythology (London: Methuen & Company, 1904), 439-441.

56 van der Woude identifies the couple on the globe as the artist and his wife, who was a strict Catholic; van der Woud, "Sphinx," 44-46.

57 Toorop writes: "On the bottom is the higher loving feeling, sound of lyre, of pure souls of women, floating to higher spiritual life." Ibid.

58 The shape of the embankment and the two swans on the lake were probably adapted from Wood with Pool and Swans 1897, a drypoint landscape made near Domburg; illustrated in Hefting, Jan Toorop, 1989, pl. 65.

59 van der Woude, "Sphinx", 44.

60 Ibid.

61 Early Christian representations of Christ as a youthful shepherd with a lyre were based on the iconography of Apollo and Orpheus as pastoral gods. Christ and Orpheus count among the great initiates in the occult literature. This reflects the syncretism and monism of the esoteric world view, which is also accepted by Christian believers, such as Anasthasius Kircher and Rudolf Steiner.

62 Toorop letter to Markus, 1894, 260.

63 Ibid.

64 Siebelhoff notes that the conflated personae of the material bride with Salome and Cleopatra was common in Romantic and Symbolist literature and art. Siebelhoff, "Three

Brides," 236.

⁶⁵Polak, Nederlandse Schilderkunst, 117.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller. Tekeningen uit de 19de en 20ste eeuw (Otterlo: Gelderland, 1968), 300-301, catalogue # 41.

⁶⁹ The sphinx as femme fatale was a nineteenth century addition to the iconography of the sphinx and a prevalent motif in the visual arts at the turn of the century. Demisch, Sphinx, 192.

⁷⁰ Toorop, letter to A. Markus, 24 June 1894, Siebelhoff, "Three Brides," 259.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Toorop identified the bell as resounding "the pure mystical times of the past." Toorop letter to Markus, 1894; Siebelhoff, "Three Brides," 260.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Toorop letter to Markus, 1894; Siebelhoff, "Three Brides," 259-261.

⁷⁶ Toorop letter to Markus, Siebelhoff, "Three Brides," 260.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Chapter III

Bart van der Leck

I. Introduction

Two recently discovered drawings by Bart van der Leck show his careful study of ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern art.¹ Subsequently he imitated the ancient art and assimilated fundamental features of it to structure his own utopian work. The ancient sources contributed to the universal and integrated nature of his art, which depicted unity and oneness, eradicated social and national differences, and made pictorial space compatible with the architectural plane. The mural art of Egypt and Mesopotamia served as instructive models for van der Leck to reduce the empirical world to flat and colorful geometries that portrayed generic people, animals, and objects. Moreover, the compositional structure van der Leck discovered in the ancient art provided a framework for "free and fixed"² compositional elements, the fundamental duality he felt existed in the universal order.

These critical changes took place in van der Leck's transitional work from 1912 to 1917, when he experimented with pictorial problems, such as unmodeled color surfaces, non-volumetric figures, and figure-ground relationships. Ancient Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian art inspired him to rethink color,

space, and figuration into flat, non-illusionistic, and architectonic pictures.³

The goal of this chapter is to explore the formal influence of ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern art on van der Leck's work and to understand what he and his commentators meant by "Egyptian" art. He spoke of "Egyptian" art, but the scope of his concern and its effect on his art are greater than assumed in the existing scholarship, as reviewed in Section II. New visual evidence for the artist's interest in ancient Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian art and his remarks on "Egyptian" art are presented in Section III.⁴ How he assimilated the pictorial conventions and their impact on his development from realism to abstraction are analyzed in Section IV.

II. Review of scholarship

Although van der Leck was an early pioneer of abstraction and a founding member of de Stijl, the literature on him is not as extensive as on some of the other members of the group.⁵ His interest in Egyptian art and its formal influence on his art have been acknowledged but rarely compared to specific Egyptian examples to show the nature of the influence. Additionally, such comments are scattered in different publications and need to be consolidated to assess the impact of Egyptian and Near Eastern art on van der Leck's work.

H. P. Bremmer finds an affinity with Egyptian art in the reductive clarity and rhythmic repetition of forms in The

Fire, The Sick One [III.28], and The Arabs [III.19].⁶ Michel Seuphor names three more works with Egyptian influences, including Mason's Aid 1914 [III.38], Still Life 1913, and The Beggars 1914 [III.40], because of the schematic arrangement of the pictorial elements.⁷

W. C. Feltkamp, who knew the artist personally, confirms van der Leck's interest in Egyptian art, and he finds similarities with Egyptian art in the way van der Leck used the groundline, rendered the figure in a planar fashion with interchangeable left and right limbs, and placed objects in space. He is the only writer on the artist to reproduce an Egyptian example, although it is unclear whether the artist knew this image or whether the comparison is merely the writer's choice. But Feltkamp does report van der Leck's view of the Egyptian mode of representation as spiritual, because it did not seek to duplicate the material world.⁸

Rudolf Oxenaar argues that van der Leck's reasons for using "Egyptian" art were not spiritual but social, to create an "ideal of a new art for a new society...for a new man, a simple, universally valid and understandable identity that would stress the unity of mankind."⁹ Oxenaar also documents van der Leck's visit to the Egyptian collection in the Louvre in 1907, which the writer believes affected van der Leck's artistic development over the next decade.¹⁰ The writer names three works with Egyptian influences, including The Harvest and David with His Harp, c. 1904, and The Accident, 1913

[III.31].¹¹ Except for The Accident, whose flat and unmodulated colors of the figures remind Oxenaar of Egyptian art, the first two works he mentions seem more akin to archaic Greek vase paintings and medieval art than Egyptian art.

Cees Hilhorst and Irene Veenstra also see Egyptian influence in the way van der Leck renders figures. Hilhorst notes such influence in paintings from 1912 to 1915, but names only The Arabs, 1915 [III.19]. The assumed "Egyptian" influence in van der Leck's art serves Veenstra in her argument for van der Leck as a modernist in a dialectic opposition of old and new. She explains his choice of Egyptian art by its legacy in the European historical consciousness as "The Beginning" and holding the promise of renewal.¹² Although Veenstra approaches van der Leck's interest in Egyptian art from a new angle, her essay lacks documentation.

Seven of the nine works cited by the above-mentioned authors do indeed exhibit "Egyptian" influences in the way the figures are depicted, in the use of flat and unmodulated colors, in the reductive clarity, in the rhythmic repetition of pictorial elements, and in the use of groundlines to position objects in space. These and other pictures will be compared with Egyptian and Mesopotamian examples to determine the specific nature of the ancient influence, van der Leck's sources and motifs and their transformation in his work.

III. Van der Leck's interest in Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern art

Evidence of van der Leck's familiarity with Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian art exists in four undated and unsigned studies. These copies of Neo-Assyrian and Egyptian art are different in content, style, and medium. Two previously unpublished copies are thought to be student works,¹³ done while attending in Amsterdam the State Academy of Fine Arts and the State Academy of Arts and Crafts from 1900-1904. In his last year at these institutions he experimented with artistic conventions outside the Western canon.¹⁴

A. Copies of Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian art

Van der Leck copied the two Neo-Assyrian images from illustrations in Austen Henry Layard, Monuments of Nineveh I.¹⁵ Although at first the Assyrian Head¹⁶ [III.1] looks identical to the bearded figure [III.2] from Ashurnasirpal's II (883-859 B.C.) palace in Layard's book, van der Leck omitted some details, including the decorative design of the necklace and the curls in the beard and hair; he made the hair into a large black plane and straightened the curve of the forehead and nose of the Assyrian to vertical and diagonal lines. These subtle changes attempt to apply verticals, horizontals, and diagonals in the representation of the human form. Van der Leck's copy looks flatter than Layard's, because he transformed the modeling in the book illustration into patterns of light and dark.

One of the recently found images is a watercolor [III.3], which van der Leck copied from the same book [III.4].

The copy displays other ideas that van der Leck developed in his later work. This pencil and ink drawing reproduces an alabaster mural relief from the North-West palace of Ashurnasirpal II in Nimrud in the British Museum, showing the dramatic pursuit of warriors in chariots shooting arrows at their enemies.

The artist duplicates virtually all the details of Layard's line drawing, except the lower left chariot wheel. The missing circle around the spokes accentuates the vertical, horizontal, and diagonal orientations, along which the rest of the composition is structured: the hemlines, beards, eyes, arms, legs, and bows and arrows of the men. The harness, heads, bodies, tails, and legs of the horses follow these "essential orientations", which van der Leck considered critical to asserting the planar surface of a painting.¹⁷ This meticulous copy of a Neo-Assyrian bas-relief was an opportunity for van der Leck to study the strong rhythmic effect produced by the repetition of compositional alignments in restricted directions. Both these lessons are essential to van der Leck's subsequent abstractions.

In contrast to the emphasis on line in his copy of the relief from the palace of Ashurnasirpal, van der Leck studied color in the second newly found image, another water-color rendering of Amenophis II and his Governess [III.5] from Prisse d'Avennes's Atlas de l'art égyptien [III.6]. He cropped the image, deleted the decorative design around the

border, the goose, and the hieroglyphs above the figures. He deliberated on the color planes, particularly the white ones, by leaving certain areas and details unfinished, including the subjugated prisoners, the dog, the color pattern on the legs of the chair, and fingers. The hard-edged, opaque, and reductive forms in Egyptian painting appear to be a point of departure for his later loosely connected and crisply defined color planes. Aggregates of flat chromatic shapes appear in van der Leck's transitional works, such as The Sick One 1912 [III.28]. These solid color planes evolve into the disconnected chromatic forms in Composition 5 [III.24] and Composition 6 [III.25].

Unlike his other copies of Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian art, the fourth drawing Composition 1916 no.2 (Man with Cows) [III.7a] is large and full of erasures. The style of this scene of men and cattle suggests an Old Kingdom inspiration of similar scenes, such as [III.8 and III.10].¹⁸ Although the details in van der Leck's drawing accord with such Egyptian scenes, but no one source with all the particulars comes to mind. Perhaps van der Leck created a composite based on Egyptian art. A herdsman with raised switch behind three hornless cows and a calf turning its head appears in the lower register of the famous Old Kingdom mural from the famous mastaba of Ti [III.8] in Saqqara c. 2500 B.C. ; another example of a small group of hornless bovines with one turning its head back [III.11] is illustrated in Karl Lepsius' acclaimed

Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien (1849-1858), a source van der Leck surely knew. In any event, the stocky forms of the Old Kingdom style must have appealed to van der Leck for the sizable geometric planes, which he reworked into more parallel and angular delineations.

This drawing used to be called Man with Cows, but has been renamed a study for Composition 1916 no.2 [III.7e].¹⁹ Since the painting is an early abstraction, the study establishes Egyptian art as essential to the initial transition from figurative motifs to abstracted representations, as the intermediary studies [III.7 a-e] demonstrate in a self-explanatory manner.

The Egyptian and Near Eastern inspiration in the other works to be discussed in Section IV is less obvious, because van der Leck went beyond readily-recognizable, superficial motifs to find fundamental parameters for his new art.

B. Artist's statements on Egyptian art and new art

Van der Leck's grandson recalls his grandfather's great interest in Egyptian art and his repeated assertion that "Egyptian art was the product of real understanding of the function of art and that since the Egyptians there had been confusion in this respect."²⁰

He studied the way the Egyptians applied flat color with little or no modeling -- as in his copy of Amenophis II and his Governess [III.5]:

I arrived at a new basis for plastic colorism via Egyptian, medieval and realistic naturalism [seventeenth-

century Dutch realism] with more insight into the function which painting with color must have on each plane which is worked on and for which a spatial solution has to be found.²¹

The inherent geometry of Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian art is important in reconstructing the spatial solutions van der Leek discovered to integrate painting with architecture. The latent geometry of Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian art imposed a welcomed order on nature, which he found "chaotic from the point of view of painting and in conflict with the essence of the plane"²² if rendered illusionistically. The reductive, delineated, unmodeled, flat color shapes in the ancient mural art were more harmonious with the planar geometry of architecture.

The imposed order on nature revealed a fundamental universal structure that represent an essential truth for van der Leek:

For the first time in the history of the world it is possible, through an insight actuated by the need for truth, or, in fact, through a more comprehensive insight into reality, to take things from the divine in nature and fashion them into human forms. For the square, the triangle and forms derived from them, plus opposing guidelines and the diagonal, are human. They are forms discovered or created by man and they do not rank as cosmic reality.²³

Without denying the divine origins of nature, van der Leek nevertheless believed the geometric abstractions derived from the empirical world represent an essentially anthropocentric reality.

Since it was the Egyptians and the Mesopotamians who pioneered the application of geometry in figurative art, and

in view of van der Leck's remark to his grandson, it was logical for the artist to examine the ancient sources to rediscover the function of art. The Egyptian and Mesopotamian models applied geometry -- the square, the triangle, the axes, and the diagonal -- to representations of daily life and served as models for van der Leck to condense the vagaries of everyday life into "free and fixed" compositional elements. Although he did not explain the meaning of this concept, the "fixed" is probably represented by the grid and the "free" by the variables of color and geometric configurations.

Van der Leck called his new art "extended realism" -- despite its abstract appearance -- since it was rooted in the physical world. The concept of "extended realism" was in contradistinction to the hierarchical "corporeality" of the classical art.²⁴ But abstraction in and of itself was never a goal for van der Leck.

Neither was art for art's sake. Van der Leck's art represented a utopian vision, a new beginning and an original equivalent for "experiencing reality as a loose cohesion." Van der Leck explained that

we are confronted afresh by the universe, which demands and compels a new image of man's experience of time and space. We stand at the beginning, we are in this sense primitives of the new era and what we are concerned with is finding the right image for the new spirit of the age.²⁵

The artist's radical style presents such an image and implicit egalitarian values by reducing human and social differences into anonymous synergies. Such social values may reflect his

impoverished childhood with a chronically unemployed father and his sensitivity to the plight of the working class.²⁶ In his pictures he dignifies the common man with heroic poses adapted from ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian art.

IV. The influence of Egyptian and Mesopotamian art on
van der Leck's work

A. Universal man

The Sower 1921 [III.11] exemplifies a new ecumenical image, distilled from ancient and modern, Eastern and Western sources. The famous sowers by Jean-François Millet and Vincent van Gogh [III.11a] come to mind by the title, pose, and gesture of the figure.²⁷ A figure based on the sower appears in an earlier work as a framed picture on the wall in Looking at Prints [III.33].²⁸ Six years later and completely transformed, The Sower is also evocative of ancient Egyptian and perhaps even Neo-Assyrian precedents.

The wide cross-over stride, lifted heel, and narrow hips are akin to Egyptian models, such as Nebamun [III.12a] in the British Museum; but the frontal head, indicated by an orange rectangle, and bent arm enclosing something small within bring to mind the famous Neo-Assyrian lion tamers [III.12b] in the Louvre. And finally the flat rendering of the figure in shifting frontal and profile views parallel to the picture plane is common to both Egyptian and Mesopotamian artistic conventions.²⁹

Neither the spiralling volume nor the charged pathos

of the European sources is evident in the poised and heroic monumentality of the image by van der Leek. The latter considered emotive expression in art superficial and dispensable in representing the essence of humanity, because "in the last resort there is a deeper foundation than the purely emotional and that is being moved by the structure of the universe."³⁰

Stripped of emotions, gender, social class, race, setting, and nationality, The Sower by van der Leek approximates a universal image of humans. With stylistic sources in ancient Egyptian and the Near Eastern art and modern European art, The Sower spans history, from the fourth millennium B.C. to the twentieth century A.D., and unites Oriental and Occidental representations into a new synthesis. Moreover, the anonymity of the non-contiguous linear components of the image bring to mind the fundamental atomic structure of the universe.

B. Single figure composition of rider

A comparison of three pictures of a mounted rider summarizes the stylistic changes in the artist's development from naturalistic to abstracted representations.

The first example is an academic drawing of a uniformed rider, Hussar on Horse 1902 [III.13], viewed from the back.³¹ The artist created an illusionistic space, using dramatic foreshortening, modeling, and an oblique placement of the rider on the page.

In contrast to the naturalism of the academic draw-

ing, Courier 1913 [III.14] appears stiff and flat. Van der Leck positioned this uniformed rider longitudinally across the picture. The unmodeled, opaque forms flatten the image of the messenger into shifting frontal and profile views that maintain a parallel relationship to the picture plane.

These essential orientations impose an order that recalls the stiff gallop of horses in Neo-Assyrian art [III.3]. Van der Leck would have seen many examples of riders in Layard's book [III.15a and III.15b] before reaching the illustrations he copied. The style of Courier, however, is neither completely Neo-Assyrian nor Egyptian, but probably again a composite of sources. Courier dates to a time when van der Leck experimented with ways to integrate painting with the architecture in his house.³²

The upright chromatic planes in Courier are intermediary to the next stage in the artist's development, exemplified by The Horseman, 1918 [III.16]. It features the characteristics of van der Leck's new art: flat, non-illusionistic, and geometric shapes arranged in discontinuous, open compositions against a white background. The fragmented motif is color-coded and arranged in horizontal, vertical, and diagonal directions. Yellow designates the rider and black the horse, while large blue and red horizontal bands frame the equestrian at the top and the bottom.³³ The horizontal bands add rhythmic variety, enhance the color contrast, and balance the predominantly vertical composition. Nevertheless, The

Horseman is the artist's own synthesis, above and beyond Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian sources. Few precedents for a prancing horse exist in those ancient arts, whereas it is a common motif in Renaissance and post-Renaissance art.

C. Group composition with riders

Riders are featured also in a group of five gouache studies and two paintings on canvas by van der Leck. These seven images are products of progressive stages in his work, starting with two representational pictures, Four Arabs and Arabs, 1915 [III.18 and III.19], and culminating in two abstractions Composition 5 and Composition 6, 1917 [III.24 and III.25].³⁴ The motif for Four Arabs and Arabs, 1915 originated in sketches van der Leck made in Algeria the year before.³⁵ The peculiar arrangement of the donkey riders and a veiled woman on several groundlines was probably inspired by similar concepts illustrated in books, including Prisse d'Avennes (Captives Constructing a Temple of Amun [III.17]) and Layard (Spoil of a Captured City with Eunuchs Taking Count [III.20]).

Several details in van der Leck's images corroborate Neo-Assyrian and Egyptian sources. The isolated palm tree and the discontinuous groundlines are distinctive features of Spoil of a Captured City with Eunuchs Taking Count, and Layard's caption explains that one tree signifies landscape. Such abridgement would have suited van der Leck's tendency to reduce details to a minimum.

The constant redrawing around the riders and donkeys

in Four Arabs displays similar concerns with parallel alignments noted in the reworked contours of Composition 1916 (no.2 Man with Cows) [III.7a]. Although the figures in both works consist of shifting frontal and profile views, the girths and blocky proportions of the riders are more akin to Neo-Assyrian [III.4] than Egyptian figures; but van der Leck's representation of the figure is more geometric and less realistic than Egyptian prototypes.

The intermediary studies [III.21-23] illustrate van der Leck's decisions to consolidate the groundlines to one, to eliminate curves, and to reduce the scene to opaque color planes. The perimeters of the planes remain to form the "extended realism" and unique combination of color and line in Composition No. 5 [III.24] and Composition 6 [III.25].

D. Group composition with single groundline

The early stages of van der Leck's "extended realism" can be seen in works such as The Sick One 1912 [III.28], where the stocky figures, reclining man, and rhythm of figure-ground relationships bring to mind a famous Neo-Assyrian relief of Ashurbanipal and his queen by his side. Cropped reproductions of this idyllic scene were published by authors, such as Joseph Bonomi in Nineveh and its Palaces [III.29].³⁶ Van der Leck appears to have deleted the opulent garden setting and canopy of vines to transpose the motif of the royal couple onto a prosaic scene of an ill man in bed with visitors by his side.

Both images depict a man reclining on his left elbow and looking to the right. The frontal torso and profile head are rendered in the by now characteristic shifting planes, which is particularly distinctive when compared to the more conventional representation of a man in bed in Study for Life Insurance 1914 [III.43].

Another link between The Sick One and the Neo-Assyrian relief exists in the rhythmic overlapping forms in the background. The bed and the table divide both picture planes horizontally into upper and lower parts. Small positive and negative shapes below the bed complement the grand rising and falling contours of the seated, reclining, and standing figures above. A similar rhythmic contrast between large and small, simple and multi-layered spaces exists in the Neo-Assyrian work.

Dissimilarities between The Sick One and the scene with Ashurbanipal are noticeable in the modeled area around the eyes and ears and the folds in the red dress in the painting. The angle of the sick man's head could have been originally inspired by Neo-Assyrian or Egyptian examples, but the angle is more exaggerated in van der Leek's picture. Clasped hands are common in Egyptian and Mesopotamian art, but not the way van der Leek depicts them here. Some foreshortening can be seen in the ancient art, but not in the manner seen in the left arm of the seated woman and in the girl's doll. These dissimilarities transform the inspiration into a new

synthesis.

In The Sick One, van der Leck displays an interest in the planar potential of a full back view that is common in Neo-Assyrian and some Egyptian art. The pose of the little girl mirrors that of the woman in a detail from the famous painted tomb of the 18th Dynasty official Rekmire [III.30] from Thebes.³⁷ The squat proportions of the figures are closer, once again, to Mesopotamian figures.

In hindsight, the three-quarters back view of Hussar on Horse, 1902 [III.13] is an early example of van der Leck's penchant for this angle. Full back views appear in Fruit Seller, The Beggars [III.40], The Accident, 1913 [III.31], and Looking at Prints 1915 [III.33]. In The Accident, van der Leck explored ambiguities between front and rear views that are common Neo-Assyrian and occasional examples in Egyptian art, which adds complexity to the reductive image without detracting from pictorial flatness. Such condensation of visual information seems to have been particularly appealing to and compatible with van der Leck's sensibilities.

The two uniformed men shown from the front and the back in The Accident are reminiscent of heraldic Neo-Assyrian figures, such as the two anthropomorphic lion-headed guardian griffins from the palace of Assurbanipal in Nineveh [III.32].³⁸ In both images, the figures stride towards each other until their feet touch; front and back views are difficult to tell apart, were it not for small details in the arms

and legs of the lion-headed figures and the buttons of the uniformed men. The adaptation of the ancient source is appropriate, given the protective role of the modern day custodians.

The front and back juxtaposition can be seen in Looking at Prints, 1915 [III.33] as well. The stiff poses of the adults and the youth in between and their placement in the composition are reminiscent of Egyptian funerary steles, particularly a Middle Kingdom example [III.34] in the National Museum of Antiquities, in Leiden,³⁹ even though the Egyptian work shows fewer figures and in a different setting. Nevertheless, van der Leek appears to have adapted a ceremonial scene for an ordinary event. The inherent geometry in the figures and objects and their alignment is another point of comparison between the ancient and modern work. Instead of the table with an extraordinary still life offering in the Egyptian stele, van der Leek shows a large rectangular silhouette, a portfolio perhaps, next to the figure on the left. The table in the Egyptian stele and the portfolio in van der Leek's painting accentuate the horizontal axis, which is repeated in the chairs as well. The simple rectangular form of the chairs may be compared to the chair of the governess in [III.6].

The kneeling pose of the youth is also rectilinear, and it too may be patterned after Egyptian models [III.35] and possibly Neo-Assyrian precedents, such as the winged guardians

[III.15b] reproduced in Layard's book. Van der Leck emphasized the triangle and the square configurations in the boy's legs and carefully made the youth's foot and knee contiguous rather than overlapping, for a flatter effect. Van der Leck also adjusted the negative spaces around the knees and ankle of the boy, and the arm and leg of the man on the right, in two intermediate studies for Looking at Prints [III.36 and III.37, the latter is unpublished], to make them follow diagonal, vertical, and horizontal directions. Even the hairline of the figures [III.33, III.36, and III.37] conforms to these orientations. Looking at Prints demonstrates the formative influence of Egyptian and possibly Neo-Assyrian figures in the emergence of the triangle and square in van der Leck's art.

E. Multiple groundlines: pinwheel composition

While most of van der Leck's compositions are organized on a single groundline, some have more than one. Arabs initially had several, but they were subsequently consolidated into one. Distinctive among the artist's multiple groundline compositions prior to 1915 is the pinwheel arrangement of The Beggars 1914 [III.40].

This composition may have been inspired by a famous Sumerian work, the Early Dynastic plaque of Ur-Nanshe [III.41], c. 2480 B.C. in the Louvre. The stone wall-plaque, commemorating a Sumerian ruler with his family, was found in the momentous archaeological discovery of the long forgotten Sumerians at modern day Tello in Iraq.⁴⁰ Although the ancient

site of Girsu was excavated in the 1870s, its publication was not completed until decades later in 1912, the year van der Leek worked on The Beggars.⁴¹

At first the two compositions seem dissimilar, but they share basic features. Both represent adults and children, who are short and stocky. The matching rectangular silhouettes, and the repetition of their feet, ears, turned heads and facial features create a circular rhythm around the center.

The hollow core of the Ur-Nanshe plaque served to attach the decorative plaque to the wall, but is also a hub in the composition: the rectangular border around the hole corresponds to the one around the outer edge; it is linked to the center with a horizontal line, which separates the upper area from the lower one and which also serves as a groundline. On the right stands a small figure behind Ur-Nanshe, and both look toward the center. The large figure of Ur-Nanshe reappears on the left, this time looking to the right, and creating a transition between the two registers.

A close relationship between geometric forms and figures exists in the Ur-Nanshe plaque and in The Beggars. In van der Leek's painting, the rectangles of the door frame and the door panels repeat the rectangular field of the picture and the blocky shape of the figures. The round doorknob seems an almost excessive detail in the otherwise austere composition; formally, however, the black circle and square border of

the doorknob correspond to the circle and square in the Ur-Nanshe plaque. While the circular arrangement in the Ur-Nanshe plaque revolves around the hole, the pin-wheel arrangement in The Beggars has a void as its center. Although the clothing and gestures of the two images are dissimilar, the patterns and hemlines of the Sumerian garments and the angles created by the arms and feet follow the same vertical, horizontal, and diagonal directions that are important for van der Leck.

The significant differences between the Early Dynastic plaque and van der Leck's paintings keep The Beggars from being derivative. The woman positioned halfway in the doorway is without precedent in ancient Egyptian or Mesopotamian art. Three of the figures in van der Leck's paintings are shown from the back, which is not the case in the Early Dynastic plaque. Unlike the stone plaque, no writing appears either on the figures or in the negative spaces in The Beggars. Nevertheless, the pinwheel arrangement is a unique approach to creating flat compositions, and variations on this circular arrangement on multiple groundlines can be seen in The Fire, 1913 and two other compositions from 1914, Study for Life Insurance [III.42] and Fire Insurance [III.43].

The adaptation of royal figures from the Early Dynastic plaque to depict commoners -- beggars in this case -- reveals a pattern in the way van der Leck used ancient art in his work. Consequently, despite bare feet and oversized

clothes, the beggars are monumental and their faces are as uniform and inexpressive as those of the Ur-Nanshe family. The resemblance of the beggar woman's face to that of the woman behind the door could mark the beginning of van der Leck's desire to eliminate social differences in his art.

F. A synthesis of Egyptian and Near Eastern
artistic inspiration

Two of van der Leck's early abstractions, Composition 3 and Composition 4 [III.44 and III.51], also show Egyptian influence in the intermediate stages from the realistic Leaving the Factory, 1908 [III.45] to the abstraction nine years later. Drawings of workers leaving a textile factory [III.45-49] in the industrial town of Glanerbrug,⁴² where he had settled in 1908, chronicle the process of abstraction of two ambitious group compositions.

The earliest version of this theme appears in a 1908 ink drawing [III.45] of workers walking away from factory buildings. By placing the masses at a diagonal to the picture plane, van der Leck made the perspective converge beyond the frame to the right, where presumably the door to the factory was located.

Two years later, he depicted a close-up of the same scene from a lower angle in Leaving the Factory 1910 [III.46], showing fewer workers and cropping the buildings. This picture modifies the earlier view with minor changes, which are more extensive in the next painting.

Here the artist abandoned the agitated line in the previous drawing for a more monumental and volumetric representation of the figures. The austere factory buildings behind the workers press in on them and create an oppressive mood in the shallow space. Despite the workers' greater presence, they are curiously anonymous, and their squarish faces repeat the shapes of the gaping windows behind them.

Van der Leck altered the architectural background in the studies for Composition 3 and Composition 4 again in [III.48]; the buildings are now directly behind the workers and parallel to the picture plane. He reversed the direction of the figures; now they move from left to right and are divided into a crowd on the left and a single female figure on the right. None of the workers is shown in the three-quarters view of the previous drawings; their stiff poses are rendered in the by-now familiar shifting planes adapted from ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources.

As in the study of Egyptian art [III.7a], the study for Composition 3 and Composition 4 [III.48] also demonstrates attempts to alter the curves of the head and shoulders into angular forms. Van der Leck eliminates facial features still visible in the earlier versions and reduces other details in the gestures and clothing of the workers as well. The figures and the setting are merely outlined with vertical and horizontal lines, which not only simplify the image to bare essentials, but also form upright and sometimes overlapping planes.

He accentuates these planes by coloring them in the next study [III.49], where he determines the color scheme and alters the relationship between the architectural background and the figures in the foreground.

In the next study [III.50] only vestiges of the previous scene remain. The color planes are reduced to open contours and the perspective in the upper left area of windows and buildings is radically diminished. It disappears altogether in the final compositions [III.44 and III.51].

These nine works elucidate the formative role of artistic traits van der Leck noted in Egyptian and Mesopotamian art in transforming a realistic picture into an abstracted composition. By deleting more and more details, he released line and color from their descriptive role in Western art and featured them as discontinuous color bands arranged in rhythmic vertical and horizontal notations on a white ground.

G. Innovation: discontinuous strips of color on white

These colorful rhythmic notations were a hallmark of van der Leck's style in 1916. The step from closed, upright color planes to open, disconnected configurations in 1916 was groundbreaking, but it is generally credited to Mondrian's influence on van der Leck. When they met in late April or May of 1916, van der Leck allegedly saw Mondrian's Pier and Ocean, 1915 [III.52].⁴³ But van der Leck recalled

seeing "a large disc with vertical and horizontal [lines], with free elements and fixed elements," and he claimed that these "free and fixed" elements were the result of his influence on Mondrian.⁴⁴

Although van der Leek may have seen Pier and Ocean, apparently he meant another Plus-and-Minus painting, the famous Composition in Line, 1917 [III.53] that Mondrian had changed after they met.⁴⁵ Mondrian adapted the unified planes, pure colors, and the exact technique that he saw in his friend's work,⁴⁶ which also resulted in a new direction. Unlike Mondrian, van der Leek arrived at the grid, reductive geometry and color planes by studying the mural art of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, not Cubism. Even if Mondrian's Cubist-inspired Plus-and-Minus compositions encouraged van der Leek to use broken lines in his first abstractions, Composition no. 1 (Noortje) 1916 [III.54] and Composition 1916 No. 2, van der Leek never went through a black and white analytic Cubist phase. And finally, van der Leek's studies of Egyptian and Mesopotamian art laid the foundation for his unique open configurations with chromatic bands, preceding Mondrian's first union of color and line in the Diamond painting Composition with Yellow Lines, 1933 by seventeen years.

V. Conclusion

The artist's painstaking copies of Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian art document his close scrutiny of both artistic traditions, and at least eleven works demonstrate van der

Leck's interest in Egyptian art and its influence on his art. His three copies of ancient art and the analysis of his work indicate van der Leck's broad use of "Egyptian" art and that it actually included Mesopotamian art as well. His taste encompassed Old, Middle, and New Kingdom Egyptian art, Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs, and Sumerian art, which he saw in museums and studied in Orientalist publications. In sum, Egyptian and Mesopotamian art represented ideal artistic parameters for van der Leck -- upright color planes and emphasis on line, elemental colors and geometric shapes, the grid and diagonal orientations⁴⁷-- and a stepping stone for the transition from naturalism to an "extended realism" of rhythmic and colorful abstractions.

The ancient art also broadened the universal basis of his painting in terms of time and geography, contributing to the integrated oneness of van der Leck's utopian synthesis. And finally, the ceremonial peculiarities adapted from the ancient models ennobled the commonplace with heroic dignity -- an important aspect of his social ideals -- and inspired a monumental, dispassionate, and architectonic art.

Footnotes

¹ I would like to thank J. J. Schonk and A. Schonk, grandsons of the artist, for bringing these as yet unnoted copies in the family papers to my attention and for patiently

answering my endless questions. I would also like to thank Mr. Ronald Feltkamp for suggesting that I look into the Egyptian influence in Bart van der Leck's art.

²Bart van der Leck, "autobiographical memoirs," 1957, printed in Rudolf Oxenaar, Bart van der Leck 1876-1958, exh. cat. (Otterlo: Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, 1976), n.p.

³Bart van der Leck, "The Place of Modern Painting in Architecture," De Stijl 1:2 (December 1917), 6-7, in Hans L. C. Jaffe, de Stijl (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1970), 93.

⁴References to Assyrian or Sumerian art may exist in unpublished materials. The primary sources of information about van der Leck are in restricted archives in the Netherlands Institute for Art History in the Hague and the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo, both of which are presently inaccessible.

⁵Rudolf Oxenaar, "The Birth of de Stijl, part two: Bart van der Leck," Artforum 11 (June 1973), 36.

⁶H. P. Bremmer, "B. van der Leck, De ziekte," Beeldende Kunst 3 (1916), 70 ; H. P. Bremmer, "B. van der Leck de brand," Beeldende Kunst 6 (1919), 133; H.P. Bremmer, "B. van der Leck, Landschap, Oefening met geschut, Vier soldaten, Huzaren met volk, De ordonnans, Bedelaars, Arabieren, Man te paard, Hondekar," Beeldende Kunst 7 (1919), 13, 15, 18.

⁷Michel Seuphor, "Le peintre Bart van der Leck," Werk 38 (November 1951), 359.

⁸W. C. Feltkamp, B.A. van der Leck: Leven en Werken, (Leiden: Spruyt, van Mantgem & de Does N.V., 1956), 26, 27-29, and 40.

⁹Oxenaar, van der Leck 1976, n.p.

¹⁰Letter to painter friend Piet Klaarhamer (1874-1954) mentioned in Oxenaar, "Birth of de Stijl," 39.

¹¹Rudolf Oxenaar, Bart van der Leck 1876-1958: A la recherche de l'image des temps modernes, exh. cat. (Lille: Institut Néerlandais, 1980), 36.

¹²Veenstra, Irene, "De gedaante van het begin; moderniteit: dialectiek tussen oud en nieuw," Bart van der Leck, exh. cat. (Otterlo: Kröller-Müller Museum, 1994), 166-168.

- 13 Letter from Mr. J. J. Schonk to author, summer 1993.
- 14 Oxenaar, van der Leck 1976, n.p.
- 15 Austen Henry Layard, The Monuments of Nineveh: From Drawings made on the Spot (London: John Murray, 1849).
- 16 Although Oxenaar lists the study, it has as yet not been illustrated nor discussed. Oxenaar, "van der Leck" 1976, n.p.
- 17 van der Leck, "On painting and building" in Oxenaar, van der Leck, 1976, n.p.
- 18 The style was identified as Old Kingdom by Dr. James Romano, curator of Egyptian and Ancient Near Eastern Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and Dr. Maarten J. Raven, curator Egyptian art, the Antiquities Museum in Leiden, Holland.
- 19 Bart van der Leck, exh. cat. (Otterlo: Kröller-Müller Museum, 1994), 42.
- 20 Letter from A. Schonk to author, 16 August 1993.
- 21 van der Leck, "autobiographical memoirs," in Oxenaar, van der Leck 1976, n.p.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 van der Leck, "On painting and building" in Oxenaar, van der Leck 1976, n.p.
- 26 Oxenaar, van der Leck 1976, n.p.
- 27 Theo van Doesburg also reworked The Sower by van Gogh for Great Pastoral Scene 1921-1922, a stained glass commission at the School of Agriculture, in Drachten; the pencil and ink sketches and water color studies for "Great Pastoral Scene", 1921 are at the Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst, The Hague. Van Doesburg was also interested in Egyptian art. He lived in Leiden and in 1917 he founded an artist group with a logo that included the Apis bull. Although both works render the body in shifting frontal and profile planes, van der Leck's is more symmetrical and heroic, while van Doesburg is interested in the interplay of planes to render a dynamic image of the

sower.

²⁸ This figure was pointed out to me by Professor Theodore Reff.

²⁹ Heinrich Schäfer, Principles of Egyptian Art, transl. and ed. by John Baines (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1986).

³⁰ van der Leck, "autobiographical memoirs," in Oxenaar, van der Leck 1976, n.p.

³¹ Although not visible in our reproduction, an erased ghost of the same composition faces left, Oxenaar, van der Leck 1976, n.p.

³² van der Leck, "autobiographical memoirs," in Oxenaar, van der Leck, 1976, n.p. The mural art of Egypt and Assyria he had studied in the copies [III.1 and III.3] surely contributed new approaches to color and line.

³³ Jim Romano noted that the van der Leck palette has the conventional colors of Egyptian New Kingdom tomb painting.

³⁴ Composition 5 and Composition 6 were commissioned in 1914 as stained glass windows for the offices of Müller and Company, a shipping and mining enterprise. Figs. 26 and 27 seem to be studies for the stained glass, which never materialized. They are known as Study for Composition 6, but they seem to develop Composition 5 for the stained glass commission. The titles of these paintings were not given by the artist, according to Mr. J.P. Smit, who notes the different titles for the same work on the shipping labels glued to the back of the frames for the so-called Composition No. 5 and Composition No. 6. Interview with Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Smit, March 17, 1993. Van der Leck had a written contract with Mrs. Helene Kröller-Müller from 1912 until the end of World War II, which resulted in 42 paintings and almost 400 drawings in the collection of the Museum. Oxenaar, van der Leck 1976, n.p.

³⁵ See fig. 18 a; and Abstraction: Towards a New Art: Painting 1910-1920, exh. cat. (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1980), ill. 86d and 86e.

³⁶ Joseph Bonomi, Nineveh and Its Palace: The Discoveries of Botta and Layard, Applied to the Elucidation of Holy writ. (London: H. G. Bohn, 1857), 401.

³⁷ Carl Richard Lepsius, Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und

Aethiopien vol. 3 (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchverlag, 1849-59) pl. 42.

38 They were among the earliest discovered Neo-Assyrian reliefs, which were already shipped to Europe by mid-century.

39 Although Oxenaar notes the frieze-like quality of the painting and considers it to be a pure example of the artist's evolution toward a simple expression that is linear and almost geometric, he does not mention anything Egyptian about it. Oxenaar, Vdl: à la recherche, 41. The horizontal scene bracketed by two seated figures facing each other is a widespread compositional type decorating even some of the imported ivory plaques in Assyria and illustrated in Monuments of Nineveh, pl. 89. The funerary stele was reproduced in a publication by P.A.A. Boeser, Denkmäler des Neuen Reiches, vol. 3. Stelen. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1913), pl. 30.

40 News of the excavations of the world's oldest civilization was as sensational as the unearthing of ancient Nineveh. Louvre catalogue of 1901, quoted in Glyn Daniel, A Hundred and Fifty Years of Archaeology (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), 134.

41 The plaque is reproduced and identified in Ernest de Sarzec, Découvertes en Chaldée, vol. 1 (Paris: E. Leroux, 1884-1912); and in Gaston Cros, Nouvelles Fouilles de Tello (Paris: E. Leroux, 1910-14), pl. 12:1.

42 Oxenaar, van der Leck 1976, n.p.

43 For influence of one on the other, see Oxenaar, van der Leck 1976, n.p.

44 van der Leck, "autobiographical memoirs," Oxenaar, van der Leck 1976, n.p.

45 Carel Blotkamp, Mondrian: The Art of Destruction (Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 98-99 and fn 28.

46 Piet Mondrian, "Van Doesburg," De Stijl dernier numéro (April 1932), 48-49.

47 van der Leck, "autobiographical memoirs," and "On painting and building"; Oxenaar, van der Leck 1976, n.p.

Chapter IV
Piet Mondrian

I. Introduction

The "Egyptian"¹ motifs in Mondrian's paintings are evident in Evolution 1910-11 [IV.1] and implicit in the Diamond paintings, especially the early ones, from 1918-1921 [IV.10, IV.13-IV.17], and offer insights into the enigma and purpose of these works. Moreover, the allusions to ancient Egypt suggest a continuity of artistic and iconographic concerns during and after Mondrian's critical transition from figuration to abstraction.

Such "Egyptian" motifs relate invariably to theosophy and its controversial role in Mondrian's art. The relevance of this doctrine for Mondrian's utopian art and aesthetic -- both figurative and abstract -- has remained elusive and seemingly inconsequential. Mondrian even stopped talking about theosophy except to sympathetic listeners, such as Charmion von Wiegand in the forties.²

In 1909, the year of his membership in the Theosophical Society, Mondrian indicated the importance of the spiritual in art:

...I believe that a painter's conscious spiritual knowledge will have a much greater influence upon his art, and that it is merely a weakness in him -- or a lack of genius -- should this spiritual knowledge be harmful to his art. Should a painter progress so far that he attains definite knowledge of the finer regions through

development of the finer senses, then perhaps his art will become incomprehensible to mankind, which as yet has not come to know these finer regions.³

His comments about "the painter" in all likelihood are autobiographical. Earlier in the letter he reported that he was working "within ordinary, generally known terrain" and that his art "remains still outside the occult realm".⁴ Since Mondrian was painting in a figurative style at the time he wrote the letter, his comments suggest a relationship between style and degree of spiritual awareness, equating the figurative with the comprehensible "generally known terrain," and the abstract style with the finer regions, incomprehensible to the uninitiated public.

Among the sources for this chapter are two that have received little or no attention in the literature on Mondrian. Steiner's⁵ 1908 lectures Egyptian Myths and Mysteries⁶ on the relevance of ancient Egypt for the modern period have been overlooked, although they correspond in important ways to Evolution. And the second source is the work of the architect Herman Walenkamp (1872-1933), Mondrian's contemporary and fellow Dutch theosophist, particularly his 1904 article on prehistoric wisdom⁷ with the diagram [IV.9] that seems pertinent to the innovative compositional design of Mondrian's first Diamond painting Lozenge with Gray Lines, 1918 [IV.10]. Mondrian probably knew Walenkamp personally, if not at least his work, because the architect was the vice president of the Theosophical Society and wrote articles on theosophy and art

in esoteric magazines, such as Theosophica and Architectura.⁸

II. Review of scholarship

Four art historians note qualities in Mondrian's painting evocative of ancient Egypt. Robert Rosenblum finds this artist's self-portraits from 1909 reminiscent of Late Empire Faiyum portraits, and Robert Welsh attributes the spiritualized iconic expression of the self-portraits to Mondrian's involvement with Theosophy.⁹ These self-portraits are precluded from this dissertation, because Faiyum portraits postdate Pharaonic Egyptian art and they are modeled, which reflects a Greek sensibility.¹⁰

Tim Threlfall proposes ancient Egyptian origins for the system of metaphysical geometry in Mondrian's 'plastic mathematics',¹¹ such as the "twelve number system" for the proportional relationship in Lozenge Composition in a Square with Red, Yellow, and Blue 1925 [IV.17].¹² Threlfall cites Walenkamp's above-mentioned article "Prehistoric Wisdom: On the Significance and the Aesthetic Working of the Twelve Number System," as a possible source for Mondrian's knowledge of the system.¹³ However, it is unclear what this system was and what purpose it served in Egypt, and it is not clear how Threlfall formulates the corresponding proportions in Mondrian's painting.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the writer attributes such an interest on behalf of the artist to a revival of "mystical mathematics" early in the century among Dutch artists and architects to visualize Theosophical concepts about

the cosmic order.¹⁵ An important distinction needs to be made, however, between the way architects use numbers to calibrate proportionate system and Mondrian's intuitive system:

As for this pure proportion, I think that when one talks about that in art it is already a foregone conclusion that that cannot be a pure mathematical proportion.¹⁶

Carel Blotkamp reports of postcards of Egyptian sculpture, in the Louvre and the National Antiquities Museum in Leiden, that Mondrian sent to the critic Steenhoff. They supposedly date from the period of Mondrian's preoccupation with Theosophy and ways to create art inspired by occult insight. Blotkamp also notes the importance of Egyptian art among Dutch theosophists and he proposes the group statue Mertitites and Khennu [IV.2], from the Old Kingdom in Leiden, as a possible source for Evolution. He observes the rigid frontality and geometric stylization these works have in common.¹⁷

III. The context for Mondrian's interest in Egyptian art

A. Mondrian's statements about Egyptian art, primitive art, primitive man, the Orient, and the utopian mission of art

Even though modern Western man is the protagonist and modern Western society the setting in Mondrian's writings, he expressed himself in a dialectical manner, and his references to ancient (Egyptian) art, primitive man, and the Orient serve as antithetical points in his discussion.

Mondrian's concept of the "primitive" pertains to "Egyptian" influences, because, although he acknowledged the exceptional purity of Egyptian art, he nevertheless considered it intuitive¹⁸ and primitive. He used the word "primitive" in both positive and negative ways. Mondrian employed the adjectives "oppressive" and "primitive" interchangeably as he discussed the art of the past. Only one other category of art existed for him and that was the new or modern art, which he pioneered. It differed from the ancient art, because "the plastic means no longer have the natural appearance of things, and relationships no longer follow naturalistic composition."¹⁹ He was critical of the primitive conception of reality, because it was limited to natural, physical appearances. In his opinion naturalistic forms weaken pure plastic expression by obscuring the inherent and pure formal relationships between line, plane, and color.

Mondrian used "primitive" in a positive sense, when he claimed that "integrally human man is perfect primitive man, but become conscious,"²⁰ and he cited the Biblical Adam as the perfect primitive man.²¹ Primitive man, Mondrian explained, lived in harmony with the rhythm of nature and expressed it in his art. He carried "in embryo man at its [his] apogee," and consequently contained his rhythm and expressed it in his art. As he evolved he lost his natural rhythm, which upset the equilibrium between his inner natural rhythm and his outer physical rhythm.²² The new mentality of

modern man, however, precludes "the reconstruction of primitive and oppressive forms."²³

Mondrian did not reject past art outright, because the "profound content of art" remained the same,²⁴ though it was barely recognizable in the new art, because of a different plastic expression. In the following passage, the artist discusses the transitional period, when the old and new modes of expression are merged:²⁵

Just as the new art is now manifested amid the art of the past prolonged into our time, we see the new life being born within the culture of the past. Art can reveal how this new life is born: while liberating itself from natural oppression it frees itself from the domination of particular forms of every kind and seeks the realization of pure and equivalent relationships.²⁶

The metaphor of birth in his writings conveys perpetuity and a related allusion to pregnancy is subtly indicated in the seemingly expectant figures in Evolution. This would be consistent with the quoted passage and iconography of the triptych, where old (figurative) art and new (geometric) art coexist on the occasion of the new art born to the ancient one. Moreover, this interpretation of Evolution equates the figurative with outer, exoteric appearances and the geometric abstraction with hidden inner and esoteric sensations.

One of Mondrian's generalizations about the Orient²⁷ credits the Occident with developing a sense of empirical reality, the intellect, and the external side of life, and the Orient with cultivating inner strength, spiritual practice, and the highest wisdom of the world. Mondrian considered both

East and West necessary for "the complete evolution of humanity, which will slowly achieve equivalence of spiritual and physical culture."²⁸

His remarks reveal old Orientalist myths that stereotype the Occident as the land of doctors and the Orient as the land of prophets, Occidental culture as materialistic and Oriental culture as spiritual. Oriental art fell short of Occidental art, Mondrian felt, because the latter achieved "freedom from the oppression of particular form, the creation of neutral forms and pure relationships, and finally, equivalent expression of the two aspects of all existence."²⁹

Mondrian expressed the fundamental duality of his utopian philosophy in the oppositional relationships of his Neo-Plastic compositions. He believed that the utopian power of art could cultivate "the superhuman element in man and hence become a means for humanity's evolution, of equal importance as religion,"³⁰ by passing along "the profound content" in art from generation to generation.

B. Concerning art and the spiritual

By 1909, Mondrian had defined his challenging mission as an artist to create art with "a deep substratum" that those with refined occult sensibilities would recognize and appreciate. But initially he did not know "how I should develop" other than "try to attain occult knowledge for myself in order better to understand the nature of things."³¹

C. Mondrian and Steiner

I believe that Steiner's teachings encouraged Mondrian to converge his spiritual and artistic goals. Although Mondrian may have heard of Steiner prior to the latter's 1908 lecture tour to The Netherlands, the theosophist was still on the artist's mind in 1921³² -- after his critical transition from figuration to abstraction and Neo-Plasticism. He wrote to Steiner from Paris to declare Neo-Plasticism as

the art of the future for all true anthroposophists and theosophists. Art expresses in plastic form the evolution of life: evolution of the spirit and (but in the opposite direction) evolution of matter. It is not possible to attain this relative equilibrium other than by destroying the form and replacing it by a new plastic means -- the universal.³³

Perhaps Mondrian wrote to Steiner to "report back" to the man who had inspired him to undertake such a utopian mission in the first place and to inform him of the successful outcome, despite the risk of his art becoming incomprehensible for the general (uninitiated) public.³⁴ Steiner reproved an artist's efforts as vain and useless were he to create art for pleasure and not for the ideal spiritual development of humanity,³⁵ and Mondrian's wording "finer regions" in his 1909 letter echoes Steiner's phrase in the next sentence after he condemns the vanity of art for art's sake.³⁶

Mondrian's attempt to contact Steiner in the twenties corroborates an underlying continuity of concerns between Evolution and the initial Diamond paintings. Steiner, however, never responded to the artist's letter, Mondrian reported angrily to Theo van Doesburg, though he still

acknowledged Steiner's ability to write good books and reintegrated that Neo-plasticism was "purely a theosophical art (in a true sense)".³⁷ Mondrian may have appreciated Steiner's ability to teach occult philosophy in a way that was applicable to daily life. Moreover, unlike Blavatsky's abstruse multivolume tomes full of arcane information, which also served Mondrian but in a different way during this transitional period, Steiner's writings and lectures were more focused, comprehensible and available in small brochures, such as the one on "Egyptian Myths and Mysteries".

1. Egyptian Myths and Mysteries

These lectures divulge the relevance of Egyptian myths and mysteries for modern times and their critical role during occult initiation as embodiments of cosmogonic and human evolution in a peculiar, ahistorical,³⁸ and esoteric saga.

In the first lecture on "Egyptian Myths and Mysteries", Steiner introduced the "spiritual connections between the culture streams of ancient and modern times" by way of "superearthy connections." Then he demonstrated the multivalence of the Isis and Osiris myths as emblematic of the cosmogonic and spiritual evolution of humans. In other words, these primordial myths were archetypal embodiments of the secret wisdom impressed on the soul by way of enigmatic forms and retained in the collective consciousness. A prominent turning point in the initiation ritual occurs when the

initiate comprehends the meaning of these myths and occult wisdom is transmitted. The soul retains, however dimly, memories of a primeval past³⁹ through reincarnation⁴⁰ from generation to generation, according to Steiner, to be awakened only during initiation with the help of the "thought-picture".⁴¹

2. The thought-picture

Steiner explains the primordial origin of the thought-picture and its role in creating a feeling of unity with the universe in the pupil:

No matter how the various men might be formed, there floated before their souls, as a picture, a thing that was already present as a spiritual picture when the sun was still united with the earth. This picture emerged more and more as the meaning of the earth, as what lies spiritually at the foundation of the earth. This picture did not appear to them as this or that form, as the picture of this or that race; it appeared to them as the universal ideal of mankind...This is the One who will at least appear as the high ideal of the earth.⁴²

While contemplating the image, the neophyte travels back in time during the three and a half days of sleep. He experiences earlier (Atlantean) times, when man, Steiner writes, was "the companion of gods." He would lose his ability to perceive divine spiritual beings in the post-Atlantean period as his ego developed and he became increasingly materialistic and tied to his physical surroundings.⁴³ The neophyte experiences a replay of the evolving human consciousness up to the modern era in three stages, and each stage the human ideal in the thought-picture has a different identity: first, the Earth Mother, then Isis, and

finally the Virgin Mary.⁴⁴

IV. Egyptian Influences in Mondrian's Work:

A. Evolution: Egyptian sources for the style and
iconic forms

Two years after joining the Theosophical Society Mondrian painted Evolution. That the painting has something to do with initiation has long been recognized, but now details of the initiation iconography emerge in light of Egyptian Myths and Mysteries. Steiner's text corresponds so closely to Mondrian's painting that his narrative reads as if it were a script for the triptych.

Among the many correlations between Steiner's text and Mondrian's painting is the emphasis on Egypt for the initiation ritual, rather than Babylon or India.⁴⁵ Moreover, the critical role of the second Egyptian stage in Steiner's lectures accords with the more pronounced Egyptian appearance of the center-panel figure and with the prominent size and height of the center-panel in relation to the smaller side panels. The shifting levels of consciousness at each of the three stages, outlined by Steiner, may explain the changing gradient of the heads in Evolution -- hardly noticeable between the left and right panel and easily overlooked unless the work is seen in the original -- and the triangles on the breasts and navels and beside the women's heads. By featuring the same woman in basically the same pose in each of the three panels, Mondrian may have wished to convey the unity, the one-

ness, and interrelatedness of all phenomena through the "superearthly" connections of reincarnated souls, that Steiner mentioned. In sum, the visual synthesis in Evolution displays the essential features outlined in Egyptian Myths and Mysteries, including the "thought-picture", the three stages of initiation, and the transfer of esoteric knowledge on the soul via secret signs.

Given the critical role of the "thought-picture" and the three anthropic stages of evolution, the triptych format of altarpieces was perfect for Mondrian's initiation piece. The three-quarter length of the androgynous figure in Evolution accords with the ideal human in the "thought-picture" whom Steiner described as a "combination of man and woman in which the lower part is omitted."⁴⁶ This important figure, explains Steiner, provides access to the collective consciousness and she guides the neophyte to cosmogonic beginnings and back to the present through the three anthropic stages.

The identity of the left-panel figure in Evolution matches the Steinerian earth mother. She personifies the remote past, when the human body first appeared as the flower-man.⁴⁷ The small downward pointing triangles on her breasts and navel symbolize the female principle of earth and matter,⁴⁸ and they strategically mark areas of the body affected the most during pregnancy. Presumably she is expecting the flower-man to whom the pair of crimson-and-black flower-shapes next to the head of the earth-mother appear to refer as well.

The triangles in the flower-shapes point in the same downward direction as those on the body of the earth-mother, and thereby visually link the iconic forms outside her body to her person in an intimate way. Moreover the black center of the crimson-shapes brings to mind Steiner's comment about the dark but clairvoyant human consciousness at the time of the flower-man (the Lemurian period),⁴⁹ when humans enjoyed the company of gods.⁵⁰

The Egyptian motifs in the center-panel parallel the next stage of initiation described by Steiner, even though the preferred sequence for reading the triptych has been: left, right, and then center. But the larger dimension and greater height of the center panel relative to the side-panels, the open eyes and triangular configurations around her head distinguish her from her neighbors; and finally the brilliant yellow and white colors in the center-panel evoke the eye-opening moment when the adept realizes the archetypal meaning of Egyptian myths.⁵¹

The myth of Osiris and Seth personify light and air, writes Steiner, as well as anatomical changes in humans, enabling them to breath:

This new thing, which previously was impossible was the breathing of air...Now man felt the light again in his dull consciousness. He could feel what streamed down in it as divine forces coming toward him. When the Egyptian soul experienced within itself how the formerly united stream divided itself into light and air, the cosmic event became a symbolic picture for the soul.⁵²

The initiate reenacts and remembers this phase of the

enlightened Egyptian soul as a symbolic picture in his mind, Steiner asserts, and Mondrian depicts this special awareness by portraying the center-panel figure with open eyes and with luminous geometric emanations around her head. Moreover, the brilliant yellow shaft of light funneling into the deep blue behind her and the way the yellow brightens into finer tonalities of white around her head is a dramatic image of enlightenment.

The sharp definition and prominence of geometry is unprecedented in Mondrian's painting prior to this picture. Replacing the flower-emblems of the left-panel are two radiant white circles enclosing crisp upward-pointing triangles.⁵³ Similar triangles represent the supreme, universal soul in Madame Blavatsky's diagram of esoteric symbols [IV.3].⁵⁴

The "Egyptian" look of the figure in the center-panel is readily apparent when compared to a drawing of the same model in [IV.4].⁵⁵ The soft, rounded forms of her breasts, abdomen, and hair are solid and chiseled in the painted work. Instead of a fleshy face and fluffy coiffure, she has an angular face framed by translucent triangular configurations similar to the Enlightened Figure c. 1895 [IV.5] by Walenkamp. But her rigid pose and wide-eyed stare recall Egyptian statues, the likes of Mertiites and Khennu [IV.2] or the Theban priestess Imertnebes [IV.6], which date from the Old and Middle Kingdom, respectively, in the Antiquities

Museum in Leiden. Mondrian travelled frequently to Leiden for his freelance work and most likely knew these sculptures, which were among the earliest acquisitions by the Museum.⁵⁶ The figures in the Egyptian sculpture and Mondrian's triptych have in common a pronounced geometry, which is rounded in the former and (tri)angular in the latter; the frontal view and rigidly held arms at their sides reveal additional similarities. Even the idea of triangles on the breasts and navels in Evolution may be a variation on the clearly delineated navel, breasts, and pubic triangles showing through the dress of the Egyptian examples. But the women in Evolution are all nude, for presumably their archetypal role as ideal universal humans would preclude clothing as too particular.

Moreover, the sameness of the poses and square expressionless faces and chin-length mass of hair of the women in Mertitites and Khennu are also evident in Evolution, and two of the three figures in both threesomes are identical. The woman Meritites appears twice in the sculpture that portrays the ka -- the vital spiritual force of the deceased -- a fact that would have made the sculpture all the more suitable as a model for Mondrian, assuming he knew about it, to depict the cycle of reincarnated souls encountered by the initiate during the ritual.

Imertebes also displays similarities with the center-panel figure, including her long neck, intelligent-

looking face, and smile. The artifice of the wig over Imertebes' hairless scalp is akin to the awkward way the triangular emanations hover around the bare head of the center-panel figure in Evolution. The fact that Imertebes was a priestess may have qualified her all the more as a model for the iconic "thought-picture" during the Egyptian cycle of initiation. Mondrian's attraction to such a figurine is suggested by a 1912 postcard of the Priestess Toui [IV.7], a New Kingdom sculpture in the Louvre, he sent to Steenhoff⁵⁷ from Paris, a year after he completed the triptych.

The identity of the center-panel figure is doubtless Isis, the designated guardian and priestess of occult wisdom. Steiner explained her significance as embodying the spiritual consciousness of ancient Egypt and present with child:

A deep mystery, heavily veiled, manifests itself in the figure of Isis, the lovable goddess who, in the spiritual consciousness of the ancient Egyptian, was present with the Horus child as our Madonna is present today with the Jesus child. In the fact that this Isis is presented to us as something bearing the eternal within it, we are again reminded of our feeling in contemplating the Madonna. We must see deep mysteries in Isis, mysteries that are grounded in the spiritual. The Madonna is a remembrance of Isis: Isis appears again in the Madonna. This is one of the connections that I spoke of. We must learn to recognize with our feelings the deep mysteries that show a superearthy connection between ancient Egypt and our modern culture.⁵⁸

The quoted passage reveals the persona in the right-panel as the Virgin Mary with child. Unlike the single triangles on the neighboring figures, diamonds mark the breasts and navel of the Madonna figure and interlocked triangles --

the theosophical star⁵⁹ -- emanate next to her head. The conjoined triangles in this panel suggest a union and balance of oppositional relationships, such as male and female and spirit and matter.

The right-panel figure is also the most visibly pregnant -- again best observed in the original, because the fine tonal gradations modeling her abdomen do not reproduce well. Although nobody else notes the allusion to pregnancy in Evolution, it is logical in view of the importance of procreation to the subject-matter of evolution and initiation; Steiner's and Mondrian's repeated reference to birth and new life; the three mother goddesses and their offsprings from early beginnings to the present; the three stages in the triptych and the three trimesters to pregnancy's term. Moreover, such a metaphor in the triptych serves Mondrian in several ways, to show that "art can reveal how this new life is born",⁶⁰ to represent the transmission of the "profound content in art", and to reveal the relationship between new and past art.

Despite the prominence of the center-panel, the icons in the third panel signify completion of the occult initiation cycle and attainment of equilibrium at this final stage, which is in keeping with Mondrian's view that modern man is the most balanced and the most advanced. The artist invented his iconic equivalent for the six-pointed star -- adjoined upward and downward pointing triangles forming

diamonds or "lozenges", as he called them. Their nascent debut in the right-panel of Evolution ripen over the next seven years into full fledged Diamond paintings in 1918.⁶¹

B. The intervening years 1911 to 1917

Between Evolution and the first Diamond paintings, Mondrian experimented first with Cubism, but after mastering it, he criticized it for being limited to empirical reality, and embarked on a new course. The work and artistic ideas of his new friend Bart van der Leek, an unknown painter in 1916, provided Mondrian with intriguing alternatives that culminated in the distinctive diamond paintings. By reworking the important transitional Plus-and-Minus painting Composition in Line, 1916-17 [IV.20] Mondrian ended his Cubist phase and commenced a new course.⁶² The artist detailed the changes he made on the painting, "I took that black and white one in hand, made the ground whiter and made some changes in the lines," and expressed satisfaction that "...this work shows the spiritual so well etc. etc."⁶³ But he did not explain how this abstraction expresses the spiritual, which is important for understanding the basis of Mondrian's repeated assertion that Neo-Plasticism is theosophical art in 1921. How could these abstractions reflect Theosophy?

Welsh traces the cross and oval geometry in Mondrian's Cubist-inspired Plus-and-Minus compositions from 1912 until 1917, such as Sea (Starry Sky above the Sea) 1914 [IV.8], to Blavatsky's diagram, and shows the continued impor-

tance of theosophy in Mondrian's work. Blavatsky specified the cross as a primordial Egyptian sign, an error Welsh corrected to be a Greek cross.⁶⁴ For Mondrian, however, her mistake may have validated the cross as an ideal universal sign with the proper Egyptian pedigree to represent the super-earthly link between ancient Egypt and modern times, between East and West, and between the spiritual and physical cultures.⁶⁵

Blavatsky's own words about the "Egyptian" cross are worth noting:

The vertical line being the male principle, and the horizontal the female, out of the union of the two at the intersection point is formed the CROSS; the oldest symbol in the Egyptian history of Gods.⁶⁶

How did she know that the cross is the oldest divine symbol of Egyptian gods? Because in fact it is not.⁶⁷ But the factual accuracy of her statement is irrelevant, as long Mondrian believed the myth about the cross.

Mondrian's continued preoccupation with Theosophy during his Cubist phase and his likely association of the cross with ancient "Egypt" may have been more important than has been assumed and indicative of the spiritual content he perceived in Composition in Line. For reworking this canvas, he eliminated distracting illusions of depth and crystallized the vertical and horizontal and cross motifs that he later expanded into the all-over pattern of the Diamond paintings.

C. Diamond Paintings 1918-1925

In this context and in view of the artist's wish to

create art about the "deep substratum" underlying "the nature of things" and the interrelatedness of all things, it is difficult not to see the diamond as an ideal form. For it implicitly contains opposing triangles and the cross motif when opposite corners are connected and the perimeter erased, and vice versa in Lozenge with Grey Lines [IV.10].

While the play of geometry in the pattern may seem elemental, for Mondrian the design offered a synthesis of all the important motifs, the transcendental signs he had found over the years, and a new compositional approach to realize his artistic and spiritual concerns. The innovative abstract composition of Lozenge with Grey Lines marks a more radical departure than Composition in Line, because the point of departure of the former was an abstract pattern and because of its distinctive reductive and expansive potential. Moreover, the diamond painting manifests the fundamental structural principles of Neo-Plasticism that Mondrian developed in the next diamond paintings [IV.10, IV.13-IV.15].⁶⁸

Two "Egyptian" precedents for the distinctive design in Lozenge with Grey Lines [IV.10] come to mind in addition to the ones mentioned for the Diamond paintings by other writers.⁶⁹ One of them is a diagram [IV.9] in Walenkamp's article on "Prehistoric Wisdom".⁷⁰ The diagram outlines how the square bisected by horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines generates a square and diamond grid based on the triangle as common denominator. In fact this geometric

progression pertains to the Great Pyramid at Giza, particularly when considered from an aerial perspective. I also found related geometric diagrams to [IV.9] in another primordial source for occult wisdom, a Babylonian clay tablet [IV.11] c. 1700 B.C., in the British Museum; the Akkadian text indicates the diagrams to be part of elemental mathematical exercises. Thus the common knowledge of these geometric principles in the ancient world may be the basis for Walenkamp attribution of the proportionate design in fig. [IV.9] to Egypt.⁷¹

In any event, the diamond canvas in Lozenge with Grey Lines [IV.10] echoes the large diamond in the center of Walenkamp's illustration. Both Mondrian and Walenkamp create equivalent relationships between the triangle and the square and their patterned progression. Whereas Walenkamp's illustration remains a diagram, the ingenious nuances the artist introduced in the painting add visual complexity to the design and distinguish the work as one of Mondrian's best.

The visual equivalences of shapes, patterns, and black and white gradations in Lozenge with Grey Lines [IV.10], another work that must be seen in the original for the full visual impact, creates a strong rhythm of opposing relationships and afterimages from the color contrasts. This rhythm reproduces the pattern in the mind of the viewer even beyond the canvas onto the wall.⁷² Mondrian facilitated this imaginary transition by displaying his paintings on a platform

rather than enclosed within a frame. Opening his work in this manner to the exterior world is critical to the utopian aspect of his work, because of the inevitable micro-and macro-cosmic relationship between canvas and architectural plane and between the art and the viewer.⁷³ Evolution displays a similar interior-exterior relationship within the canvas between the geometric forms on the woman and those next to her head, which the artist extended to occur in the environment outside the Diamond paintings.

Although the grid is a Cubist structural device, in Mondrian's work the grid is also mythic.⁷⁴ The artist makes the implicit grid of Cubism explicit and into an all-over universal pattern in Lozenge with Grey Lines that extends beyond the canvas both rhythmically and through afterimages on the wall behind it. In this painting, Mondrian developed van der Leek's concept of "free and fixed" compositional elements closer to his utopian philosophy about the duality of "permanence and change" as fundamental cosmic oppositions.⁷⁵ The lines of varied thickness, and tone produce fugitive, twinkling emanations from their points of intersection, making it difficult to contemplate the whole painting all at once. Despite the "fixed" grid structure, the elusive "free" effects rouse the eye to an endless chase around the canvas.

The stellar effect of this composition has been linked to Mondrian's extensive discussion of stars in his writings.⁷⁶ Although the analysis of this effect has been

primarily formal, Carmean suspects a cosmic significance in what he calls Mondrian's "starry sky" diamonds,⁷⁷ which is plausible given the theosophical belief in the direct affinity between man and the stars. At death, the spirit returns to the astral world and the body disintegrates into earth.⁷⁸ The Egyptians believed that the souls of the deceased went on a nightly journey and returned by dawn. Star clocks, found on coffin lids from the Ninth to Twelfth Dynasties and on astronomical ceilings in royal tombs,⁷⁹ served the ritualistic purpose of telling the dead the time, based on the position of the stars, when the soul of the deceased embarked on its nightly journey. The Egyptians plotted their stars using a twelve-number system that produced designs like the one in fig. [IV.12]; the five-pointed stars on these expansive grids are anthropomorphic representations, in which the points correspond to the head, arms, and legs. Could the constant grid and changing star pattern of the Egyptian star clocks have inspired a viable conceptual and compositional solution for Mondrian to express the immutable and changeable and the significance of stars as human souls?

I think they did so, basing myself on the following statements by Mondrian and on the grid and star patterns in Lozenge with Grey Lines [IV.10], which could be compared to the Egyptian prototype. If the seated figure of the Egyptian model is disregarded, it is conceivable that the star and grid pattern served as a departure for the new figure-ground rela-

tionship Mondrian developed in the next five Diamond paintings.

Referring to the stars, Mondrian noted:

the starry sky shows us innumerable points not all equally emphasized: one star twinkles more than another. And now again these unequal light values engender forms. Just think of constellations: these too are forms.⁸⁰

He also explained new compositional possibilities inspired by observing the stars and the way they fill the space, accentuating relationships more than individual forms:

...the stars are determinate sources of light no less than the moon. But the stars have the advantage of appearing as points and not as form, like the moon. The multitude of stars produces a more complete expression of relationship. As I said earlier, the primordial relationship must be plastically expressed in multiplicity to make us see it as living reality.⁸¹

At this stage Mondrian expressed his thoughts on how best to show the primordial relationships:

Simply to represent the horizontal and the vertical as a unity would naturally not be art: it would at best be a symbol. Furthermore, the primordial relationship in itself represents, for us at least, something relatively determined by ourselves.... Now we can see that there is another "reality" beyond trivial human activity. We now clearly see its insignificance, for here all separateness ceases. We see an individual whole; and in contrast to the changeability of human will, we now contemplate the immutable....The universal now comes to the fore...⁸²

This quoted passage reveals the cosmic significance of the grid and how the "fixed and free" elements would transform the grid into a universal form. The passage also discloses his reasons for abandoning the Cubist scaffold of Sea (Starry Sky Above the Sea) [IV.8] in favor of the extended grid in the Diamond paintings. The latter was better suited to represent-

ing the "immutable" universal for Mondrian, the iconic triangle and Diamond variants, and primordial significance of the night sky.

Mondrian's writings reflect the occult belief that stars are the souls of the deceased, and Steiner traced the souls of those living in the modern period to

ancient Egypt during the Egyptian cultural epoch, that the same souls are in us which at that time looked up at the gigantic pyramids and the enigmatic sphinxes....Let us remember that our souls were in Egyptian bodies. This is quite correct; our souls were incorporated in these bodies that became mummies. We know that when man, after death, is freed from his physical and etheric bodies, he has a different consciousness; he is by no means unconscious in the astral world.⁸³

The progressive grid based on a triangular module structures the next Diamond compositions as well. Using the reduced reproductions of the first six Diamond paintings, in Carmean's exhibition catalogue, I was able to compare their scaffolds by superimposing a photocopy of Lozenge with Gray Lines on the other five compositions. Carmean notes the obvious evolution of the second and third diamond canvases from the grid of Lozenge with Gray Lines,⁸⁴ but despite superficial changes in design, canvas and grid dimensions,⁸⁵ the proportions also apply to Composition in Diamond Shape, and only gradually change in Diamond Composition, 1921 [IV.16] and Diamond Painting in a Square with Red, Yellow, and Blue 1921-1925 [IV.17].

Having explored the new compositional approach in at least three consecutive works -- at first just in black and

white and then with color -- Mondrian internalized the grid and no longer needed to adhere to the earlier proportionate format, which would have been too limiting for him and out of character.

By 1921, Mondrian had formulated the principles of Neo-Plasticism and the iconic role of the diamonds shape, which he retained throughout his career, whether in his most reductive painting Lozenge Composition with Two Black Lines, 1931 [IV.18] or in his most complex epitomized by Victory Boogie-Woogie, 1942-44. Consistent with the last two examples, on the whole, the Diamond paintings are more audacious and disclose his new artistic revelations almost by a decade in advance, as Lozenge Composition with Four Yellow Lines, 1933 [IV.19] exemplifies. Here, the black verticals and horizontals are replaced by a pure equivalence of color and line relationships.

The spiritual significance of the Diamond paintings is also suggested in the way Mondrian hung the paintings on the wall. On the back of Lozenge Composition with Four Yellow Lines [IV.19], he specified that it should be hung "in such a way that the center is not lower than eye level when the viewer is standing -- if possible the lower angle should be at eye level -- PM."⁸⁶ Based on this note and the way he installed Lozenge with Grey Lines [IV.10] in his studio, all of the Diamond paintings hang above eye level, which lifts the viewer's gaze upward and enhances the already intrinsic ela-

tion produced by these composition.

V. Conclusion

Mondrian also raised the center-panel of Evolution and Composition in Line [IV.21] in relation to his other paintings, which reinforces the connection of these two works with the Diamond paintings they have in common because of the "Egyptian". Moreover, these works highlight major turning points in Mondrian's spiritual and artistic mission. The personal link between Mondrian and his art, proposed in this chapter, provide further insights into the role of theosophy in his work and the significance of his utopian art for the viewing public.

Theosophy provided both direction and reasons for Mondrian to seek esoteric sources that confirmed the Egyptian origin for the universal and archetypal motifs that he assimilated at a fundamental level in his work. By 1921, theosophy "had become implicit to his life"⁸⁷ and to his art. And he appears to fulfill his artistic mission for humanity by creating ever finer rhythmic cadences of lines and colors. The synaesthetic effect in his paintings would open the viewer's spirit to ever higher levels of refinement necessary to realize the oneness and unity of all things, and create peace and harmony among all.

The reductive and abstract nature of Mondrian's art reflects the fundamental dynamic duality of this interrelatedness. Inspired by his own initiation and Steiner's advice to

dedicate his art to the spiritual advancement of humanity, Mondrian appears to have painted Evolution, the largest work in his oeuvre, as an initiation piece for the public. The monumental triptych may be viewed as both a gateway for the public and a keystone in Mondrian's own spiritual and artistic evolution, separating figurative images for the uninitiated from abstract compositions for the initiates.

Despite the occult angle of Mondrian's Orientalism and interest in Egypt and the hermetic basis of his radical new style, his paintings have been regarded as icons of modernist purity. Thus while the esoteric references reflect old myths of Orientalism, at the same time Mondrian's innovative style is a outstanding manifestation of the new phase of Orientalism.

Footnotes

¹ "Egyptian" is in quotation marks, because on the whole the influence is indirect and based on the authority of occult sources, whose views on Egyptian art have more to do with myth and often are unverified.

² Margit Rowell, "Interview with Charmion von Wiegand," in Piet Mondrian 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition exh. cat. (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1971), 77-78, 86.

³ Mondrian letter to Israel Querido, 1909, Robert P. Welsh and J. M. Joosten, Two Mondrian Sketchbooks 1912-1914 (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff International nv., 1969), 9-10.

⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁵ Mondrian became a member of the Theosophical society May 25, 1909 and remained in touch with the society and his Theosophical friends throughout his life. In Paris he rented a room in the headquarters of the French Theosophical Society before he found a place of his own. The best summary of sources documenting Mondrian's affiliation with the Theosophical Society is in Carel Blotkamp, "Annunciation of the New Mysticism: Dutch Symbolism and Early Abstraction," The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985 (exh. cat.) (New York: Abbeville Press and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986), 96-106.

⁶ The brochure of these 1908 lectures given in Leipzig appeared in 1911. Steiner's lectures were transcribed, printed, and circulated privately among members. Letter from Robert Friedenthal, Rudolf Steiner Nachlassverwaltung, Dornach, Switzerland, to Mina Roustayi, 14 August 1993.

⁷ "Prehistoric Wisdom: On the Significance and the Aesthetic Working of the Twelve Number System," originally published with a Dutch title; see Herman J. M. Walenkamp, "Vóór-historische wijsheid," Architectura XII, no. 41 (8 October 1904), 333-336a. Although Tim Threlfall cited this reference, he appears to have overlooked the correspondence of this diagram [IV.9] in the Walenkamp article with Mondrian's painting. Tim Threlfall, Piet Mondrian: His Life's Work and Evolution 1872-1944 (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1988), 334.

⁸ Marty Bax, "De Onbekende Walenkamp," Jong Holland, IV, no. 4 (1988), 2-18; see also Architectura 1893-1918, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Architectuurmuseum, Amsterdam, 1975). Mondrian knew Theosophia, because he submitted a now lost manuscript from 1914.

⁹ Welsh, Robert, Piet Mondrian, exh. cat. (Toronto: The Art Gallery of Toronto, 1966), 102.

¹⁰ I owe this clarification to Professor Richard Brilliant, September 1993.

¹¹ Tim Threlfall, "Piet Mondrian: An Untitled and Unknown Drawing circa 1918," Art History 1 (June 1978), 234.

¹² E.A. Carmean Jr. and William Leisher observation that this painting is the same as Diamond Painting in a Square with Red, Yellow, and Blue 1921-1925 is now accepted; Yve-Alain Bois et. al, Piet Mondrian 1872-1944. Exh. Cat. N.Y.: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994, 216-27.

13 Threlfall, Mondrian, 334.

14 The ancient Egyptians had canons of aesthetic proportions, but the "twelve number system" is not one of the proportionate systems: in the Middle Period the Egyptians used eighteen squares to represent the figure, and in the Late Period, they used twenty-one squares.

15 Threlfall, Mondrian, 333-334.

16 Mondrian letter to Theo van Doesburg, 13 June 1918, quoted in Mondrian, 1994, 184; also see Rowell, "Wiegand," 79.

17 Blotkamp, Destruction, 58. The author wishes to express her gratitude to Drs. J. Freek Heybroek, Curator of Print Cabinet, Rijkesmuseum, Amsterdam, for sending me photocopies of these unpublished postcards in a private collection. Two postcards showing front and back views of an elegant priestess sculpture in the Louvre's Egyptian collection; its relevance to Evolution will be discussed in Section IV of this chapter.

18 Piet Mondrian, "The New Art - The New Life: The Culture of Pure Relationships" (1931) in Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James, The New art - The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1986), 250.

19 Ibid., 247.

20 Ibid., 256.

21 The fact that Mondrian would mention Adam as the perfect primitive man may partly reflect Blavatsky's thinking by placing Adam Kadmon in the center of her diagram where the cross is located. See Blavatsky's Chaldean diagram, Helena P. Blavatsky, Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology. 2 vols. (1877; reprt. Pasadena, Ca: The Theosophical University Press, 1976), 164-65.

22 "New Art -- New Life," 253.

23 Ibid., 257-58.

24 Ibid., 246.

25 Ibid. 247.

26 Ibid., 248.

27 Mondrian spoke in general terms and did not specify either geographic location nor historical time. Laxmi Sihare study of Oriental influences on Mondrian's philosophy presents mostly Indian sources. Laxmi P. Sihare, "Oriental Influences on Wassily Kandinsky and Piet Mondrian," New York University

28 "New Art-New Life," 263.

29 Ibid. The quote is self-referential, since he was pioneering the new art, and factually incorrect, because Islamic art consists of neutral forms and pure planar relationships.

30 Michel Seuphor, "Piet Mondrian: 1914-18", Magazine of Art 5 (May 1952), 217.

31 Mondrian letter to Israel Querido, 1909, Welsh Sketchbooks, 9-10.

32 Robert P. Welsh, "Theosophy" in Piet Mondrian 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition exh. cat. (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1971), 35-51.

33 "Le Neo-Plasticisme me semble être l'art d'un prochain avenir pour tous les vrais Anthroposophes et Théosophes...L'art exprime plastiquement l'évolution de l'esprit et (mais en direction opposée) évolution de la matière. Il ne pouvait atteindre à cet équilibre relatif qu'en anéantissant la forme et en la remplaçant par un moyen plastique nouveau -- universel." Mondrian letter to Rudolf Steiner, 25 February 1921, Steiner Archives, Dornach, Switzerland; in Carel Blotkamp, Mondriaan in Detail (Utrecht: Veen. Reflex, 1987), 143, translated from French by Mina Roustayi.

34 Mondrian letter to Rudolf Steiner, 25 February 1921, Blotkamp, Mondriaan, 143.

35 Rudolf Steiner, "Astralwelt und Devachan, ihre Beziehung und ihr Zusammenhang," lecture in Amsterdam, 8 March 1908; Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe, 60 (Christmans 1977), 21.

36 Steiner writes: "Knowledge of the higher finer regions, which Theosophy grants us, must provide us with the means to bring about the spiritual progress of mankind." Steiner, "Astralwelt," 21. For Mondrian's 1909 letter see above fn. 2.

37 Mondrian letter to van Doesburg, 7 February 1922, Van Doesburg Archive nr. 138, Netherlands Institute for Art History, The Hague, translated in Blotkamp, "Annunciation," 104.

38 Although both Blavatsky and Steiner spoke of spiritual sciences, they also admitted that the facts cannot be proven empirically: "What we can read in the spiritual world may be understood, but not discovered, through logic. It can be discovered only through experience." Rudolf Steiner, Egyptian Myths and Mysteries, twelve lectures in Leipzig 2 - 14 September 1908, (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1971), 13.

39 Ibid., 22.

40 Ibid., 3.

41 Rudolf Steiner, "Das Esoterische Leben," lecture in Rotterdam, March 8, 1908; printed in Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe, 60 (Christmans 1977), 25. Steiner's thought-pictures are different from the "thought-forms" described by Charles Leadbeater and Annie Besant. Thought-forms, according to Charles Leadbeater and Annie Besant, are auras emanating from a person. The shape and color of these forms reflect the spiritual and psychological condition of the individual. See pertinent passages in Rudolf Steiner, Theosophy (Hudson, New York: Anthroposophic Press, inc., 1971), 140-153 and 190-195, addendum 13.

42 Steiner, Egyptian Myths, 36.

43 Ibid., 21-22, 29, 34.

44 Ibid., 54-55.

45 Steiner discussed the significance of ancient Near Eastern cultures for the occult in Steiner, Rudolf Steiner, Occult History, six lectures given in Stuttgart, 27 December 1910 - 1 January 1911 (London: Rudolf Steiner Press, 1957); see lectures 1, 2, 4, and 6.

46 Steiner, Egyptian Myths, 37.

47 Steiner, Egyptian Myths, 73, 93, 54-55.

48 Blavatsky, Isis II, 264.

49 Mondrian discussed the evolutionary process in terms of the Lemurian and Atlantan periods and footnotes Steiner as

his source. The essay is reprinted in The New Plastic in Painting 1917, Collected Writings, 48. The editors say that Mondrian's statements reflect Steiner's in the reprint of his 1908 lectures in Holland.

50 Steiner, Egyptian Myths, 92-93.

51 Ibid., 123-24.

52 Ibid., 53, 58.

53 Welsh traces the circle and triangle motifs to the Chaldean diagram in Blavatsky, Isis II, 264; Welsh, "Theosophy," 47.

54 Blavatsky equated the En Soph, which is normally associated with the Kabbalah, with Anu, the head of the Mesopotamian pantheon. Blavatsky, Isis II, 267.

55 The model for the undated Study of a Female Nude [IV.4] is allegedly Agatha W. Zethraeus (1872-1966). This information was provided by Martin James, who kindly allowed me to see his manuscript before publication; Martin S. James, "Piet Mondrian: Theorie der Geschlechterrollen," in Die weibliche und die männliche Linie: das imaginäre Geschlecht der modernen Kunst von Klimt bis Mondrian, ed. Susanne Deicher (Berlin: Dietrich Reiner Verlag, 1993), 201-20.

56 In Mondrian's letter to L. Schelfhout from Domburg [postmarked 3 October 1910], the artist reports on his travels to Leiden to draw bacteria, to earn money; letter translated in Herbert Henkels, Mondrian: from figuration to abstraction exhib. cat. (The Hague: Gemeentemuseum, 1988) 196. Color lithographs of both sculptures are illustrated in the monumental publication C. Leemans, Aegyptische monumenten van het Nederlandsche Museum van Oudheden te Leyden. vol. 2, part 1 (Leiden 1839-1905), pls. XII (Mertitites and Khennu) and XXIII Imertebes.

57 see footnote 17.

58 Steiner, Egyptian Myths, 8.

59 Robert P. Welsh, "Mondrian and Theosophy," Piet Mondrian 1872-1944: Centennial Exhibition exhib. cat. (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1971), 44.

60 "New Art-New Life," 248.

61 John Milner, Mondrian (New York: Abbeville Press, 1992), 143-45.

62 This painting is regarded as Mondrian's first abstract canvas; in Mondrian, 1994, 340.

63 Excerpts from Mondrian letters, 25 January 1917, to van Assendelft, and 7 July 1917 to Theo van Doesburg, quoted in Mondrian, 1994, 174.

64 Welsh, "Theosophy," 48-50.

65 see above fn 28.

66 Blavatsky, Isis II, 270.

67 Dr. James Romano, interview August, 1993. Blavatsky did not have to show any documentation, because she served as a mere scribe to a voice revealing the information to her; Blavatsky, "My Books," Isis II, 46 appendix.

68 E.A. Carmean, Jr, Mondrian: The Diamond Compositions exh. cat. (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1979), 27; Threlfall, Mondrian, 257; Bois, "Iconoclast," Mondrian, 1994, 347.

69 Meyer Schapiro mentions paintings by 17th century Dutch artists Pieter Saenredam and Emanuel de Witte depicting church interiors with diamond-shaped escutcheons as precedents for Mondrian's Diamond canvases; still the comparison is formal and there is no mention of any symbolic meaning attached to the shape. Meyer Schapiro, "Order and Randomness in Abstract Painting," in Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries Selected Papers (New York: George Braziller, 1982), 259; also notably by Carmean, Diamond; and most recently in Mondrian, 1994.

70 Walenkamp, "Prehistoric-Wisdom," 334. This is not the diagram for the "twelve-number-system" mentioned by Threlfall.

71 These are the same shapes E. A. Carmean, Jr. illustrated to introduce the peculiarities of the diamond shape. Carmean, Diamond, 17-18.

72 See diagram of Diagonal Composition with its lines and color planes extended to form a square picture, illustrating the micro-macro relationship between canvas and wall; in Carmean, Diamonds, 27, 30.

73 "The Microcosmic and Macrocosmic" was the subtitle of "Mysticism and Esotericism," Steiner's first talk in The Hague, 5 March 1908; printed in Beiträge zur Rudolf Steiner Gesamtausgabe, 60 (Christmans 1977), 9-13. Madame Blavatsky also made numerous references in Isis to the concept of micro- and macro-cosm, which is an old neo-platonic idea that Mondrian could have learned from a variety of sources besides the ones mentioned here.

74 Rosalind E. Krauss, "Grids," The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths (London: MIT Press, 1985), 12-13.

75 For van der Leek's influence on Mondrian, see Blotkamp, Destruction, 94-106.

76 They were on his mind during the teens and while working on the Diamond paintings. For the symbolic and aesthetic importance of the night sky and stars for Mondrian as a new paradigm for his own art see Mondrian, "Natural Reality and Abstract Reality: A Trialogue (while Strolling from the Country to the City)", Scene 3, "Night -- the stars, now in a bright sky, above a broad expanse of sandy beach," in De Stijl 1919 through July 1920, complete text in Collected Writings, 82-123.

77 See summary in Carmean, Diamonds, 24-26.

78 Steiner, Egyptian Myths, 8; Blavatsky, Isis I, 168-70.

79 J. R. Harris, ed., The Legacy of Egypt 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 46. Richard A. Parker, and O. Neugebauer, Egyptian Astronomical Texts. vol. 3 The Rameside Star Clocks London: Lund Humphries, 1964.

80 Mondrian, "Natural Reality," 91.

81 Ibid., 90.

82 Mondrian, "Natural Reality," 89-90.

83 Steiner, Egyptian Myths, 3, 9.

84 Carmean, Diamonds, 28-30.

85 I discussed my observation and Carmean's argument to the contrary with James Coddington, a conservator at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. August 1993.

86 Mondrian, 1994, 257.

Conclusion

The questions posed at the beginning of this dissertation led me to examine the compelling role of ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern motifs in the innovative art of Gauguin, Toorop, van der Leek, and Mondrian in Europe at the turn of the century. The images in their art are unlike those of previous Orientalist paintings, and mark important stages along a transition from realism to abstraction in European art. Though different motivations brought the four artists to use such motifs, their artistic syntheses reflect collective European notions about the ancient Orient. The motifs are integral to the artists' shared moral concerns and utopian ideals about the potential of art to communicate social and spiritual values. The refined aesthetic power, economy of means, and epic structure of ancient Oriental art made it no less appealing than the received truths about it -- the myths of Orientalism -- that had initially drawn the artists to it. The preceding chapters lay bare the intricate legacy of ancient Egyptian, Assyrian, Sumerian, and Persian art to the new form and inspirational content of the artists' images. Whatever their individualistic approach to the ancient motifs, in many ways their use of them echoes the sentiments and work of assorted 19th-century creative figures -- composers (Wag-

ner), philosophers (Nietzsche), spiritualists (Péladan, Blavatsky, Steiner, Massey), cleric (Lenz) -- together with savants in ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern archaeology (Lepsius, Ebers, Prisse d'Avennes, Layard, Champollion, and Dieulafoy). Rarely discussed in relation to the selected artists, the relevance of this international artistic and intellectual connection to Symbolist and de Stijl artist is one of the findings of this dissertation.

These four artists hitherto never associated, have enough in common to be linked. For the use of ancient motifs reveals personal and artistic insights that were integral to expressing their innermost beliefs, which emerged as a result of introspection and artistic transition. Formulated through self-reflection, the ancient motifs gained collective significance when the artists elevated their personal experience into utopian solutions for society at large.

The dichotomy between the individual and collective humanity concerned all four artists and was succinctly stated in the first de Stijl manifesto, which van der Leek and Mondrian helped formulate:

There is an old and a new consciousness of time.
The old is connected with the individual
The new is connected with the universal
The struggle of the individual against the universal
is revealing itself in the world war as well as in
the art of the present day.¹

The messianic tone of this passage characterizes the convictions all four artists, voiced in their self-appointed

capacity as visionary social reformers through their art. Gauguin and the three Dutch artists epitomize the popular role of artist as priest of a better universal culture at the turn of the century, a role predicted by Wagner, promoted by Sâr Péladan, Theosophists, and other esoteric groups, and exemplified by Gauguin, the initiate.

Whether he was or was not an initiate, Gauguin and the others realised the metaphysical potential of his doctrine of Synthetism and primitivism. Ancient Oriental motifs were indispensable for novel forms and structures in the four artists' work. In addition to Gauguin's shift from mimesis to invented forms that are not as comprehensible as in academic art, ancient Oriental motifs had connotative and artistic precedents for multicultural and pictographic syntheses.

Ancient Oriental art and the close relationship between art and writing, especially in Egyptian art, restored a primal pictographic role to the illusionistic model of art. The new, alternative mode offered a novel visual language sufficiently flexible to create pictorial equivalents for the multivalent forms of the psyche. From the seminally Symbolist images of Gauguin and Toorop to the geometric abstractions of van der Leek and Mondrian, ancient Oriental motifs were instrumental in progressing from mimetic form to abstracted notations.

However different, the resulting notations consisted of integrated and reductive elements, seen from various points

of view and concerned with universal truths and forms. Varied racial, social, and literary implications enrich the four artists' individual efforts and enhance the impact of their art on the viewer. Collectively, the work of these four artists reflects a fascination with the psyche from artistic, spiritual, or scientific vantages. Speculations about the origins of the psyche, its evolution, and susceptibility to abstract signs flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An essential goal of theirs was to reach and affect the public, contrary to the common identification of the four artists discussed here with a solipisistic attitude of "art for art's sake".

By restoring pictographic forms to art, the artists devised ways to reunite text and image to create novel pictorial syntaxes. The primordial connotation of the ancient Orient in European culture made it indispensable for representing eternal time and space both symbolically and structurally. The decorative grandeur, monumentality, and alternative use of color and line to academic art inspired new figuration and figure-and-ground relationships for representing the various realms of the psyche in flat and pictographic forms.²

The four artists used ancient Oriental motifs as an antithesis to decadent European culture and to give pictorial structure to an elemental duality common to all of them. Gauguin and Toorop manipulated ancient Oriental motifs to

represent the fundamental duality of their philosophy; Toorop went a step further by assimilating the axuality inherent to much of ancient Oriental art. That axuality remained submerged under Toorop's profuse linearity as a structural matrix of his work, then it emerged as an oppositional structure to the exclusion of recognizable figurative motifs in van der Leck's and finally in Mondrian's work.

Each of the four artists transformed the ancient Oriental motifs for his individual spiritual, ethical, and psychological needs. The resulting expressive schemes ranged from figurative symbols in the moral allegories of Gauguin, Toorop, and Mondrian, to iconic gestalts in the abstractions of van der Leck and Mondrian, to abstracted pictorial motifs of line and color in the works of all these artists.

All three schemes mentioned above are part of the ingrained European myth of the primordial Orient that Gauguin's call to principal truths and return to primitive purity to regenerate art and society triggered in Toorop, van der Leck, and Mondrian. And all three schemes contributed to the universal element in their work, whether in the form of archetypal motives or musical expression. Ancient Oriental art offered alternatives to the descriptive role of color and line, releasing them into expressive pictorial elements with subliminal powers.

Dissimilarities in their Orientalism

Individual differences in the use of ancient Orien-

tal motifs divide the four artists into two camps on generational, artistic, and religious grounds. Gauguin and Toorop, both Catholics of sorts, depicted universal spiritual themes in predominantly curvilinear allegorical images, while van der Leek and Mondrian, of Protestant background, stripped detail down to elemental rectilinear compositions.

Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Persian motifs in Gauguin's work served various symbolic and pictorial purposes, shaping his multiple alter egos as a primitive, a prophet, a demon, or a god. The Orient was part of his opposition to Western culture and his dualistic thinking: good versus evil, male versus female, Occidental versus Oriental, civilized versus primitive. Gauguin mined the pictographic character of Egyptian hieroglyphs and art and the decorative flair of line and color in Achaemenid art. He also used Egyptian motifs in an archetypal fashion. His egocentric fantasy of a new superior race involved casting his Maori mistress in an Egyptian pose as an archetypal goddess.

Toorop's assimilation of Egyptian motifs was in some ways broader and deeper than Gauguin's, although Toorop's referents seem limited to ancient Egypt, not the ancient Near East. The motifs are evident in the multiple personae of his allegorical characters in specific images, including the lotus flowers, uraeus, mourning women, and the collosi. These motifs are based on clichés, universal by default and valued by Toorop as archetypal motifs. Appreciating the musical as well

as the hieroglyphic qualities of Egyptian art, he liberated line to flow, meander, and echo around an axial core. His frequent travels and tireless zeal in promoting social reform through art influenced Dutch, Belgian, and Austrian artists in their thinking.

Also influential, mostly among de Stijl artists, van der Leek made important contributions to modern art. More secular than spiritual compared to the other three artists, van der Leek shows the broadest assimilation of ancient Oriental art, due to his detailed study of ancient Egypt, Assyria, and Sumer.

His unique path to abstraction was primarily through the model of ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern art, instead of the more conventional route through Fauvism and Cubism. In search of elemental structures, purity in art, and reintegration of it with architecture, van der Leek at first painstakingly copied the ancient models and then used them to systematically peel away layers of representation of contemporary scenes, arriving at a geometric core suitable for the fundamental duality of his "free and fixed" concepts. By submerging figuration within this general artistic scheme, he fused East and West as well as past, present and future ideals.

Mondrian's interest in Egyptian art sheds additional light on the controversial esoteric factor in his work. His lifelong involvement in Theosophy was particularly intense

during his transition from figuration to abstraction. Theosophy helped him chart his personal and artistic mission in life to refine the senses and bring about individual and world unity and harmony. Egyptian motifs mark critical changes in his development, leading from an emphasis on external materialism to a different and integrated form of materialism. By treating art as matter, consisting of lines, forms, and colors in relation to one another, to the wall, and to the viewer, rather than an illusionistic representation, Mondrian paradoxically hoped to bring affect something as immaterial as the soul.

A new Orientalism

Though ancient Oriental sources were only one set of a variety of non-Western and non-classical conventions, Gauguin, Toorop, van der Leek, and Mondrian explored the potential of ancient Oriental art in unprecedented ways that distinguish their Orientalism from other Orientalist paintings and make it relevant to the primitivist impulse at the turn of the century. The distinguishing factors lie not so much in recognizable motifs or the popular myths as in the pictorial and symbolic significance of their synthesis, rooted in the ancient Orient.

Future research

The interdisciplinary nature of my topic has raised many more questions than the focus of the dissertation has allowed me to answer. The topic can thus be developed along

many lines. One such possibility is to eventually present the original eleven artists and their interest in the ancient Orient.

Another possibility is to examine the reception of ancient Oriental art by examining the aesthetic philosophy of Blanc, Owen, Hubert de Superville, Nietzsche, Jan van Vlooten, Prisse d'Avennes, and other important tastemakers. Such an examination would invariably clarify the significance of Orientalism within the broader impulse to primitivism at the turn of the century.

Footnotes

¹ From de Stijl (Amsterdam) vol 5, No. 4 1922, translated by Nicholas Bullock in The Tradition of Constructivism, Stephen Bann, ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974), 65.

² Ann Anne Armstrong Wallis, "The Symbolist Painters of 1890," Marsyas I (1941), 119.

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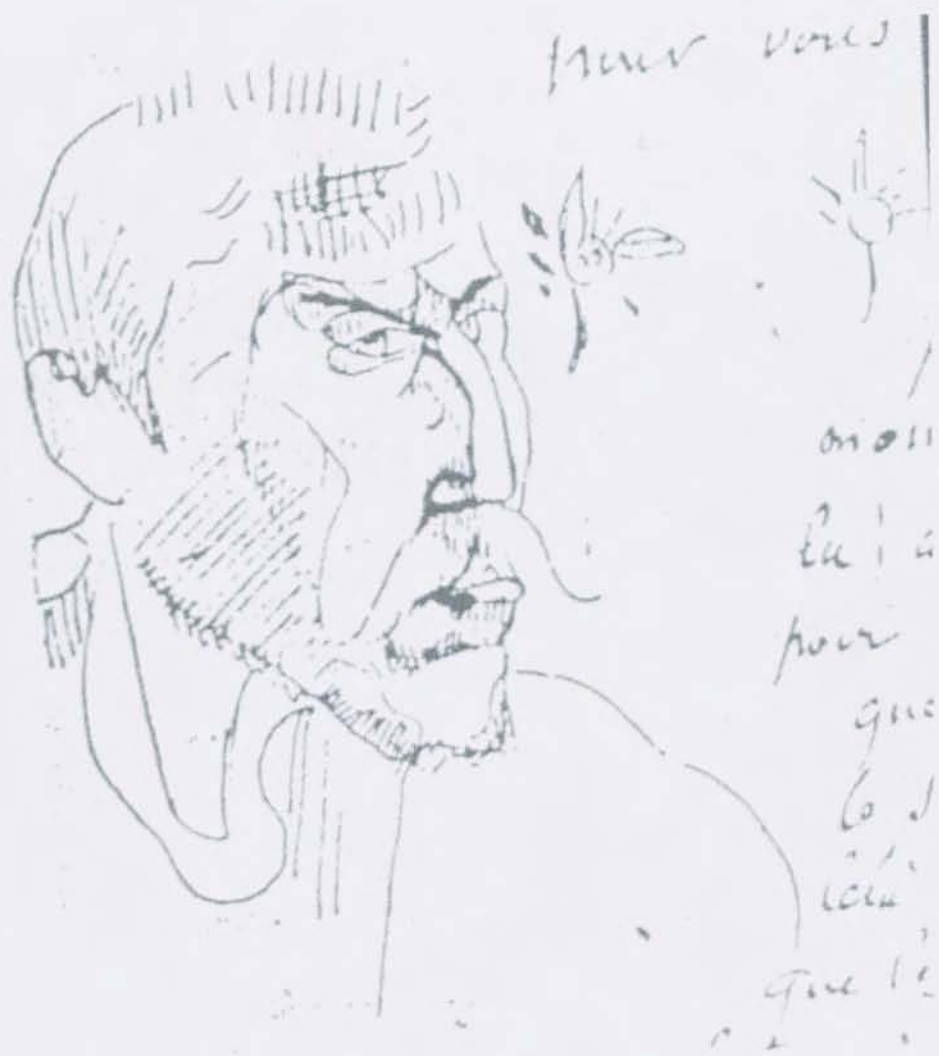


Fig. I.1



Fig. I.2



Fig. I.3



Fig. I.4

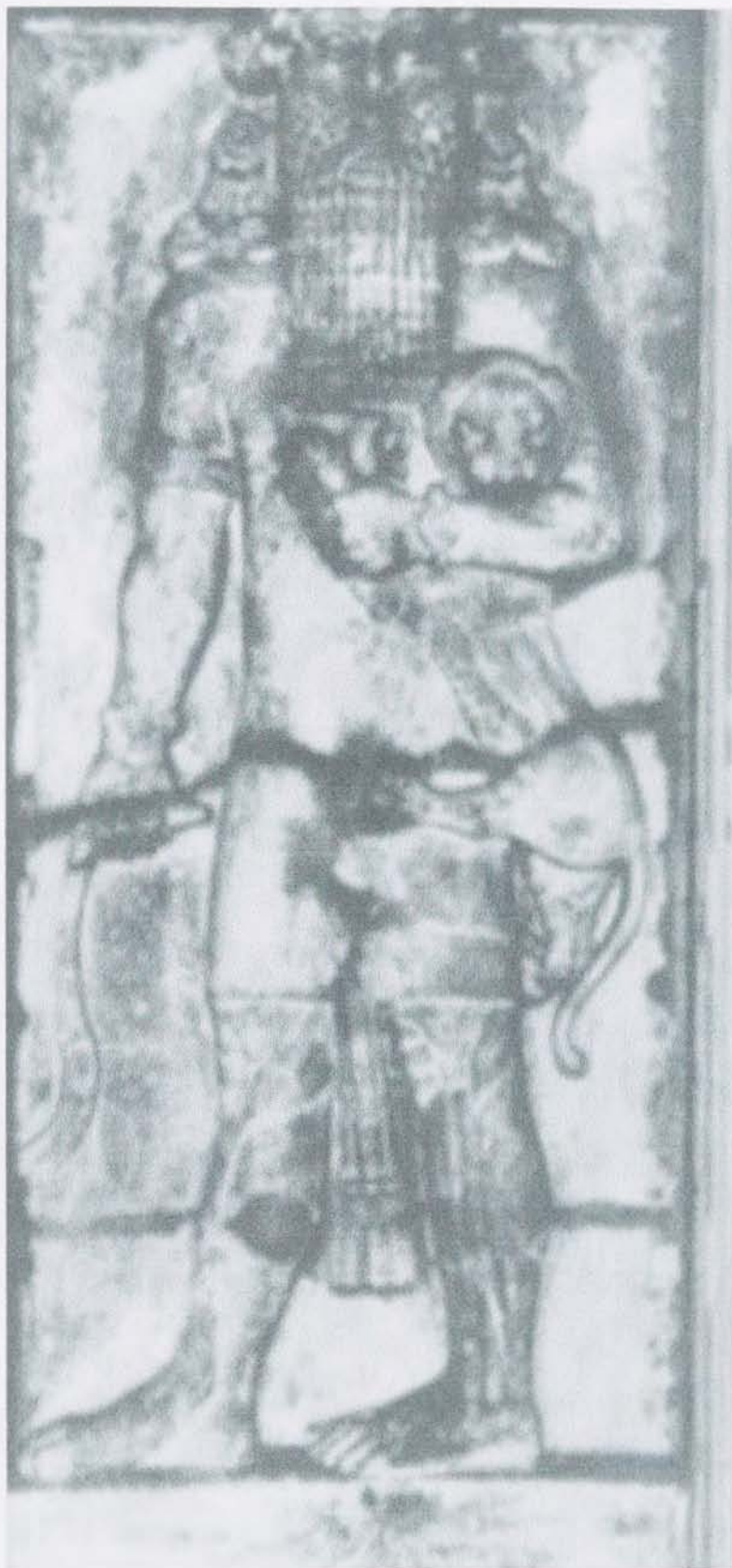


Fig. I.5

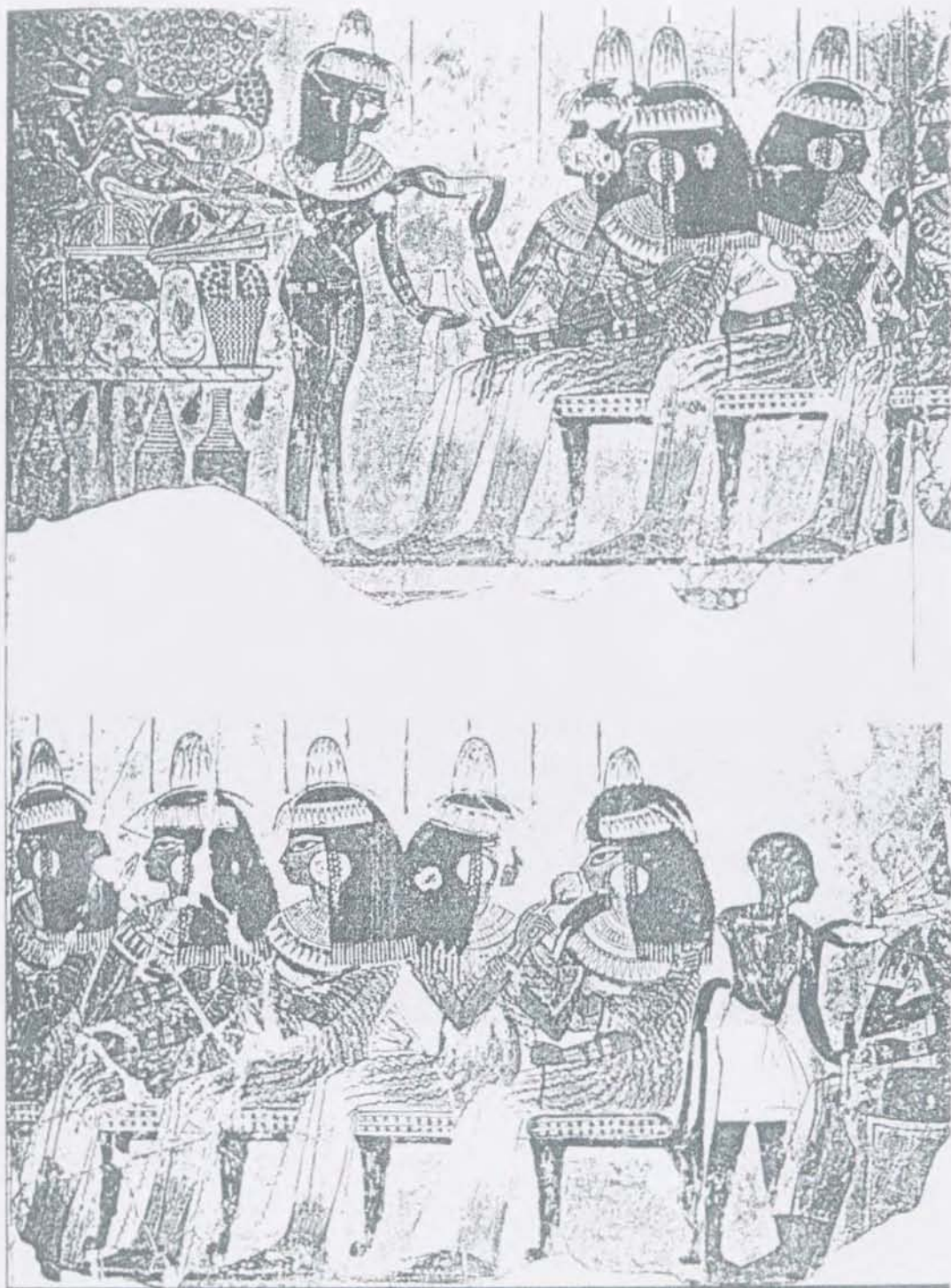


Fig. I.6



Fig. I.7

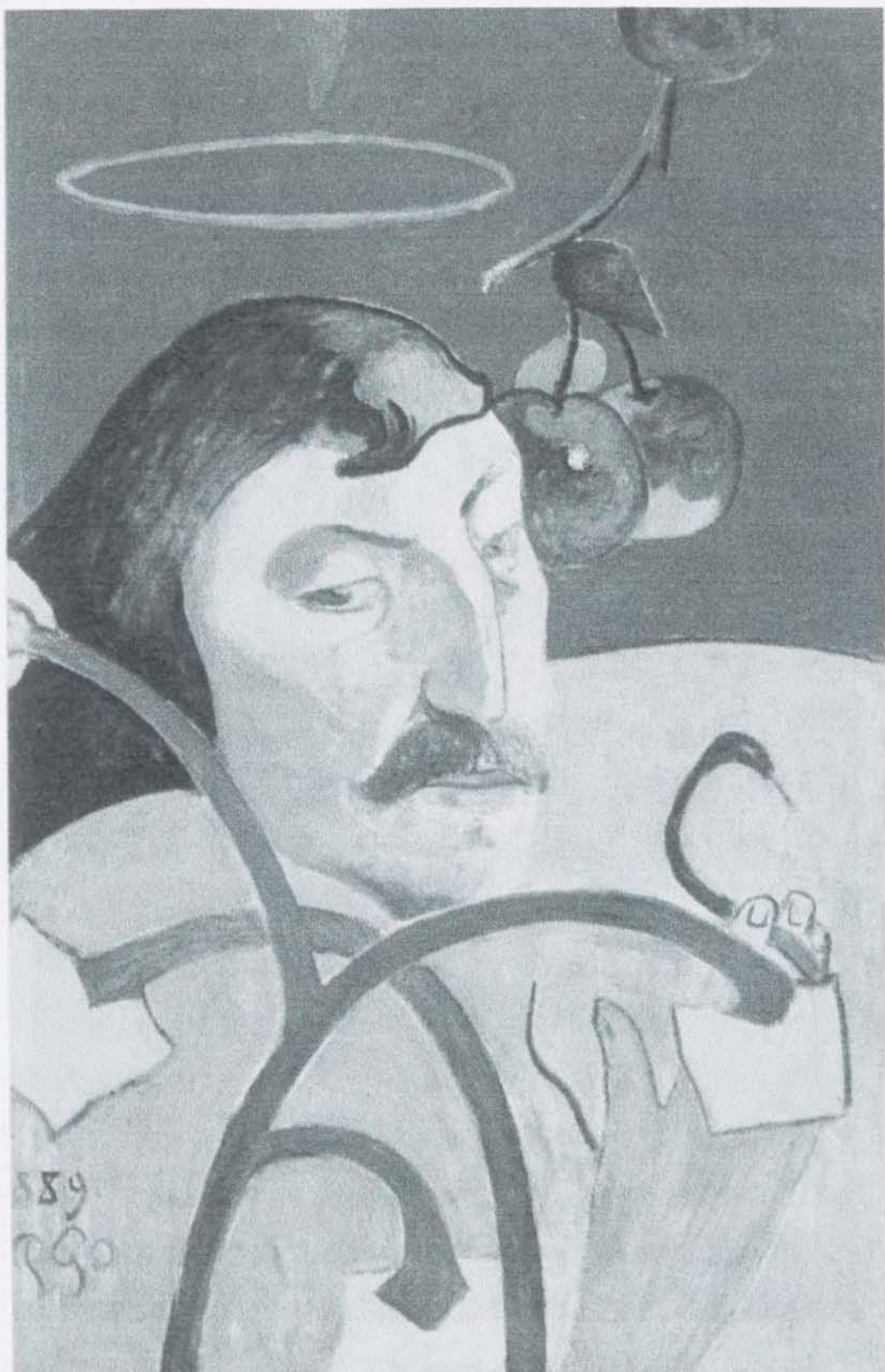


Fig. I.8



Fig. I.9

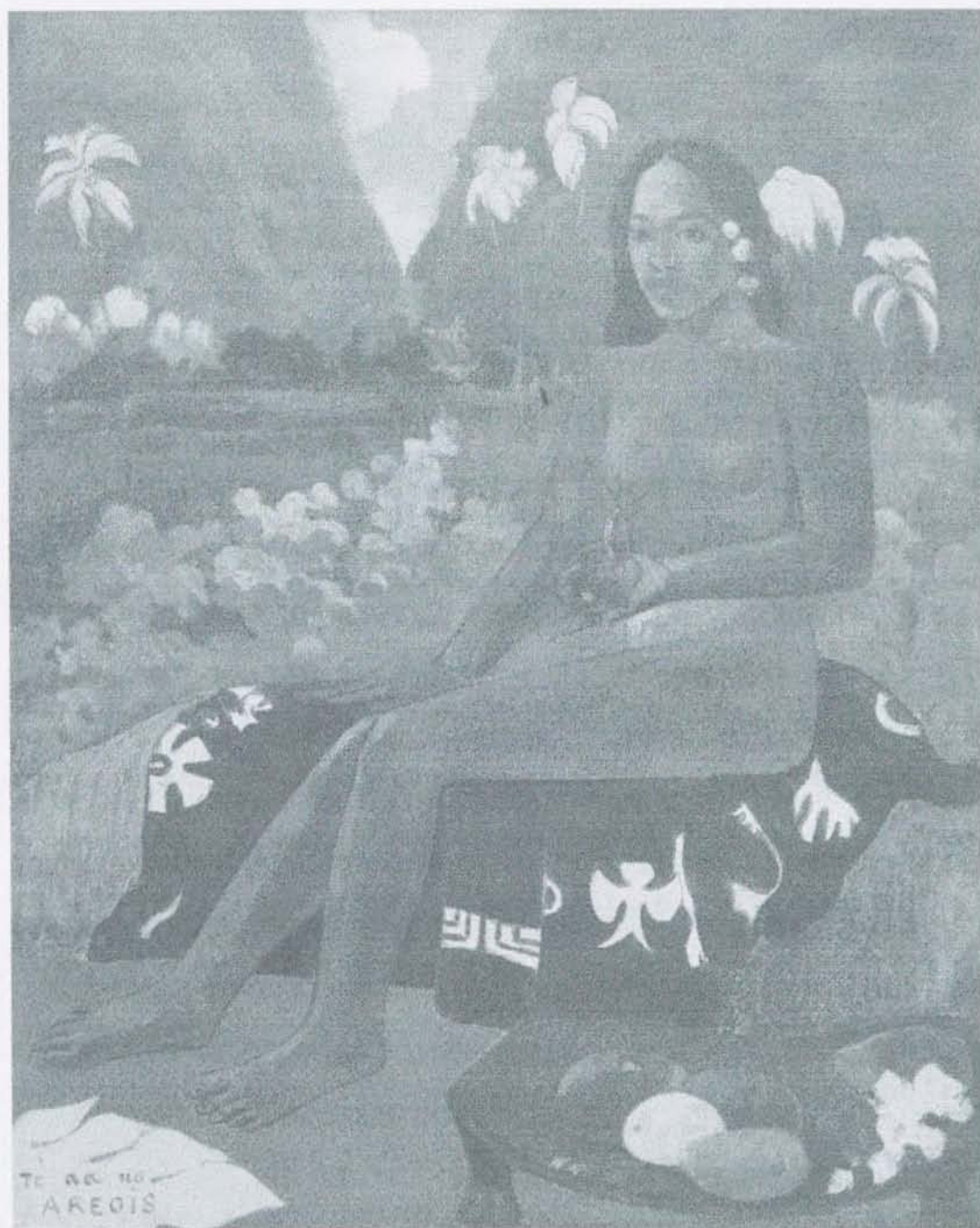
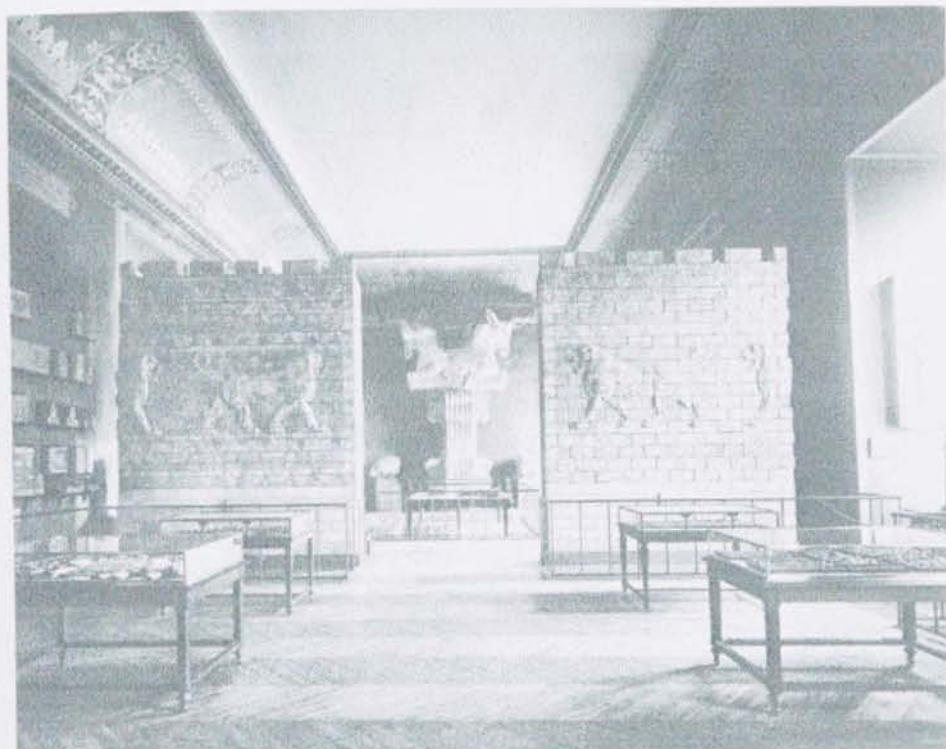


Fig. I.10



La salle Thoudry en 1952 au 1^{er} étage de l'aile de la Colonnade au Louvre.
en 4 avec le chandelier pour exposer par les reliefs du palais de Thèbes à Saï.
Inaug. par M. Drouot en 1989-1990.

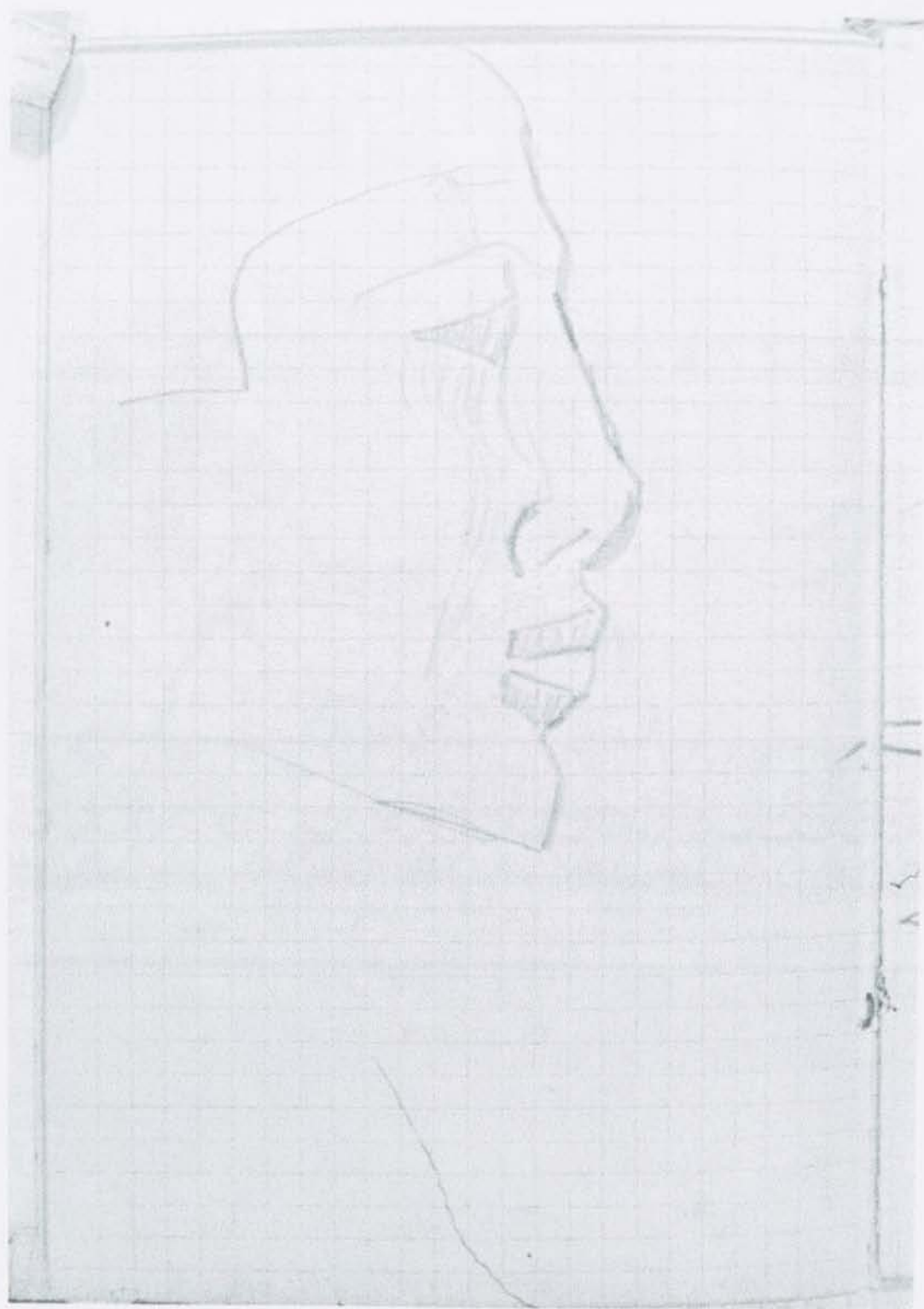
Fig. I.11



Fig. I.12a



Fig. I.12b



I.12c

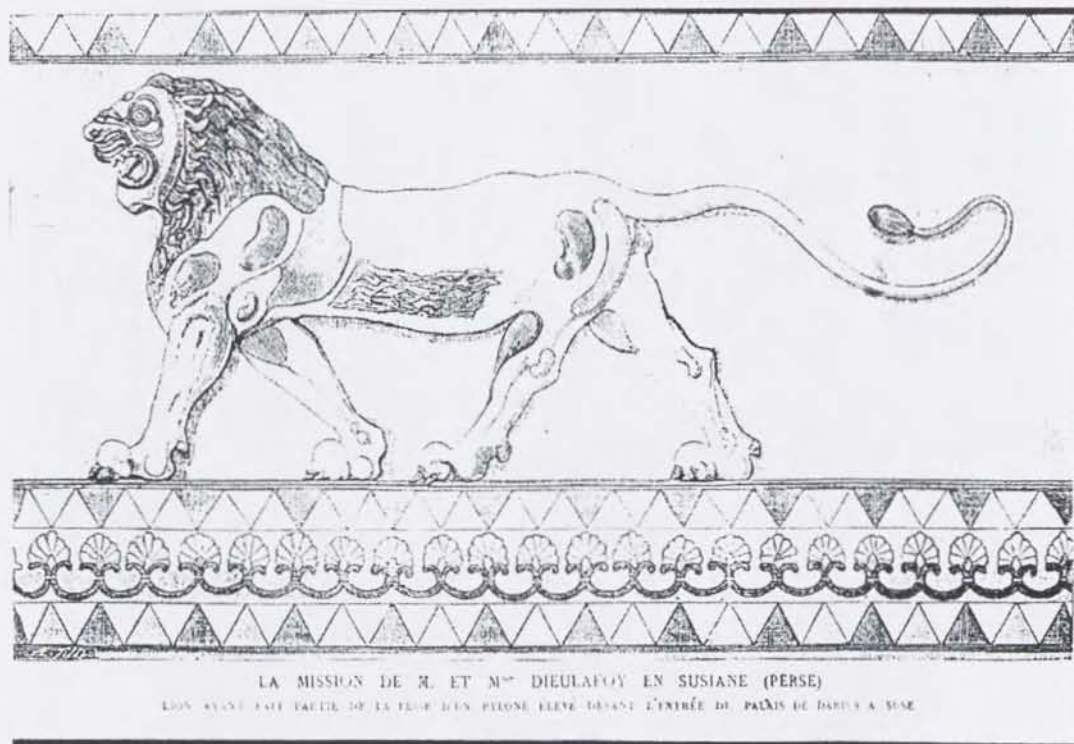


Fig. I.13

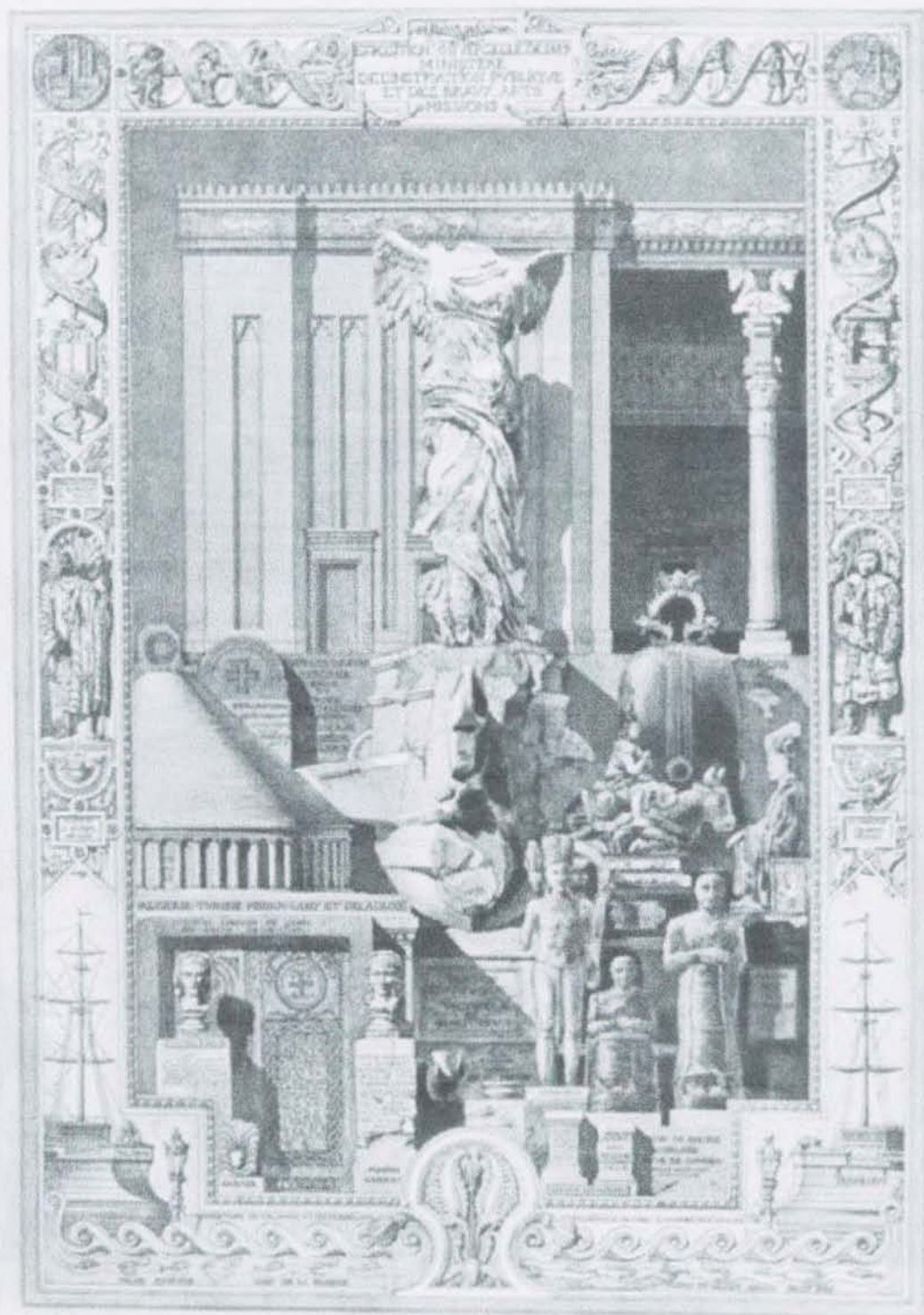


Fig. I.14



I.15



Fig. I.16

verdâtre - car malgré l'inscriptum les personnes ont l'air
 contradictoire avec le titre
 c'est il y a des reflets que
 sur les parties basses q
 riches -



Je vais l'envoyer à Paris
 Peut être celui plaisir pl
 de Haam vous dit le

Cordialement à

P. Gangein

P.S. je suis que vous fatig
 ainsi je ne demande per
 un plaisir que s'ins à

Le service militaire
 remis à un an pour li



au Pouldu près Quimper / Finistère /

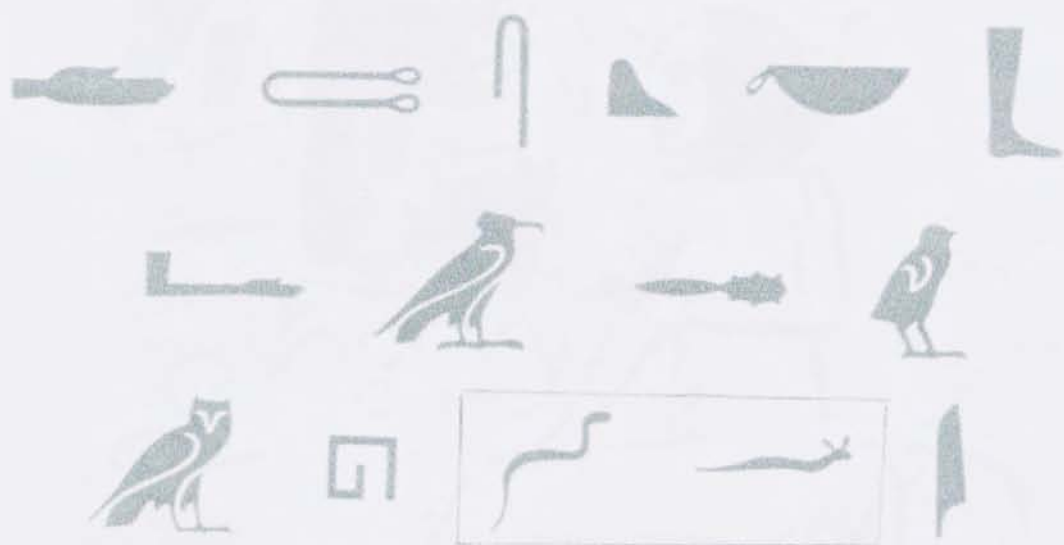


Fig. I.18

Je suis mandit -



Fig. I.19



I.20

220

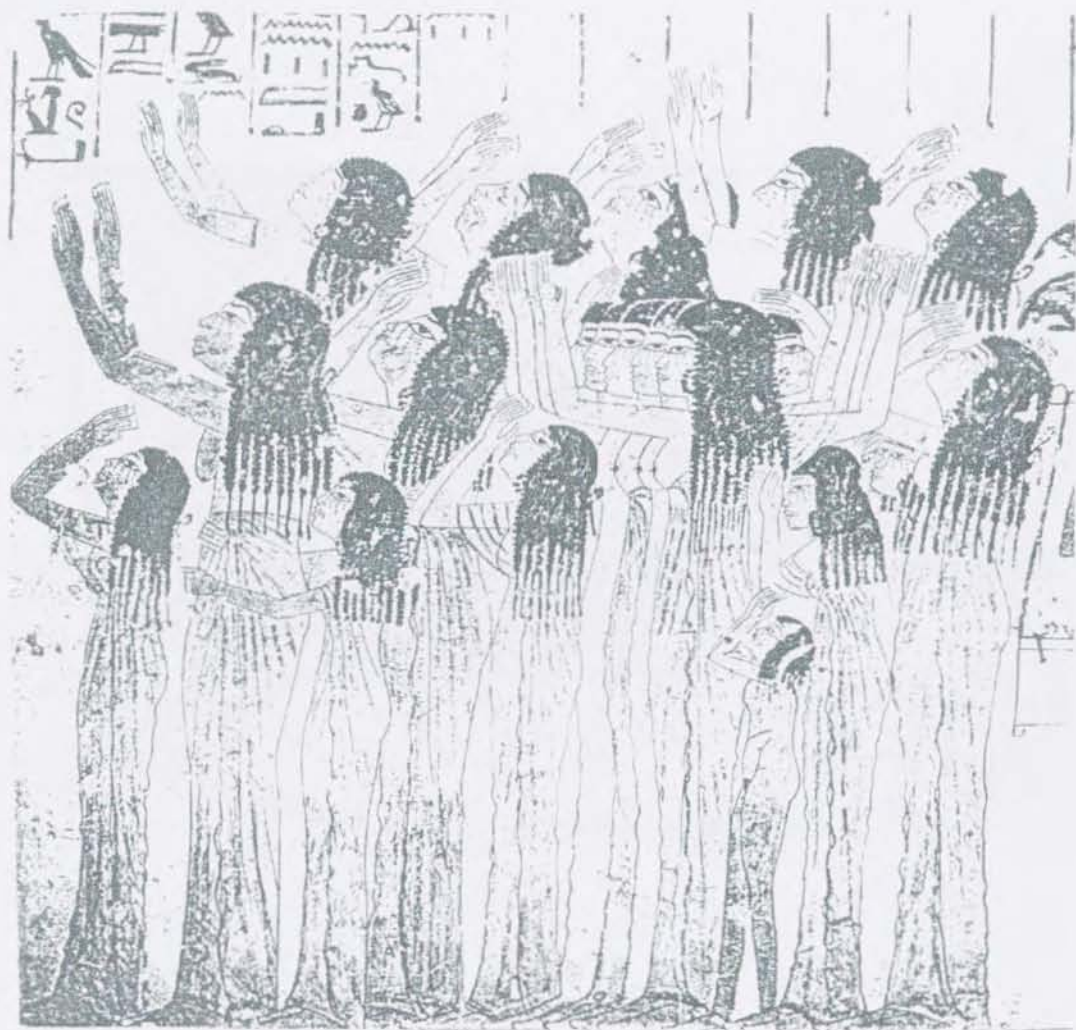


Fig. I.21

I.21



Fig. I.22

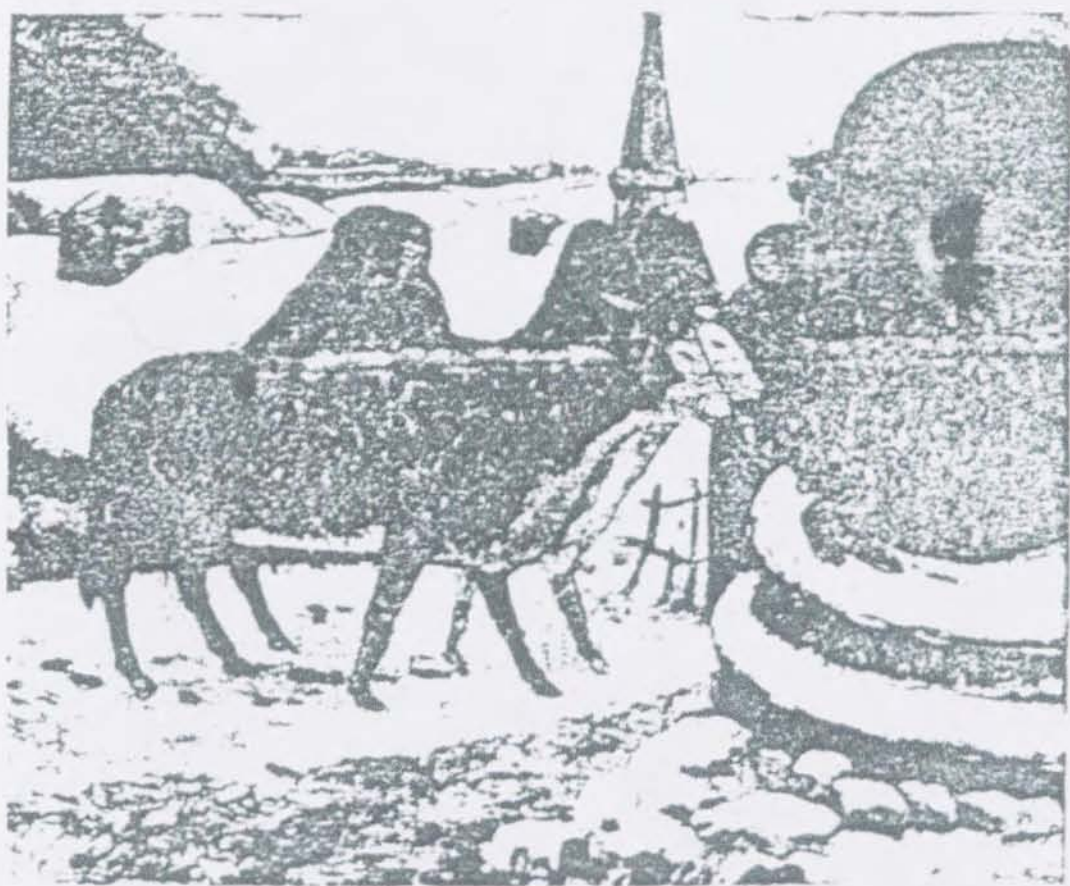


Fig. I.23

Fig. 23

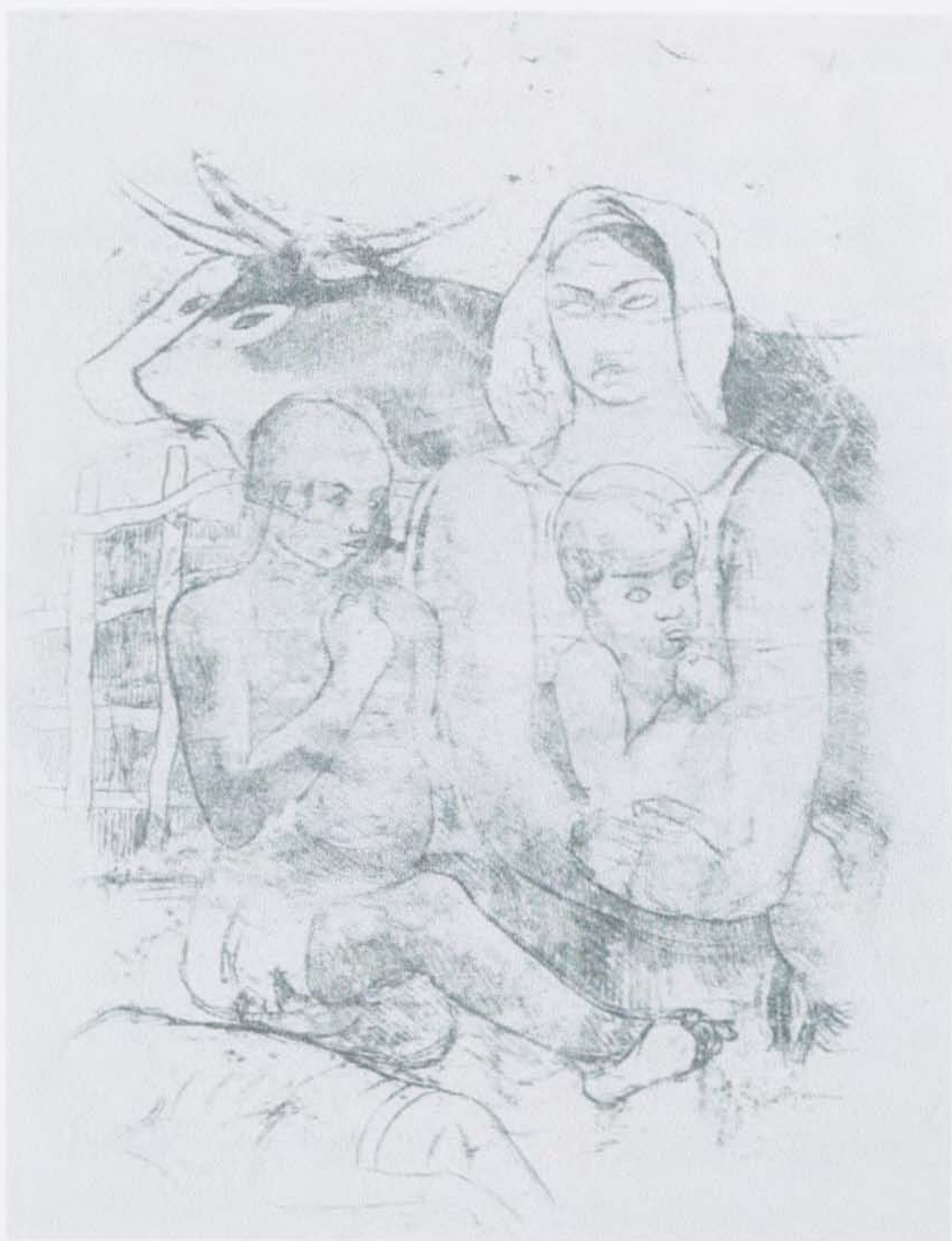


Fig. I.24



Fig. I.25



Fig. II.1



Fig. II.2



II.3



Fig. II.4

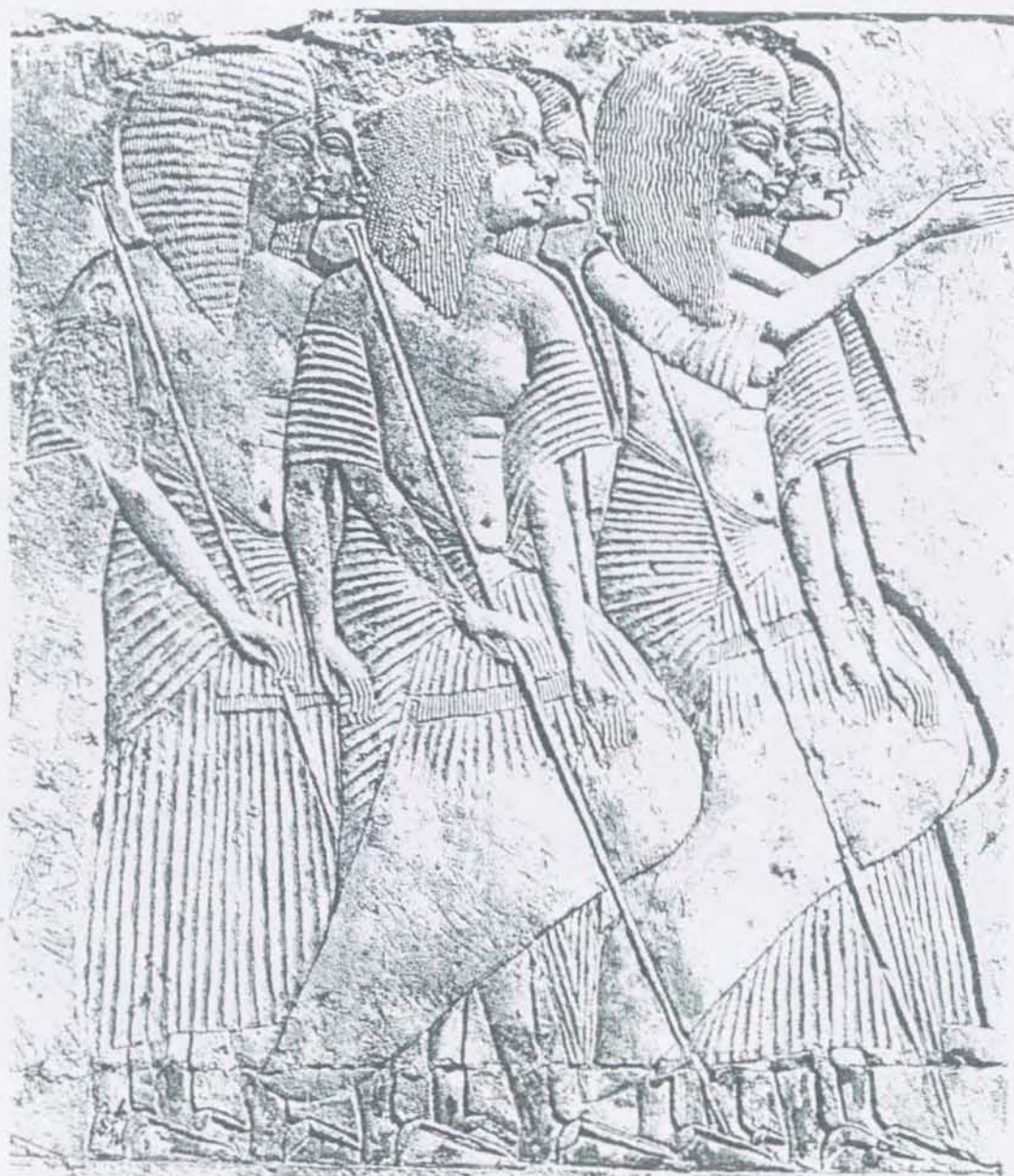


Fig. II.5



Fig. II.6

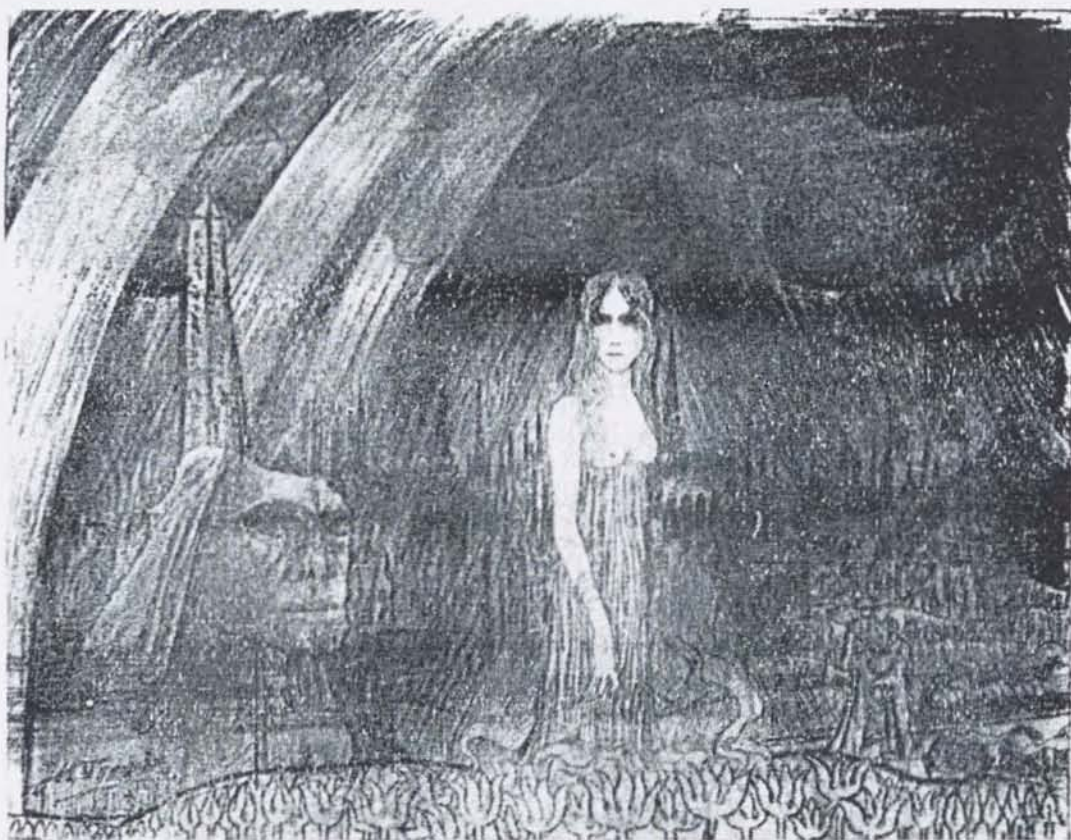


Fig. II.7

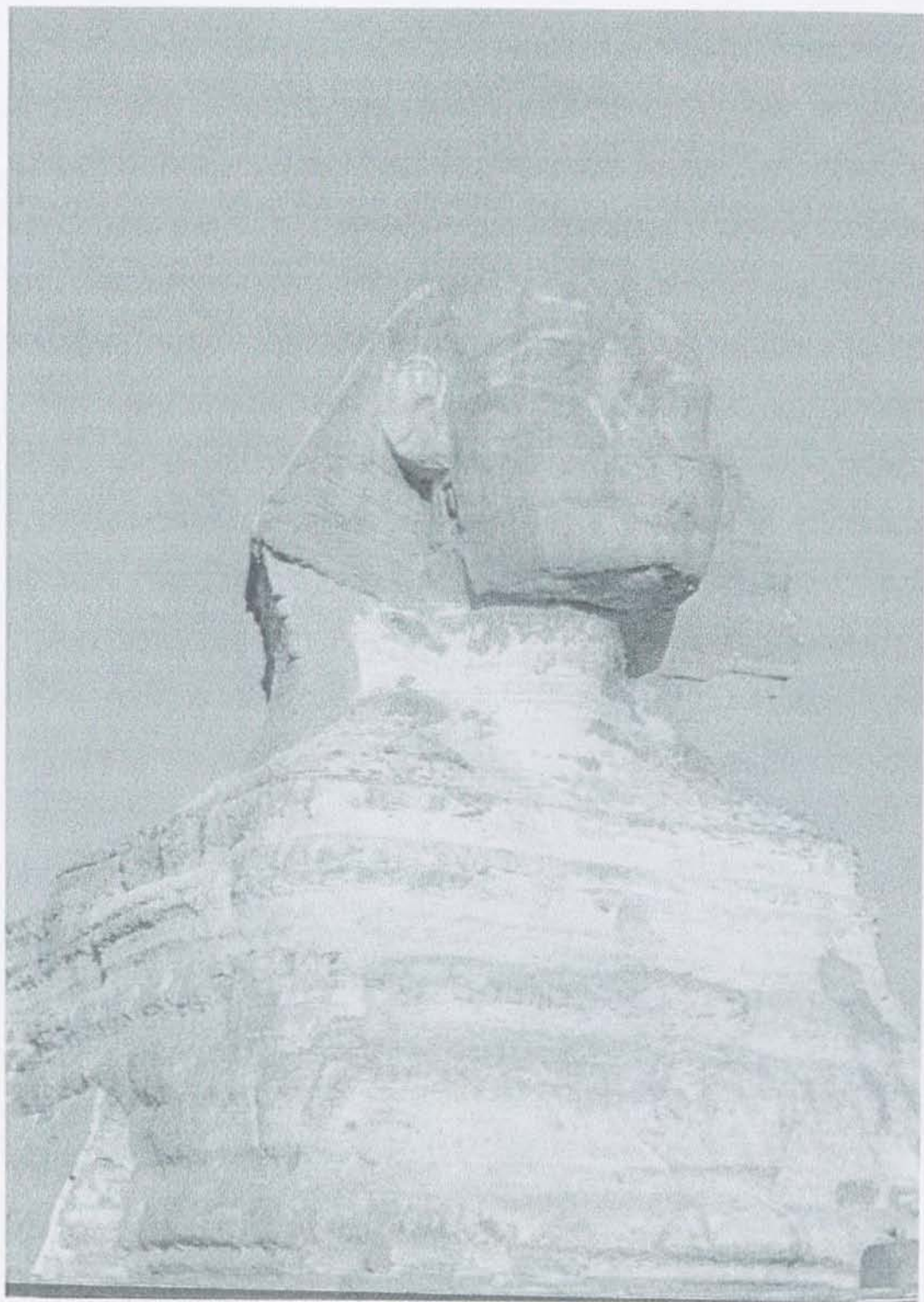


Fig. II.8

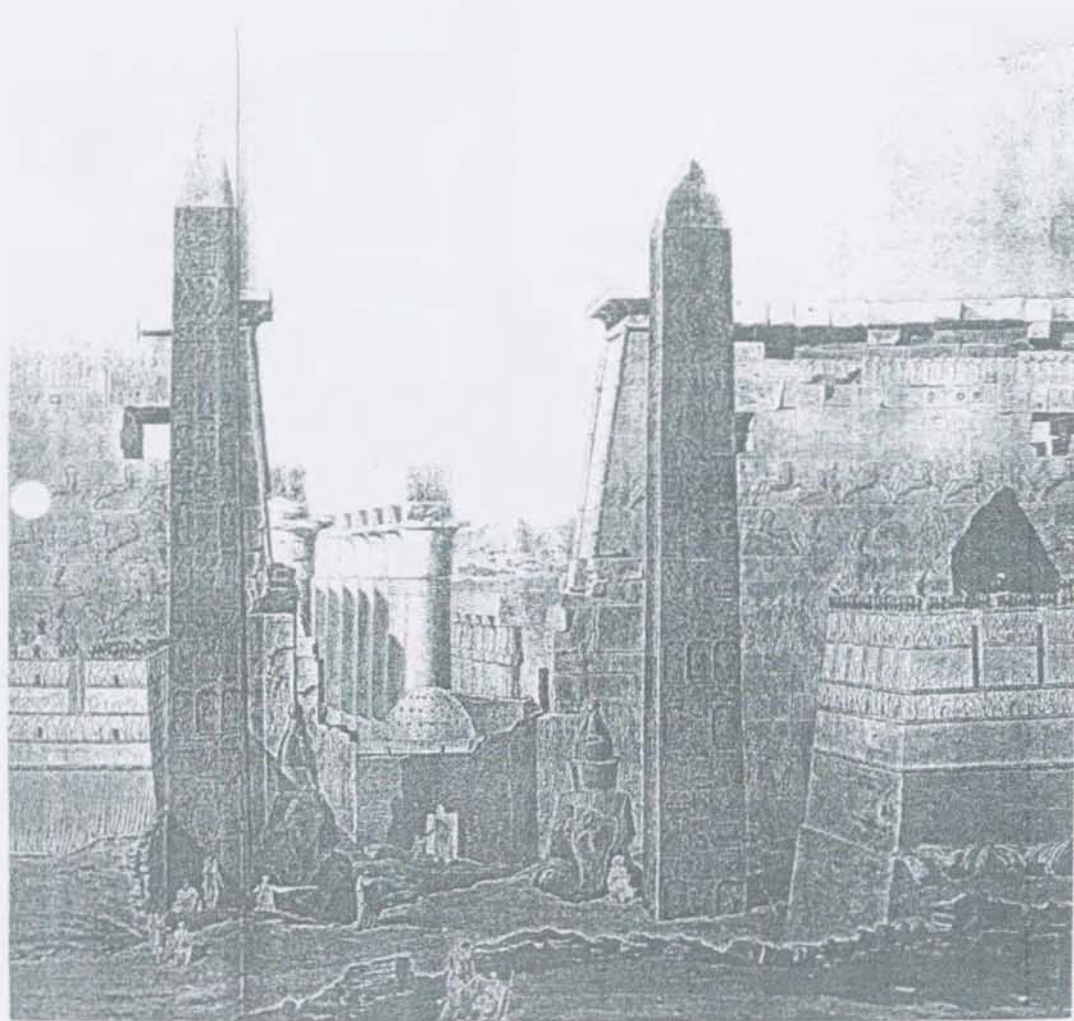


Fig. II.9

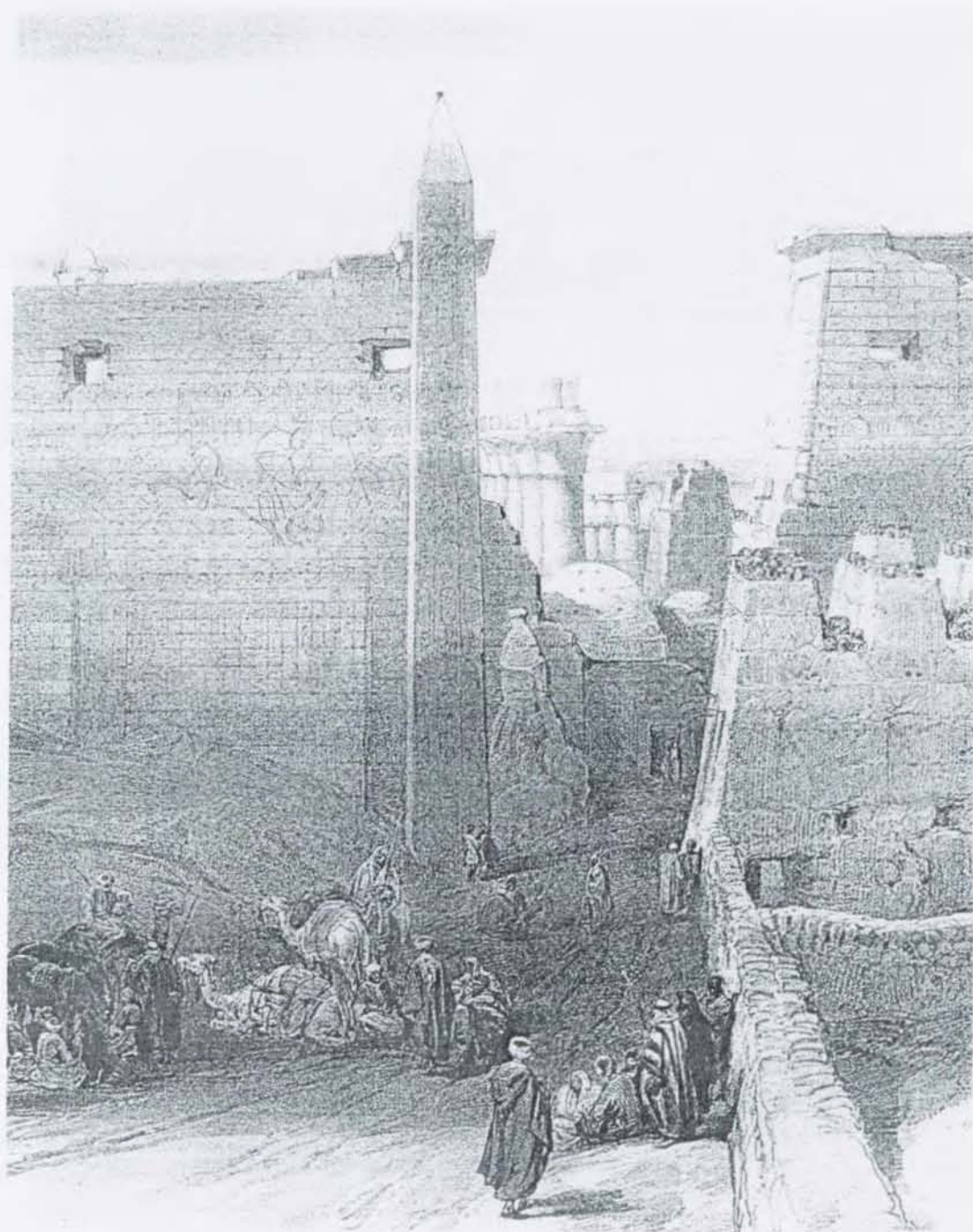


Fig. II.10



Fig. II.11

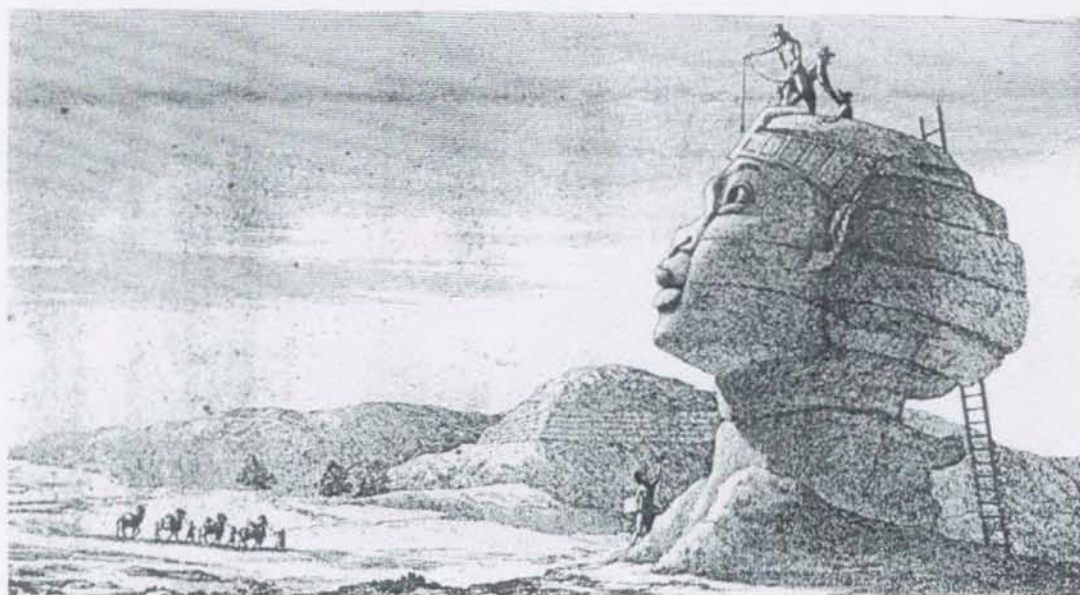


Fig. II.12



Fig. II.13a



Fig. II.13b

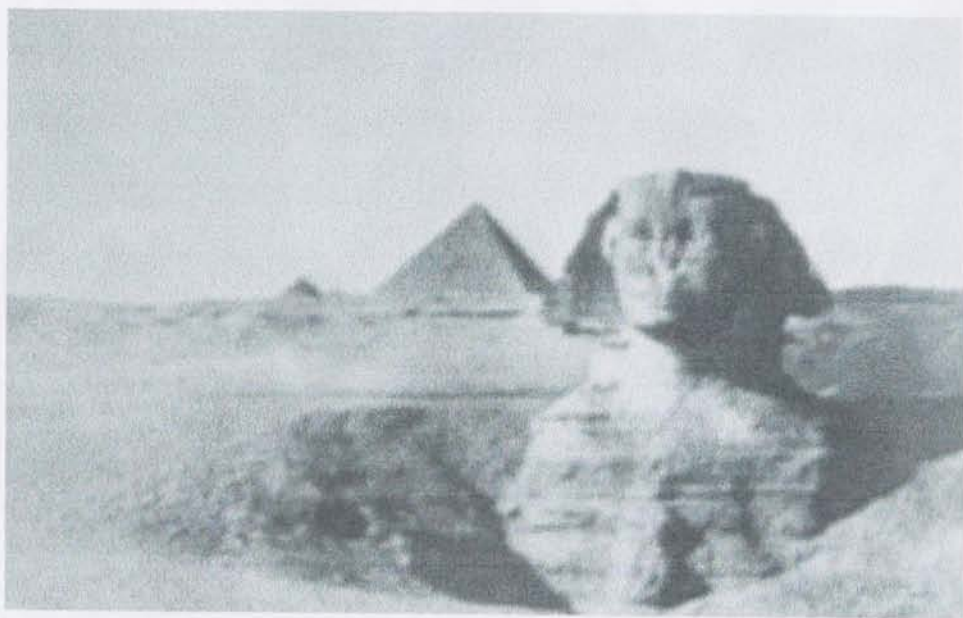


Fig. II.14

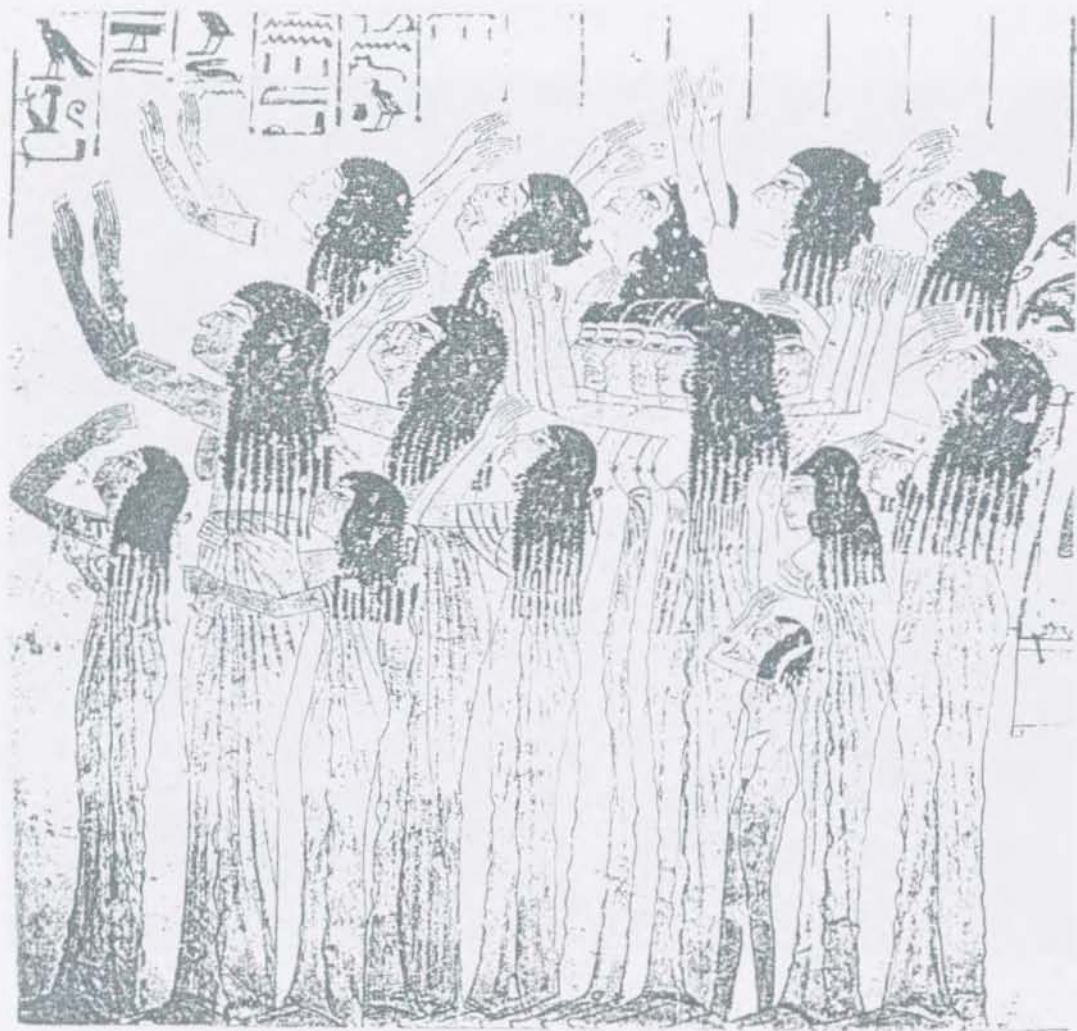


Fig. II.15

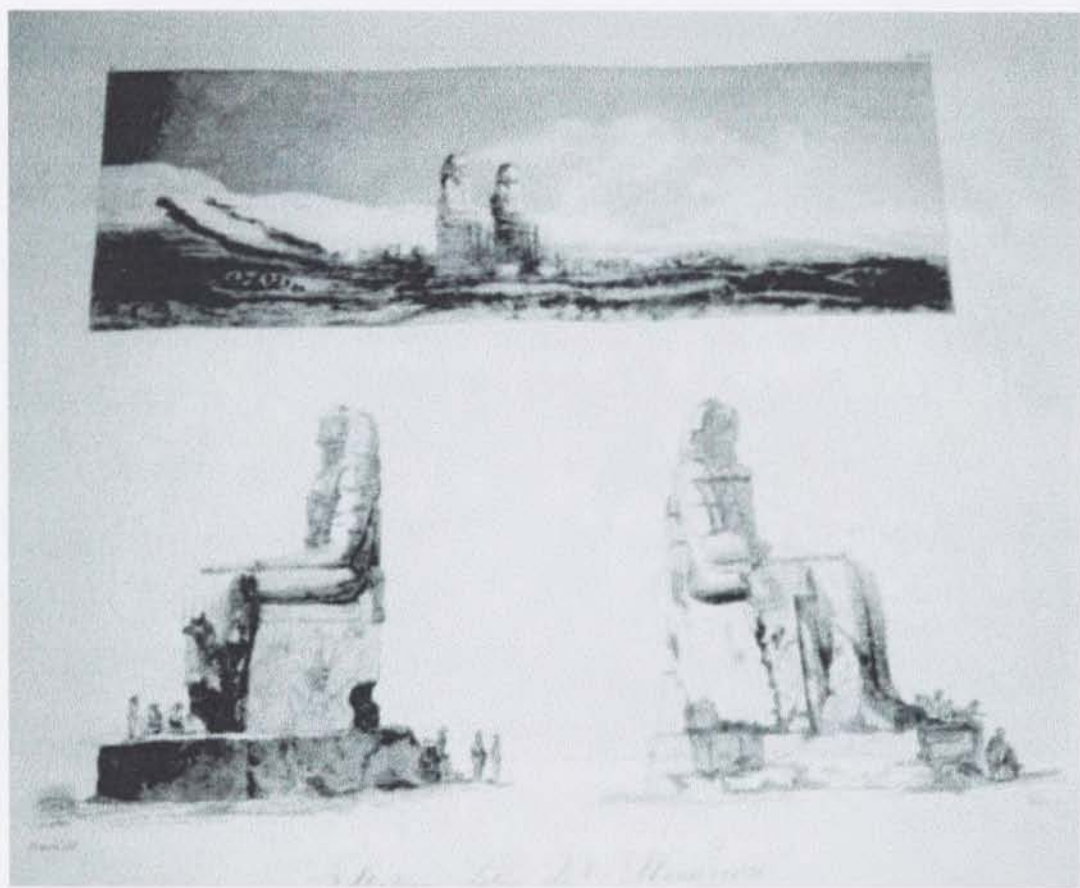


Fig. II.16



Fig. II.17



Fig. II.18



Fig. II.19

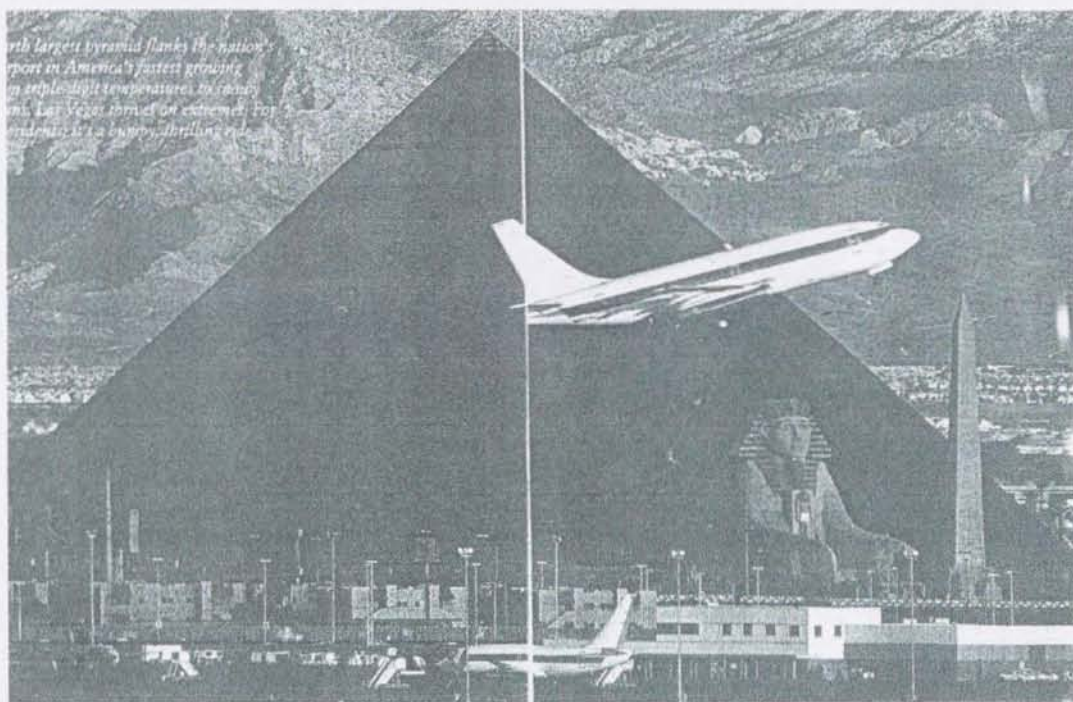


Fig. II.20



Fig. III.1

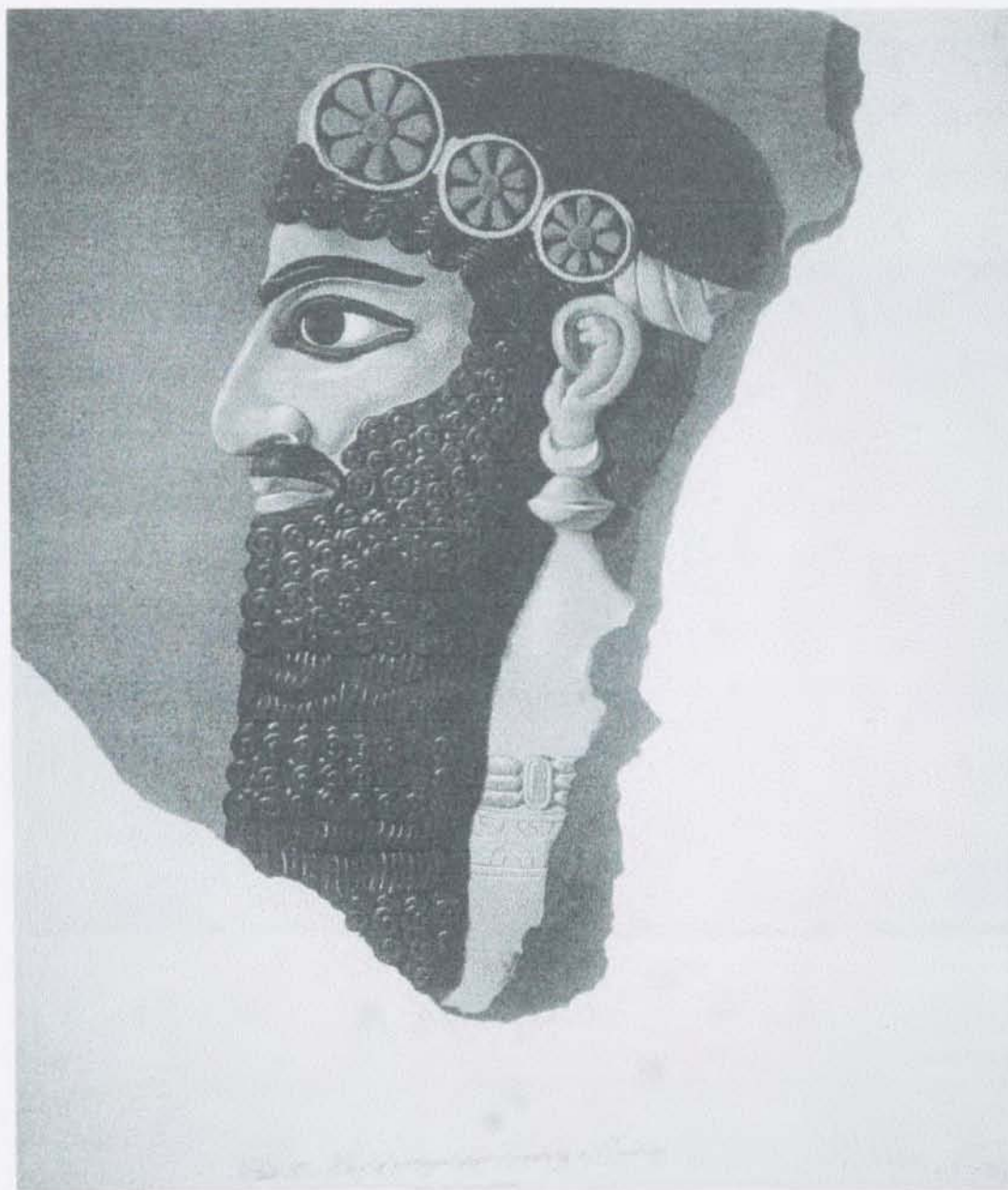


Fig. III.2

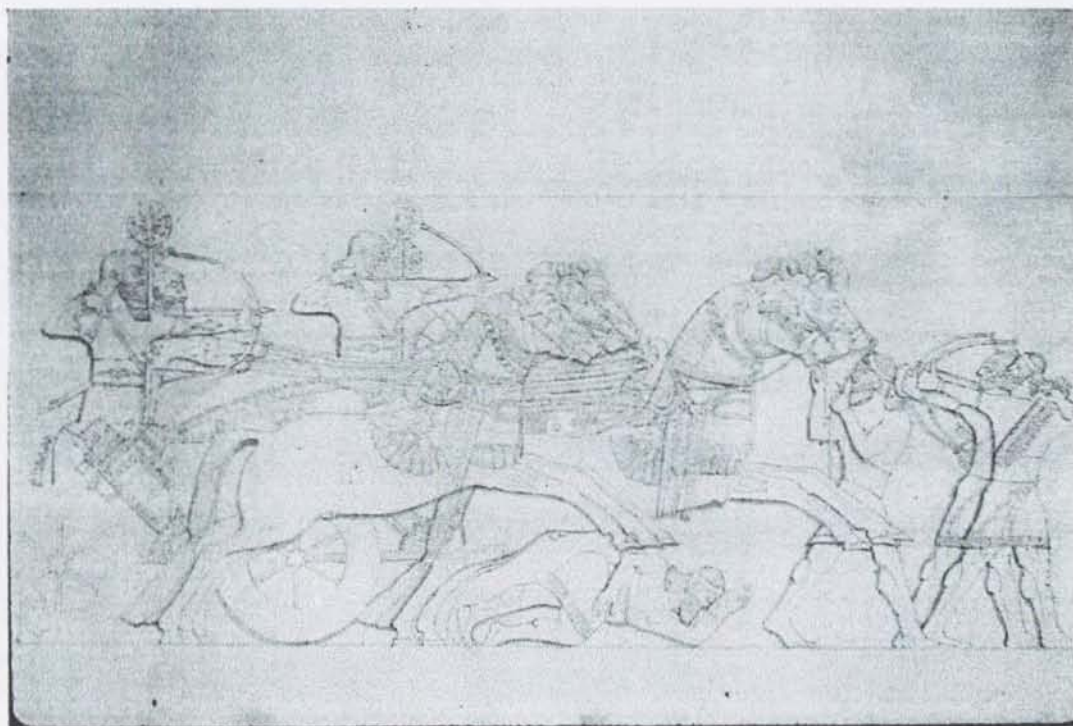


Fig. III.3



Plate 27. Warriors fighting in Chariots.

Fig. III.4



Fig. III.5



Fig. III.6

*



Fig. III.7a

*

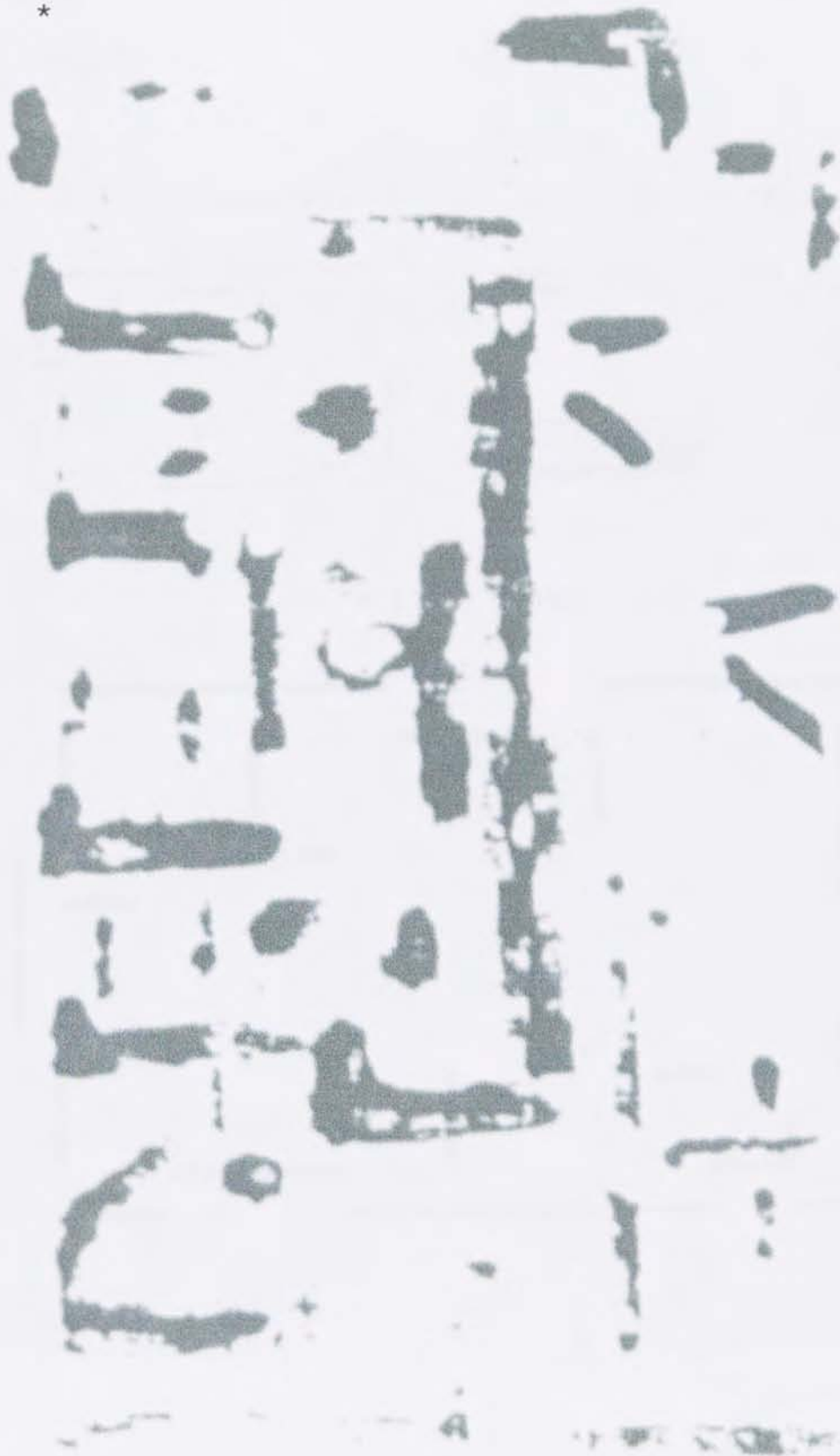


Fig. III.7b

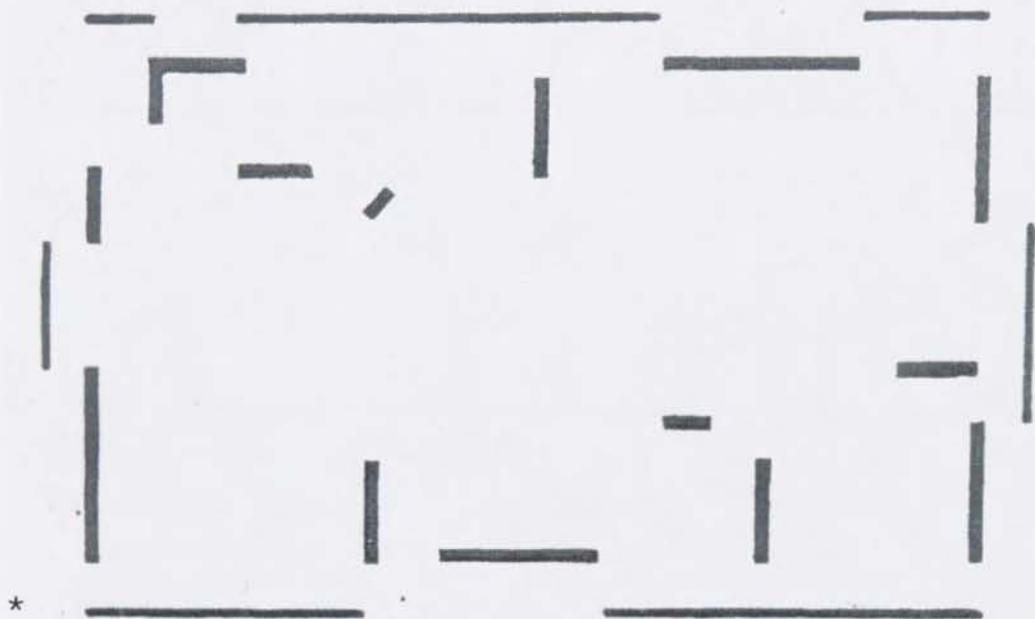


Fig. III.7 e



Fig. III.7c



Fig. III.7d

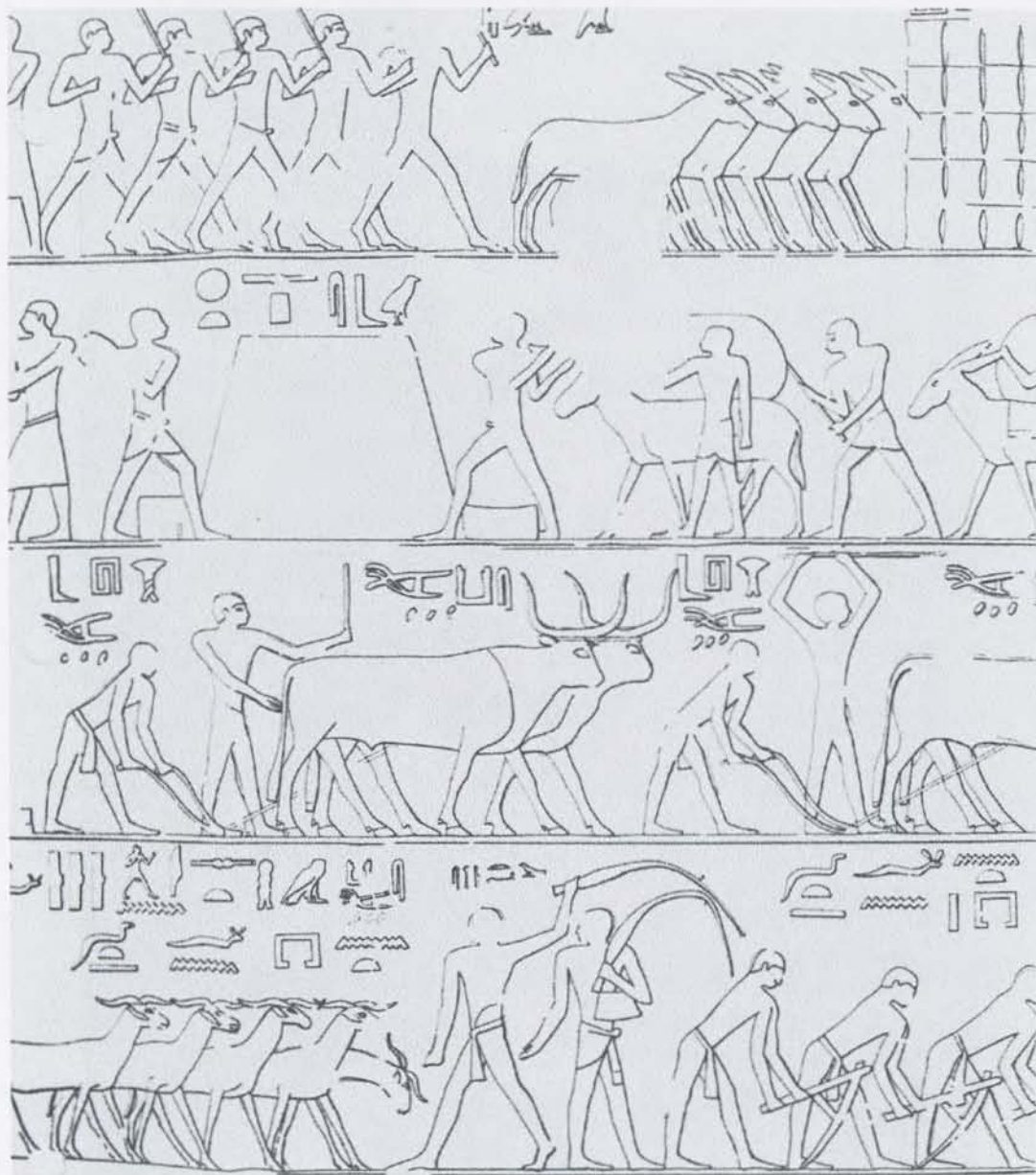
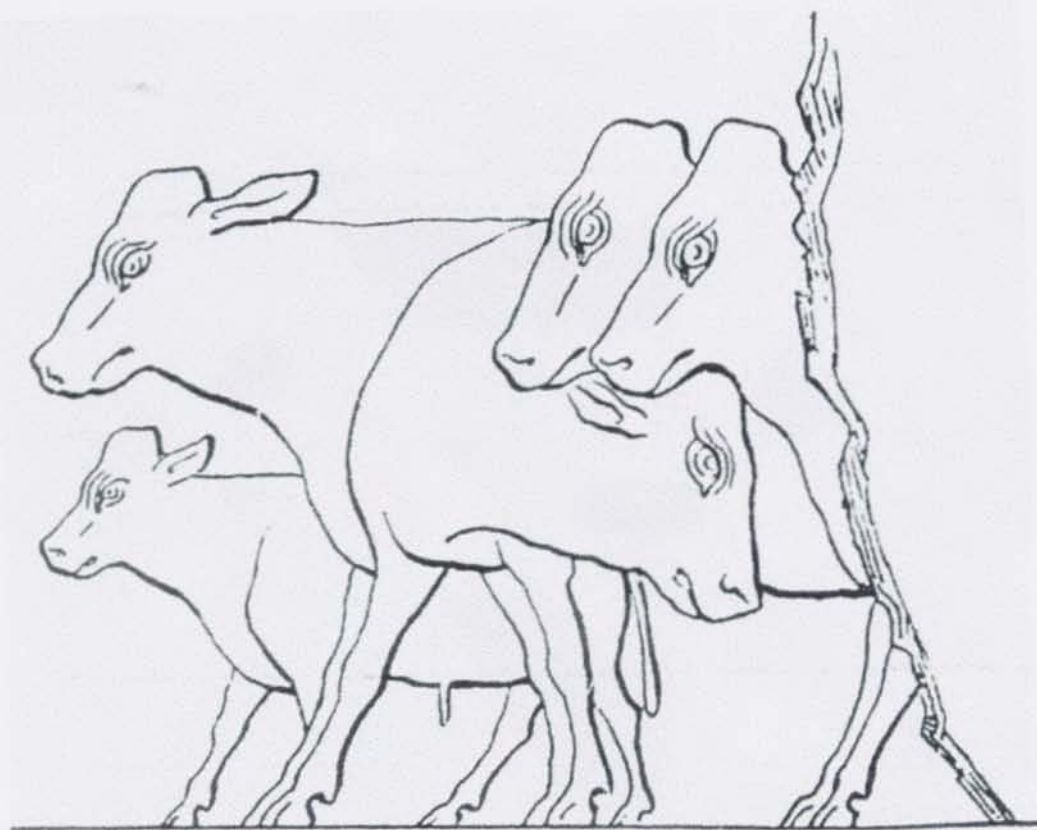


Fig. III.8

*



Fig. III.9



HORNLESS CATTLE UNDER THE OLD EMPIRE
(after L. D., ii. 9).

Fig. III.10

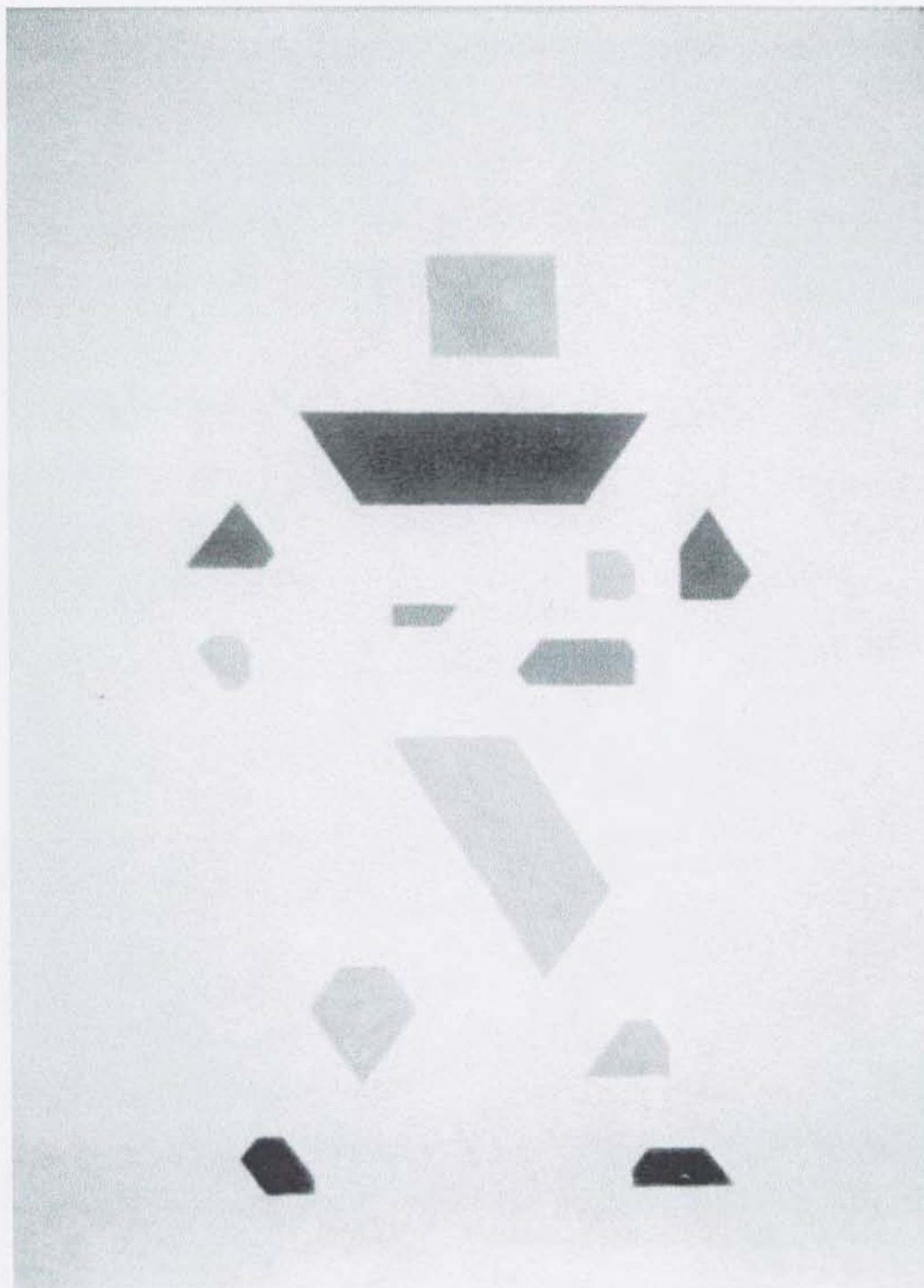


Fig. III.11



Fig. III.11a

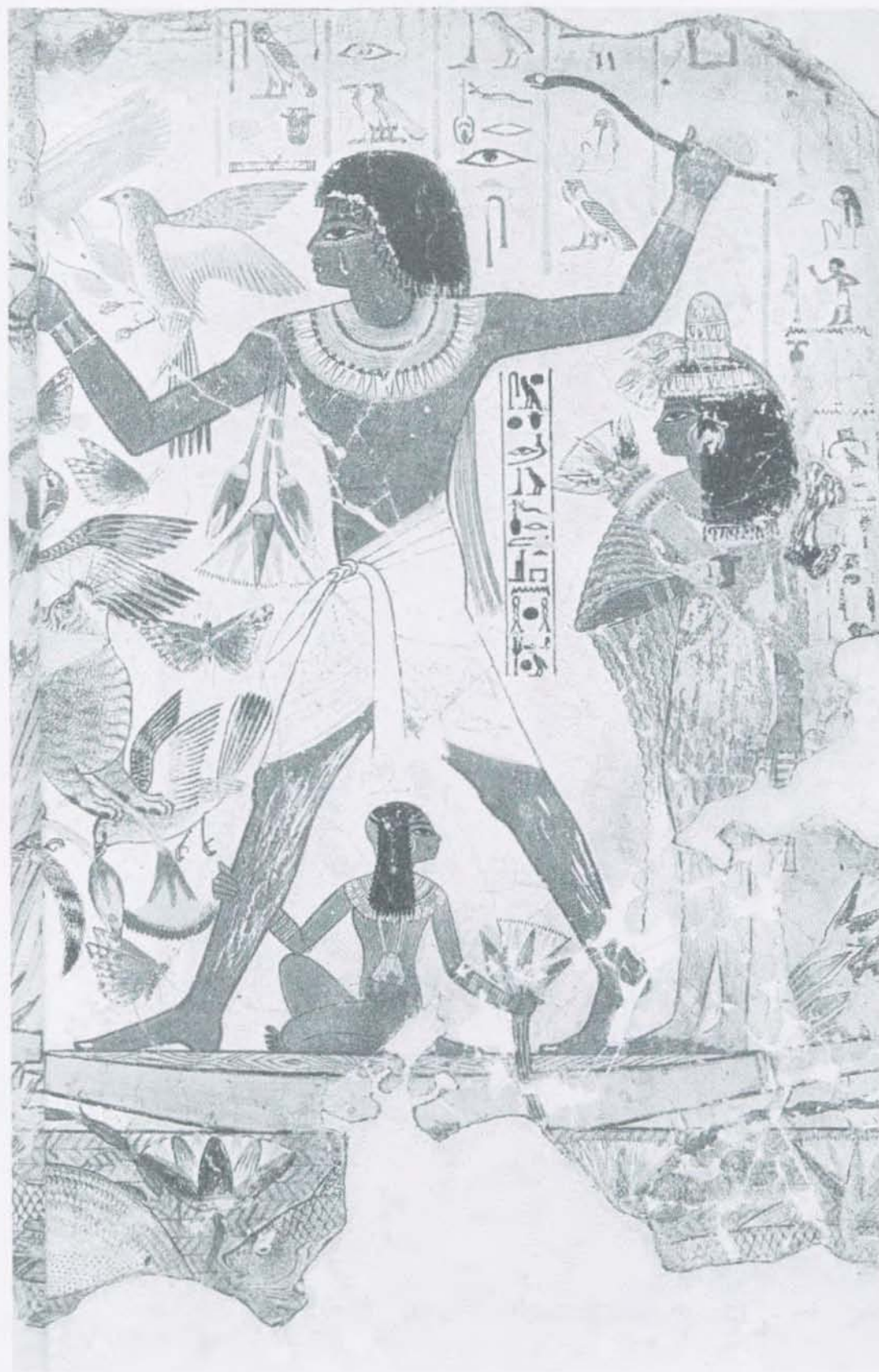


Fig. III.12a

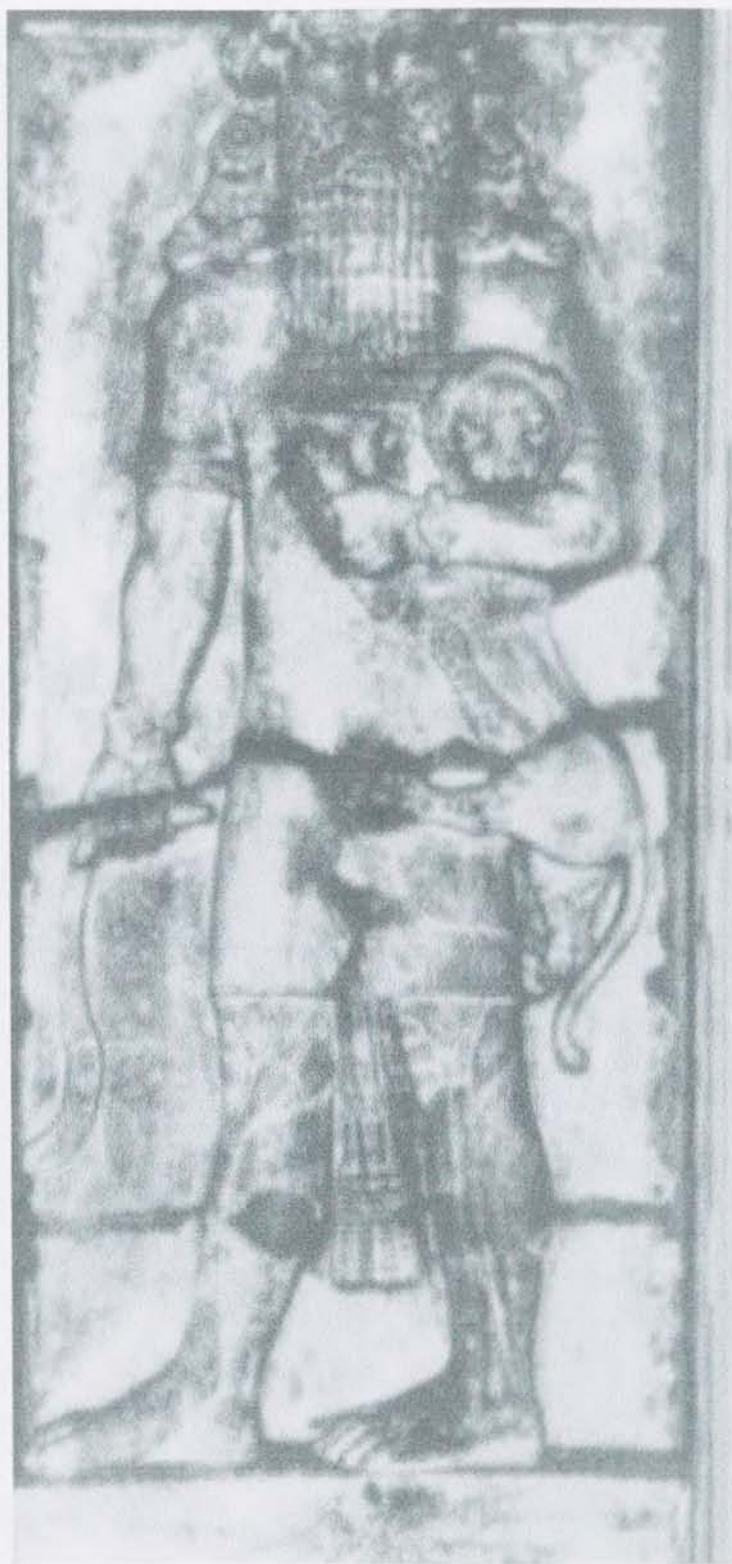


Fig. III.12b





Fig. III.14



Fig. III.15a

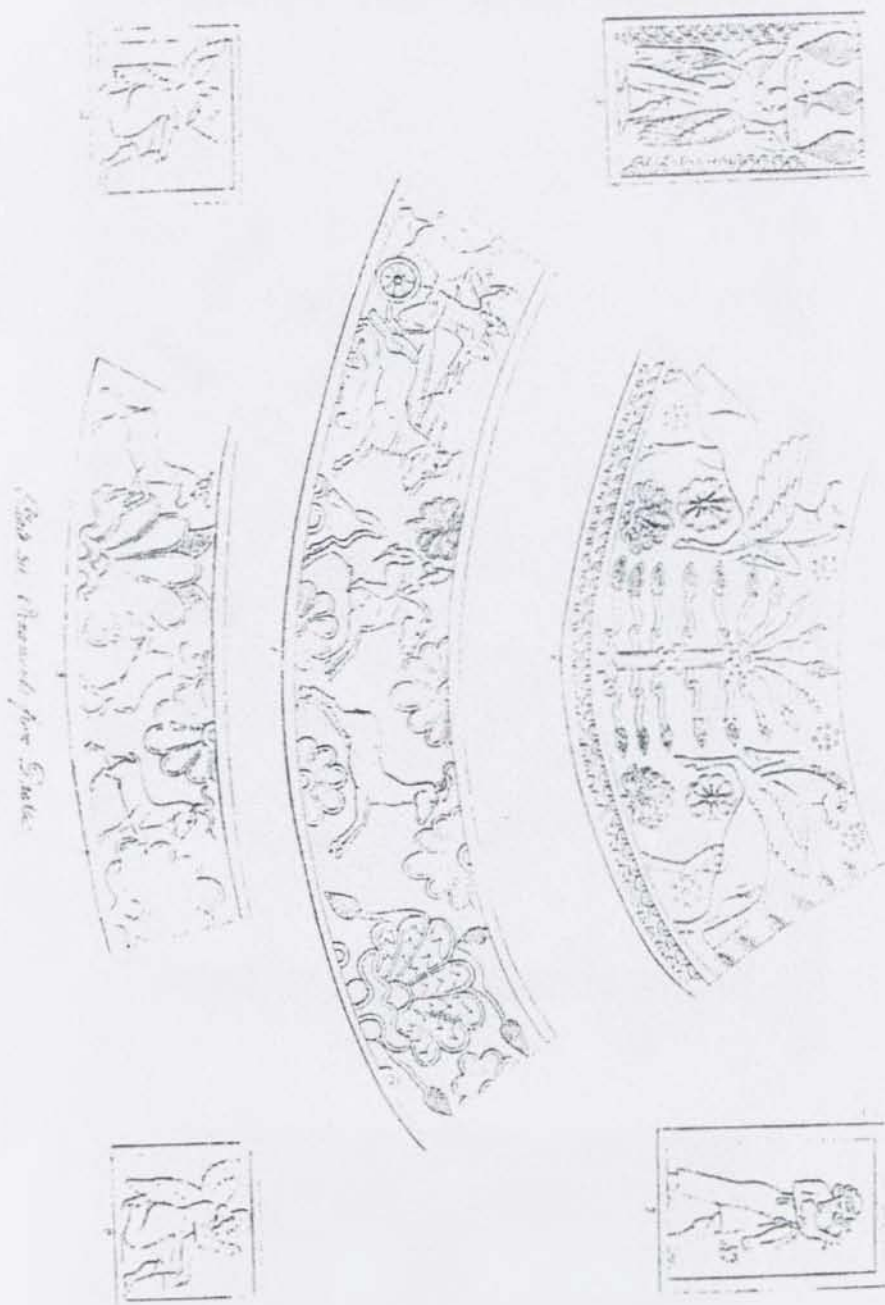


Fig. III.15b

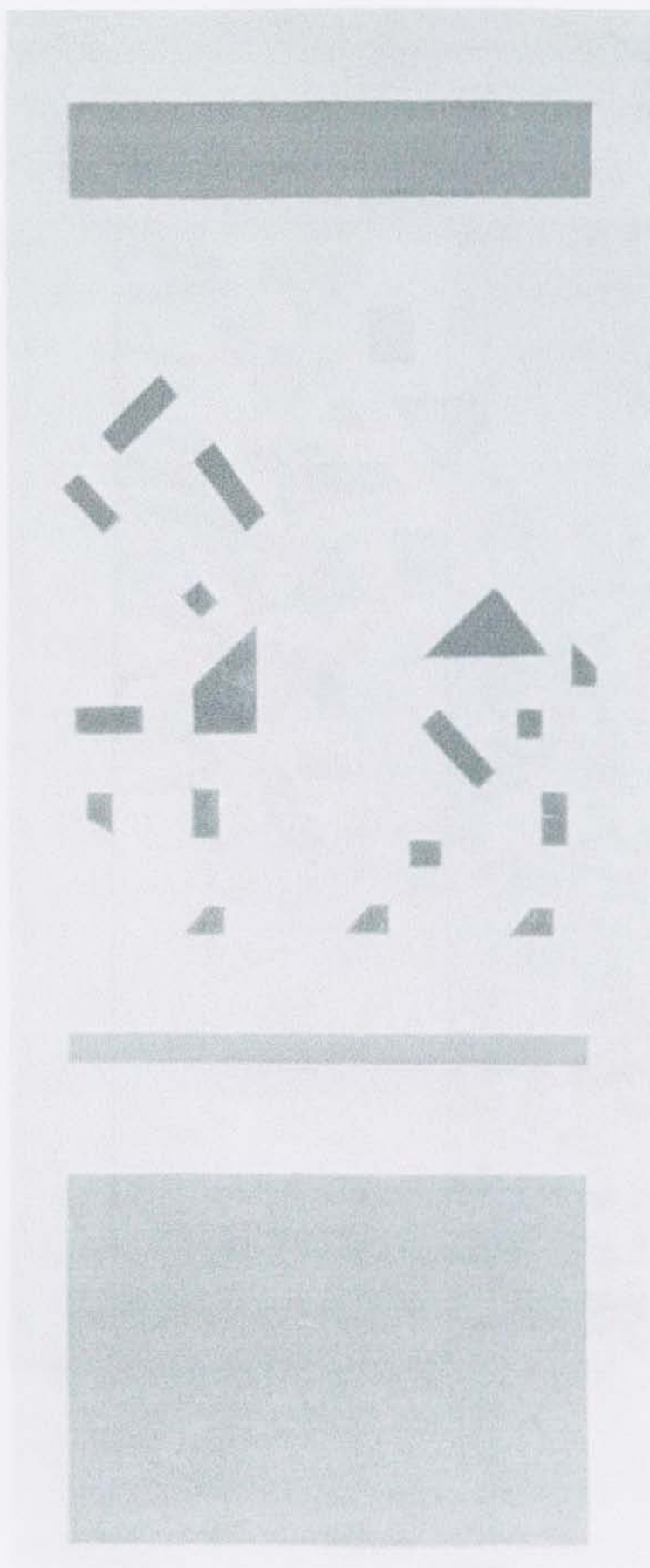


Fig. III.16



Fig. III.17

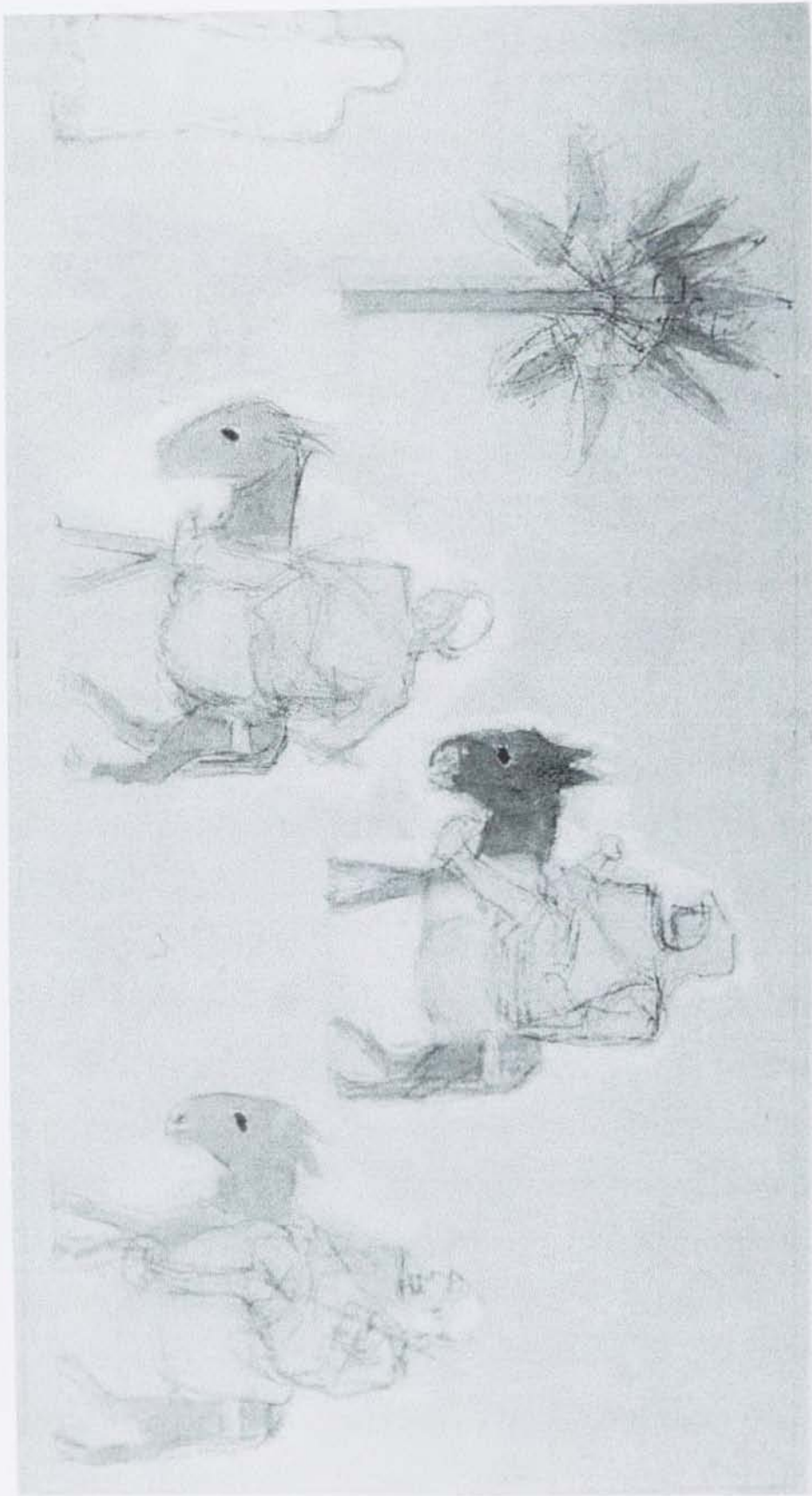


Fig. III.18

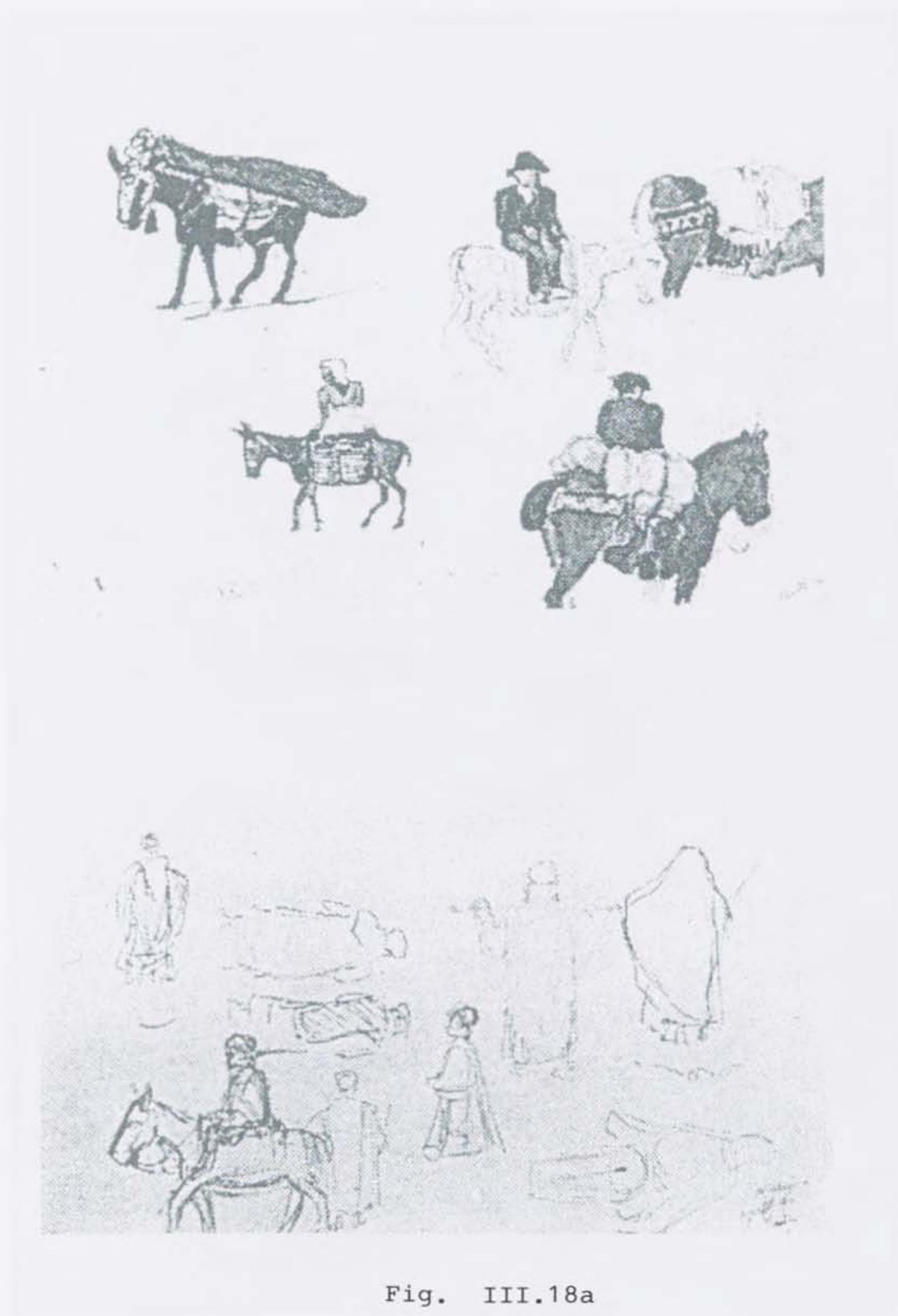


Fig. III.18a

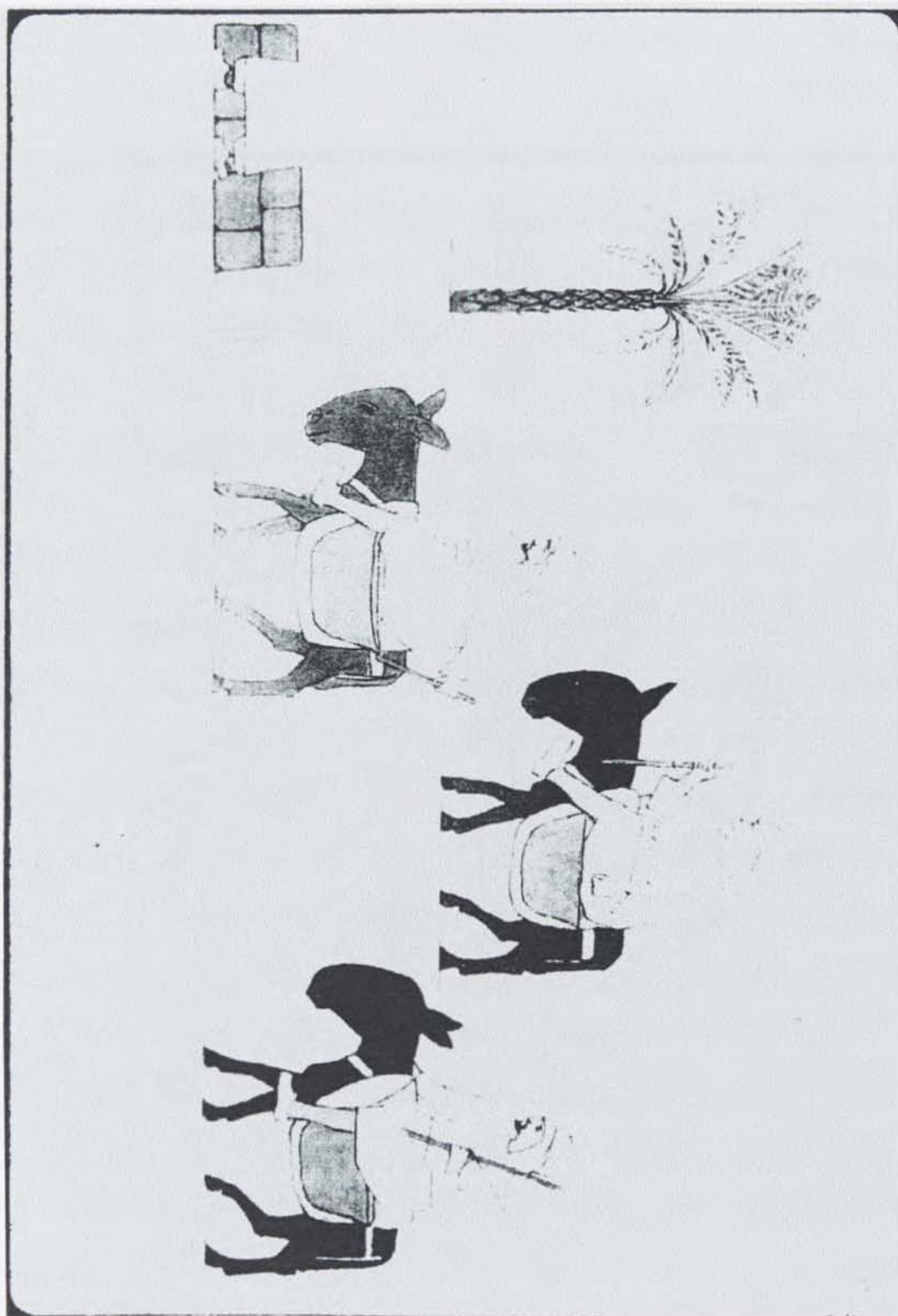
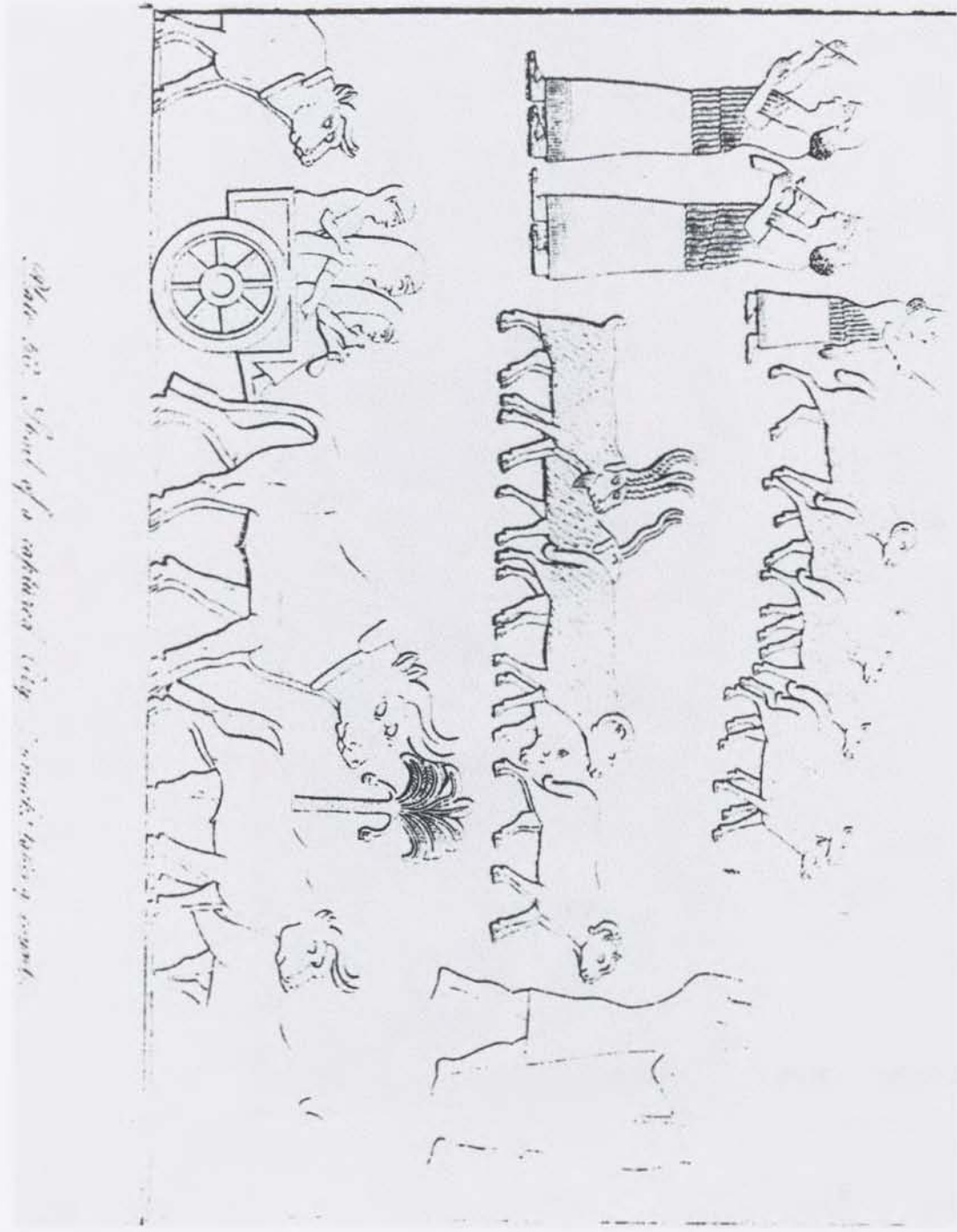


Fig. III.19



Man in front of a cart with oxen

Fig. III.20



Fig. III.21

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Fig. III.22

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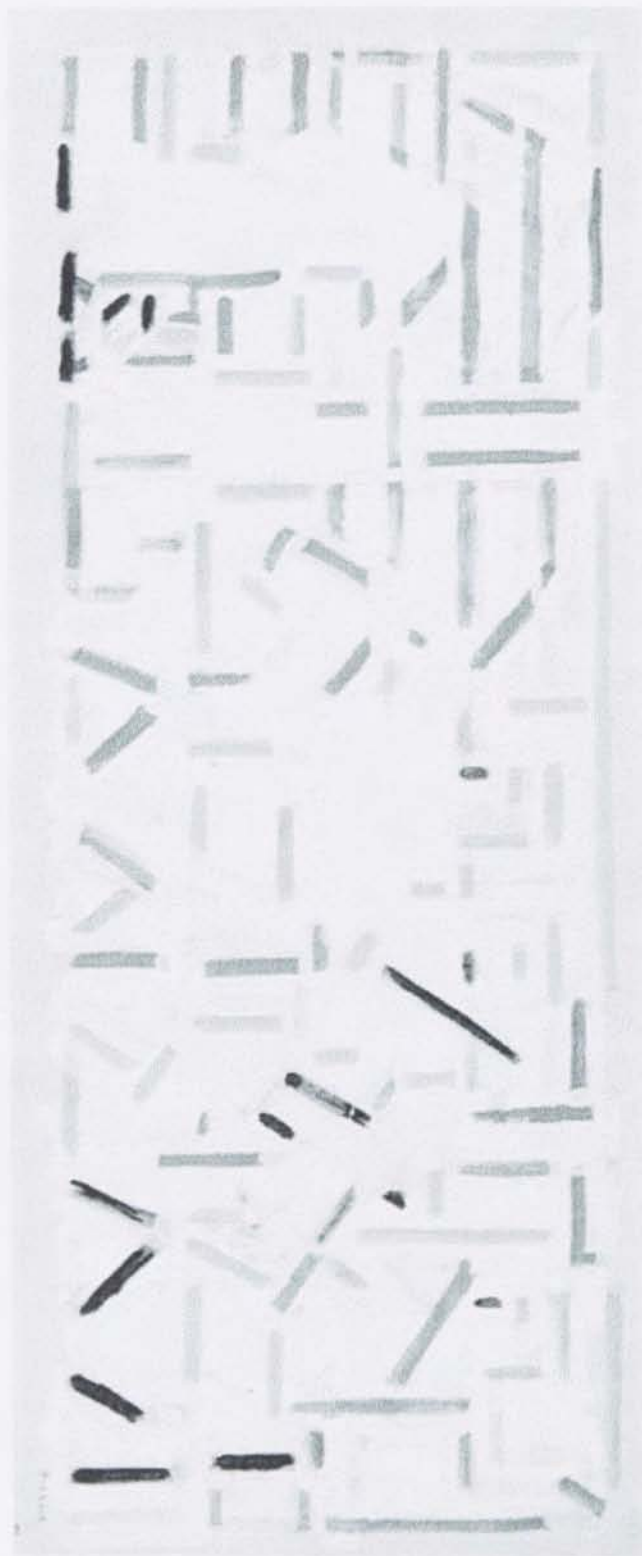


Fig. III.23

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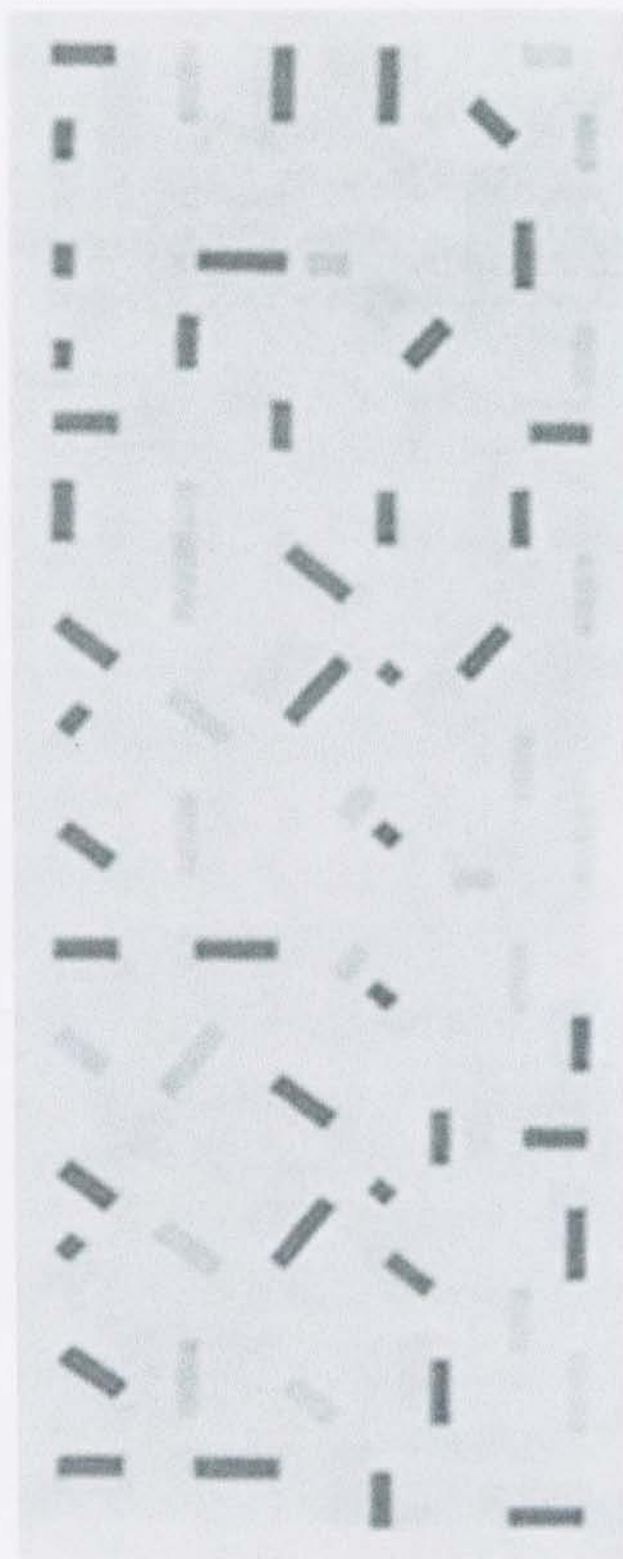


Fig. III.24

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Fig. III.25

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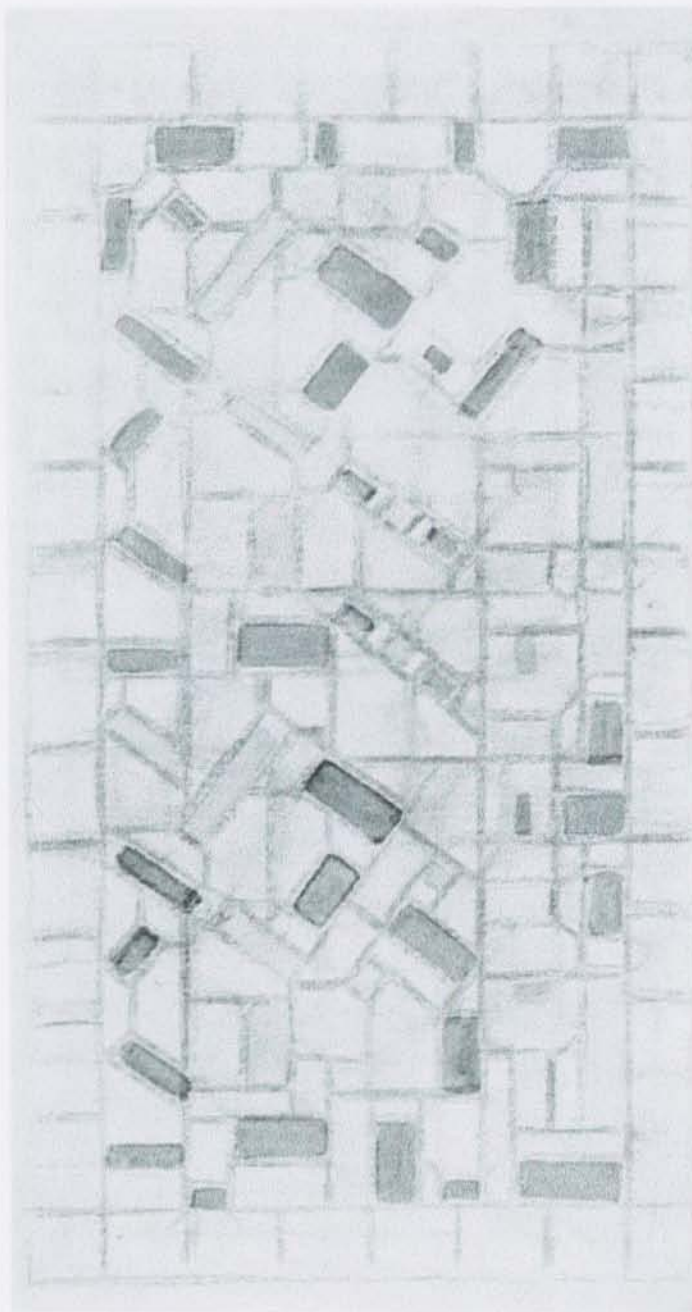


Fig. III.26

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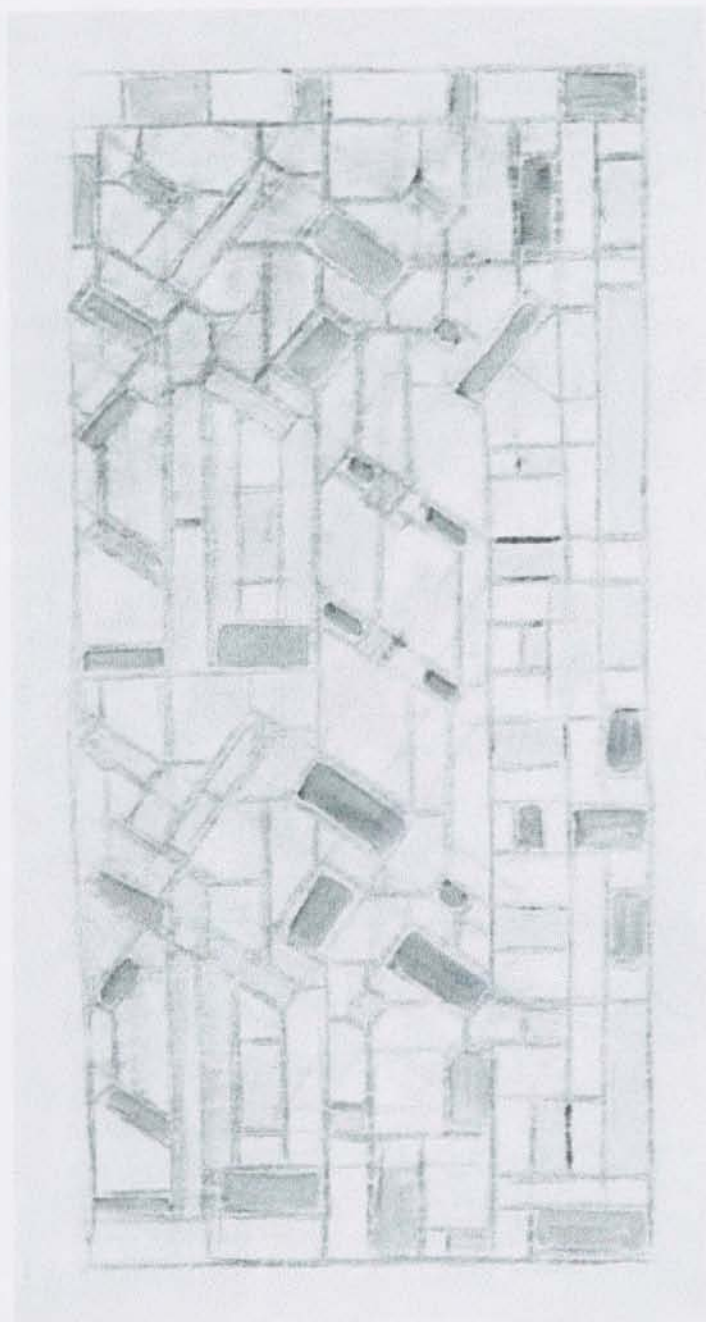


Fig. III.27



Fig. III.28

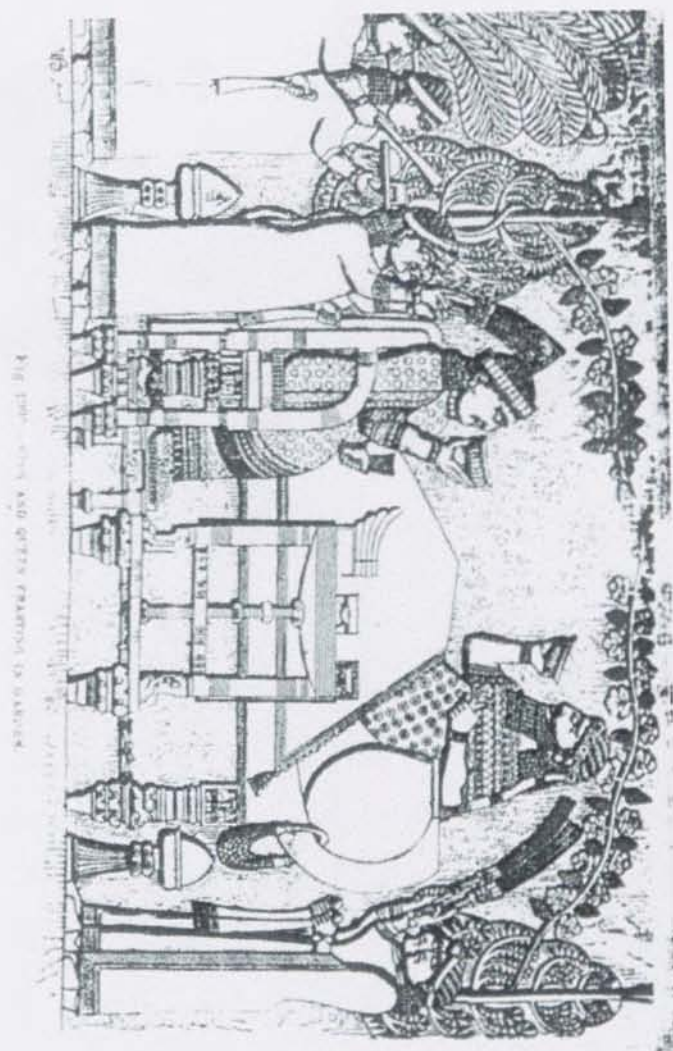


Fig. III.29

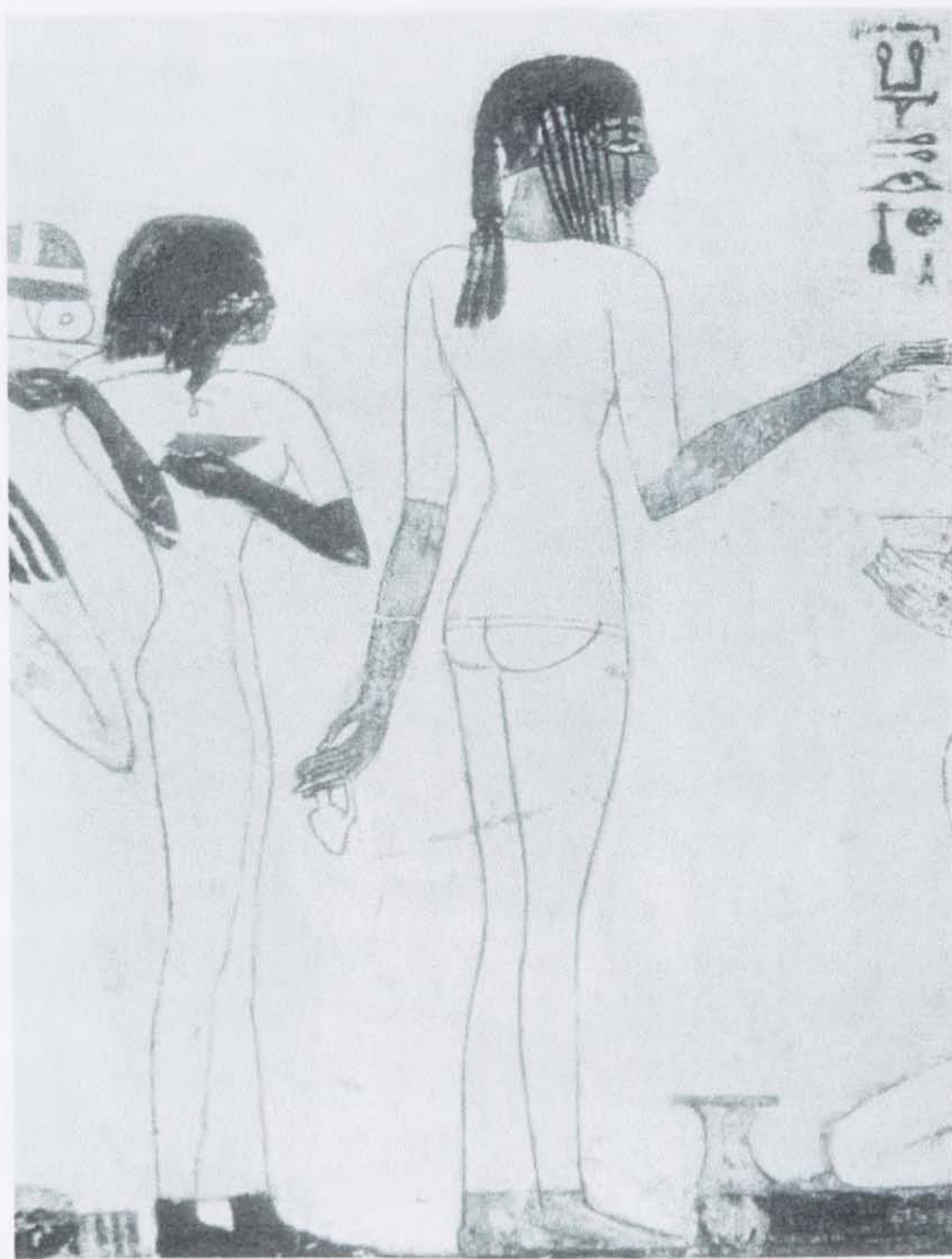
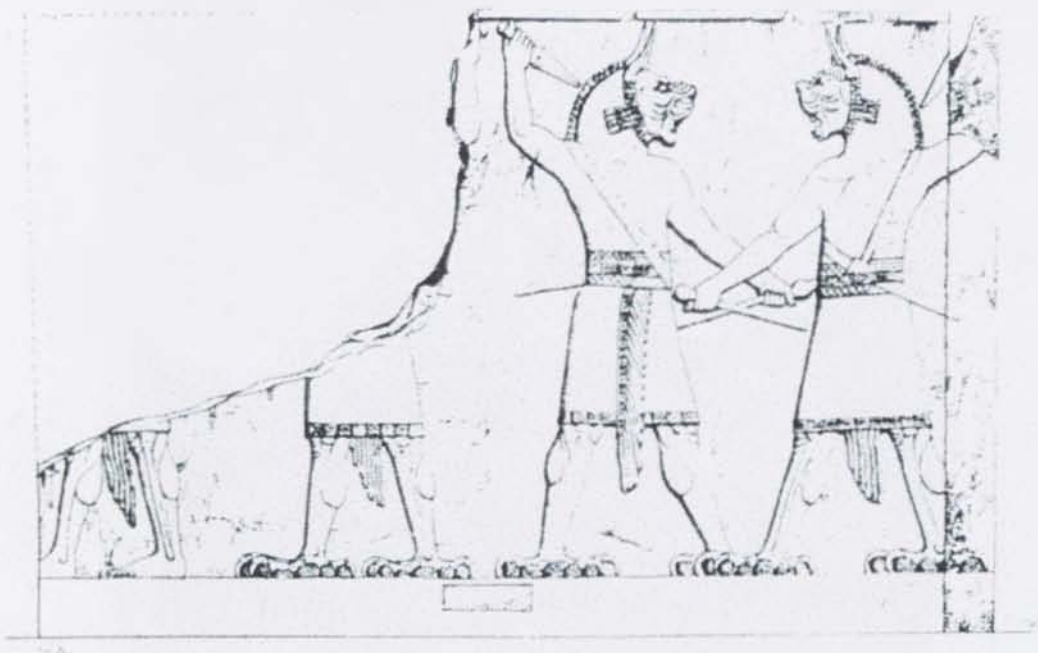


Fig. III.30



Fig. III.31



Guardians of a doorway in Ashur-bani-pal's palace : above, as now preserved, below, as found.

British Museum, 118911

Fig. III.32

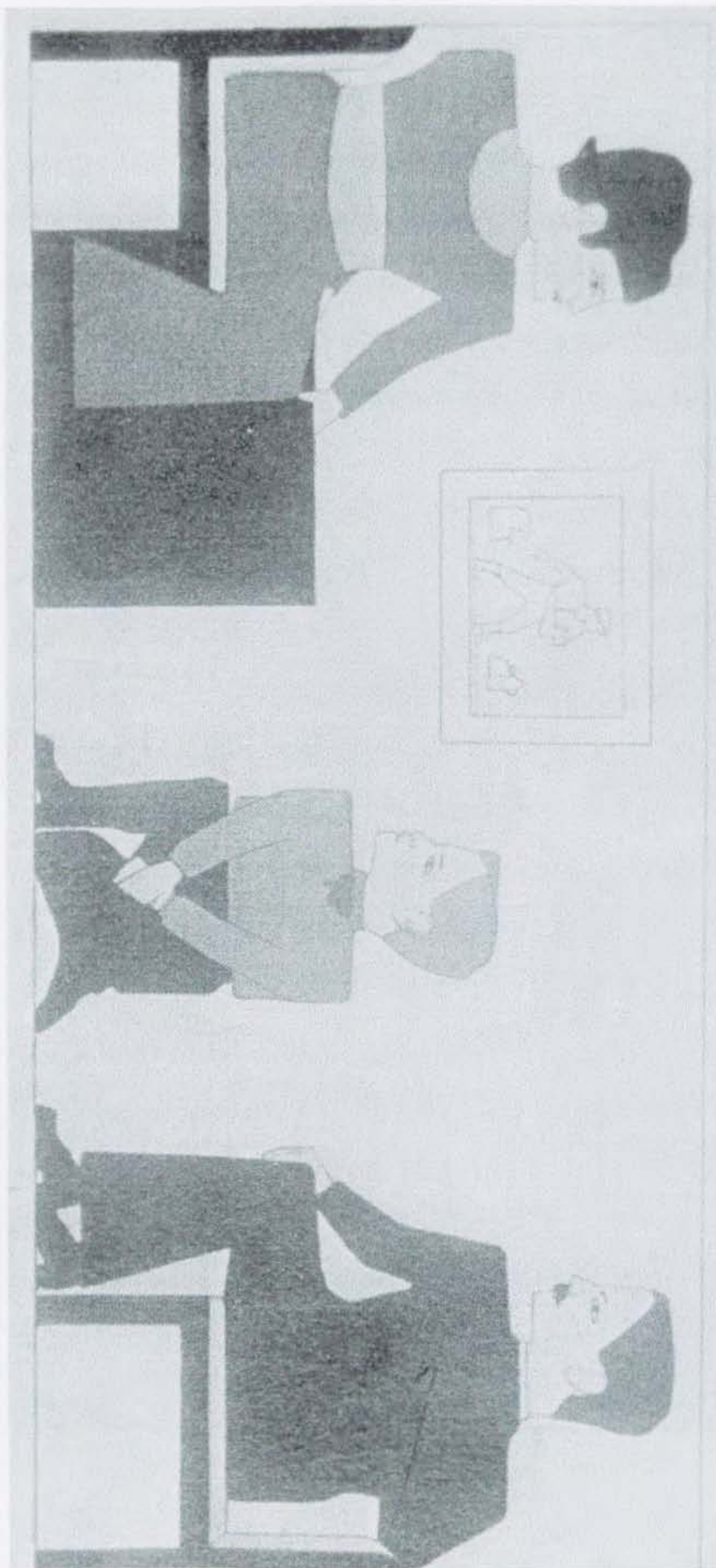


Fig. III.33



Fig. III.34

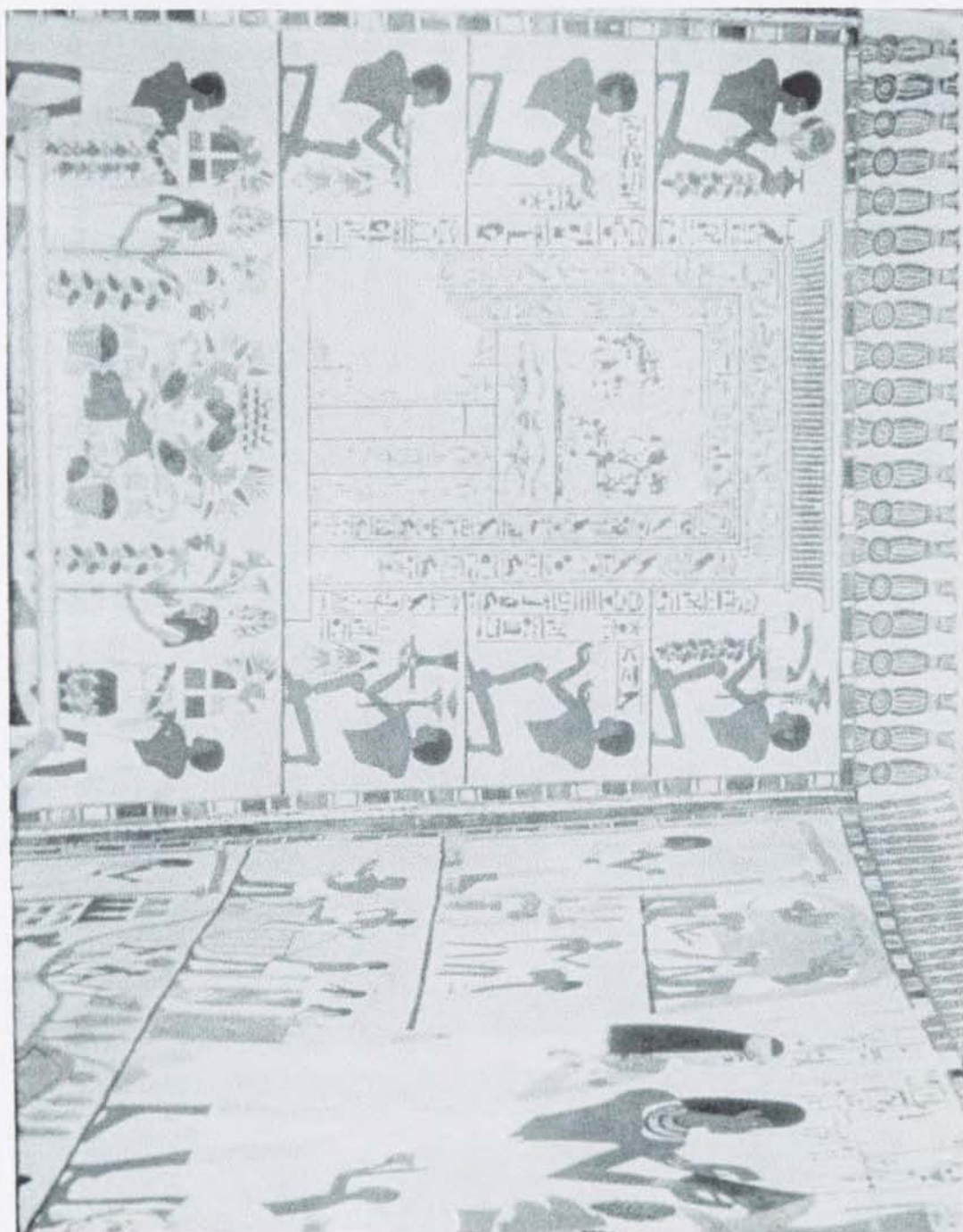


Fig. III.35

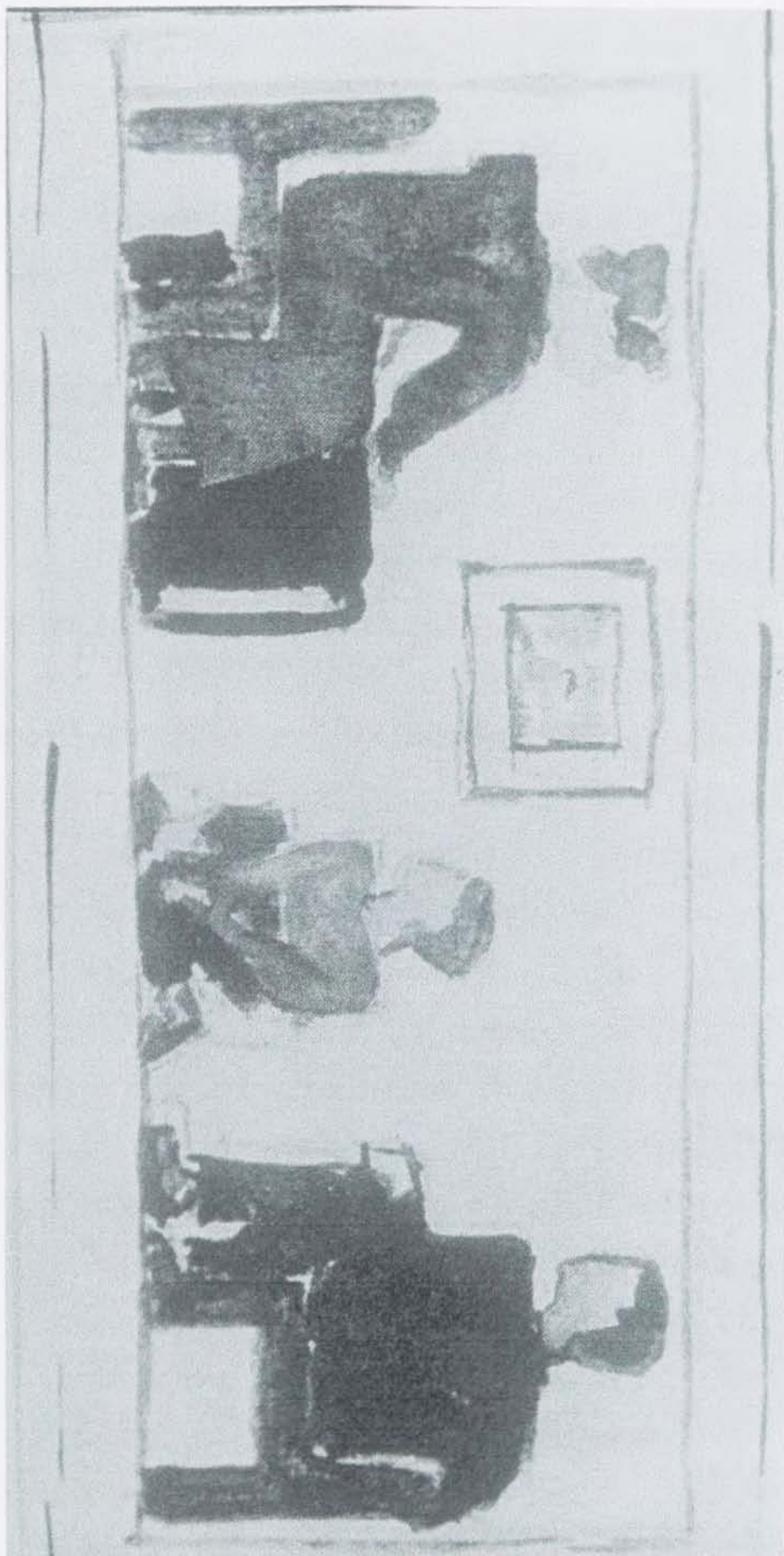


Fig. III.36



Fig. III.37

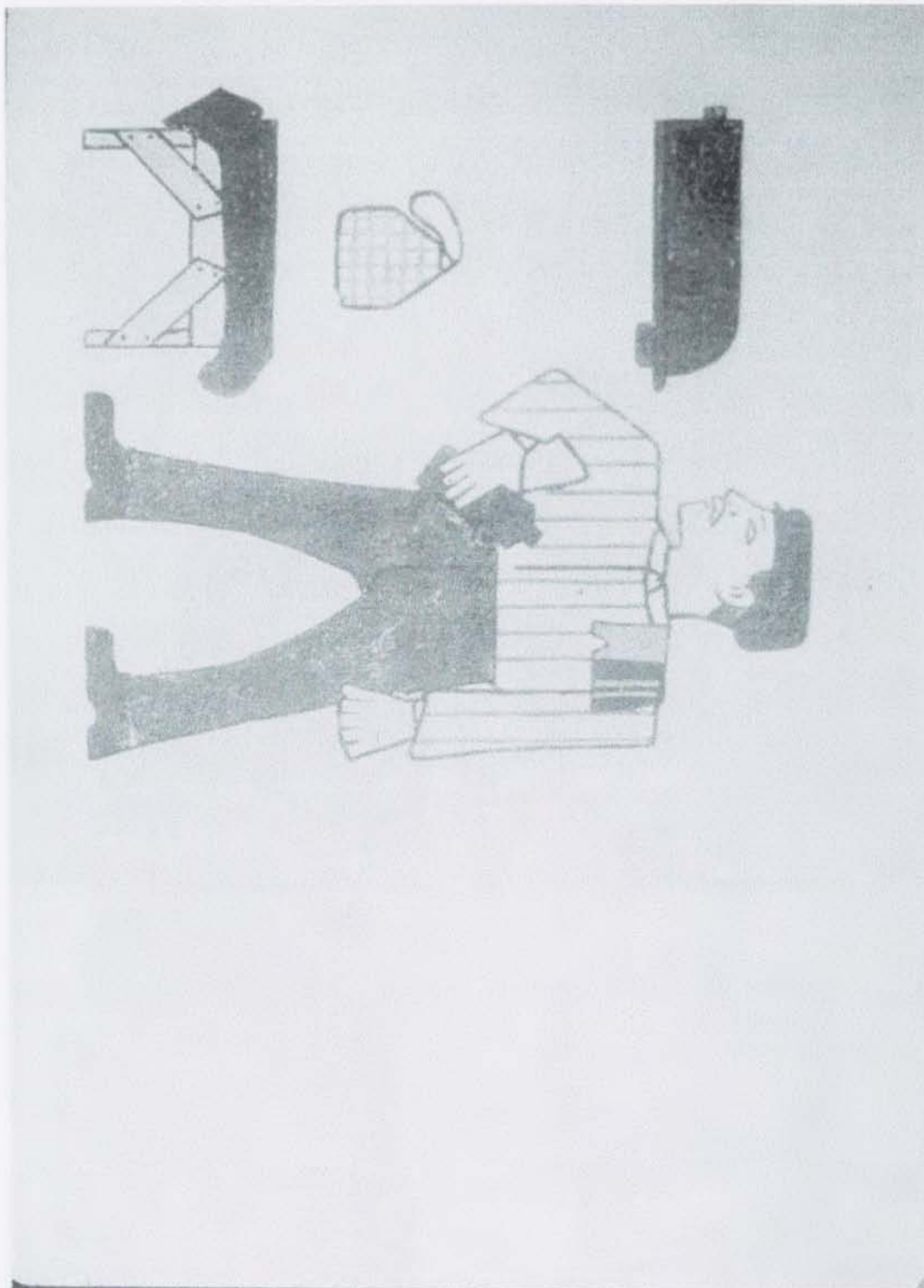


Fig. III.38

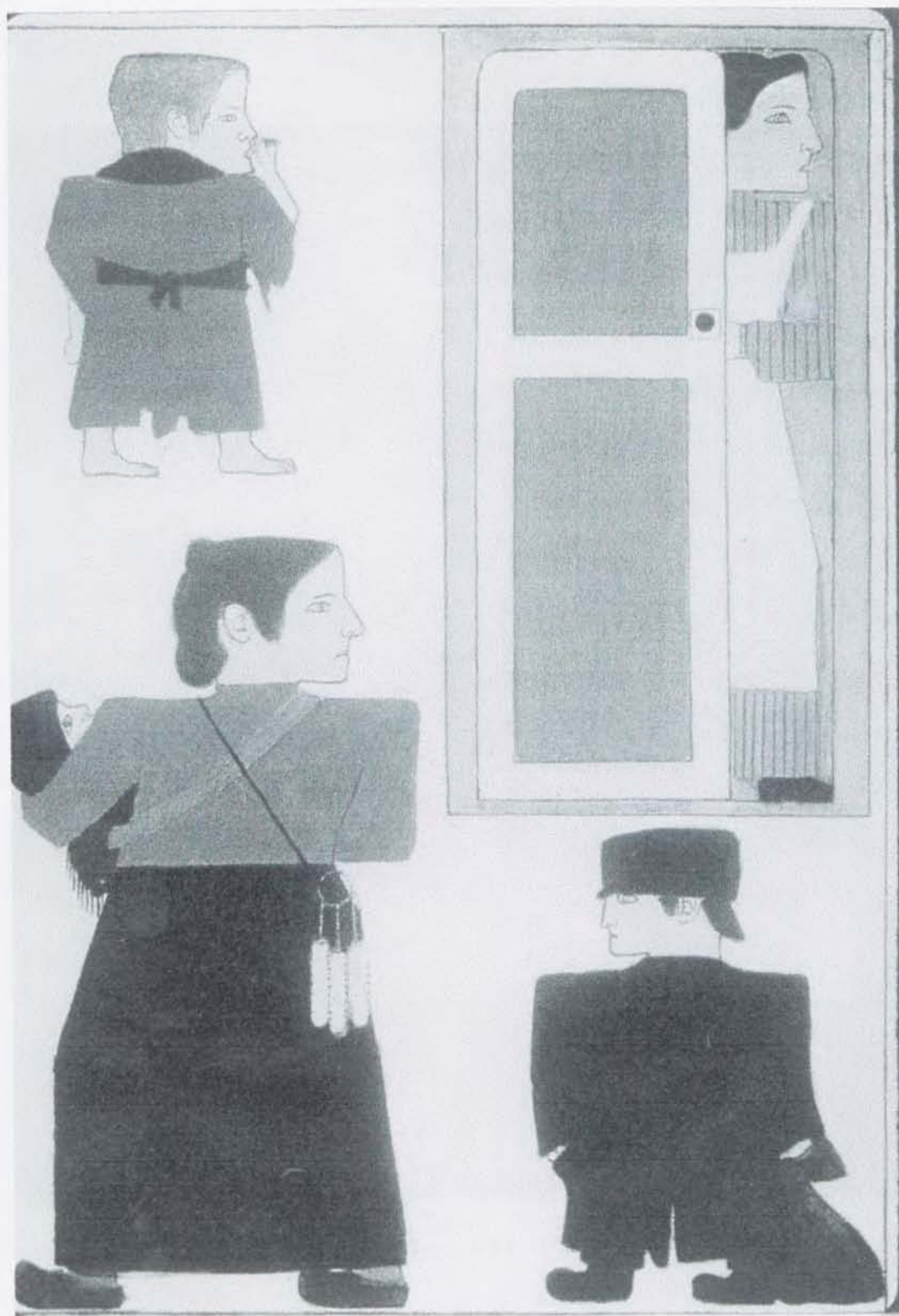


Fig. III.40



Fig. III.41

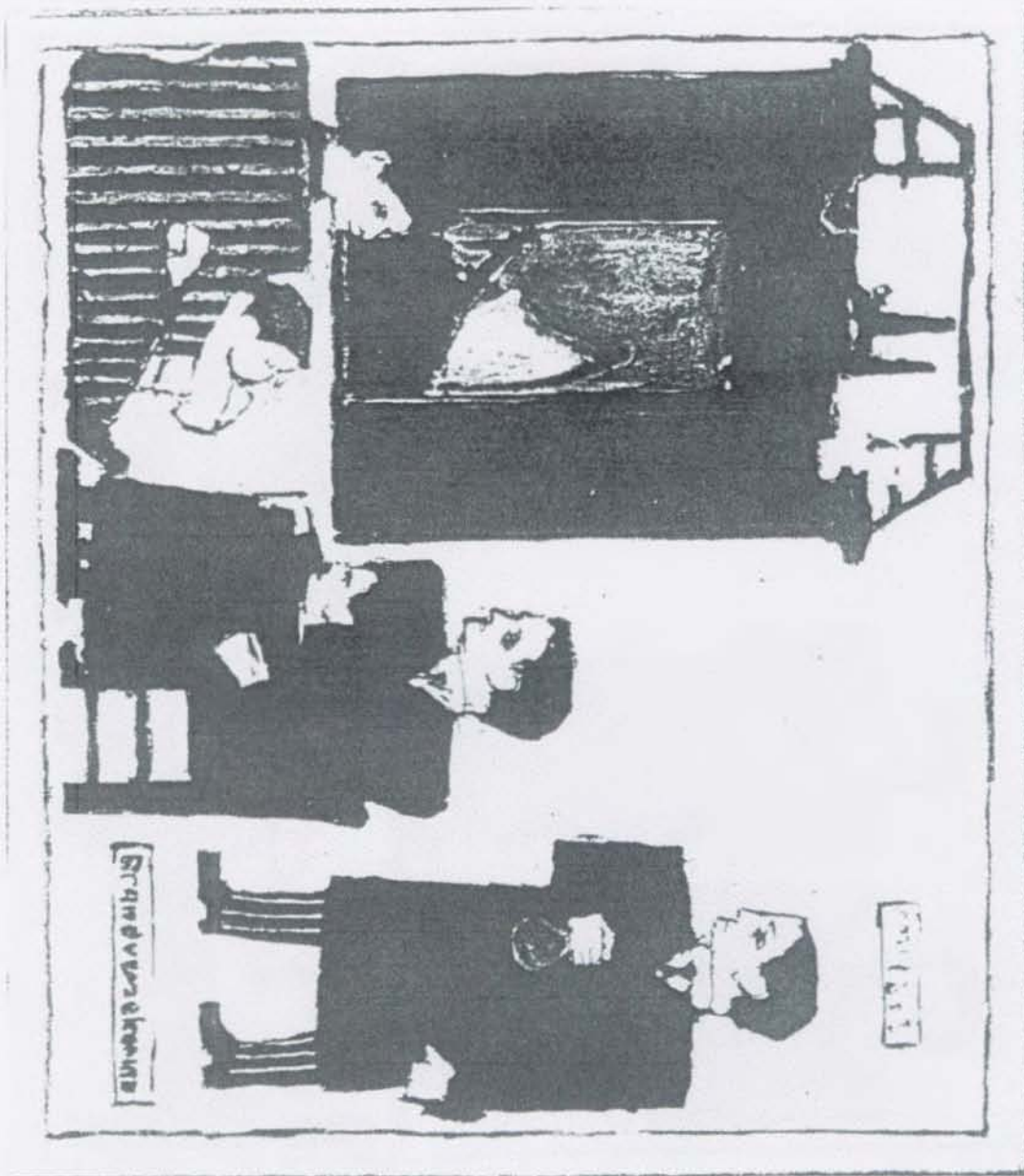


Fig. III.42



Fig. III.43

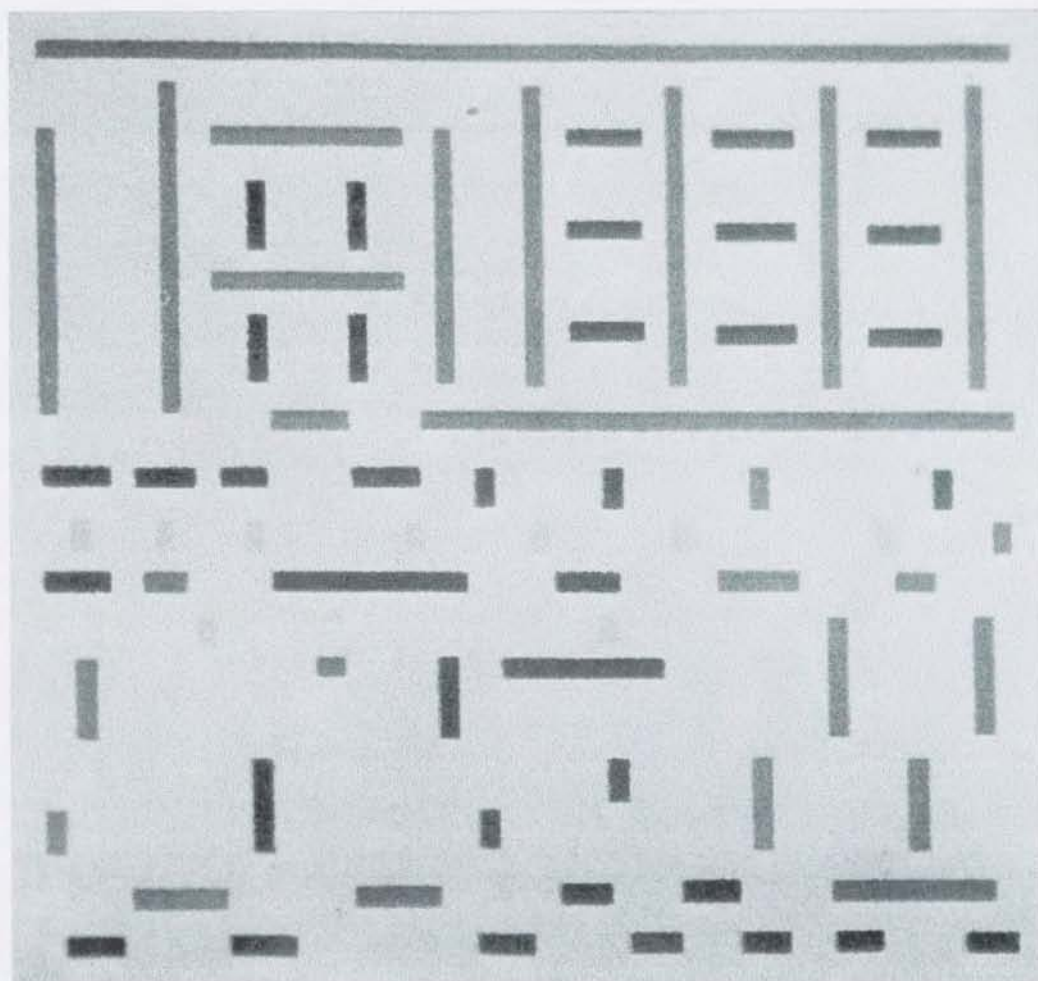


Fig. III.44

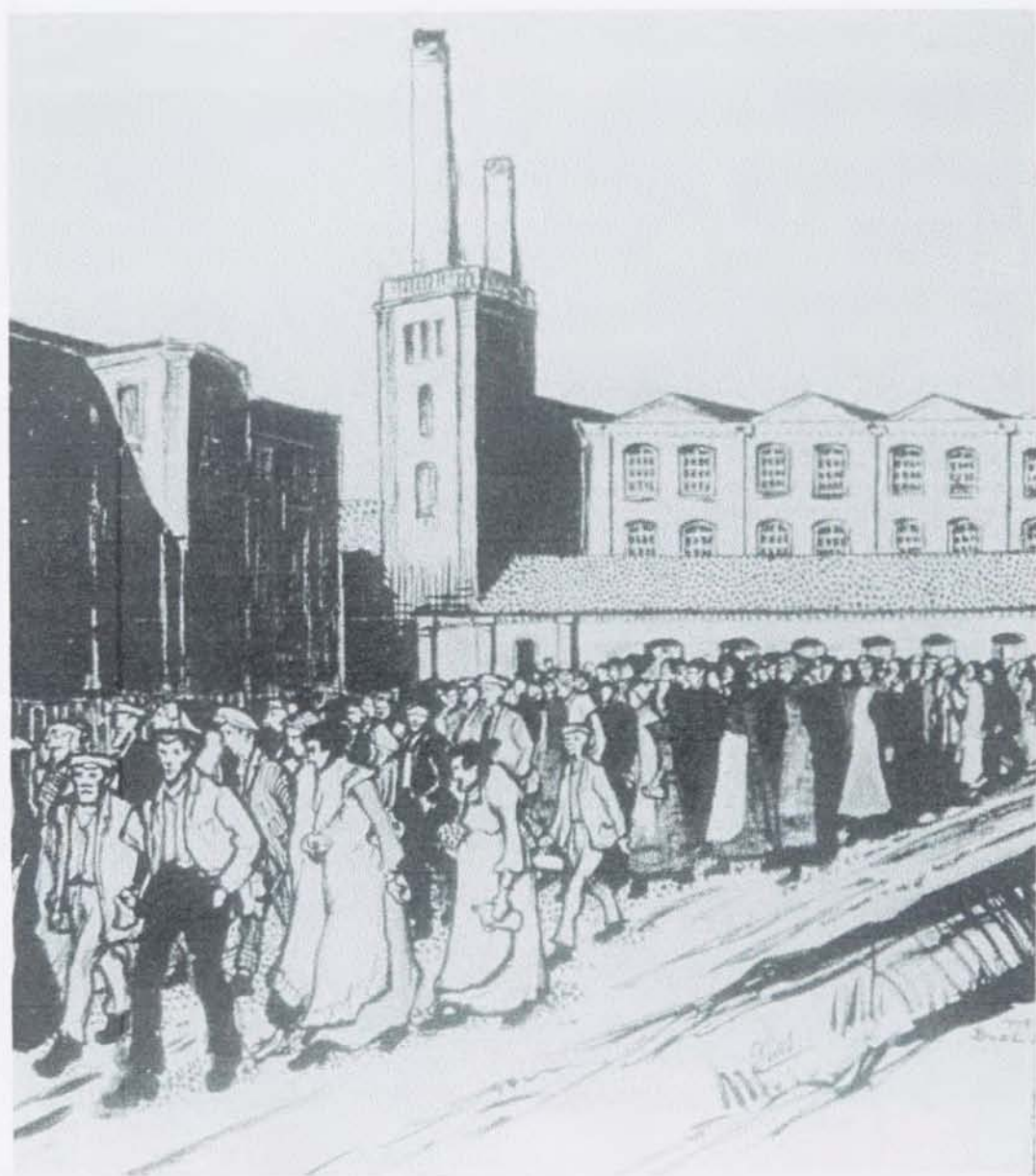


Fig. III.45



Fig. III.46



Fig. III.47



Fig. III.48

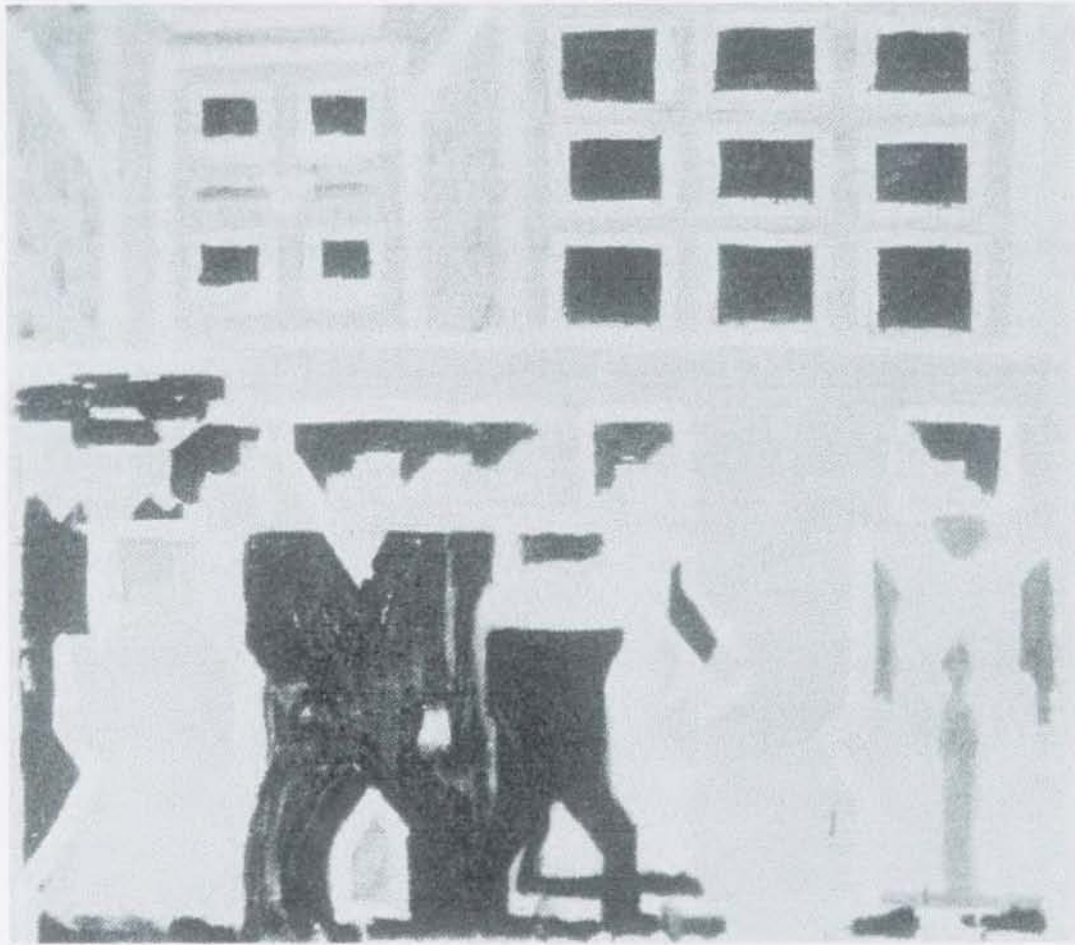


Fig. III.49

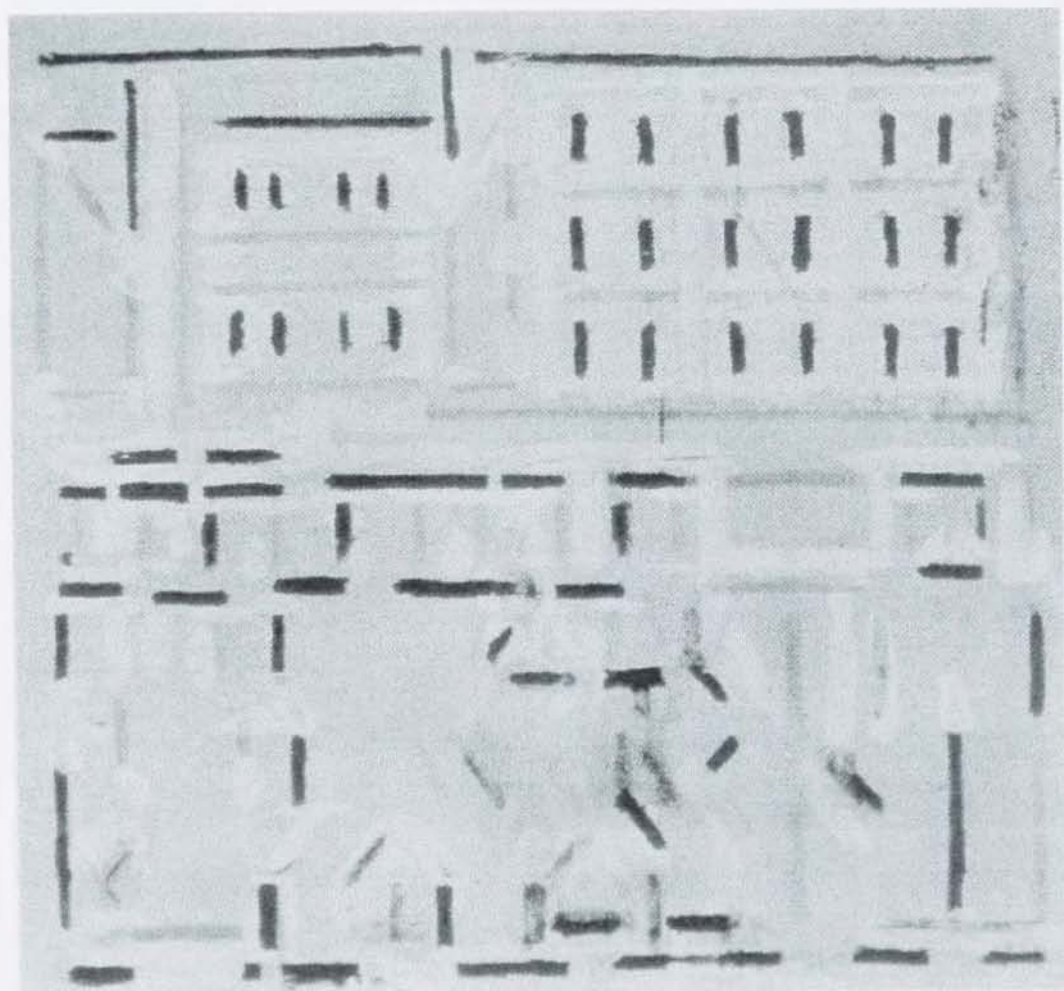


Fig. III.50

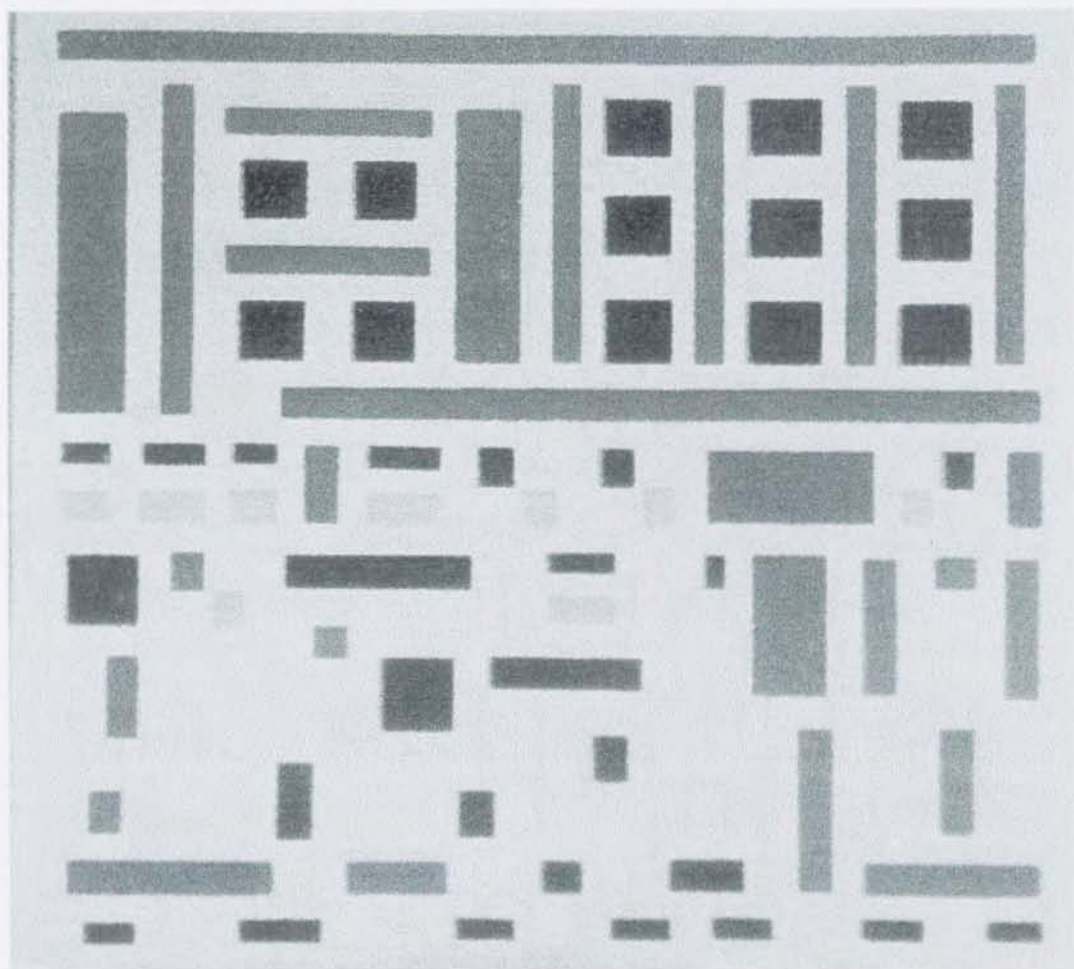


Fig. III.51

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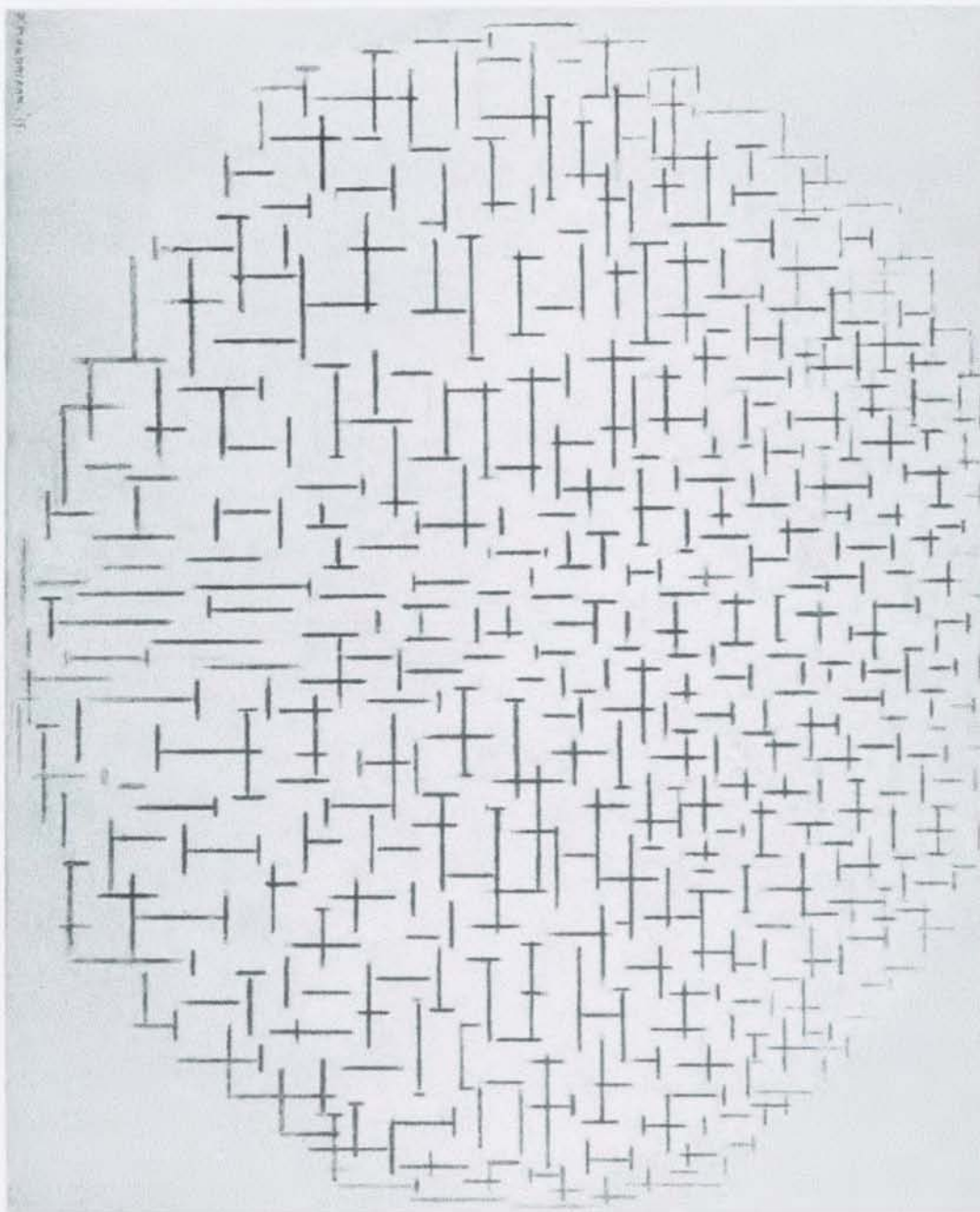
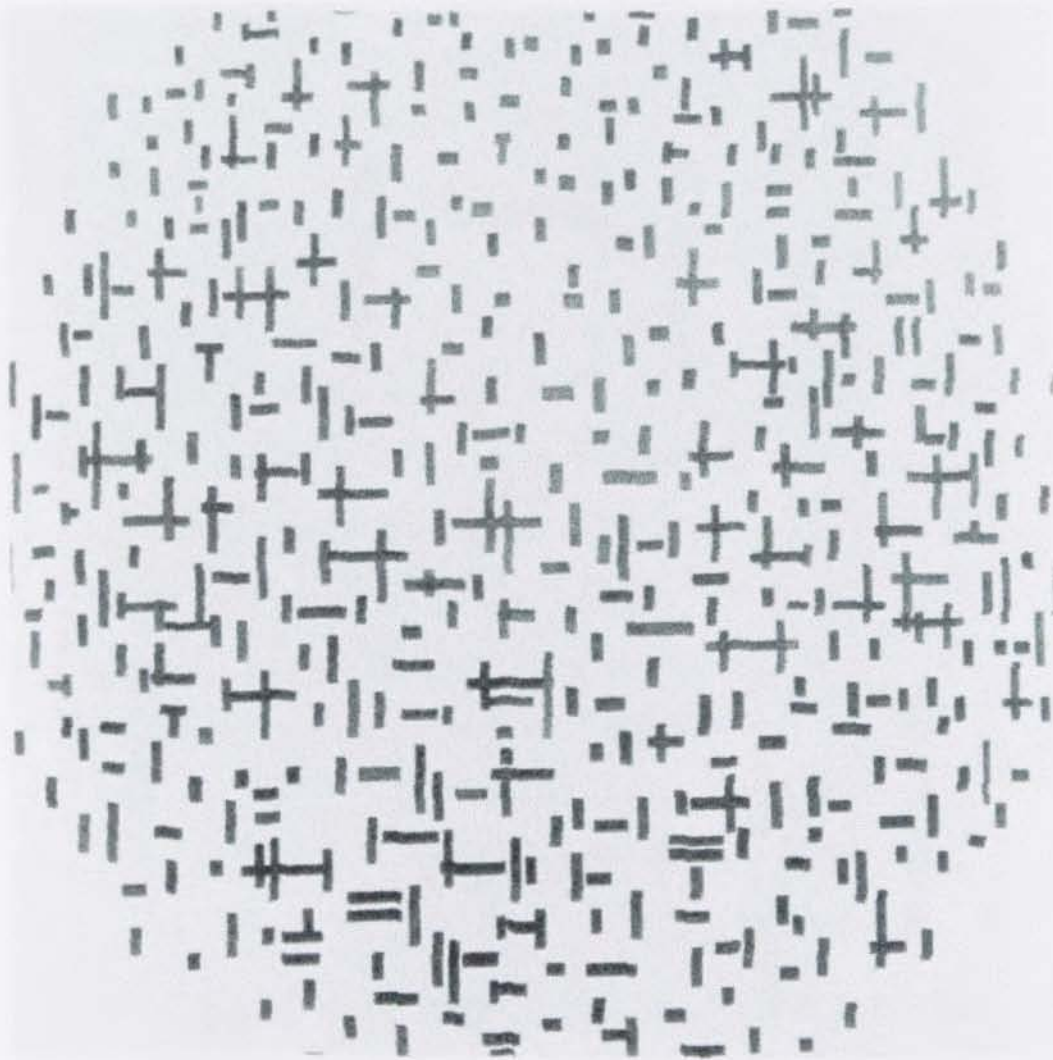


Fig. III.52



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Fig. III.53

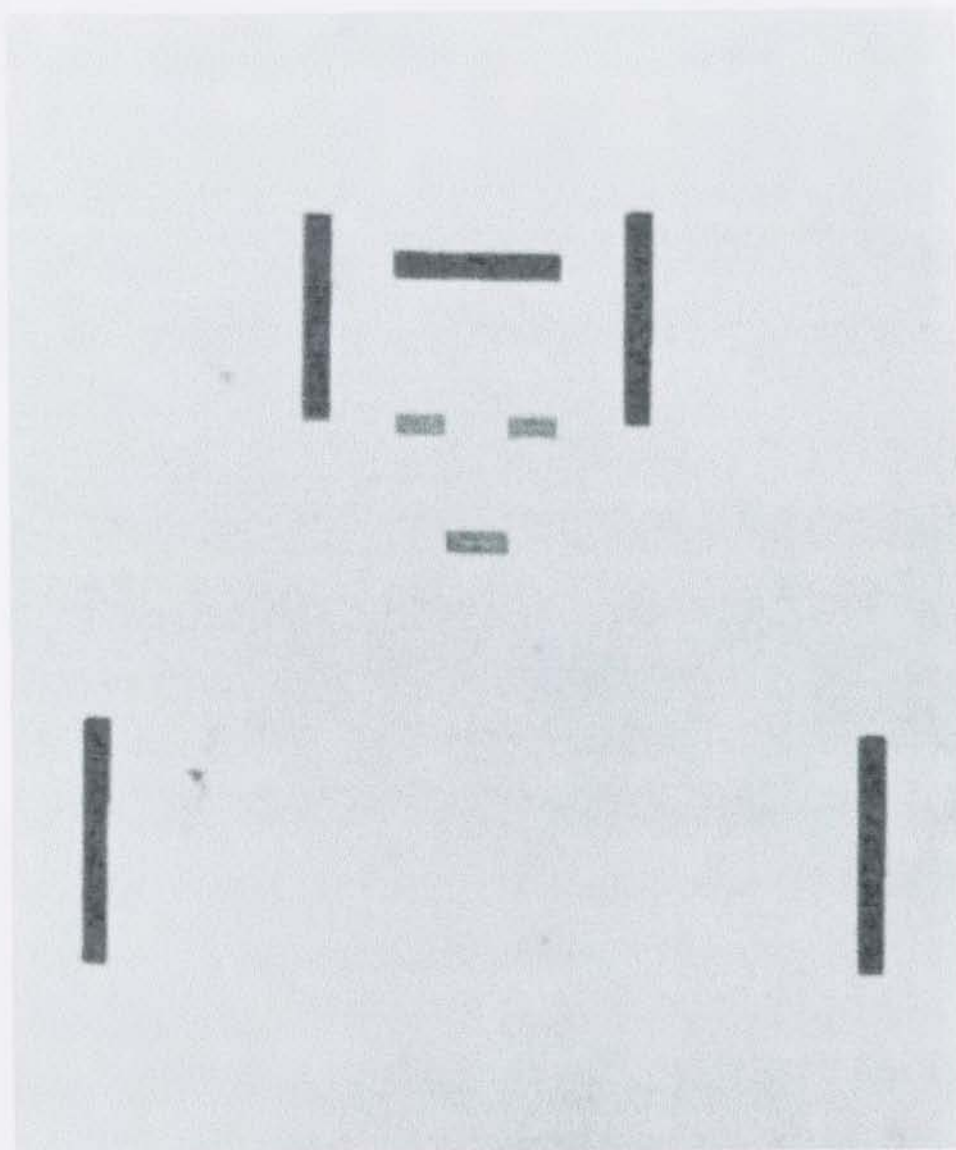


Fig. III.54

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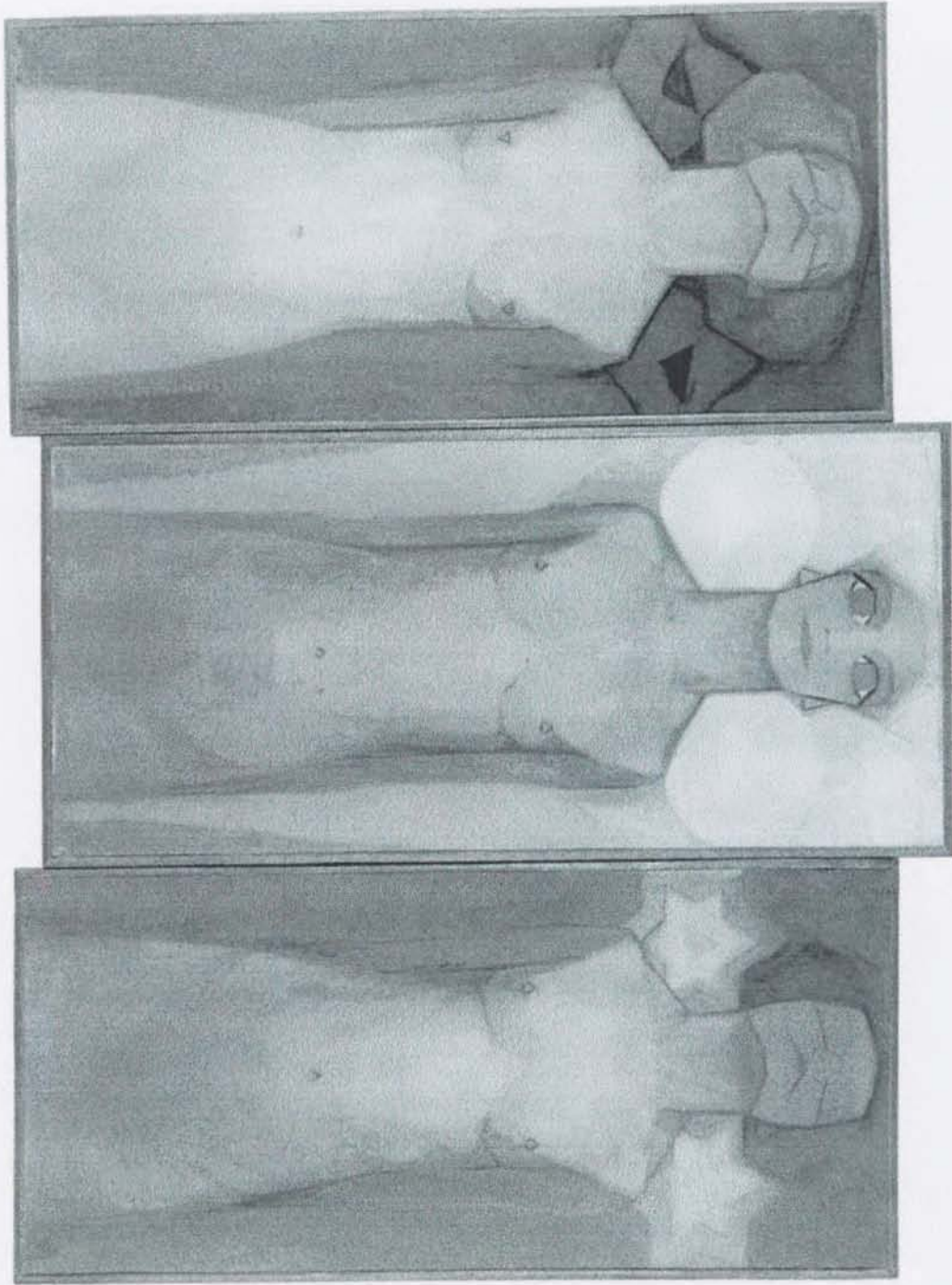


Fig. IV.1

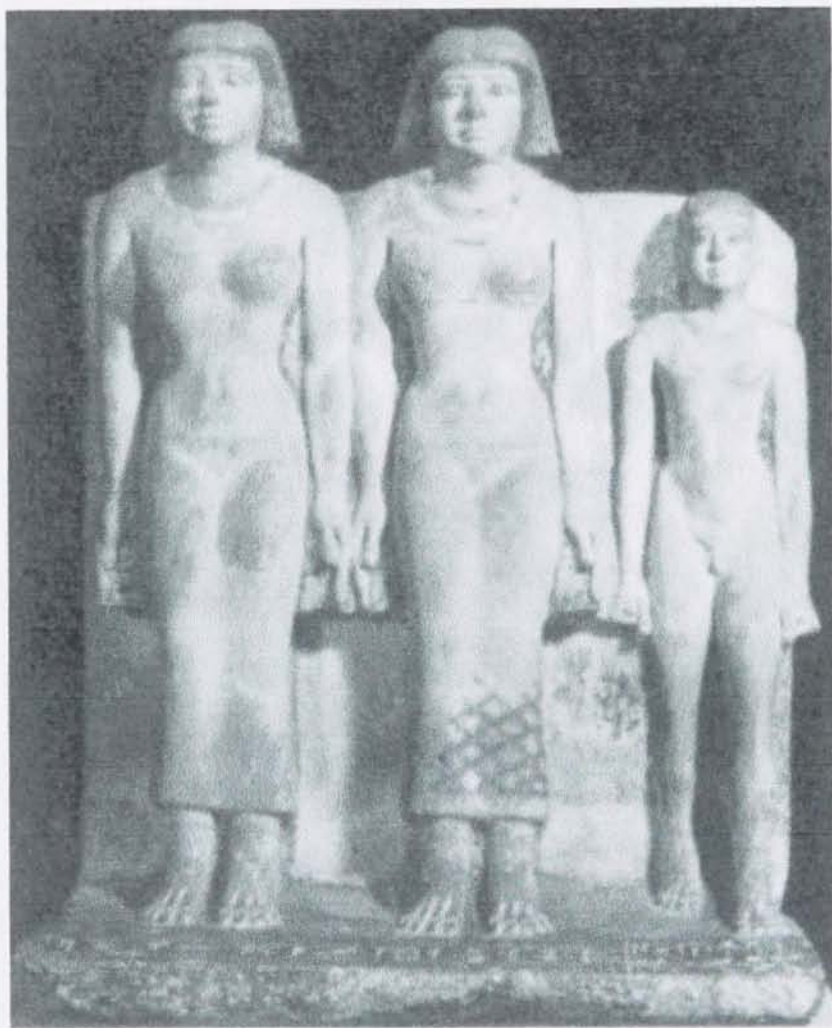
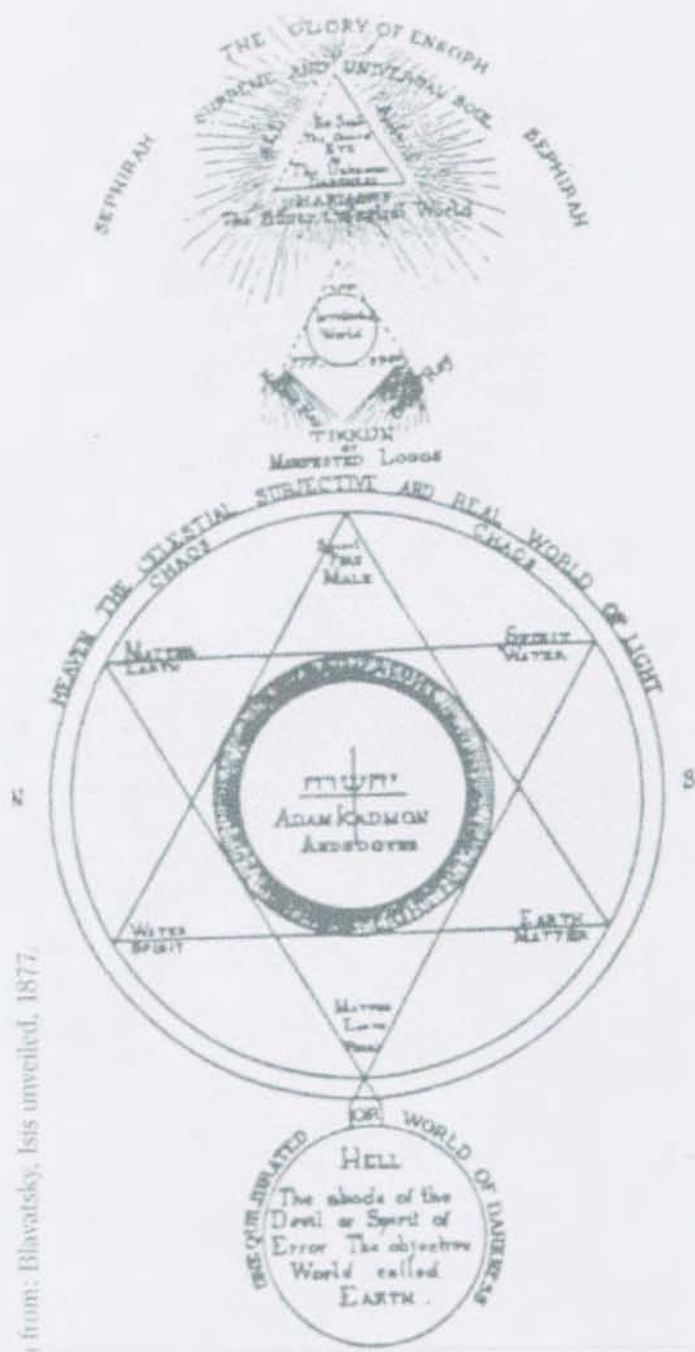


Fig. IV.2



from: Blavatsky, Isis unveiled, 1877.

Fig. IV.3

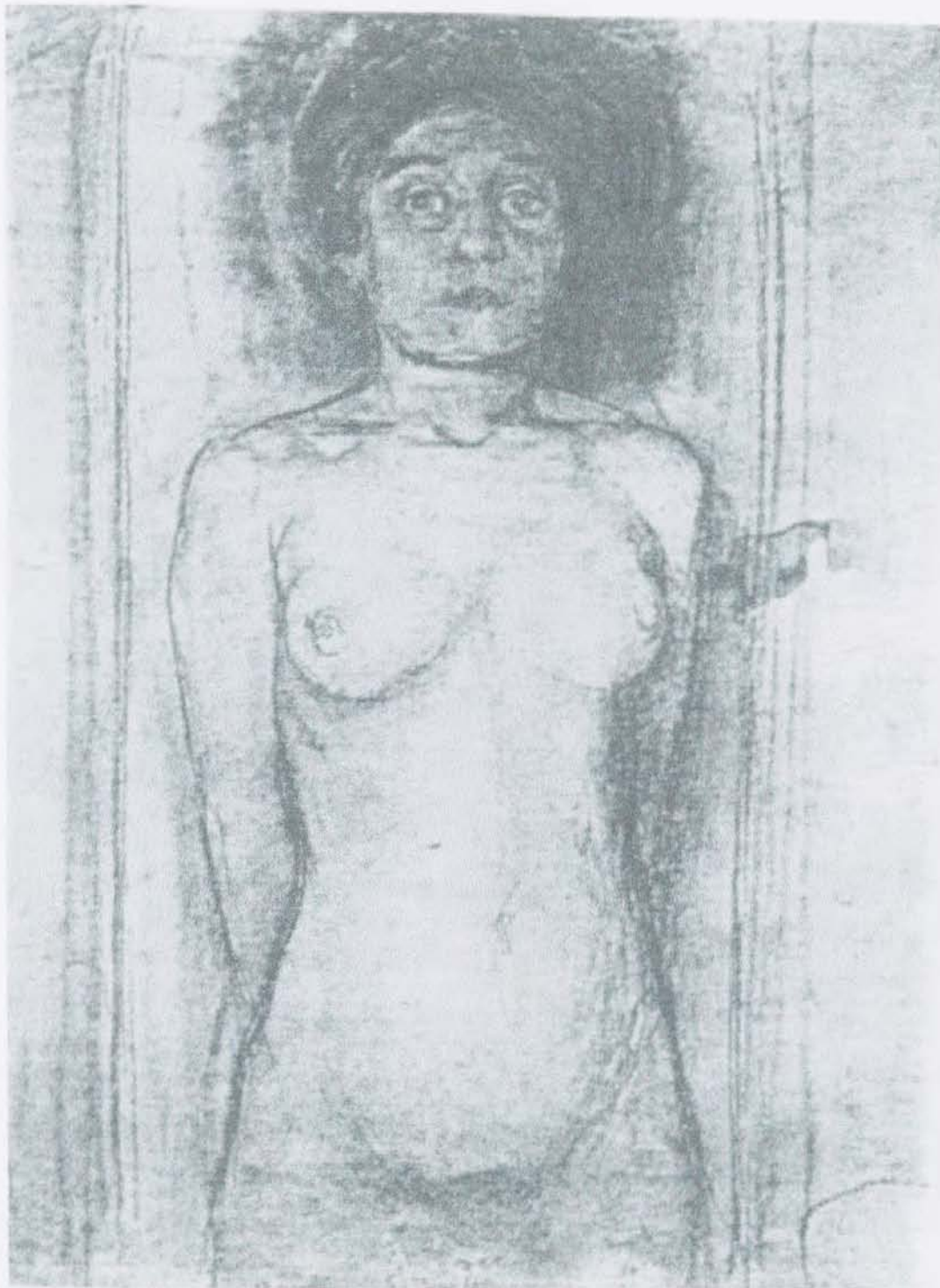


Fig. IV.4



Fig. IV.5

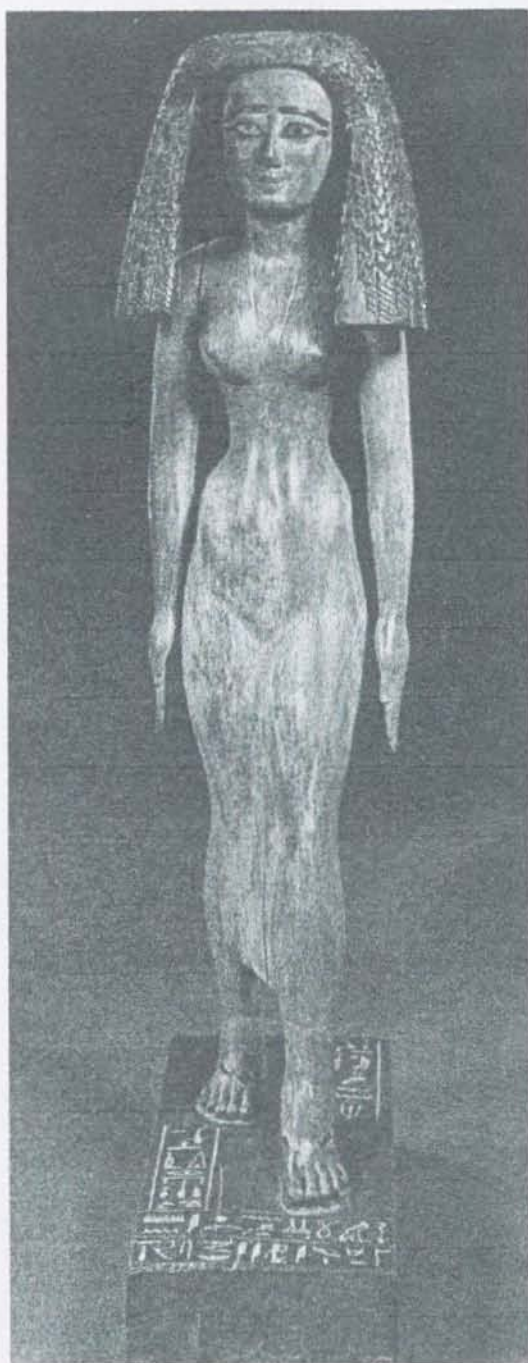


Fig. IV.6



Fig. IV.7

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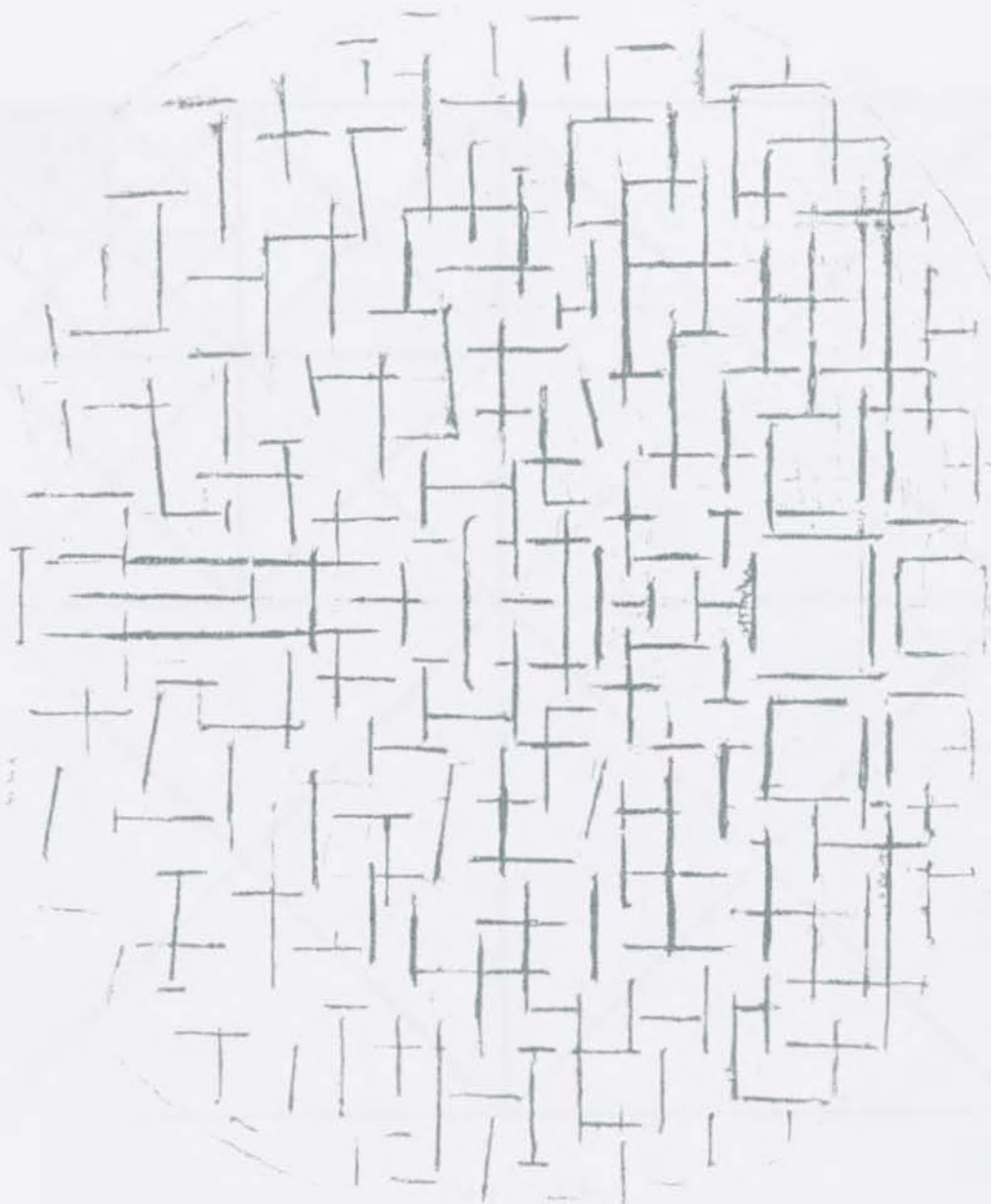


Fig. IV.8

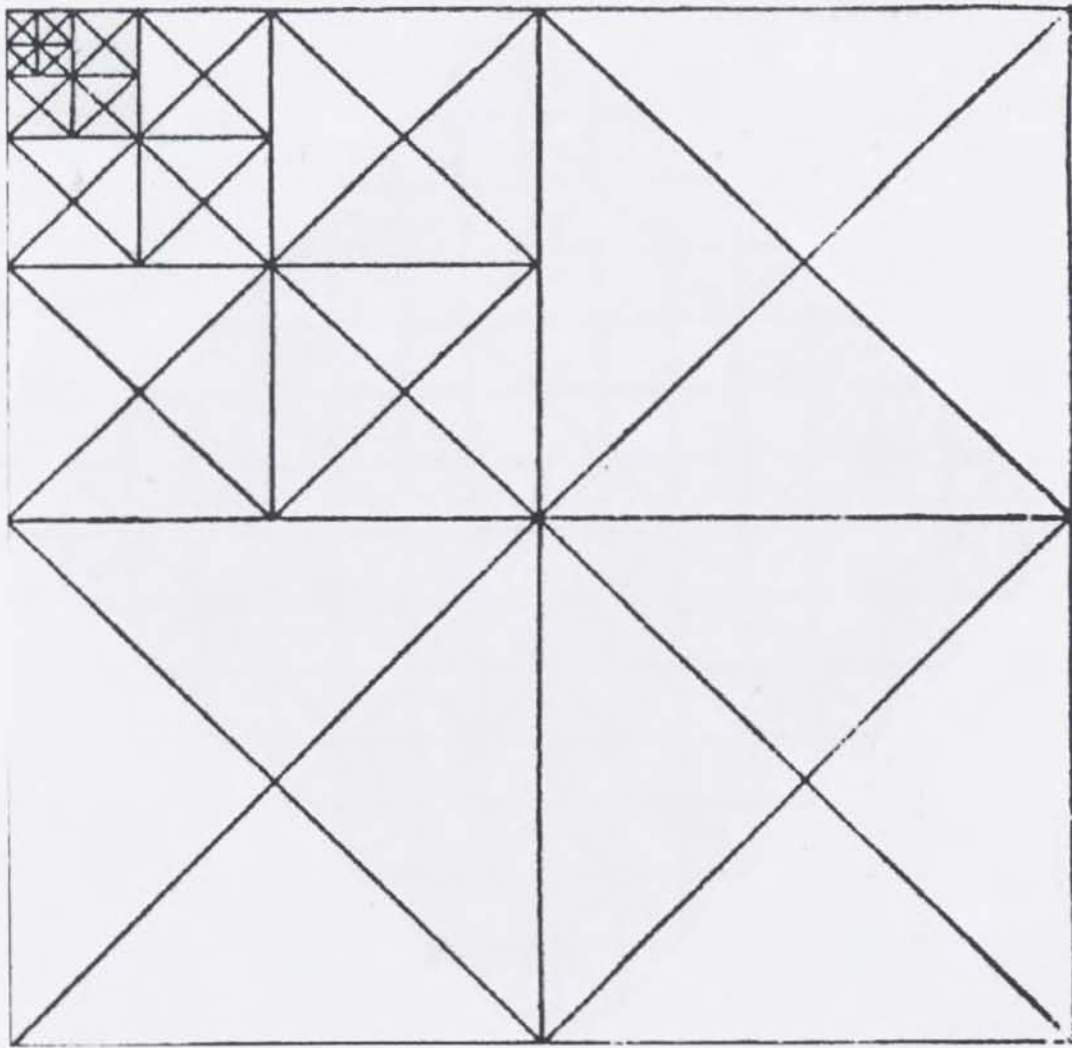


Fig. IV.9

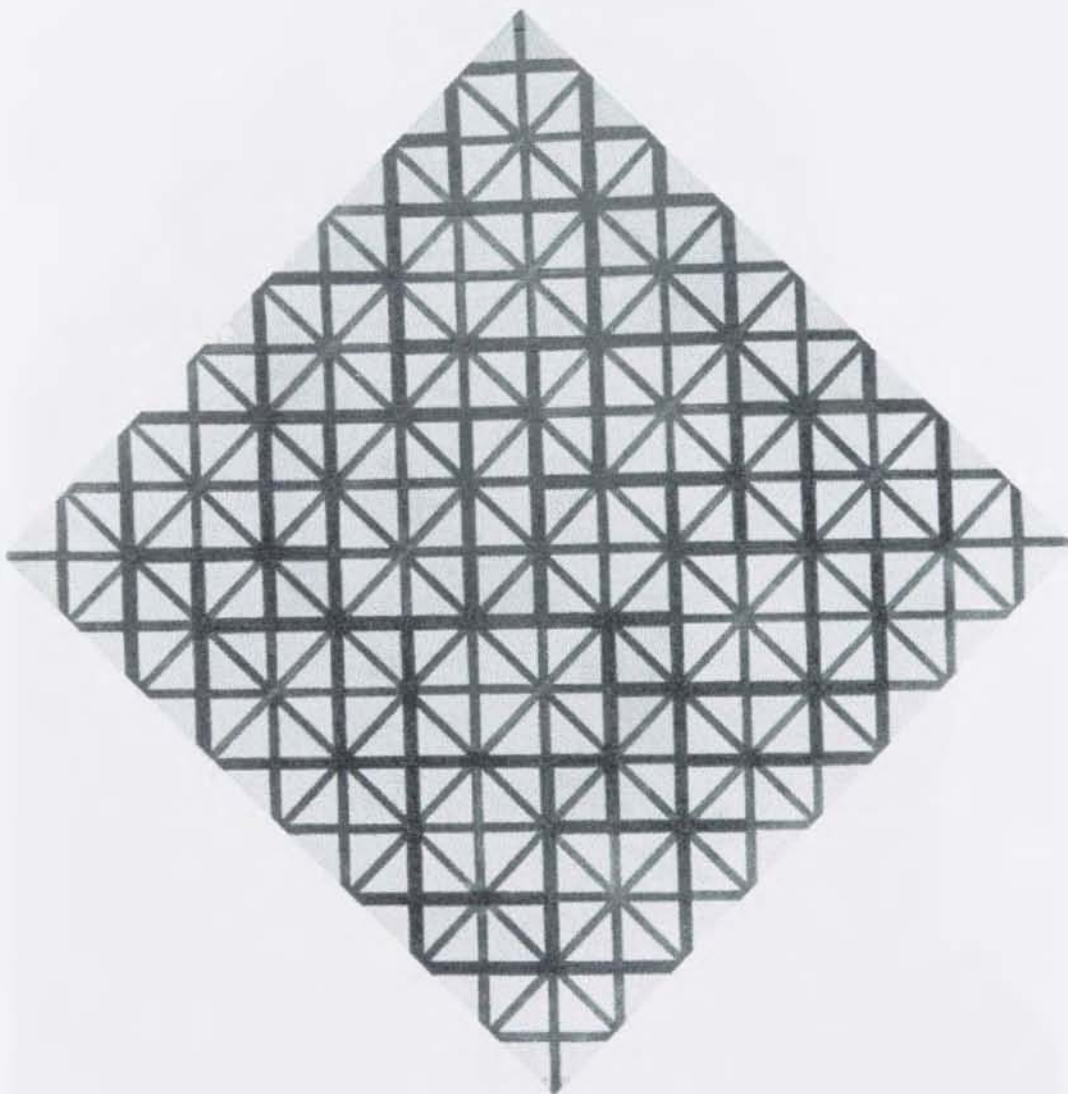


Fig. IV.10



Fig. IV.11

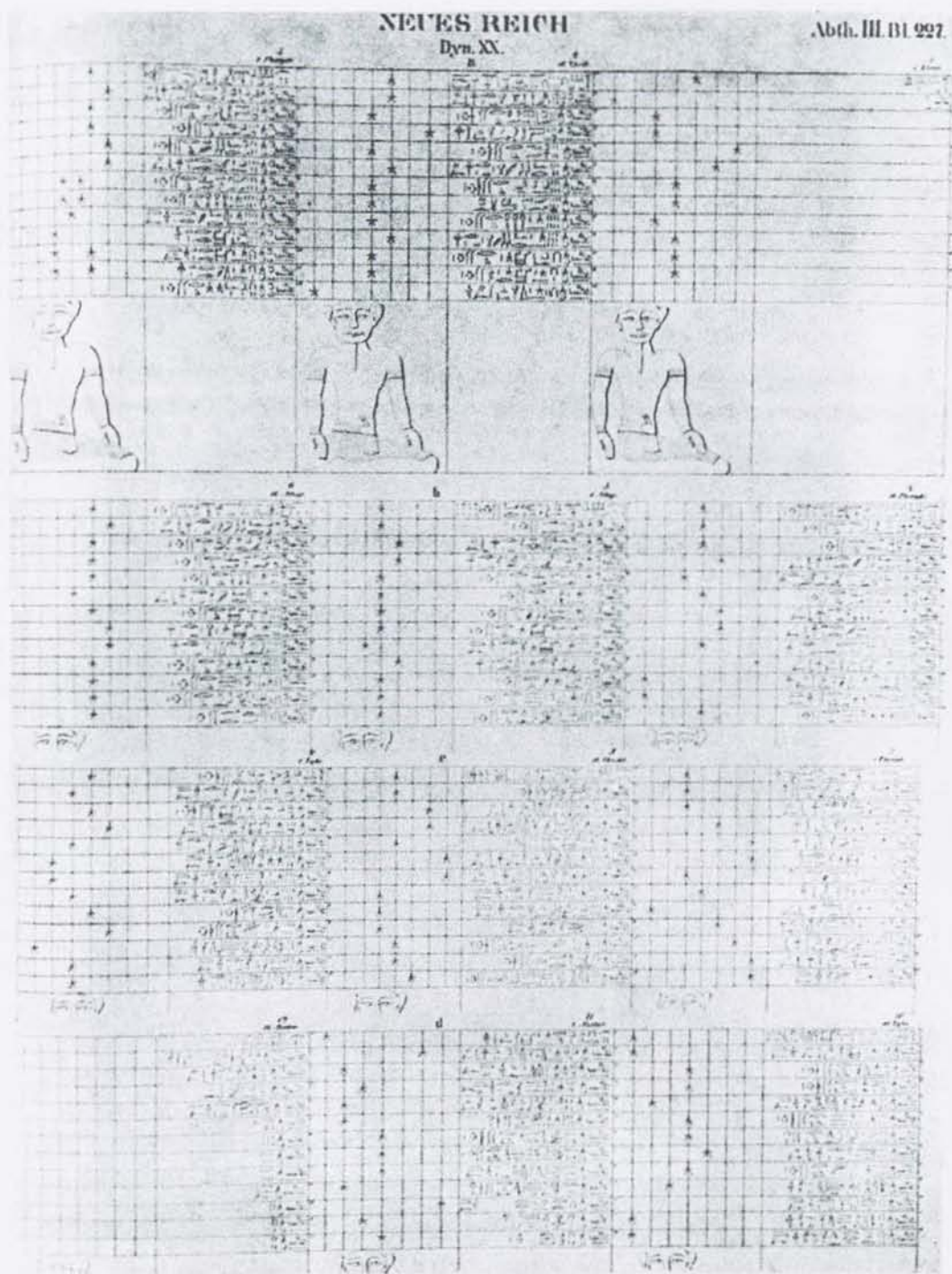


Fig. IV.12

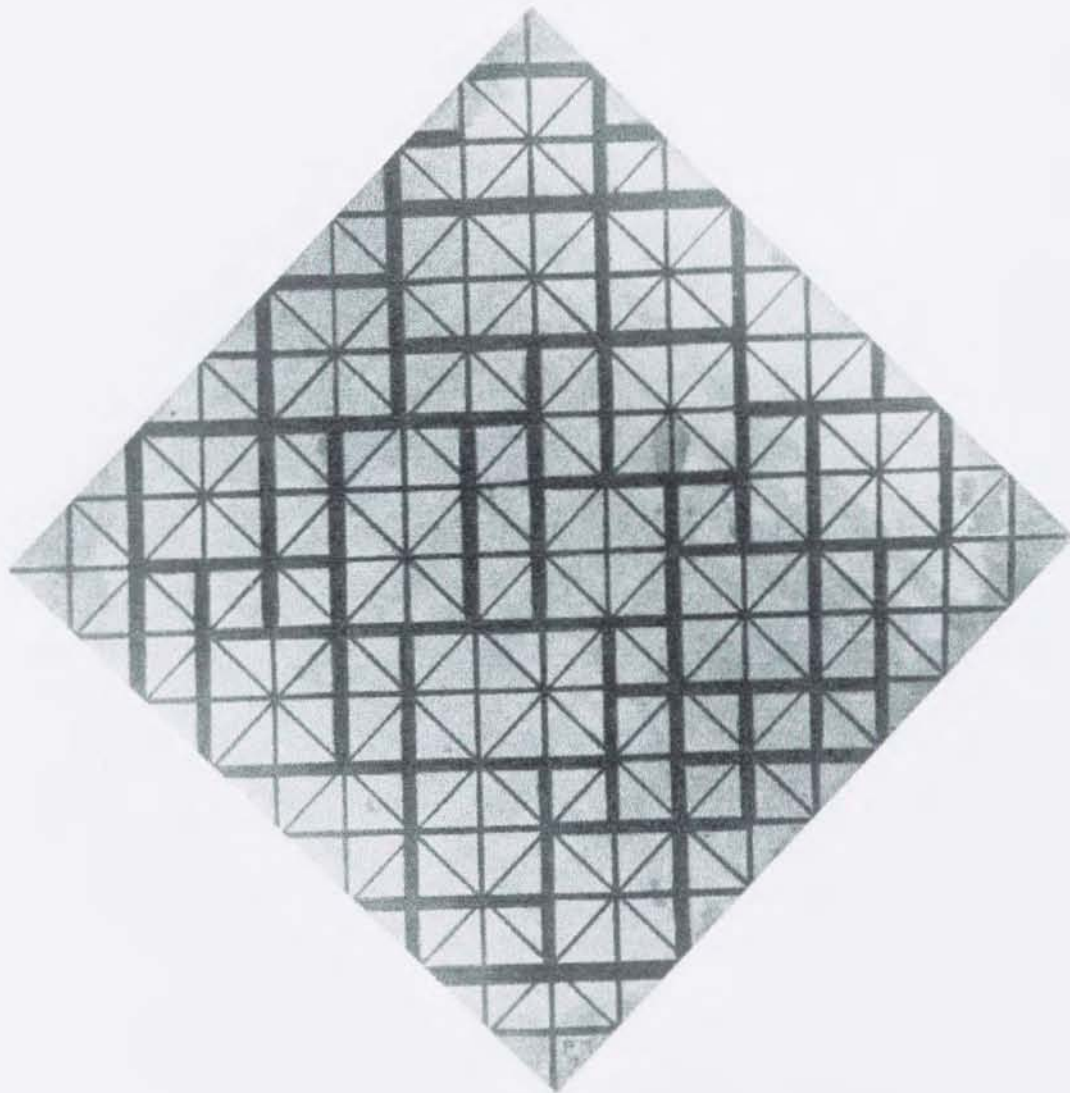


Fig. IV.13

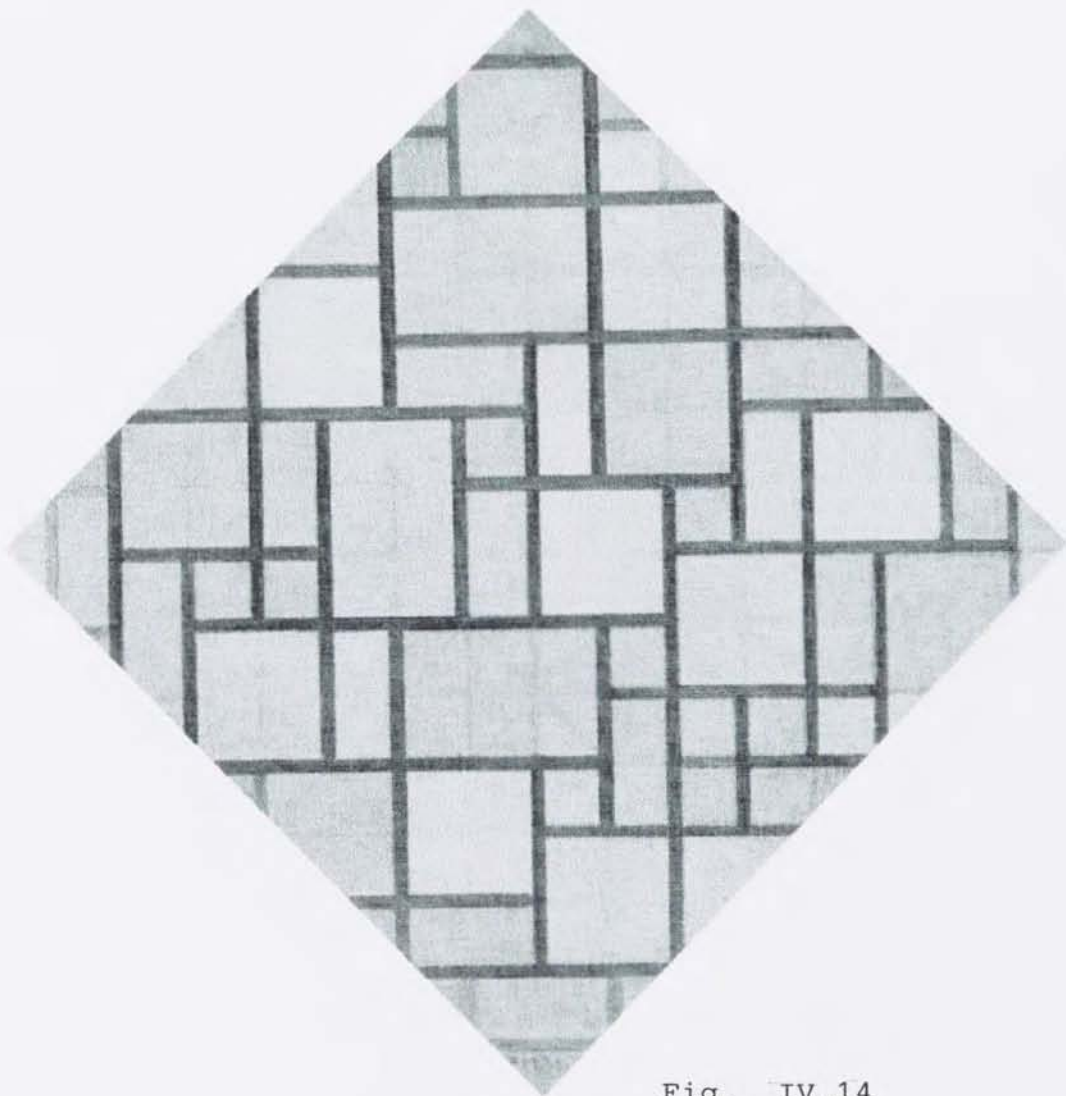


Fig. IV.14

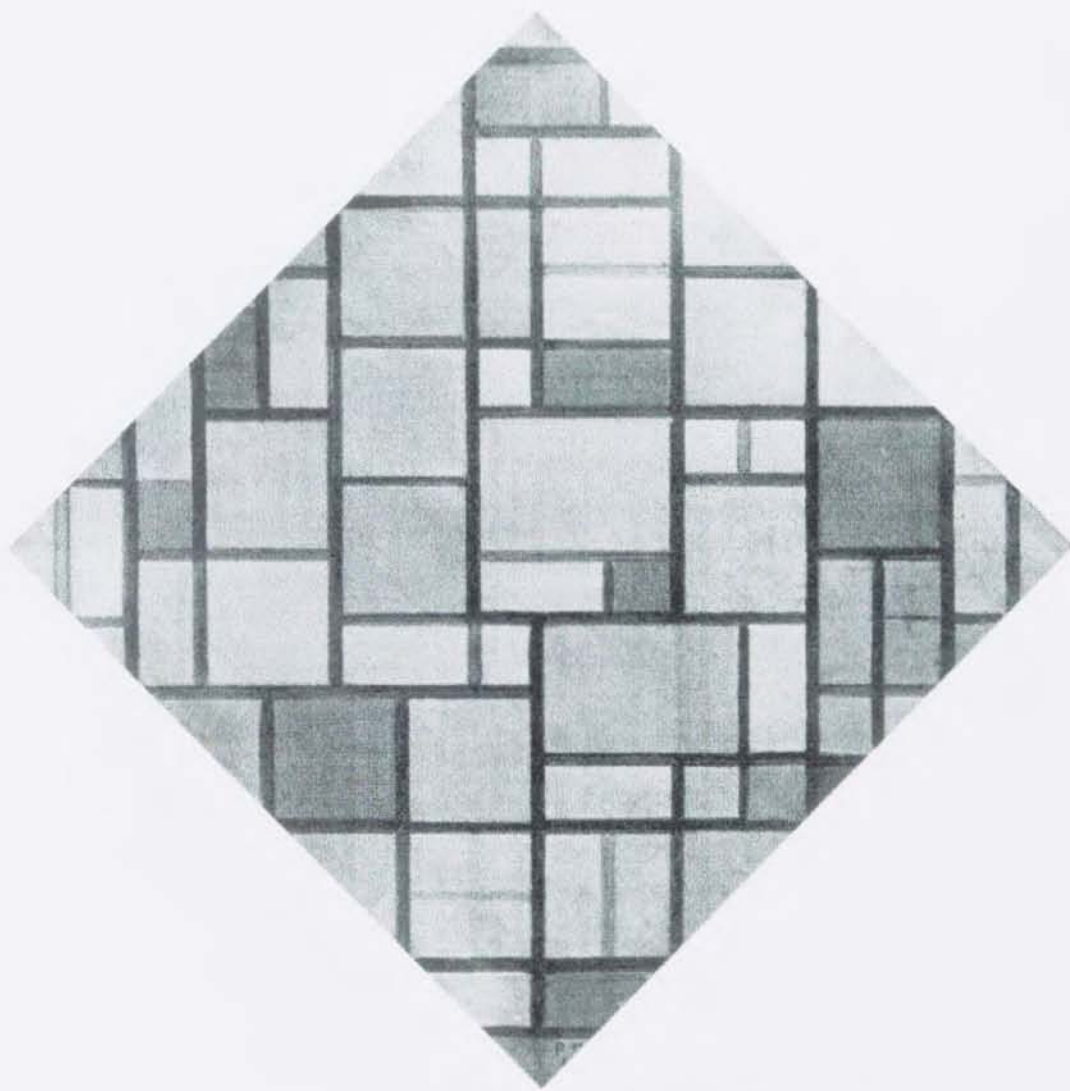


Fig. IV.15

35

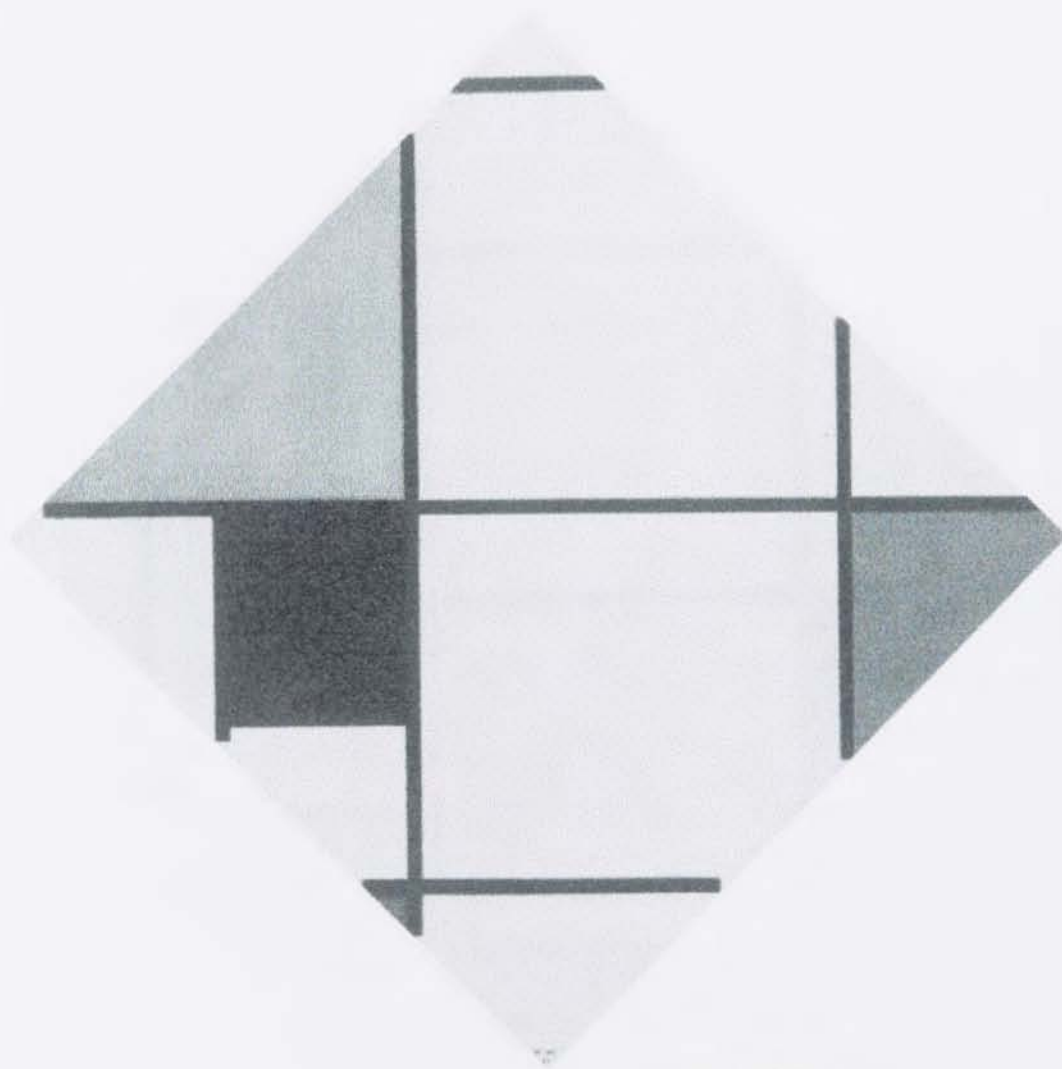


Fig. IV.16

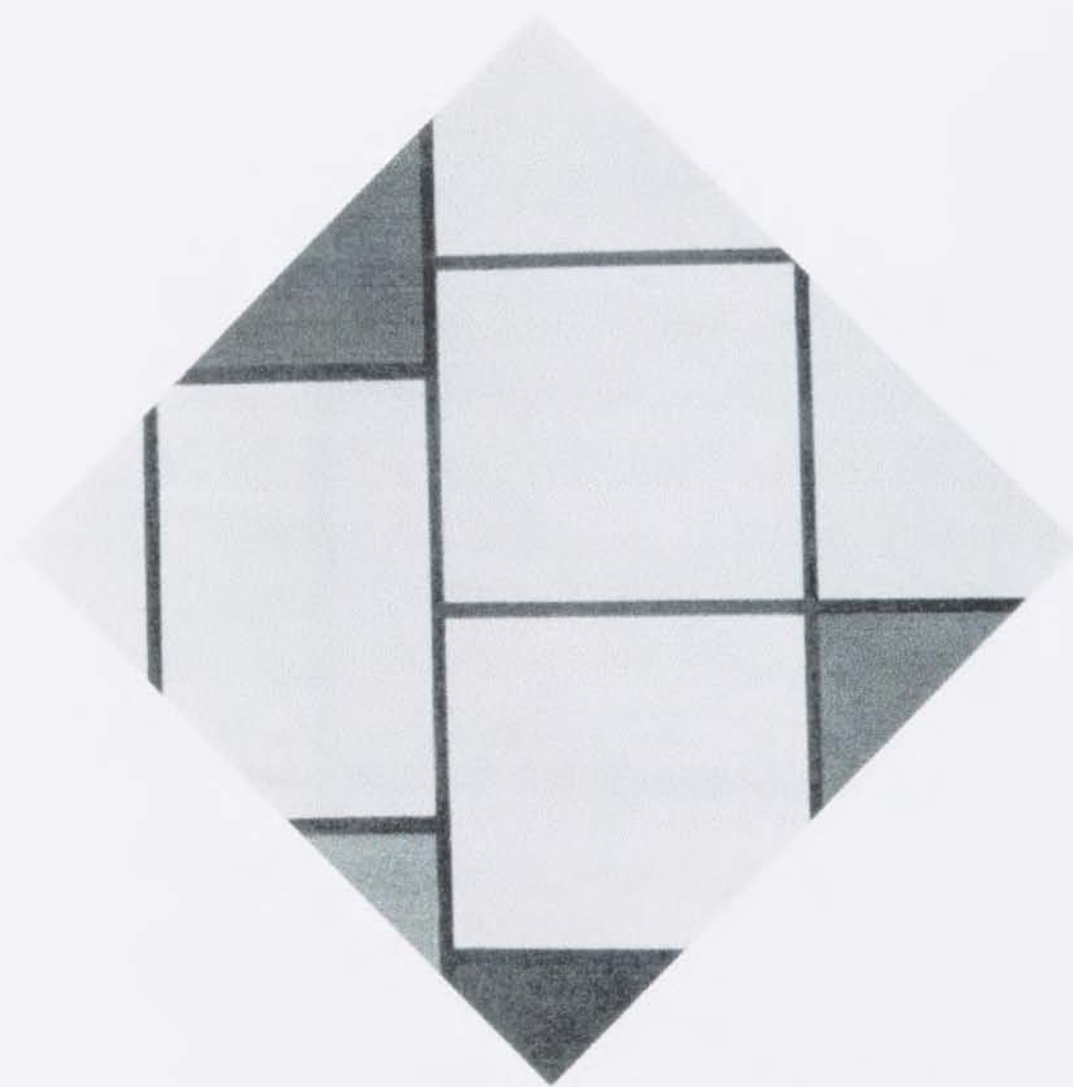


Fig. IV.17

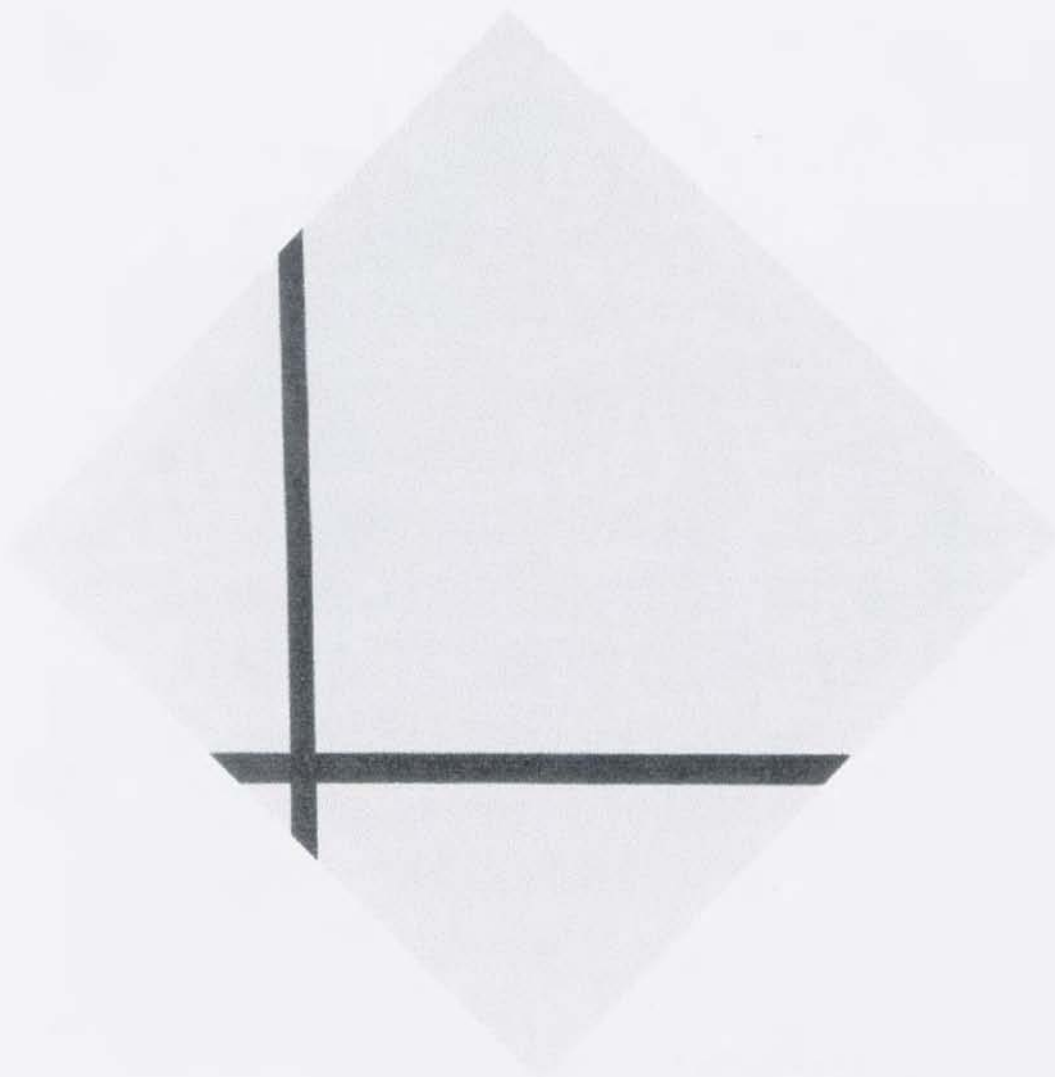


Fig. IV.18

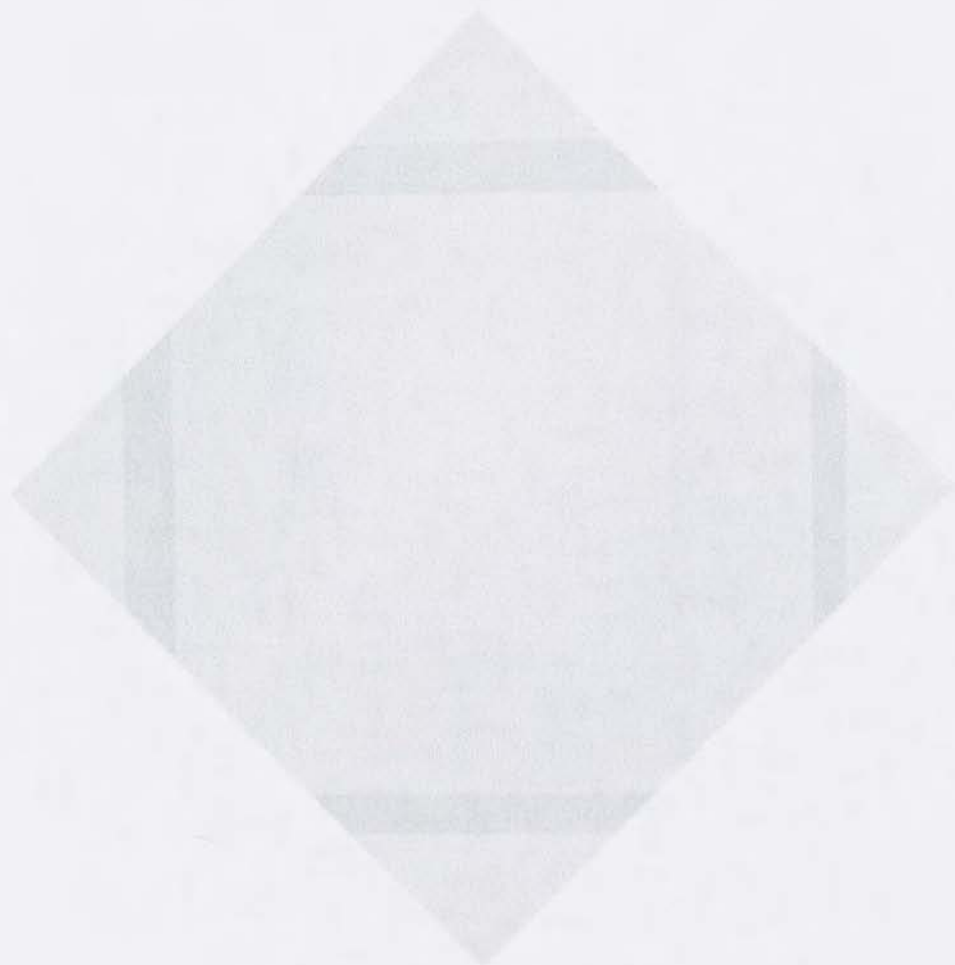


Fig. IV.19

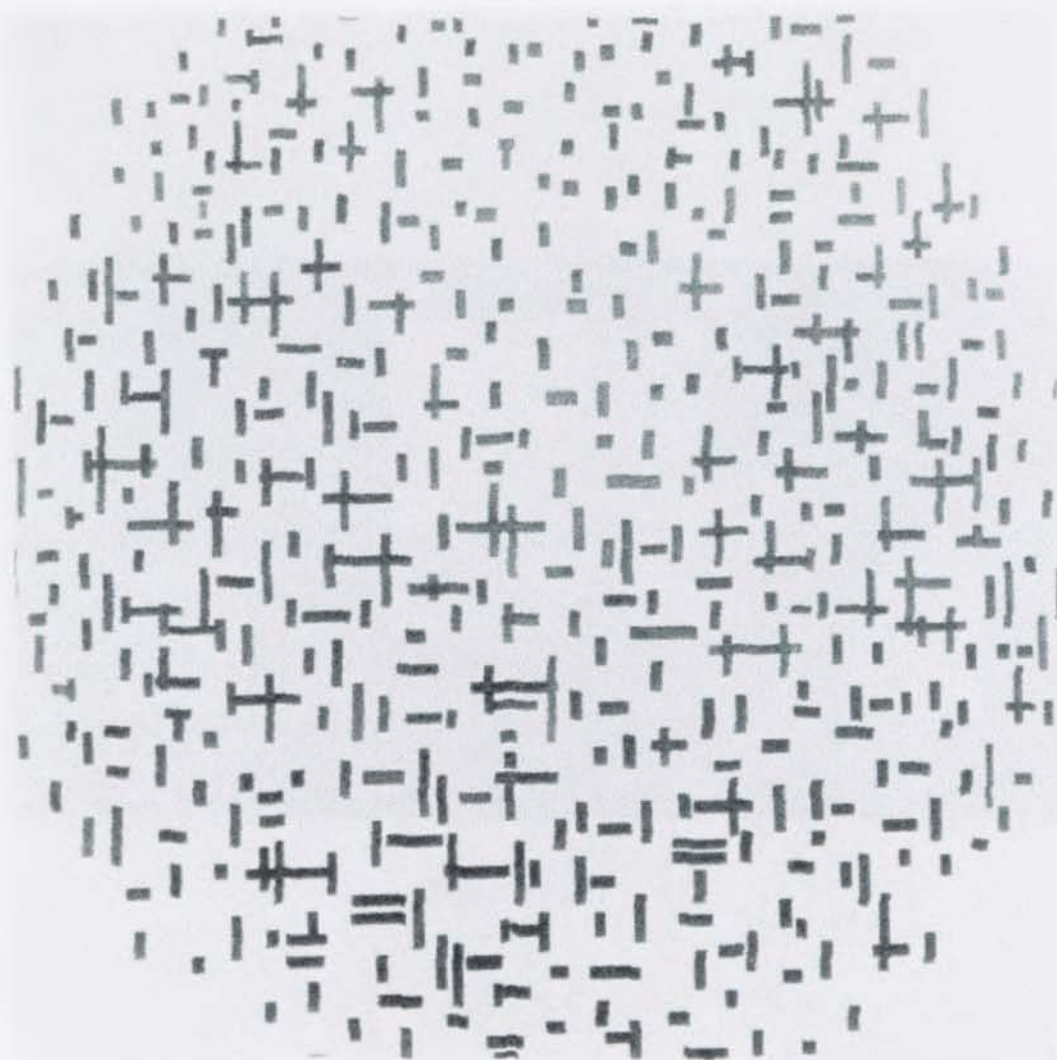


Fig. IV.20

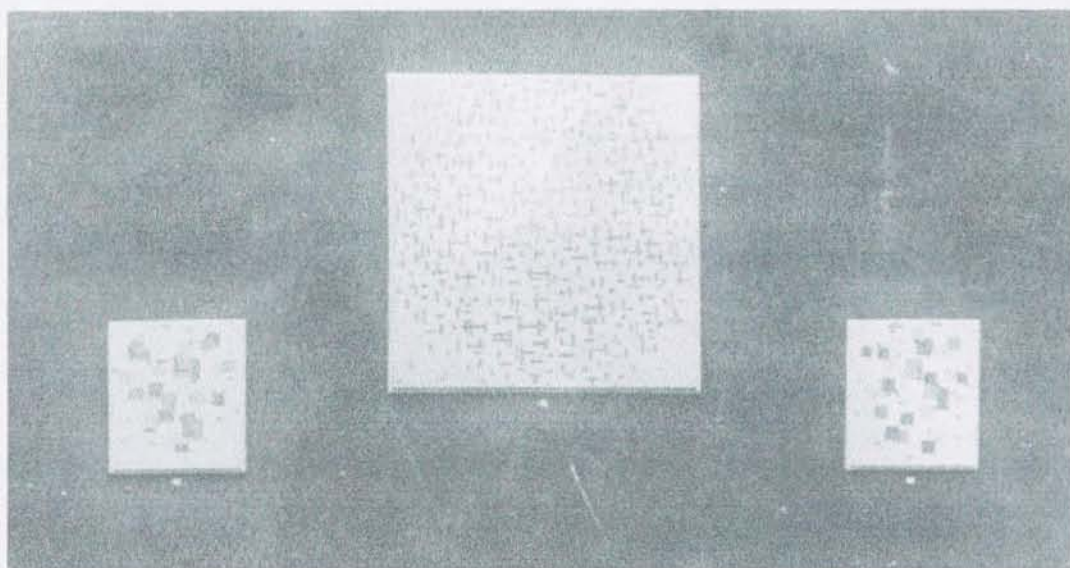


Fig. IV.21