

I wonder how the paper is making out. It seems precarious. Your remarks re young ones putting their theories into film - it seems to work that way here too, although I'm not much clued up on it all. It's too time-consuming to keep up with it, and I'm lost in my own work. I don't think I got a cheque for the second article - in fact, I know I didn't. If the paper is totally broke, never mind. Write to me. Janet.

Much love and thoughts of you.

Helena

TO OPEN SLIT HERE

SENDER'S NAME AND ADDRESS (PLEASE SHOW YOUR POSTCODE)

H Bernstein

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BY AIR MAIL
AIR LETTER

PAR AVION AEROGRAMME



Janet Stevenson
115 Glenwood Ave
Hubbard Woods (Chicago)
Ill 60093
U.S.A.

13th May 77

Dearest Janet,

I did get a cheque. Please thank whoever responsible. I did what you said and looked at Mojekwu's credentials - I was astonished, didnt know he had them. However, dont agree with him generally about Zambia, nor would Patrick.

Italian holiday was all right - weather awful, rain a lot and wasnt too warm. A nuisance when you have two small boys who want to go to the beach. Also living with them revealed the cracks in Pat's marriage. They are only cracks, I suppose, not fissures, at least he obviously has no intention of making any changes, but compensates through his work and the two boys.

On the way home we went through Aix and Arles, beco I'd seen them briefly before at height of tourist time, and wanted to see Cezanne's studio at Aix and the Roman arena at Arles. We didnt see the former, but had a bonsella - a new place, called Foundation Vasarely, a Vasarely gallery of stunning design and fabulous, increasingly beautiful scenery, ~~and~~ stunning. Do you like Vasarely? These were on a huge scale, and were marvellous. It's just outside Aix. After Arles visited a strange place, Les Baux, which gave its name to bauxite, and presents an old village anchored to a plateau left high and dry by excavations. The Village is intriguing and interesting, and the surrounding countryside strange, Dante-esque, contorted by both man and nature: wierd. Then we pounded straight up the motorway home. Now, between visits from South African relatives, I'm trying to apply myself to new work. I have refrained from sending you any new prints because I think you must have enough on your hands at present. Do you have to spend a great deal of time looking after your mother? Is it draining you, Janet? I think of you and her very often.

Hetty had a coronary - a mild one. I saw her a few days ago at the Royal Free Hospital (she should be home this week) she looked fine and the general prognosis is good. I said she must slow down running about with the Peace Council, conferences on Ireland, etc. She said, on the contrary, she is going to get rid of all the other things she hates doing (looking after two rented flats, etc) and devote all her time and energies to the only thing she really enjoys doing which is her political work.

At Apricale a woman in the village wanted to buy bar house. At first we said yes, then changed our minds. It's still not properly habitable, but has made some progress. It looked so beautiful, with dark green tile on the floor and the terraced hills . . . but Italy is now prohibitely expensive, like the rest of Europe, to those who travel with sterling. The British tourist is becoming rare. Swiss and West Germans, in huge cars looking rich, abound.

Work - I'd love to discuss it with you - it pulls this way & that. Matson in New York has not succeeded in selling the novel. A publisher here has had it 4 months, keeps promising to come to a decision, will let me know for sure this afternoon or tomorrow morning - I wait for the phone, reluctant to go out shopping, but - silence. The film still hangs in the air - interest lost, one cant keep on being keen about a project after four years . . .

I want to write another novel, mentally consider and keep playing around with a few different ideas, cant really decide what it's to be, get irritated with myself. I've been selling pret'y well (etchings) but costs of materials are so high, its an Alice

situation in which one runs faster & faster to stay in one place. Still, from the beginning of this year until December, I am exhibiting in various places continuously except for November - libraries, galleries, open-air exhibitions, etc. I look more & more for places where the work will be seen, even if not sold, and begin to avoid the galleries, where it is sometimes sold but not seen by people.

On holiday, read Millet's 'Flying' (would never have got through it normally) with mixed irritation, absorption, etc. Did you read? Would love to discuss with you. Going to see a play by Soviet Kirghizian writer, Aitmatov, supposed to be good . . . will tell you. Weather here consistently vile, summer never came to England this year (except for three days when we were in Italy) and the weather works on me with grey, cold depression. We had nothing but Royalty and Jubilee solid, day & night, all media, all stops out, for weeks resulting after pounding the public into a state of stupefaction in a kind of mass hysteria with a million people outside Buck House and down the Mall (looked like one of Castro's gatherings) all screaming their silly heads off at the sight of a dull, plain, stupid

No room. Much love. Hilda

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18/7/77

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Dearest Janet,

Sitting waiting week after week hoping to hear from you, then feeling worried - I know we both have long gaps, but somehow anxious to know how you are, what is happening, if you are totally occupied with your mother and her decline, still able to snatch at life . . . Because I guessed you must be too occupied, I havent sent any new prints; you must say if you would like some sometime.

I wrote a piece for the British Guardian on the exile of Winnie Mandela - a heart-rending story. Wondered if you would care to have it for the paper expanded and explained. But I dont know if the paper is still on its two feet, and staggering on!

Havent any particular news for you. Cant remember when and what I last wrote, but must have been after we came back from Italy. Since then a mouldy sort of summer - not totally bad, but too much rain and chill between the sunny spots. I've had a fairly unproductive period, stopping and starting, unable to make up my mind about subjects (not short of ideas, simply too many!) whether to aim more at satisfying the gallery requirements because I want money or to do something about Soweto because it pulls. However, I do seem to have managed to pull out a bit from the slough - not so much depression as lack of decision. After months of waiting on a publisher who promised to make a 'quick decision' on that unpublished novel, it was finally turned down 'we just cant sell books about South Africa the public is bored with them' and in addition, position re novels getting published now has become desperate. Heard no more from Matson in NY, wait for the post each day but its circulars, bills and requests involving undesirable effort.

Hetty had a heart attack - not TOO severe, and she seems to be making a good recovery, but now has to take care. Bernard moved the grand piano from their living room and made a little kitchenette in the corner so that she doesnt have to run up and down the stairs to the kitchen all day. She is full of bounce, still deeply wedded to her peace activities - she says she'll drop everything else except her political work. Saw a play here on Sat. called 'Are you now or have you ever been?' Not bad, well acted, but wondered whether young audience really got the feel of what it was like.

Family all well - Ivan went to Lebanon, made film about PLO, came back quite shattered with what he saw and heard there. Keith has at last got job with photographer which looks as though it will provide him with the opening he wants to the great big world of trendy photography. We went to see Frances who has moved into new little slum house in Manchester with friend John, who I

I know would make an excellent husband for someone else's daughter - still, they are 'making a little home' and it is fun for them and a more settled life for her. The whole weekend we never once discussed the gang of four, though I itched to ask her about China's policy in Africa - shattering - but next time, maybe. Our relationship has improved so much, she has become more loving and stopped patronising me, so I hesitate to shatter it. Pat in Zambia is selling prints like mad, but cant send the money, so I plan to go there maybe in Jan or Feb of next year, to draw, paint, photograph and I hope, to be able to do some travelling in other African countries - depending on state of funds. I've looked at myself, my age, and realised that all those dreams of what I want to do will NEVER be done unless I get and go and do them now, without waiting any more for Rusty, who cant bring himself to take any more chances at his age. So I'll do it in bursts here and there, starting in Zambia. Please write, dear Janet, I miss you.

W. L. S.
(But I can't get a letter from you tomorrow!)

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PAR AVION AEROGamme



Janet Stevenson,

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U.S.A.

10th, Wed, August 77

Dearest Janet,

Sending this to you so you can read it first. Probably too long. Trying to get photos to send - probably send them tomorrow.

~~Arthur~~ ^{Art} 2 On Sunday I'm going away for four days, so hope ~~Arthur~~ 2 contacts me before then, or even after. Don't know where he will be staying, so can't leave a message. Rusty is going to Italy to try and get the house finished, and I am going to Hereford with my sister-in-law to paint.

In case this article is a little incomprehensible to Americans, I would like to explain that when you are under banning orders they are so stringent and so absurd that it is literally impossible not to break them. We did, continually. The thing is not to be caught, but with the kind of surveillance that Winnie is under, it is a totally impossible life. If someone comes to her house during 'house arrest hours' - whether invited or not - she is breaking her ban. If she stops to talk to a neighbour in the street (in what language?) and another neighbour comes up, this constitutes a gathering and she is breaking her ban. And so on.

They can't bear her because she is beautiful, highly intelligent, literate and proud. They want all black women to be illiterate and humble.

Jimmy must run

Much love

Hilda

*— Never be Jimmy I prayed for rain — Love it!
I'm sure you have someone clever on the paper
who can put Rands into dollars — don't know
what R100 is.*

Photos will follow in few days

19th Sept 77

Dearest Janet,

The weeks whip by - snap, snap and they're gone - and I have a notebook which says, every single day, among the things I must do 'Write Janet.' Next day it says 'Write Janet' and next week . . . reasons for not getting on with it abound, and this morning I thought I must really go out and buy some air-letters and write Janet, and then re-thought - that's another way of postponing doing it . . . life's full of these tricks, you have to learn to trip up your own tricks.

First, thanks for ITT, with Mandela article, which I thought looked good with the picture you used, and I am so glad you published it (or Jodis or whoever). Since I wrote it Winnie has been charged seven times with contraventions of her banning orders since being exiled, and Mr Justice de Wet in the high courts issued an order on two policemen to refrain from harrassing Zendzi; he said she was not under house arrest, and was permitted to have visitors (that's Zendzi, of course, not Winnie), and it was stated that the police ~~interfered~~ with, assaulted and arrested any of her friends who came to see her. My own Toni fought out the same issue when Rusty was house-arrested - that is, the right of other members of the household to have their own visitors. Poor Zendzi! She's 16, lively, well-educated, does not want to leave her mother alone, but what a life for her!

Regarding ITT, I'm sorry I dont read it all. When it comes in batches (as with Art, I'm overwhelmed, having in addition a great pile of books not read over-due from the library, apart from last week's Sunday newspapers not read, etc, etc. But from what I have read it does seem to me to be improving all the time ~~o~~ from the first rather hesitant, feeling-their-way issues; it has more punch. I do think it must have a point of view on most things, even if it tries from time to time to present the alternative. More about that in a moment.

I didnt object to what you did to The Home, being aware of the technical difficulties of re-production.

I havent sent new prints because I keep waiting for another one to be done. I had two or three months (or maybe more, cant recall) of awful slough of despond, the bottom of the graph, when my work just didnt move and I felt in total despair about everything I did or tried to do (the art side I mean). The more I struggle the worse it went. Nothing spectacular happened to bring me out of it. It just gradually, through hard grind, began to make headway again. I have worked for two months on a particularly recalcitrant animal plate - sable antelopes - that is now finished, awaiting final proofing then printing. Although (as usual) I'm deeply dissatisfied with the end result, at least I finally licked it, after two completely new versions and four different states (stages, re-worked) So I'm able to begin on something else, and just bit by bit, it

all appears to be picking up, with new ideas pressing to be investigated. I don't want to pester you with prints while you have all your present burdens, but will send Vanishing Herds and Sable Antelopes when the latter is ready. I'm trying to add considerably to the animal prints, with the idea of a 'threatened species' exhibition. Meanwhile, it has been a good year for me from the point of view of being seen, starting with the Royal Free Hospital over Christmas, going on to the Swiss Cottage women's exhibition which was seen by hundreds and hundreds of people, to the three-month-long week-end open-air exhibition at Hampstead where I have become their best-selling artist, and where I really sold extremely well, and now I am preparing for another exhibition at the Royal Free in November and December, and must have new stuff to show - hard grind! I've had offers of shows from two different galleries, but I don't think I will take them up, I tend now more and more to favour shows at public places, like the library, the hospital and the open-air exhibition, where just ordinary people see the work, rather than the elitism and closed-in-ness of galleries. This is really what my kind of work, and prints, are about. Meanwhile, the writing side has started nagging again. An unpublished novel about love, which I now see can be re-written, re-juggled, to become more effective - oh dear, time!

It's the turn of the year. Last night we switched the heating on for the first time. We haven't had much summer, mostly overcast and fairly cold.

Just remembered I've got a plate in the acid - must run

Love Theda

The road to hell . . . had intended to comment on some of the articles I managed to read in ITT but no time now. Pleased to see you are making circulation drive - would be tragic if paper couldn't survive.

Check out our Italian film "Illustrious Corpses", a political thriller - absolutely splendid & thought-provoking about all sorts of things including Eurocommunism

11th October 77

Dearest Janet,

Recently two friends of mine arrived here from South Africa: Indries Naidoo spent 10 years on Robben Island and Mac Maharaj 12 years. I had them over one evening and got them to talk for about an hour and a half, from which I distilled an article with some fascinating material in it. I wondered whether 'In These Times' would be interested. I am writing to you instead of direct to your foreign man, because this gives me an excuse to fill the rest of this letter with trivial bits of this and that. If he would like the article I have a print to go with it - The Island - do you remember it? Men breaking stones with pick-axes on top of a great pile of stones. I suppose you don't have a copy by any chance? Anyway, you'll let me know about it.

It seems as tho I'll have to put aside -ictures soon for a while and do some writing. Next year is (guess what) International Year Against Apartheid. Never mind, don't jok, it gives rise to many propaganda opportunities. I think DEFA, who did the woman booklet, want something about the same length on trials, torture-a-x-la-Biko, etc, and while it mightnt look like much work when one has finished because it doesnt take so long to read, it takes a long time to prepare - I have to gather material like flowers, some very rare, from many gardens. ALSO: I have an exhibition at the Royal Free Hospital this Christmas, together with 2 other women print-makers (but they make smaller prints than I!) and this means getting work ready, framed, etc. And possibilities of another one later on in a London stores; and I plan to go to Zambia fairly early on next year, where kwachas for prints sold by Pat are gathering dust in his bank. Also I've been selling quite a lot of prints, so busy life. The days whip by relentlessly, it always seems to be Monday again and a whole week of things to be done. I think of the paper . . . is it surviving? and you . . . are you surviving? Your silences are not golden to me. Winter is on its way - I can't BEAR it! Oh, I hate it so much, the greyness, the dirty dullness, the half-light all day, the blanket over one's head so grey and depressing, the cold. I ride my bike and between the blasts of stinking choking breath from the lorries comes once more the odour of damp leaves. All else is the same. Toni and family are well, the boys grow up and more beautiful, Ivan has work, tho nothing very important. Frances pursues her proletarian life in darkest Manchester. Keith works for a photographer and dreams of better jobs to come. Pat rarely writes from Zambia because he has never been able to write a letter of more than about 3 lines. Rusty works, and looks down-trodden and watches telly and reads. I dream of escape, travel . . . While I draw and etch, I listen to the radio. I don't know if your British correspondent has written about the kind of stuff I hear. There has been in this country now for the last few years a consistent orchestrated attack on the trade union and labour left; it is very reminiscent of the old days when the target was more directly the communists - now its communism through the back door. From the awful phone-in programmes that I'm compelled to listen to

when the only alternative is Stockhausen or German leader, I can guage what an effect this is having on the not-so-silent majority. A stream of prejudice, echoing all the media phrases, pours forth. Racism is officially disapproved, unofficially helped in every possible way. I can feel a new kind of mass fascism growing up here, not with jack-boots and hysterical rallies, but in the twisted minds of millions - it is incredible. Is it the same in the USA? Lots of love, dear Janet. I hope you are surviving. We are survivors, aren't we?

Holder

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26/10/77

Dearest Janet,

Went to the opening of a new gallery, Casa Pupo, in Pimlico Road, 'champagne & caviar party' they said, at 12 noon. I drank five & a half glasses of champagne, ate three peoples' portions of caviar, then staggered to a taxi to Marks and Spencers, where I bought myself new pants, shirts, jerseys, for the first time in years - wouldn't have done it if I had been sober. Came home free on the bus (old persons' free pass) (old! who, me?) decided it's too late to do any decent work, must write to Janet.

1) Yes, you were right, I meant to send some prints off. They will now be sent in no more than 2 days - I have to get cardboard rolls, for some reason they're not easy to get at the moment. Hang on, it won't be long.

2) Of course I love the money, but would rather have the article printed anyway, money or not, so will send it - but it needs a bit of a re-write, give me a few days, it will come.

3) Re punk rock - I consulted the oracle, Keith. He now works for a photographer who keeps a file of pix of rock, pop & jazz stars, & sends K to all the concerts to take pictures, so K is right there up front listening to them all and watching them. This is what he says:

The Sex Pistols, the whole punk scene, they are NOT white working class rascist, they are, in fact, not anything, they are, says the oracle, just the latest fad being manipulated and exploited by the big record companies and fashion shops on the High Street. Each small group might start off as being some sort of rebellion - against unemployment, against teenage miseries, the feeling that the great big world is against you and you've got to push it over, about being bored, nothing ever happens to me, I haven't any future, etc, etc, but none of them, not one of them, can push up into the big time without becoming simply puppets who are manipulated for cash, and if they don't push up, then nobody knows they exist except a few local people.

The oracle cites the case of Johnny Rotten and the Sex Pistols. Twice they rebelled against what the company they were signed with demanded, and what they wanted to put out. Twice the companies simply tore up their contracts & told them to get out. Now they've signed up with a third, & they're behaving themselves. They will be promoted as long as the image serves a purpose, as long as it lasts, then they'll find a new image, & the Sex Pistols will sink to the bottom of the sea. Three years ago, says K, London airport was jammed by teenyboppers every time Dave Cassidy or the Osmonds flew in; riots outside their hotels. Today they fly in and out and no-one even notices, because Teenyboppers are three -years-ago scene & we're promoting something different today.

K says punk rock has some roots in Reggae (which is black) and has fringe-black exponents, so is not anti-black.

I had a look at some of the lyrics on the record sleeves - he has a great collection - and I must say it confirmed his view - the words might, in a line here or there, convey a suggestion of kicking against the status quo, but on the whole they seemed pretty meaningless and even stupid, or just nothing. But K keeps coming back to this - any group big enough to be known is a commercial proposition. The Teddy boys are another thing - they're simply kids who like dressing up in fancy clothes - no political bias one way or another.

Janet - I'm posting the -rints today. On this slip you'll see one, Leopard - I've been waiting for some more to be editioned, but don't want to wait any more - will send him on when ready. Prices are a guide - as you will see, my prices have gone up, but if you want to buy a print yourself to give someone, then take a third discount off.

Going away for weekend, have tons and tons and tons of work to do, some men tramping over the house trying to stop the roof from leaking, sun pouring in - October's the best month in England, golden leaves - nostalgia - long to see Janet, sit in your kitchen looking at books and birds outside the window.

Much love, will write again soon - or at least send articles

/↓

It's ROTHWELL ST

NOT ROCKWELL

x No Slip.

Prices
(selling price
in England)

Vanobung Herds	£45
Sable Antelopes	£45
Seabirds	£25
Leopard (when it comes)	£43

11/11/77

Dearest J,

Your letter stirred me into action, I had to re-do this article, here it is. The Guardian had a photo of prisoners breaking stones on the island - I am trying to get it from them, but if it doesnt come in two days, dont wait. The print will do, I expect.

Awful days mounting and framing pictures - now they are all up at the Royal Free Hospital.

Glad you liked the prints - yes, every now and then I am at peace with myself, but not for long. Trying to write small book for DEFA (the same people who did the booklet on women) by end of year - very difficult - about torture, trials, justice. Masses of stuff to read, painful reading, dont know how to put it together to MAKE others want to read on, not just turn away sickened. But must do it. Print-selling taken a sharp upward turn this year. Sometime, when there is time, will tell you of the problems fought in silence within my soul re the direction of my work . . . and why I'm taking the path of doing mainly prints to sell.

Didnt tell me where you went for your 2-day freedom ride. New York? LA? Why didnt you print Edith's article?

Much love

Both Indries & Mac talk about the island as though they are still there - "we" - & the present tense
Indries & I worked in the same office before his arrest & then he & 3 others were trapped by a police agent into a small act of sabotage. Mac is one of those beautiful people you must love - he was subject to the most terrible & obscene physical tortures after his arrest - they drove a rusty nail through his penis.

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