

November 1938 to early 1940, part 9

FACTS

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November 1938 to early 1940, part 9

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Danish National Gallery

Creator/key person:
Ernest Mancoba

General comments:
Rules of transcription:
Spelling errors kept, followed by
correction as [sic: corrected spelling]
Necessary insertion of missing
punctuation marks added as [.]
Necessary paragraph breakage as
[/P]
Illegible words indicated with
[illegible]
Scratched out letters and words not
transcribed

SUMMARY

This Mancoba diary covers Mancoba's first months in Paris. He is enrolled at L'École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Rue d'Ulm. He has befriended the Danish ceramicist Christian Poulsen whom he abbreviates as "Xtian" and various other students whom he variously identifies as "Pultzer/Pulzer/Bulzer", "the Algerian", "Chargo/Chago/Chayo" and "Roser" (amongst others). He has a visit with a South African identified as "Mall". The diary likely ends at the end of December 1938 or January 1939.

TRANSCRIPTION

[continuing from previous page, Mancoba returns to his hotel from celebrating Christmas with friends] snow tread –

Following day Mall arrives & I am glad to see him – He has changed tremendously – He hates the English more than ever before. He has been three years in England and thinks little of the English – He has been a socialist in England & has met very interesting people – Politically he has been very unhappy & has even given up public speaking – In Sheffield he has been called nigger nigger by the children in the streets [.] the children through the English literature have been taught and have assimilated the stereotypes of other races as outsiders & objects of suspicion [.] but some English girls love coloured men and they are assured of a good time in the company of blacks who spend money on them –

[/P] Mall has been to Egypt, having travelled from Paris to Marseilles & has been greatly impressed by the Southern coast of France [.] beautiful islands [.] blue skies & colourful surroundings [.] He has been to Egypt and tells me how greatly the English have exploited that land where there is unspeakable poverty & wretchedness – 7000 British troops [.] Prostitution rife and the English soldiers frequent the dens of prostitution in crowds [.] He has learnt to dance & has become well known in the dancing circles – Siegfried –

We go to the Greek Restaurant by Dupont & have a good feed then coffee at Dupont [.] We decide to go to Chatelet to see the French stage – we have supper in my Hotel & Mall tells me the History of Islam he seems [illegible] to have become more religious – we talk of the cosmopolitanism of Islam – He tells how Mohamed married a Coptic Xtian [sic: Christian] – A negress – an arab [.] A negro slave married a relation of his own etc. No colour friction within the circles of Muslems – I say how unfortunate the Moslems did not wipe out the Hindu religion when they had the

opportunity – during their Conquest of India – Mall says Moslems not a [illegible] religion tolerance – they fought as self defence [.] We plan to go to the Mosque in Paris – After Supper we go to Chatelet – We are disgruntled & leave before the interval – It is the Coffre Fort Vivant – a fellow swallows a diamond and it settled in the appendix & there has to be an operation [.] he runs away with a nurse girl to Martinique [.] Hollywood & New York – They revue spectacle is a presentation of these adventures & the story is an excuse for foolish singing, dancing & tom foolery – We go to the Negro bar – Horrible types of negros – I drink punch & Mall [.] coffee – Much talking & playing cards – Mall goes home & we make appointment for Saturday

// After lunch I have a bath & we take metro to Magodor Theatre but Mall has seen the play & we go to see Laurie & Hardie [sic: Laurel & Hardy] – a bitter satire on marriage – Afterwards we go along Boulevard & look at Xmas [sic: Christmas] selling crowds of people – We go to walk at [illegible] of Follies Bergeres as we return a man asks us if we want to see a show of naked girls doing the sex act – we do not resist but go to No 14 [sic: number 14]. climb the stairs I see two elderly looking men waiting their turn looking foolish & sheepish [.] A woman comes out and asks the fellow what we want & she does not want people just to come & look – I see a half naked girl and Mall tells me afterwards there was a black girl – The man asks us if we wld [sic: would] not like to see swimming girls – we get away & Mall is filled with horror & [illegible] and disillusionment. He asks me if I am not horrified [.] I reply that I cannot be horrified at prostitution as such – I am horrified at the cause for it & for the other ills of our society – A butcher shop horrifies me very much the same way – Meat hanging there with thousands of hungry people looking on unable to eat – Wages too low for people to get married & settle down [.] We see many negro soldiers [.] Metro [.] get off at St Michael [.] eat at Capulade [.] We go to Negro Bal [sic: Bal Negre] – We settled down [.] Mall is thrilled by music – He wants to dance but I am not willing – He asks a girl & they dance [.] I think he cuts a poor figure in those clothes – The girl thanks him and he sits down – Next dance he asks another girl [.] she refuses then another still no [.] He scratches his head and sits down confused [.] I was sorry – But why did he not ask the same girl again [.] But then I have never been able to account for the behaviour & reaction of woman [.] so uncertain – I drink grog & he coffee – He is hurt and talks of these girls as below him etc [.] He admires the frank expression of sex in the dance –

Many officers army with their wives [.] many beautiful negro girls – we go upstairs & look down, a queer affair – I tell Mall my opinions of dancing [.]

how one must fit oneself to a whole gamut of foolish senseless [illegible] to be a dancing idol [,] buy trousers, think of fashions of shoes [,] trousers, ties hair etc etc – I am not willing. I shall dance in a different society – He looks impressed [,] He says he is not upset he has met rebuffs before – Some of the girls are well dressed [,] others shabby and it is the well dressed that get a dance [,] we leave in despair – I go to sleep –

Mall arrives at 130 & we go to see the Follies – He has heard it is a good show from a Scotch woman at the Auberge de la Jeunesse [,] we enter & the show begins – a fairly clever skit on tailors & Scouts – The next rubbish – Technique marvellous but no substance. I remark that the stage requires a Shakespeare to use it [illegible] & satisfactorily [,] the spirit of the times – More confusion – we go to Greek cafe for Supper – Cha Dupont for tea – There we meet Mall's friend [,] The hit at Marseilles – He takes us still to another Cafe – very kind & Mall tells him – He wants to learn English [,] He is [illegible] – we make appointment for 6.30 Monday evening –

Mall arrives at 630 and we go to see his friend – we take bus at Bd St Germain [sic: Boulevard St Germain] & as we are not used to system in Paris Mall gives 5 fr [sic: francs] but conductor demands another for return money – Hes a talkative fat short fellow – Characteristically [,]

[/P] We get off & Malls friend waves to us through the window – we walk up & man is very hospitable – On radio Samson & Delilah opera [reference: "Samson and Delilah", opera by Camille Saint-Saëns] – There is tea & wine – Mall takes little & reminds us he is Mohammedan [i.e. Muslim] – They talk about North Africa & man shows pictures painted by himself – we talk of politics & especially South Africa – We believe French colonial policy not so ruthless as English – Socialism in Europe on the retreat & France united as one Nation – we depart & I tell Mall how a South African [,] a friend of mine [,] was thrown out of a flat because she allowed me to go & see her

It is snowing & we take the bus back to St Michel – Mall asks me what I think of Indians in South Africa [,] I tell him I despise them as short sighted and hope a man like Kajee [reference: Abdullah I. Kajee]¹ will be successful in persuading the Indians to join the united front. It is one of the most beautiful bus rides I have had in the snow [,] We go to Dupont & take Chocolat [sic: chocolate] – All races there – A negro & French woman are making love at the corner –

Tuesday – we go to see Musée Guimet and Mall brings a Belgian friend he met at the Auberge – At the metro he says he does not like the French – He likes the English and even the graceful [illegible] – He is a student of medicine at Brussels University – Mall asks why – courteous etc we tell him we are happiest in Paris – He is surprised – We look at Musée & have dinner together at a little restaurant – We stay until 4 o'clock at Musée – Afterwards we away towards the Eiffel Tower [.] It is a tremendous thing and a great engineering achievement – we pass beneath it and buy chestnuts of a French woman in the snow – we see some of the exhibition [illegible] the process of being pulled down – Cardboard [.] we walk down Champs Elysee & take the metro to St Michel – we eat at Greek restaurant among snobs –

Wednesday we go to Trocadero Musée L'Homme [sic: Trocadero, Musée L'Homme] – we see the skeletons & mummies but cannot finish in a day [.] Mall points out the differences between male & female skeletons – He is fascinated & we go to Opera & eat at Indian restaurant [.] Curry disappointing – There are Indian people here speaking English [.] Mall dislikes them – women & a man –

We go out to find Picasso, we go along Bd Hausmann [sic: Boulevard Haussman] – I see the most modern Post Office I have known [.] Galleries Lafayette wonderful – Au Printemps magasin [French: store] tremendous – Mall looks at the picturesque policeman on horseback controlling the traffic – We find Picasso at Rosenberg's – Mall & I are interested – Then Paulsen [sic: Christian Poulsen] arrives with the Swedish lady [.] She is queer [.] shakes hands & goes off – We fix appointment to meet following day at 4 for tea at Poulsens – We go to Simon Galleries [probable reference to gallery of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler] to look at at some Surrealists – then back to St Michel – [illegible]

We go to Trocadero [sic: Trocadero] again & finish the Musée L'Homme [sic: L'Homme] [.] Man has gone through terrible days & Xtian [sic: Christian] religion a tremendous force towards the proper direction – I cannot find anything European before Xty [sic: Christianity] & I wonder why – Such a musee [sic: French: musée or English: museum] would be dangerous in the hands of Nazi crooks to prove superiority of white race against the black –

We finish and go back to St Michel - & find Xtian [sic: Christian Poulsen] at home – We have tea and Pulzer arrives [.] we talk of modern art and of course Mall gives his opinion of the English moderate –

I tell of my impressions after reading England, the unknown island [reference: Paul Cohen-Protheim "England, the Unknown Isle" first published 1931] & English are they human [reference: G. J. Renier "The English: are they human?" first published 1931] – The former writer a Nazi – superiority of black race against white – Bulzer says not necessarily – Mall agree with him – Modern art I feel inexplicable & there must be an answer & standpoint for appreciation [...] Bulzer thinks [illegible] you either like it or you don't – unsatisfactory [...] we eat at Olympia –

Friday we go to Luxembourg Musée [sic: Musée du Luxembourg] & I see some of M. Vallette's work – Bust by Maillol [reference: Aristede Maillol (1861-1944, France)] very good – we go out & have tea – We look at books & I buy Picasso –

Saturday we go to Musee Rodin pay 5 fr [sic: francs] – Mall is very interesting his view about art – 1st Hall more [illegible] than 2nd – The Burghers of Calais [...] We wonder away & go get tea at Le Dome – Mall likes it [...] We go [illegible] at Olympia then to see the adventures of Marco Polo [,] terrible muck – Mall goes home [...]

Mall arrives we go to eat then Louvre but it is closed – we go to see if the Follie Berger have changed program but not [...] we see Marx Brothers – Quite clever – we eat and Mall & I goes [sic: go] to his hostel – we talk about conditions in SAfrica [sic: South Africa] – Particularly relations between black [,] white & Religion – He deploras my materialism

[end of this section of the diary]

¹ W. Sze: A.I. Kajeer (1896-1948) was a South African leader of Indian community

miss to read -

~~Miss~~ Following day Mall arrives +
I am glad to see him - He has changed
tremendously - He hates the English
more than ever before - He has been
three years in England and thinks
little of the English - He has been a
socialist in England + has met very
interesting people - Politically he has been
very unhappy + has even given up
public speaking - In Sheffield he
has been called nigger bridge by the
children in the streets - The children
through the English teachers have been
taught and have assimilated the
stereotypes of other races as outcasts
+ objects of suspicion but some English
girls love coloured men and they
are assured of a good time in the
company of blacks who spend more on
them - Mall has been to Egypt having
tramped from Paris to Marseilles +
has been greatly impressed by the
southern coast of France beautiful islands
Abertines + colourful surroundings - He
has been to Egypt and tells me how

greatly the English have exploited that
land where there is unfeeling poverty
&retchedness - 7000 British troops
Prostitution rife and the English soldiers
frequent the den of prostitution in crowds
He has learnt to dance & has become
well known in the ~~first~~ dancing circles
- Sheffield -

He goes to the Grand Restaurant by Depot
Shah a good feed the coffee at Depot.
He decides to go to Chatelet to see the
French stage - he has supper in my
Hotel + Mall. tells me the history of
Islam he seems to know to have done
more religions - he talk of the cosmopolitan
of Islam - He tells how Mohamed married a
Coptic slave - A negress - an arab
Anglo slave married a relative of his son
etc. He talks of the circle
of Moslems - I say how important the
Moslems did not know of the Hindu
religion when they had the opportunity during
their conquest of India - He says
Moslems not a good religion
to have - He says he will depend
he plans to go to the Mosque in Paris -

After supper he goes to Chatelet -
He is disappointed & leaves before
the interval - It is the Coffre-fort
revant - a fellow swallows a
diamond and it settles in the
appendix & when he is operated
he runs away with a nurse girl
to Martigny, Hollywood &
New York - The revue spectacle
is a presentation of those adventures &
Boston is an excuse for foolish
silly dancing & for foolery -
We go to the Regio par - Horrible
types of negroes - I drink punch &
black coffee - Much talking &
playing cards. Mall goes down &
we take opportunity for Saturday
after lunch I have a bath & see
the Latin & Magador theatre but
Mall has seen the play & we go to
see Laura & Hardie - A bitter satire
on marriage - Afterwards we go along
Boulevard & look at some pretty
groups of people - Night walk at
Bozophe of Folies Bergeres and as
he returns a man asks us if we

want to see a show of naked girls
during the sex act - he does not resist
but goes out to No. 14, climb the stairs
I see two elderly looking men waiting
their turn looking foolish & sheepish
A woman comes next and asks the
fellows that we want & she does not
know people at all - I see a
half-naked girl and Mall tells
he afterwards that she is a black
girl - He said asks us if we would not
like to see young girls - we get
away & Mall is filled with horror
& disgust and disillusionment. He
asks me if I am not horrified I
reply that I cannot be horrified at
prostitution as such - I am horrified
at the cause for it. In the other
ills of our society - A butchers shop
horrorifies me when they back the
saw - Meat hangs there
with the smell of hungry people looking
unable to eat - Wages too low for
people to get married & settle down
We see many negro soldiers & Metro
get of at St Michael eat at Capulede

He goes to Negro Ball - We settle down
ball is chattered by music - He says
to dance but I am not really - He
asks a girl who says I
think he cuts a poor figure in those
clothes - The girl thanks him and
he sits down - Next dance he asks
another girl she refuses then another
till no - He scratches his
head and sits down - I was
I am sorry - But why did he not
ask the same girl again
But then I have never been able to
account for the behavior, reaction
of woman so uncertain - I drink
grog + coffee - He is hurt and
talks of these girls as below him etc
He shows the frank expression
of sex with dance -

Many officers among both their
lives many beautiful negro girls - We
go up stairs + look down a queer
affair - Still Mall in Sunday paper
has one must fit himself to a
whole gamut of foolish self
conception. At the dancing club

big tomms, thick froshins, gashes
kisses, ties, hair etc etc - I am
not telling - I shall dance in a
different society - He looks impressed
he says he is not upset he has not
rebuff before - Some of the girls are well
dressed others shabby and it is
to well dressed that get a dance
he leave in despair - I go to
sleep - Moll arrives at 1/20 &
he go to see the tollies - He has heard
it is a good show for a festival home
of the ~~North~~ Auberge de Capresse
he etc & the show begins - a bit
clever spilt on sailors & Saints - the
rest rubbish - Technique marvellous
but no substance - I remark that the
stage requires a make-up & use
it represents satisfactorily the spirit of the
times - Now confusion - he go to
Greek cafe for supper - La Depart
for tea - He go next Moll's friend
he hit at Marseille - He takes us
with him to the cafe - very kind & Moll
tells him - he back to leave by 1/20

He is afraid - he takes appointment
for 6.30 Monday evening -
Mall arrives at 16.30 and we go
to see his friend - We take bus to
Bd St Germain + as we are refused
to enter Mall gives 5fr
but conductor gives another 5fr
and we get in - He is a
talkative but short fellow - Characteristic
He gets off + Mall's friend takes
us through the door - He barks up
+ man is very hospitable - On radio
Janson + Delille speak - There is tea
+ wine - Mall takes little + reminds us
he is Mohammedan - He talk about
North Africa + man shows pictures
painted by himself - We talk of politics
+ especially South Africa - We believe
French colonial policy not so ruthless
as English - Aggression is worse on
the retreat + France united for one
nation - We depart + I tell Mall
how in South Africa a friend of mine
was thrown out of a flat because
they allowed her to go + see her
It is snowing + we take the bus

back to Michel - Mall asks me
what I think of Indians & South Africa
I tell him I despise them (as
they slighted and hope a man
like Kayce will be successful in
persuading the Indians to the united
front. It is one of the most beautiful
baysides I have had in the snow
We go to depot & take Choulet - All
races there - A negro & French
woman are making love at the
corner -

Tuesday - We go to see Musée
Guimet and Mall brings a
Belgian friend - he met at the
club - At the metro he says he
does not like the French - He likes
the English and even the Germans
better - He is a student of medicine at
Bonn's University - Mall asks
how - Constan, etc. he tells him we
are happiest in Paris - He is
surprised - We look at Musée
& have dinner together at a little
restaurant - We stay until 4 o'clock
at Musée - Afterwards we

away towards the Eiffel Tower
It is a tremendous thing, and
a great engineering achievement -
we pass beneath it and buy
Chestnuts of a French woman in
the snow - we see some of the
Exhibition built. The progress of
being pulled down - cardboard
we hold down Champs Elysee
like the Metro to St Michel -
we eat at Greek restaurant among
Anibs -

Wednesday we go to Trocadero
Musée Luvre - we see the
skeletons & mummies but cannot
finish - a day Mall point out
the differences between male & female
skeleton - He is fascinated & we
go to Opera & eat at Indian restaurant
Curry disappoints - There are
Indian people here speaking right
well & better than - there were
a man -

We go out to find Picasso, we go
along Bd Haussmann - I see the
musee modern Post Office I have known

Galleri Lafayette Boulevard - Aulontaps
Regard, Frederiks - Mall look
at the picture of policemen on horseback
control the traffic - we proceed
Picasso at Rosenberg's - Mall here
interested - then Poulsen arrives
with the Swedish lady she is queer
shakes hands & goes off - Reflex
appontret to meet Volbur day
at 4 for tea at Poulsen's - He
go to Simon Galleries & look at
at some Surrealists - then back
to St Michel - Ha
again. We go to Trocadero
& finish the Musée d'Orsay
Man has gone through terrible days &
Christian religion a tremendous force
towards the proper direction - I
cannot find anything European before
1914 & I wonder why - Such a museum
would be dangerous in the hands of Nazi
crooks to prove superior - White
race against the black -
We finish and go back to St
Michel - I find Xiang at home -
we have tea and Batz arrives

we talk of modern art and
of course Mall gives his opinions
of the English moderate -

I tell of my impressions after
reading Ryland the unknown Island
& English are the human - The former
writes a Nazi - Superior of black
race against Hitler - Bulze says
not necessarily - Mall agrees with
him - Modern art I feel
is explicable & there must be an
answer & standpoint for appreciation
Bulze thinks people from either like
it or you don't - unsatisfactory
we eat at Olympia -

Friday we go to Luxembourg
Musée & see some of M. Valette's
work - But by Maillots very good - we
go out & have tea - we look at
books & I buy Picasso -

Saturday we go to Musée Rodin
from 5 p - Mall is very interested in
the art - 1st Hall more interesting
than 2nd - The Bourgeois of Calais
we walk away & go to the
at Le Dome - Mall likes it

we go to see Van & Olympia then
to see the address of Marco Polo
terrible muck - Mall goes home
~~that~~ Mall arrives he goes out
then. Louvre but it is closed - we
go to see if the Folie Bergere have
Lange program but not
we see Mark Bultus - Quite
clever - we eat and Mall & I
go to his hotel - we talk about
conditions in Africa - particularly
relations between black white
& Religion - He explains my
materialism

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