

November 1938 to early 1940, part 2

FACTS

Date:
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Page number:
p. 78-83

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

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

At school Egyptian arrives late with Jacques – Guardian gives them a talking to & there's excitement [.,] fellows talk of staying away – I speak of possibility of getting chucked out [.,] Egyptian confused [.,] not much intelligence –

Alexandre [.,] negro [.,] arrives and speaks English with me – He knows some but not perfect – He wants me to communicate with a girl friend of his who will write in French & I in English [.,] She is doing studies at Lycée – We walk together to my hotel – It is rainy & at corner of St Michel – Alexandre playfully asks to carry an umbrella 3 girls are sharing [.,] One smiles & says Non Monsieur [French: No, sir] politely – I think of the girl in South Africa who nearly fell on her back when I asked her to show me a street in Troyville [suburb of Johannesburg] – she was for a bus & I was tired [.,] I had walked a long way for no bus for negroes in SAfrica & it was desperation [.,] I was no surprise [sic: not surprised] [.,] she was a good South African. We part at door of my hotel – de la Sorbonne [.,] I share the lift with an old lady & young lady who speak English –

After dinner I go to Hotel Soufflet to return book "The Summing up" by S. Maugham [William Somerset Maugham, "The Summing Up", 1938] to Putzer – They are drinking tea – with old Danes. Putzer likes my drawings – He shows me his painting of the Greek woman [.,] I like it tremendously – He is extremely refined. Afterwards Xtian [Christian Poulsen] tells the fortunes of the old Dane – Once a popular bank clerk in Copenhagen [.,] gave it up to come to Paris to draw – last night He does not sleep [.,] stayed up at Le Dome [sic: Le Dôme] cd [sic: could] not pay for bed –

At the Academia draw a nude woman – beautiful [illegible] now & again to friends – Algerian arrives – Next a negro poses [.,] He looks stupid but a magnificent physic [sic: physique] – He dominates the Academia & I think of Nigger of the Narcissus [Joseph Conrad, "The Nigger of the

Narcissus", 1897] – clever book & Mr Watson -

On way home Xtian [Christian Poulsen] asks if I had drawn nudes before in SAfrica – I say it's unheard of in that country - & that the Dutch reformed church wd [sic: would] be up in arms if they knew one of their natives was drawing naked white women in Paris – He laughs & says I shd [sic: should] not go back to that savage country

I return to my hotel. & then go to dinner & see the [illegible words] line of defence - & wonder what the future generations will think of the ruins of the monstrous structure – to bed –

Classes as usual [,] no staying away of fellows [,] punctual – Xtian [Christian Poulsen] remarks what a successful strike! – Alexandre arrives at 1 – we go out and the door a girl friends stops – they talk [,] he comes running after us – He wants to speak English –

In afternoon we work casting the relief of the Luxembourg & Egyptian – Egyptian shows his skull in [illegible] & professor is embarrassed [,] Pierre does a bust of me [,]

Paul works & listen to conversation [,] Pierre tells me he knows an address we could go and copulate [,] I avoid him and Paul asks me to go with him – On the way he tells me Pierre is a sexual degenerate – He sleeps with men etc [,] We part & I ask him why he does not take coffee with me [,] he says he has no time. I know he avoids – Nothing doing [,] I go to caffe [sic: café] & take my time before Supper & go to bed –

Up x to school – the usual [,] have you copulated [?] from Pierre the longhaired fellow – I work at the ox head skeleton – I have come to like it – but I can't reconcile myself to it – the Egyptian works feverishly – I ask again – Pourquoi travail [French: why work] [?] - he says "you want to eat for nothing" [,] I answer I want but to go back to the forest & live in the sun!" I want him to think a bit for he never does – an ox [,] He's confused when I say you eat – you complete and die - we work till 11.30 – I tell the Algerian Christian invites him for tea – He does not seem keen – I wonder if he likes Xtian [Christian Poulsen] –

Before dinner Chayo arrives & happy – He tells me he will get pay tonight & go to the Bal Negre¹ [,] I ask him to wait for me after the [illegible] 9 & 10 – He does me out of 2fr [sic: 2 French francs] for the metro! I return to the school and work [,] The Egyptian clever at casting – His moulage

[French: molding] good – He soft soaps it –

[/P] Pierre looks horrible [,] hair all about [,] but he is good artist and I like him in a [illegible] manner – He lives like a candle in a windy room – He asks if I wish to go a hostel with him [,] it being Saturday – and he is persistent – Paul looks on sadly and we depart together. On the way he tells me Paul masturbate & a sex maniac [,] I am sorry – I prepare for the [illegible] Supper –

I arrive at Hotel Avadurer & find find [sic] at the door – the Confused Englishman who calls [illegible] the as distinction // black & white loathe the worm – He tries to be gallantly useful to some sour English women. He tells me not to stand at the door as they always had ladies to leave their coats in the usual room [,] I tell him I didn't know that – He says something – I ask if [illegible] is coming for I feel [illegible] out of place with these hypocrites of English men

I see The French fellow () and I am happy – We talk – He is so keen [,] I shouldn't catch a cold – Berbet arrives and asks 22fr [sic: 22 French francs] for the dinner & it appears [illegible] did not tell him I was coming –

We go into day room – I sit next to English [,] talkative but stupid and [illegible] and Englishman with son ([illegible]) [,] I speak to the Frenchman with [illegible] He is proud of English connections [,] He shows photographs & speaks of girl (French) who exclaimed Napoleon when she saw the Nelson Column at Trafalgar Square [in London] The woman speaks of good food at Copenhagen & good french reds –

¹ W. Sze: Le Bal Nègre was a popular Parisian night spot in the 1920s and 1930s that featured black performing artists.

At school Egyptian arrives late with
Jacques - Edmond gives her a talk
& there's excitement fellows talk of
staying away - I speak of possibility
of getting clucked at Egyptian expressed
not much intelligence -

Alexandre negro arrives and
speaks English with me - He knows
some but not perfect - He wants
me to communicate with a girl
friend of his who will write in French &
English - He is doing studies at
the lycée - We walk together to
my hotel - It is rainy & it comes
of St Michel - Alexandre playfully
asks to carry an open umbrella
Girls are shawing one smile &
says Non Monsieur politel - I
think of the girl in South Africa
who nearly fell on her back
when I asked her to show me
a street in Troyville - She was
bawdy for a time & also tired I
had walked a long way for no
base for negroes in Africa not
for. Despretreux was in surprise

There is a good book Africa - he part
at door of my hotel - de la Fontaine
I share the lift with an old lady
& young lady who speak English -
After dinner I go to Hotel Soufflet
& return book "The Summary of" by S.
Maugham to Puzos - They are
drinking tea - with old Dane - Puzos
likes my drawings - He shows he has
part of the Greek bones I like it
tremendously - He is extremely refined -
Afterwards Khan tells me the fortunes of the
old Dane - Once a popular bank
clerk - After he gave up to come
to Paris to draw - ~~that~~ last night
he ~~did not~~ did not sleep stayed up at
Le Dore did not pay for bed -

At the Academie draw a nude
bones - beautiful skulls mounted to
friends - Algeria arrows - Next a negro
poses - He looks stupid but a
pompous physique - He dominates
the Academie - I think of Nigger of the
Narcissus - clever book of Mr Watson -

On way home Khan asks about
~~my feelings~~ ~~at drawing~~ made if I had

drawn under before in Saffron - I saw
it is unpaired of that country - that
the Dutch reformed church had to
up a work of the they knew of
of their picture had drawn naked
white bones - Paris - He says
& says I shd not go back to
that savage country -

In the morning I & the go to
church & see the pictures of the
trajist line of defence - & wonder
what the stone of arches will
stand of the ruins of the
monstrous structure - to bed -

Classes as usual no staying away
of fellow punctual - Khars remarks
what a successful stroke! Alexandre
arrives at 11 - he goes out and the door
a girl friend stops - they talk he
comes running after us - He wants
to speak English -

In afternoon we took coffee the
relief of the day on the way to Sympna -
Sympna shows his skull in "reparat"
Professor is embarrassed Pierre
does a bit of me

Paul looks gladder & conversation
Pierre tells me he knows an
address we could go and complete
I avoid him and Paul asks
me to go with him - On the way
he tells me Pierre is a sexual
degenerate - He sleeps with men etc
We part & I ask him why he does
not take coffee with me he says
he has no time - I know he avoids
nothing but I go to cafe & take
- my time before supper & go to bed -
Up to school - He usual have
you copulated from Pierre the
long haired fellow - I work at the
ox head skeletons - I have come to like
it - but I can't reconcile myself to
it - the Egyptian work is terrible -
I ask again - Pourquoi travail? he
says "you must eat for nothing"
Janssen says eat & go back to the
forest & die with the sun! I want to
think a bit for he never does - as ox
heads composed the sea you eat - you
complete and die - Alexandre
arrives we work till 11:30 - I still

the Algerian Choiche invites me for
tea - He does not seem keen -
wonder if he likes Khan -

Before dinner Charjo arrives &
happy - He tells me he will get
my things & go to Bal Negre
I ask him to wait for me after
the 7th & supper 9+10 - He
does me out of 2 fr for the metro!

Return to the school and work
The Soupla closes at last - His
mouldage good - He soft soaps it -
Pierre looks horrible hair all about
but he is a good artist and I like him
in a ghastly manner - He lives like
a candle in a windy room -

He asks if I wish to go to the Hotel
with him but being Saturday - and he
is pernicious - Paul looks on sadly
and we depart together - On the
way he tells me Paul pastabate
and a sex maniac I am sorry -
I prepare for the 7th & supper -

I arrive at Hotel Gradina
and find at the door - the surprised
Sghitro who calls Anna, the

Native as distinction of black & white
to the the rooms - He tries the
gallantly useful to see some English
board - He tells he not to stand at the
door as they always had led to
jewellers coats in the novel room
Still he I didn't know that - He
says something - Jack of Amers
says for that was not at all place
with these hypocrisies of English
see the French fellow and
in half - he talk - He is to keep
I shouldn't catch a cold - Berbet
arrives and asks 22 sh for the dinner
it appears street did not call to
two long -
Begs for dining room - I sit next
to shyest talkative but stupid and
off and disagree with son (sp)
He speak to the Frenchman with coffee
He is proud of English connection - He shows
photograph of specks of girl (Fred) who
exclaimed rapturous when she saw
the Nelson Column at Trafalgar Square
The room speaks of good food at
Copenhagen & good french beds -