

November 1938 to early 1940, part 4

FACTS

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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" 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

[from previous page: I walk in Notre [Dame]] as if I knew it from old – To me it's the culmination of the progress of Xtianity [sic: Christianity] before its decline to over time [.] When the church has become nothing more than an object of interest for American sightseers. The Stained glass windows drawing attention at once – I have never seen anything of its kind anywhere before [.] Also the attendants and caretakers here seem to be in a world apart, for them Notre Dame is their world, like Quasimodo [.]

A few women are kneeling in prayers at the different altars – I am glad that at least the French have not used church as storehouse of Tomstones [sic: tombstones] like Westminster Abbey [in London] for instance – I am nevertheless dismayed to find two war memorials – One for peace under a huge crucifix and another for the British Empire – I am shocked to read "South Africa" & to see the National Emblem of South Africa –

[/P] The wood carvings are beautiful – I am impressed with the skill and devotion which [illegible] the putting up of this structure – It is a symphony of stone and glass – it is alive as a work of art but does not fill me with any religious feelings as I was told by a lecturer in Philosophy who wanted an excuse for getting converted into Christianity –

[insertion in margin] I think if Bishop Huthi Poem & the Church oppressor of the People in the Middle Ages [.] I want to break the nose of one of the bishops.

I see the stone and I think Brownings Bishop [probable reference to Robert Browning and his poem "The Bishop orders his tomb at Saint Praxed's Church", published 1845]¹ ... By the way Browning is horrible cheat. The pillars and exactness of measurement must have entailed exhausting mathematical calculations –

I see the Statue of the Madonna [illegible] de Paris – I remember the remark of the American [,] She holds the baby as if she did not like it. But I don't see the pt [sic: point] of the remark – I didn't think it is wonderful – A young woman stands and looks as if in meditation [.] I wonder what she is thinking about –

Then I go to see the treasure – And I am not filled with disgust as I was at Fort Hare [reference: University of Fort Hare] at the Sunday Evening Benedictions – Here I have the impression that these are in a museum like the African masques [French: masks] in the British Museum – Most made of gold [.] The church was fabulously rich in those days [.] There is a gaping crowd of the baldheaded men & young women perhaps religious fanatics who wait for the dead church to rise again – Or curious creatures like me unaffected by any bright dreams for the revival of this monster. Or perhaps it filled a gap – gave birth to modern society but what a society – From (Coruna barefooted king before bishop to the Vatican) and yet hanging on influencing in a warped manner progress of man to the impasse of today – I feel it must go. I go toward the door to look for a book to read on Notre Dame but find none at the bookshelf – I am struck by the notices in French & English [,] more in German & Italian [.] The Statue of our Lady at the door has the most magnificent robes I have seen [.] I go out and look at the figures in the [illegible] they are beautiful and have stood the weather wonderfully –

[/P] This Church has not filled me with the disgust I had when I left Westminster Abbey . Where the victory of English wars throughout the world is made to live in a boisterous fashion – It took some searching to find the so called Poets Corner – I could see nothing for dominating figures of Gladiators and Disraelis [possible reference to Prime Ministers as Benjamin Disraeli held the post in 1868 and again between 1874 and 1880] – and other minor makers of the British Empire –

[in margin: small sketch]

I go back to my hotel and ask for a bath – at supper the woman apologises for delay to bath – I sleep early – read Candide [reference: Voltaire "Candide" first published 1759]² –

[inserted in margin] I see a negro at the hotel bureau ready to leave the hotel [.] His teeth reminds me of Some one [illegible] in South Africa – the Hotel Porter asks if wants taxi monsieur on si vous plait [French: sir, if you please] If the white goes off expecting a tip – how unlike South Africa

I go to school and it is a happy morning as professors are pleased with the relief of a South Africa goldmine I made and the figures look like real work men – I have always seen life as a workman – It's a joy to see the dignity of the Parisien worker ouvrier [French: worker] [.] Perhaps I am [illegible] friends with the future rulers of the world, the toiling masses – Also the Greek skull gets good marks. The fellows congratulate me I say I am glad & feel a bit reconciled to the school. Xtian [sic: Christian Poulsen] is glad – We leave school and go to lunch [.] after lunch – I go to Pulzer & Xtian they are having tea – Pulzer shows me his latest drawings – they are wonderful and we go to Grand Chaumiere [reference to Académie de la Grand Chaumière, an art school] to draw - On the way I tell Xtian [sic: Christian Poulsen] how different the French chdn [sic: children] are behaved to a Negro with Street In England I had children shout at me a Nigger Nigger but not so in France [.] and as I say this I have a feeling I betrayed myself for I could not guarantee what these kids are capable of doing at any moment [.] I want "to touch wood" [reference to English superstition] – We pass a flower shop & Xtian talks about the flowers I must take to this person [.] I ask him what impression the poems & pictures of negroes in European [illegible] picture books leave on the children – He says Negro things to play with etc – He remarks a poem of negro going down a street in Copenhagen in red and white trousers –

The model posing for the nude is very beautiful – I draw with enthusiasm [.] At rest interval a girl speaks to a Chinese in English and I feel restless because that is the language I associate with the British Empire and South Africa –

A new model arrives and casts a curious eye at me – I wonder why perhaps she would object [illegible] her body to niggers – and I think of how once I was brutalised by [illegible] at Krugersdorp [city in South Africa] along the little valley I charged upon them bathing and my nose so long that I thought I was dying – blood all over my new shirt [.]

I was 12 and on a Xmas [sic: Christmas] holiday to see my Aunt – I was ashamed to confess to her what had happened [.] I was [illegible] I thought she would not understand – [illegible] –

But the girl was quite free after all and she smiled now and [illegible] to her friends in the group of artists sketching. Parted with Xtian at the Dome [.]

[/P] On the way bought a newspaper & read of Pact³ agreed by Germany &

France [:] Von Rippendorp & Bonnet [Joachim von Ribbentrop, Nazi
Germany, and Georges Bonnet, Vichy France] – Not much enthusiasm in
Paris – I see a decorated trio of magazin [French: store] vans for Xmas –
On the first [,] Father Xmas has a coloured child in hand – I am happy –

[2 illegible words in margin]

I eat & go to bed – to read – Chargo arrives and tells me he will sign
contract to reason for the job at the play Chatelet [probably Chatelet des
Halles]

¹ W. Sze: Robert Browning (1812-1889), English poet and playwright

² W. Sze: Voltaire is nom de plume of François-Marie Arouet (1694-1774), French writer and philosopher


³ W. Sze: Franco-German declaration of 6 December 1938

as if I knew it of old - To see it is
the culmination of the progress of thought
before its ~~decline~~ decline to us, the
then the church has become with more
than in object of interest ^{progress} of its seeds.
The stained glass windows draw my
attention at once - I have never seen
any thing of its kind any where before
Also the attendants and caretakers here
seem to be in a world apart for their
where there is their world like quoniam
I see women are kneeling in prayer
at the different altars - I am glad that
at least the bench have not used the
church, as ~~stone~~ ^{stone} horse of Tomstones like
Westminster Abbey for instance - I am
nevertheless disappointed to find two
bar memorials - One for France under a
huge crucifix and another for the
British Empire - I am shocked to read
South Africa" to see the National Emblem
of South Africa - The wood carvings are
beautiful - I am impressed with the staff
and devotion, which imbued the
pathy of the structure - It is a
symphony of Stone and glass -

it is alive as a work of art but ~~it~~
does not fill me with any religious
feeling as I was told by a lecturer in
Philosophy who bawled an excuse
for getting converted into Christianity.
I see the Stone ~~of the~~ and
I think Broomings Bishop --- By the
way Brooming is horrible cheat.
The pillers and exactions of treasure-
hunt must have entailed exhausting
mathematical calculations.
I see the Statue of the Madonna met
de Paris - I remember the remark
of the American He holds the baby as
if she did not like it. But I don't
see the pt of the remark - I don't think
it is wonderful - A young woman
glances and looks as if in meditation
ponder what she is thinking about.
Then I go to see the treasure - And I
am not filled with disgust as I was
at Fort Stare at the Sunday evening
Benedictions - Here I have the impression
that these are in a museum like
the African Masques in the British
Museum - I go most have of gold

I think
of Bishop
South
Poens +
the church
oppression
of the people
the
middle
ages
I want
to break
the nose
of
the
bishops

The church was fabulous rich these days
Here is a gaping crowd of baldheaded men
& young women perhaps religious fanatics
who wait for the dead church to rise
again - Or curious creatures like
me unaffected by any bright dream
for the revival of this monster. It
perhaps it filled a gap & gave
birth to modern society but what
a society - From (Coruna barefooted
King before bishops to the Vatican) and
yet having an influence in a barbed
manner progress of man to the present
of today - I feel it must go. I go toward
the door to look for a book to read
on Notre Dame but find none at the
book shelf - I am struck by the notices
in French & English now in German & Italian
The statue of Our Lady at the door has
the most magnificent robes I have seen
I go out and look at the figures all round
outside they are beautiful and have seen
the better sculptured and polished - The church
has not filled the hill the descent I
had when I left Westminster Abbey
where the victory of English arms


 thought that the world is made to live in a
 bourgeois fashion - I took some searching
 to find the so called Poets corner - I
 could see nothing but dominantly figures of
 Gladstones and Disraelis and other minor
 makers of the British Empire -
 I go back to my ^{little} ^{apartment} and take up for
 a bath - ^{at 11:30} I sleep - read - write -
 I go to school and it's a happy
 morning as professors are pleased with
 the relief of a South Africa gold mine
 I made and the figures look like
 read work now - I have always
 seen life as a work now - It's joy to see
 the dignity of the Parisian worker Guvier -
 Perhaps I am naive friends with the future
 rulers of the world the toring masses -
 Also the Greek skull gets good marks
 The fellows congratulate me I'm glad
 & feel reconciled to the school - That's
 glad - We leave school and go to
 lunch after lunch - I go to Puker's
 they are having tea - Puker shows me his
 latest drawings - they are beautiful
 and we go to Grand Chaudiere to
 draw -
 expects at
 Kp - how unlike South Africa

I see
 a negro
 at the
 Hotel
 bureau
 ready to
 leave
 the hotel
 Residing
 in Cape
 town
 Africa
 Puker asks
 if he has
 taxi
 numbers
 on a road
 with white
 lines

~~The~~ On the way I tell Klari two different
the French children are separated to a Negro
in the street - In England I had children
short at me - a Nigger Pigger but not
so in France and as I say this I have
a party I betrayed myself in I don't not
guarantee that these kids were
capable of doing at any moment I
want "to touch wood" - I possess a
flower shop & then talks about the
flowers I must take to this person
Dansk him what impression the poems
& picture sold of negroes in unplea-
surable picture books leave on the
children - He says Negro things to
play with etc - He remembers a piece of
negro going down a street in Copenhagen
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The model posing for the nude is very
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at rest interval a girl speaks to a friend
in English and I feel regretted because
that to the language I associate with
the Pontic Empire and South Africa -
A new model arrives and costs

a curious eye at me - Wonder why
perhaps she would object to seeing her
look knicker - and I think of her
indeed I was troubled by Daffodil
at Kongens dorp along the little valley
I charged upon them both and panned
my nose below that I thought I was
dying - blood all over my new shirt
Dover 12 and on a Xmas holiday
to see my Aunt - I was ashamed to
confess that what happened I was
I thought she would not understand -

But the girl was quite free after all
and she smiled now and again to
be friends in the group of portraits sketchy.
Parted with Xmas at the Done on the
boat brought a newspaper - read of
Pakt signed by Genl. + Grand Vol.
Kippelhoff + Bonnet - Not much enthusiasm
in Paris - I see a decorated trio of
Magagnans for Xmas - On the first letter
Xmas has a coloured child in hand - I
am happy -

dear
Mama

I can't get to bed to read - Chrys
arrives and tells me he will be contracted
to know for the job at the play - that let