

## 3-4 September 1938

### FACTS

Date:  
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Page number:  
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Diary location:  
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  
Full name of person mentioned [First  
+ Last name]

Mentioned people:  
Gerry Brand  
T. C. Mehta

### SUMMARY

On 2nd September 1938, Ernest Mancoba boarded a ship that left Cape Town, South Africa, for Southampton, United Kingdom. It arrived on the 19th September, 1938. Mancoba kept a travel journal of the voyage.

### TRANSCRIPTION

[3 Sep]

At breakfast, A [Abraham] and Watson absent [,] both feeling seasick - N looks as hard as nails - I discover a queer self over confidence and complacency which makes me uneasy - He stares glassily too long at people and his movements at table seem to be a result of deliberate coaching and practice - He closes his mouth because probably he was told so and munches with the deliberateness of an animal - He is careful not to speak with food in his mouth etc - He never opens a conversation.

After breakfast we play bridge - Four [,] 2 Indians and 2 Africans - N soon picks up the essentials of the game but he is disturbingly inattentive - he gazes around like an infant [,] When the band strikes up he drums his hands on the table and with a backward and forward sway of upper body keeps time to the jazz tune - I win at Casino Grand Sweepstakes.

We sit on deck N + I and I soon learn he is off to Yale to study "Race Relations" - I try to open a conversation but he seems to be avoiding a discussion - I ask if he has a standpoint - he says no he is detached as a scientist shd [sic: should] be - I wonder & tell him of my dislike for the whites as a group, and I am disappointed he does not bother to know why -

I potter around until dinner time [,] Again no A [Abraham] & W [Watson]. The menu is queer [,] has queer names [,] meaningless to me - I remark on this say why the waiter did not bring the things one after the other without bothering to question as we who have had no alternative to the inimitable mealie meal [a porridge made from corn meal] in South Africa. He replies that there are people who did not take certain kinds of foods. This was pointless as we at least did not know what would come next.

I asked him if he would like to travel on a Japanese boat to study Race Relations - No there was no need for that [,] one could always go to Japan etc.

After dinner took down some biscuits to A [Abraham]. He told me he felt better lying down - His girl told him to take biscuits and Worcester sauce [sic: sauce] on the voyage or against sea-sickness - He had prepared a mixture himself [,] but did not work - He was big eater and missed his

food badly.

Hanged around till tea-time – N + I talked together [.] I told him I wished to keep away from cluster of whites – He wondered why & said I was going to live with them in Europe I might as well get used to it straight away.

I told him bluntly I had a strong aversion and couldn't help it – I asked him what the whites had done with Africa – Oh very well for themselves but also much for the Africans [.] I should not be on the boat if it was not for the Europeans. I should not be able to criticise them were it not for the work they had done if in Africa - etc etc – They could not help but do it. I protested. If they wished progress. The "Father of the Natives" version of trusteeship bunk all over again and I wonder at the simplicity of this man – No wonder he has lived all his life in the Reserves – and he has never been personally thwarted in his few primitive requirements. Does mere education civilize the Blackman – I wonder –

Mahtu [sic: T.C. Mehta] arrives late to tea [.] N stands up and tells the waiter to bring a cup – He is callous. Mathu [Mehta], sensitive fellow seeks our company. Speaks of books he has read specially on Black Problem in S.A. [.] mentions review in Forum on Africa Peril Abercrombie [H. R. Abercrombie "Africa's Peril: The Colour Problem", 1938] – I ask to see the Forum. Mathu [Mehta] brings it along [.] I read it—segregation (see cutting).

We discuss race relations Mathu [Mehta] + I. Gandhi & Nehru. He admires Gandhi's earlier life in London.

He picks up photograph of N's in academic gowns and all the odds and ends – remains of medieval education frills – I tell him of my aversion to educational tabs – education as means to an end – Welcome function for African doctor in Native village but people soon find his charges too high – higher than the old mission doctor's.

He tells me his father wishes him to be more a social success [.] a family honour more than for the people – He shows the usefulness of knowledge of law – He on his way to Lincolns Inn<sup>1</sup> in London. Tells me Watson the West African down with sea sickness –

Standing in the passage I see Watson just disappearing into his cabin like Conrad's Nigger of the Narcissus [Joseph Conrad, "The Nigger of the Narcissus: A tale of the Forecastle", 1897] –

Abraham down with sea. s. [sic: sea sickness] anxious to know of result of

Test Match Eng. Vs SA. [sic: rugby test match between England and South Africa] excited to learn of SA success 19 to 3. He is sorry Gerry Brand did not play — It strikes me as queer as G. Brad [sic: Brand] as S African might have brutalized many a coloured person in his time — Humans are strange creatures —

Meet on upper deck other two Indians —

They thought N somewhat queer — His stare [,] strut etc. We sat in smoking room expecting music but none — I felt very strange uneasiness knowing that tho [sic: though] they did not say they hated the idea of niggers in their midst — I whisper to Mathu [Mehta] that if they had a Jewess on board someone would have protested against the niggers —

As some gos [sic: goes] away from the chairs near [,] I felt hot and cold with uneasiness — I have been brutalized many a time in the Transvaal — I think of an incident when I attempted to board a tram car in Johannesburg to get to Rosettenville to break the news to my sister of the passing of my mother [,] as I reached for the steps the driver jerked the car and shook me off, to the amusement of standersby.

We discuss the Xtian [sic: Christian] religion and agree it was the result of fears in the pre scientific period of human history — out of place now except to bluff the simpleminded — X explains the systems of religion in India.

Mathu [Mehta] is as sensitive and uncomfortable as I [,] we get up and leave the smoking room to my immense relief. I get down to my cabin — and vow never again to sit in that Devils Hole —

4 Sep.

[/P] Up for breakfast still no Watson and Abr [Abraham]

After breakfast sat on desk (we four) — X tells me a white passenger had been speaking to him and told him it was hard to believe an African capable of studying art and appreciating and doing a doctorate in Philosophy — These hypocrites who have reduced the African to near animal stage now turn round & say it is hard to believe the African to be human —

We read on the deck cold wind blowing all the sunny places occupied by whites on the decks — I go downstairs and see Watson [,] he had vomited much from sea sickness, he looks terribly [illegible] down — He is glad to

see me and he says he has missed me much because of the interest I have shown in West Africa — We talk [.] He believes the English best Colonial administrators [.] Compares the Belgian and French Colonial policy with English — Africans in both have migrated to English Dakar & Ashanti.

I tell him of N — He says Xtians [sic: Christians] have brought advantages and disadvantages e.g. Slavery abolished — But Methu [sic: T.C. Mehta] intervenes — it is more profitable to have wage-slaves.

We talk of African fetishism which served a useful purpose in keeping intact the African society morally and physically — W [sic: Watson] tells of how in his country a woman will not sleep with a man who is not her husband because She would offend the fetish and die — He points out nevertheless the cheapness of human life in African Society e[.]g[.] when a king died [.] his councillors got a number of other people killed to accompany the king — Nevertheless Xtian [sic: Christian] nations still wiped each other out in Wars — But the Africans knew how to adjust themselves to each other as individuals — The League of Nations let wars drift and had no practical suggestion to make to stop war and yet Xtian [sic: Christian] —

Early missionaries asked us to throw away all fetishes — In Accra there is a cenotaph to the War dead and a ceremony is conducted in which the chief citizens took part and the Governor laid a wreath and then walked backwards to a point before giving his back to the cenotaph. This looked like worship of the pile of stone — like a fetish to the African contradictions.

W. [Watson] shows us his passport and I tell him how difficult it was to get a passport for a “native” in SA [.] 3 months — with thorough investigation by all gov [sic: governmental] departments [.] He is astonished. He tells how had planned to travel round Africa by the East Coast and then to London. But at CapeTown he was refused passage in all boats travelling via the East because he would be the only black on board and S Africa whites resented travelling with blacks. He felt he was grateful to us for even though his plans were upset he still would have stopped in CapeTown longer than the month. He showed a letter of introduction to the Governor of ----- for his white departmental chief.

W. [Watson] gets sick again and he vomits convulsively [.] We ask him to dress up — and walk him up & down the lower deck [.] the upper deck is crowded with whites. He feels better and goes back to his Cabin.

It's lunch time — N still down — After lunch we play bridge [.] the band



strikes up a tune – Dinner.

An officer comes along to assist in the election of a Sports Committee – Mathu [Mehta] in a queer way surprised us by bawling out SV Naidoo – My foot and Naidoo's flick confusedly at Mathus [Mehta's] shin. Still he bawls out the second time [,] but to our relief no one takes notice of him - I think inactivity begins to tell on his nerves - The game is dull & we go down - sleep

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<sup>1</sup> W. Sze: A society of barristers in London, named after the estates Inns of Court and Inns of Chancery where students and apprentices of law stayed

The music ends with God Save the King and the Masochist  
~~of the stars~~ a finger of fire disappears ~~into the~~  
~~waves of night~~ into the night.

At breakfast A and Watson absent  
both feeling sea sick - N looks as hard as  
a nail - I discover a queer self over confidence  
and confidence which makes me uneasy - He stares glassily  
too long at people and his movements at table seem  
to be a result of deliberate coaching and practice -  
He closes his mouth because probably he was told so  
and munches like a ~~rat~~ with the deliberateness  
of an ~~other~~ animal - He is careful not to speak with  
food in his mouth etc - He never opens a conversation

After breakfast he plays bridge - Four ~~Side~~  
Indians and I African - N soon picks up the  
essentials of the game but he is disturbingly  
inattentive - he gazes around like an infant  
When the hand strikes up he drops his  
hands on the table and with a backward  
and forward sway of upper body keeps time to the  
jazz tune - I found at Casino Glad Sweepstakes  
of 30 he sits on deck N & I and I soon learn he is  
off to make to study "Race Relations" - I try to open an  
conversation but he seems to be avoiding a discussion -  
I ask if he has a standpoint he says no he is  
detached as a scientist should be - I wonder. I tell him

of my dislike for the white as a group and I am  
disappointed he does not like to know why -  
I potted around until dinner time  
Again not  
A & W. The menu is queer has queer names  
meaningless to me - I remark on the ~~same~~  
say why the waiter did not bring the things  
one after the other without Hester's question as  
he who have had no alternative to the  
invariable meek meal in South Africa. He  
replies that there are people who did not take  
certain kinds of foods, thus my pointless as  
he at least did not know what would come  
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I asked him if he would like to travel on a  
Japanese boat to study race relations - No there was  
no need for that we could go always go to Japan  
etc.

After dinner took down some biscuits to a -  
He told me he felt better by doing down - His girl told  
him to take biscuits and Norwalk powder although  
or against sea-sickness - He had prepared a mixture  
himself but did not work - He was big eater and missed  
his food badly -

Wagged around till tea-time - He & I together I told  
him I wished to keep away from clusters of whites. He had  
said how going to live with them a couple of



might as well get used to it straight away -  
Told him bluntly I had a strong aversion and  
could not help it - I asked him what the Whites  
had done with Africa - Oh very well for themselves  
but also much for the Africans I should  
not be on the boat if it was not for the Europeans  
I should not be able to criticize them were  
~~also etc etc~~ it not for the work they had  
done in Africa etc etc - They could not  
help but do it, I protested, They insisted  
progress. The "father of the natives" version  
of trusteeship bunk all over again and  
I wonder at the simplicity of this man - No wonder  
he has lived all his life in the Reserves - and  
he has never been personally threatened in his  
few primitive requirements. Does mere education  
civilize the Black man - I wonder -

Matthias comes late to tea. He stands up  
and tells the wails thing a cup - He is calling  
Matthias, sensitive fellow keeps our company - Sleaps  
of books he has read specially on Black Problem  
in SA. mentions review in Forum on Africa Cecil  
Abercrombie - I ask to see the Forum. Matthias  
brings it along I read it - segregation (see cutting)  
He discusses race relations Matthias + D. Gandhi  
+ Nehru - He admires Gandhi's earlier life in London

He picks up photograph of N's in academic  
gowns and all the odds and ends - remains of  
medieval education - tells him of my  
aversion to educational tabs - education as  
means to an end - Welcome function for African  
doctor in Natoro village but people soon find  
his charges too high - higher than the old African  
doctor's -

He tells me his father made him to be more  
a social success in family honor more than  
for the people - He shows the usefulness of  
knowledge of law - He on his way to Lincoln's Inn  
in London - tells me Natoro the best Africa  
does with sea sickness -

Standing in the passage I see Natoro just  
disappearing into his cabin like Conrad's  
Natoro of *Muggers* of the *Narcissus* -

Abraham does with sea sickness, anxious to know  
of result of Test Match Eng vs. S.A. excited  
to hear of S.A. success 19 to 3. He is sorry  
Gerry Bourd did not play - It strikes me as  
queer as J. Bourd as S.A. might have  
brought many a coloured person in his time -  
Humans are strange creatures -  
meet on upper deck other two ideas -



They thought Mr. Sorensen was queer - He started shouting  
we sat in smoking room expecting music but  
none - I felt very strange uneasiness knowing  
that tho they did not say they hated the idea  
of niggers in their midst - I whisper to Mattie  
that if they had a power or board someone would  
have ~~been~~ protested against the niggers -  
As fore goes away from the chairs near I felt  
hot and cold with uneasiness - I have been  
brutalized many a time in the Transval - I think  
of an incident when I attempted to board a  
train car in Johannesburg to get to Rosettenville to break  
the news to my sister of the passing of my mother.  
As I reached for the steps the driver jerked  
the car and shook me off - to the amusement  
of bystanders by -  
He draws the Xthian religion and agrees it was  
the result of fears in the pre scientific period  
of human evolution - out of place now except  
to bluff the simple minded - X explains the  
systems of religion in India -  
Mattie is as sensitive and uncomfortable as  
I we get up and leave the smoking room to  
my immense relief. I get down to my cabin -  
and visit once again to pit in that Devil's Hole -  
4 Sept. Up for breakfast still no Nelson and Abv.

After breakfast set on deck (we four) - When X tells  
me a ~~white~~ white passenger had been  
speaking to him and told him at our board  
to believe an African capable of studying  
art and appreciating and doing a doctorate  
in Philosophy - These hypocrite who have  
reduced the African to near animal stage  
now turn round say it is hard to believe  
the Africa to be human -

We read on the deck cold wind blowing  
all the ~~the~~ sunny places occupied by white on  
the decks - I go down stairs and see Watson  
he had vomited much from sea sickness he looks  
terrible ~~down~~ <sup>down</sup> - He is glad to see me and  
he says he has missed me much because of  
the interest I have shown in West Africa - We talk  
he believes the English West Colonial administration  
compares the Belgian and French Colonial policy to  
English - Africans in both have migrated to English  
Baker + Ashanti -

I tell him of N. He says Xthians have brought  
benefits and advantages and disadvantages eg.  
slavery abolished - But Matthew stivers - it is more  
profitable to have wage-slaves.

We talk of African fetishism which served a  
useful purpose in keeping intact the African society



morally and physically - He tells of how in his country  
a woman will not sleep with a man who is not  
her husband because she would offend the fetish and  
die - He points out nevertheless the cheapness of human  
life in African society, eg when a king died his councillors  
got a number of other people killed to accompany the king -  
Nevertheless Xhosi nations still wiped each other out in  
Wars - But the Africans know how to adjust themselves  
to each other as individuals - The League of Nations  
let wars drift and had no practical suggestion  
to make to stop war and yet Xhosi -

Early missionaries asked us to throw away all  
fetishes - In Accra there is a cenotaph to the War  
dead and a ceremony is conducted in which  
the chief citizens took part and the Governor laid  
a wreath and <sup>then</sup> walked backwards to a point before  
giving his back to the Cenotaph - This looked like  
worship of the pile of Stone - like a fetish to the African  
contradiction

John and Jack Hoger up and we talk  
He shows me his passport and I tell him how  
difficult it is to get a passport for a native in SA  
3 months - with thorough investigation by all 9 departments  
He is astonished - He tells how he had planned to travel  
round Africa by the East Coast and then to London, Port at  
Cape Town he has refused passage in all boats travelling via



KILDER TIL  
DANSK  
KUNSTHISTORIE

NY CARLSBERGFONDET

the East because he would be the only black on board  
and S Africa white resented travelling with blacks. He  
thanked us for felt he was grateful to us for even  
though his plans were upset he still would have  
stopped in Capetown longer than the month. He showed  
a letter of introduction to the Governor of — for his white  
departmental chief.

W. gets sick again and he vomits convulsively  
We ask him to dress up — and walk him up +  
down the lower deck the upper deck is crowded with whites.  
He feels better and goes back to his Cabin.

Sept 5 It is lunch time — W still down — After lunch  
he plays bridge the band strikes up a tune — Dinner  
time — and bridge again. I play a bad game  
Sept 5 After breakfast I go to the lower deck

Mr. An Officer comes aboard to assist in the  
election of a Sports Committee. Mathu is a queer boy  
puzzled us by bawling out St. Nauda — My foot  
and Nauda's stick crossed at Mathu's shin. Still he  
bawls out the second time but to my relief no  
one takes notice of him — I think inaction begins to tell  
on his nerves — The game is dull + we go down — Sleep

Sept 5/4 go down after breakfast + walk <sup>steerage - 6 trips but do not</sup> — Mathu calls me up <sup>mind up</sup>  
to a game of bridge — We sit corner — Watson comes along  
to the writing table — A huge form of reality which makes the