

29 Aug 89

SOMAFCO

P/Bag Masumbun

Marogoro

Tanzania

Dear Madi,

Harold Wolpe is here for a Seminar, so I shall get him to post this to you in London. It was lovely to get your letter - it arrived at the end of April - and your love via (I take it) your Chief Pop - Rusty said someone gave it to him, he didn't know who.

When were you in Masumbun? And for how long? I've totally forgotten about it. I am sort of adjusted to many aspects of life here although I do not intend to adjust to them all. I am severely handicapped because my typewriter - (together with medicines, toiletries, kitchen equipment, crockery, books, all art materials, paper, paints, pencils, boards, expensive brushes, plus essentials we haven't got here such as pillows, towels, etc, etc) are still at Tanzanian Customs in Dar where they have been since the end of March - before we arrived. Don't ask me to explain. I'm already suffering from writer's cramp through hand-writing everything, & as you may guess, it's a long, sad story.

As for trips to the Marogoro Hills - we are totally without any transport. We have difficulty in hitching an occasional lift to Marogoro to get fruit at the market. We live at Masumbun, but Rusty's institute is supposed to be in Dakawa. Only he has no transport & can't get to Dakawa. Let me not depress you with our situation any further. I signed a contract before I left London (I went there in June to launch the new 'The World That Was Ours' & had a wonderful time - publisher paid the fare - did countless radio interviews, went to Paris for a BBC 2 programme, enjoyed 15 minutes of fame) for my projected book: 'Exiles, The South African Experience' - lined up by a combination of flattery on the publishers part & greed on my own (a considerable advance). Don't know what I've told you about the book, but it's based on oral history, & I intend to visit as many people as possible - certainly to go to Sweden & the GDR sometime to record interviews. I hope you will help me with suggested victims. At Masumbun, of course, as totally 'Exiles' I am starting the collection of material here, & this gives me something to do in addition to the hours & hours spent on domestic work without any appliances or kitchen equipment. If this letter sounds like one big moan to you, it is not an adequate reflection of my life. It's being in Africa - so beautiful, so maddening - the sky, the smell of the dry grass, the landscape, the people with their friendliness & loud voices & beautiful smiles, the courtesies, the slow pace, the frustrations - and the stupefying bureaucracy of our own organisation. Rusty's job here is to set up an institute for political education & studies for ANC Cadres - at Dakawa. I'm not on ANC business - doing my own thing, an appendage of Rusty.

Thanks for writing about both Edith & your late-lover. I hope her health bears up. I'm reading Christa Wolf essays 'The Fourth Dimension'.

Much I had a typewriter - I'd tell you some of the hilarious things that happen here

Much love Madi (i.e. from Rusty, but not as much as from me)

Dear Hilda,

11<sup>th</sup> April 1989

Welcome to the heat and challenge of Mazimba! At least you're arriving at the right time of year, with the "hot period" behind you for a few months. And if it gets unbearable next January, maybe you will be able to return to Europe a little earlier. Or else go into the Morogoro Hills on evenings + weekends, where the view is magnificent + the surroundings mercifully cool. Regards to Edith. Rusty.

Edith showed me the letter you'd recently written her but we still couldn't make out exactly what the ANC had asked either you or Rusty to do.

I spent a lovely week in Berlin, but interfered more with Edith's work than I wanted to do. She was so concerned about providing meals, + her standards are high, so though I left her alone in the morning by sleeping late + taking long baths, her mind was on my needs rather than her work.

Healthwise, she had one infection after the other last year. Colds + urinary tract, mostly. Also her nose which has been badly operated on (for sinus trouble, I think) runs faintly constantly + she has a mysterious heart condition. She takes different kinds of medicines to keep all this in check. While I was there she also had an examination for kidney pains, but there were no stones, so it must be her back. Some months ago I brought her vitamin-mineral pills with "selen" (as it's called in Swedish) + they seem to help her feel less tired. At least she phoned for new supplies a couple of days after the 1st hot rain as she noticed a drop in energy levels in the afternoon. I also brought her a pair of padded thermal pants as she loves sitting on benches in the sun, even when it is chilly, in the hope they will have a prophylactic effect.

Going to thermal baths for cures is a fine art in the GDR. It is a great honour to be selected (as she has, by the writers union) and given such a cure. They pay all expenses. People of all ages go, if they can, for rheumatic or back pains. Different types of waters + various kinds of treatment, depending on the ailment.

You are right that Edith was critical of Herbot. He made a few mistakes, like running me down + smuggling about how he could put me in my place. And Edith is loyal; in addition very sceptical about men in general. The bits she has let on about her Max indicate that he was extremely difficult (often) unfaithful, autocratic on occasion, as well as being clever, bright, hard working + all that a brilliant young woman could aspire to. But that doesn't mean he was a comfortable husband.

AVGIFT BETALD  
TAXE PERÇUE

SVERIGE

TO AWAIT ARRIVAL

**AEROGRAM  
PAR AVION  
FLYPOST**

Ms. Hilda Bernstein  
c/o SOMAFCO  
Private Bag Mazimba  
Morogoro  
Tanzania

Avsändare MADI GRAY  
Sender  
Expéditeur Bellmansg. 24, 3tr,  
Absender S-11647 STOCKHOLM  
SWEDEN

27/4/89  
✓

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Tillverket av Posten

... enough + earlier than I did, + was long in two minds about whether to warn me. Only when I mentioned I was beginning to have some doubts, did she say anything. Even then she was careful. Today I am relieved that the GPR authorities delayed so long in consenting to our wedding. By the time they did, in Nov. I was utterly disenchanted + had realized he has no political sense whatsoever. (Anyone can mouthe anti-apartheid platitudes. Since then, he has shown himself to be a greedy liar. So I am heebly relieved at my narrow escape. Pity about the dream, + the feeling of being in love was lovely. But that's okay, too. Beryl (Nandi's father) is in Harare with his wife Elsa. (The world in which you move is so small, that you may yet meet in Southern Africa). That's fine in many ways, as Ms's relationship with me is basically harmonious + developing. But occasionally there are crises, anti-social + extra-parliamentary protect, which break me + then I miss B's authority. ALL THE VERY BEST LOTS OF LOVE Madi

Forget to tell you that  
I'm going to SA for 6  
weeks on 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. Will  
visit Joburg, Maputo for a  
weekend, Windhoek for a  
week to see Anton Johnston  
& his family, Cape Town &  
Montagu with my brother  
for 5 days at the hot springs  
It's a rigorous schedule

as I hope to get some  
interviews cover the  
elections, work,  
But be fun -  
been there since last year



see friend  
to call  
look for  
etc.  
should  
haven't

elections. Most of all,  
what changes have there  
been? Is the honeymoon  
for the ANC over?

By the way, Esther  
seems to have broken  
off our association. Sent  
her money for her books  
a year ago (which she  
never acknowledged) + a  
letter telling her about  
doing things differently; +  
haven't heard a word since.  
But send her my regards if  
you're in contact with her.  
lots of love Madi

5 am 18<sup>th</sup> June 91

My dear Hilda,

Just a quickie. Off to D. + Edith  
in 5 hours + am doing everything  
done that needs

Spent the week-end at Maddi Grey  
(South African, was living in  
Sneders, Sackville), ple's high  
school in Norrköping, a medium sized town  
about 2 hours by train towards  
Crothenburg. Topic: African Women Writes.

Featuring Madi on Hilda, Madi on Str  
Women Writes, Madi on ANC Women's  
Conf, etc. till I thought I'd die of boredom  
at the sound of my own voice. But it  
was successful, nevertheless, & they  
were fascinated by your life + works.  
And several had read + really liked "Death  
is part of the Process". The others wanted to  
know where to get it. Also "The world that was  
Ours".

Am coming to London on 25<sup>th</sup> June  
& am spending weekend of 28/30 at Mason's.

We were thinking of motoring down to  
Dorstone <sup>for a day</sup> with her 2 yr 8 month old son,  
David. How does that grab you? Let  
me know, pse. Tel 081-960 3646.

80 Kempe Rd (clom Newman), London NW6 6BL.

Hope to see you soon! Lots of love Madi.  
All the best to Rusty!

3 am 18<sup>th</sup> June 91

My dear Hilda,

Just a quickie. Off to Berlin + Edith in 5 hours + am trying to get everything done that needs to be done.

Spent the weekend at a people's high school in Norrköping, a medium sized town about 2 hours by train towards Crothenburg. Topic: African Women Writers.

Featuring Madi or Hilda, Madi or Stan Women Writers, Madi or ANC Women's Conf, etc. till I thought I'd die of boredom at the sound of my own voice. But it was successful, nevertheless, + they were fascinated by your life + works. And several had read + really liked "Death is part of the Process". The others wanted to know where to get it. Also "The world that was Ours".

Am coming to London on 25<sup>th</sup> June + am spending weekend of 28/30 at Marion's. We were thinking of motoring down to Dorstone <sup>for a day</sup> with her 2 yr 8 month old son, David. How does that grab you? Let me know, pse. Tel 081-960 3646.

80 Kempe Rd (clom Newman), London NW6 6BL.

Hope to see you soon! Lots of love Madi.  
All the best to Rusty!

AVGIFT BETALD  
TAXE PERÇUE

SVERIGE

**AEROGRAM**  
PAR AVION  
FLYGPOST

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Tillverket av Posten

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Öppnas här · Open here · Ouvrez ici · Hier öffnen



13<sup>th</sup> June 1993

Dearest Hilda,

Rereading your lovely letter of March while planning to write an answer. To ~~ans~~ answer your first questions, re visitors. The new sofa I bought makes up into two single beds, + for special guests I can roll one into my office. So, no problem. You are more than welcome to stay at any time! Would be lovely!

How wonderful that you will be attending the launch of your book at the WM Book Fair in September! If you meet Stephen Gray, allow him to be charming to you. He's a master at that. Enjoy!

(2)

Now that summer is here, have you not started painting, or at least drawing, again?

I had a nasty shock that came like a bolt out of the blue less than two months ago. When a woman turns 50 <sup>in Sweden</sup>, she is routinely called for a mammography. A week later I received a request to return for more photos. Thought they'd just made a mess of the first lot, but no, they had found a lump. Now it's been excised (very small tumour, + when I'm dressed you can't tell the difference) + I've had my first chemotherapy treatment. That will go on for 6 months. Concurrently, for two years, hormones to shut off my estrogen supply. And afterwards, radiotherapy of the affected breast. So I'm concentrating on finding

③  
alternative foods, vitamins + mineral  
supplements + other ways of  
beating both the cancer + miti-  
gating the side effects of the poisons  
they're filling me up with. One of  
my friends is giving me healing  
treatments two or three times a  
week. So far (touch wood) I'm only  
plagued by tiredness. Hope to go  
home for a visit in December after  
the chemotherapy + before the radiotherapy.  
luckily it's all in early stages, so the  
prognosis is excellent. Still, this wasn't  
the way I had thought of spending  
my 51<sup>st</sup> year.

Won't be coming to England for  
a while, I think. Possibly a stopover  
(less than 24 hrs) on the way to or  
from Cape Town. Tho' some time I'd  
love to visit you in your little box in Oxford

Nandi finally got her A-levels. She worked hard + was rewarded with top marks. Now she's applied for university to study something that will enable her to work with war-damaged children eventually. This has been her ambition since, at 15, she met refugees from Renam in Moz. She has also fallen in love with a man 8 years older than her who seems to be in love with her. I'll meet him next weekend. He's a plowshare activist (you know, the ones who want to beat weepers into useful artefacts.) I'm so pleased for her - she has been LONGING for a meaningful relationship.

Dear Hilda, hope you + Rusty are well + settling down. Edith + her brother will be in Stockholm for ~~4 days~~ in late July!! GREAT!!! love, love, love — Madi

It's March already! 1993

Dearest Madi

That was such a happy letter from you I almost sat down and answered it on the spot but realised that there must be a decent interval between letters, otherwise we would have time for nothing else. I really enjoyed hearing about your trips, and your house renovation. Now Madi's room is your office, where does the visitor sleep? And the birthday parties sounded wonderful. Make the most of the next ten years. I've decided that women are at their best from 40 to 60. At 60 I finally renounced the obviously unattainable romantic dreams that I had lived with, which doesn't mean I resigned myself to being old - I'm angry at that, not resigned. I am sure your decision not to return at present is a wise one. There's so much to say about this - about those who have returned, and the inevitable family splits and sorrows. The title of my book - 'The Rift' - is taken from a quote of Edward Said: 'Exile is strangely compelling to think about, but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home. Its essential sadness can never be surmounted.' This is so absolutely right - it is an unhealable rift, and in some ways saddest of all is the illusion that return can heal the rift. (The book, by the way, is to be launched in SA at the Weekly Mail Book Week, first week in September, and I expect to be going there for the launch. A small compensation for the publisher's constant delays in publication.)

When did I last write to you? Did I tell you about our house? It is a semi-detached box, with little boxes of rooms in an appallingly dull post-war housing estate, and we bought it because of the garden - it overlooks Oxford canal and has trees, and Rusty is fully occupied tearing the interior to pieces and putting it together differently. Since we moved, I've done nothing creatively, and hate it, filling all my days with mundane things, going to the shops, preparing meals, trying to exist on what is virtually a building site - the first few weeks with all the kitchen on the floor as R tore it to pieces; now it is functioning & much better, but the mess goes on - you had it, so you know. Incredible pervasive fine dust over everything. Friends envy my capable do-it-yourself husband, but he is also an elderly man who is much slower than he used to be. I'm vegetating. We watch television (news, documentaries and nature films). We eat our evening meal watching the news, heart-searing pictures of starving stick children in desolate camps (the scenes from Somalia - unspeakable) and dreadful visions of cruelties, war, torture, death. And we sit and watch and eat our satisfying meals; read a little; go to bed early. Somehow, although I can't see a way to change it, it isn't a way to live. Yet I'm pleased we moved, however disruptive it's been, as London is so much nearer, I can see people from time to time, and one of these days, I tell myself, I will start painting.

Will you come to England this year? Do you know Oxford? If you can ignore the tawdry, ugly, endless industrial Oxford, Cowley Oxford, with its mean streets of endless terraced or semi-detached houses, if you just turn your eyes to the city itself, it is incomparable. Marvellously beautiful, endlessly fascinating. I've been able to go to the Ashmolean, and see some exhibitions, and we even go to the cinema (which by the way I love, better than the theatre) which we could never do in Dorset. We know one family here - Sadie and Charles Berman (you, a Capetonian, would not remember him, but he had a jazz band and played the trumpet). Sadie I love. When you wrote about walking around with a towel, it reminded me that I actually had to ring Sadie one day and say 'Can I come and use your lavatory?' The floor was up, central heating being installed. Bathing? I gave it up for a while. Still I feel like a visitor here, wondering sometimes what I am doing in Oxford. Nothing, really.

I think what really depressed me these last few weeks was the eternal greyness, the cold and dark. It's lifting at last, all the signs of Spring and new growth, but so many grey days! The lack of light is awful, the lack of space, the loss of horizons, of sky. That's why, in the end, you must leave Sweden, and that's why Africa remains like a great gash in one's heart - or as Frances once said, it is a hole in the heart that can never be filled. Anyway, come and see us here, and we can talk about our lives and the horrible old world and powerlessness.

Madi Gray  
Bellmansgatan 24, 3tr.,  
S-118 47 Stockholm  
  
Sweden

We seem to have been out of touch with ANC affairs - I wonder what is happening in your neck of the woods. Billy? Is he still there?

(Lunchtime break)

Not to worry about forgetting the photos. They have become irrelevant. I'm not so depressed as this letter may make me sound. England's not a nice country any more, gets nastier every day, immeasurably damaged by the twisted morality of the Thatcher years, continuing with our present government - John Major's answer to the child crime problem: We must condemn more and understand less. I keep thinking of two little boys, ten years old, who killed a toddler of two. Condemn yes, but somehow the thought of a ten-year-old, arraigned in court for murder . . . .

Oh well, nothing more to say. But much love. And to Madi, when you see her.

6th January, 1993.

Dear Hilda and Rusty,

Even if I am late with my greetings, they are nonetheless sincere. ***I wish you a very happy and healthy, peaceful and prosperous, and—dare we say it?—free and democratic 1993!***  
Thanks for your greetings. Moving is always an upheaval. It takes time to find the nice bits.

1992 turned out to be remarkably good to me, I note with some surprise. It included three trips abroad: Israel, New York and Cape Town, with a weekend in Princeton, ten days in Johburg and a stop-over in London. My first visit to Israel was fantastic! Was north as far as a kibbutz on the Lebanese border and south as far as the most southerly oasis on the Dead Sea, in Gaza, on the West Bank, and met Palestinians and Israelis engaged in all kinds of bridge-building. I went to New York to enjoy free lodgings on Manhattan's East End, while my friend Ann was still working there. Saw a lot, from an exhibition on African-American and Jewish relations, to the immigration museum on Ellis Island. Walked across the Brooklyn Bridge, took the Staten Island Ferry and discovered a sculpture garden in New Jersey. Visited the City of Peace—Philadelphia—with my cousin Carol lives in Princeton with her family. In SA I had a tour to my roots. Aunt Sophie in Johburg told me a lot of family history; Miracle Mother, whose pace-maker has given her a new lease on life, gave me access to old family albums and many of her memories. I stayed with Ronnie for a month, getting to know him as an adult and had a few days with his daughters, too. Wonderful, wonderful.

Nandi is now more-or-less grown-up and has definitely moved out, which is a mixed blessing. She's busy with her school-leaving certificate, had a very successful operation to reduce her breasts just before Xmas and has made a rapid recovery. We had a tree for old times sake.

Mid-year the landlord ripped out the bathroom floor. For about two and a half months I wandered round with a towel in my handbag, showering at the friends I visited. By mid-August I had a new fully tiled bathroom. When I got back from SA at the beginning of November it was time for the rest of the flat. Each room was freshly wallpapered, the lounge floor sanded, the kitchen repainted with new lino on the floor, and all cupboard and room doors were resprayed. As I could only afford to throw out the unrepairable, I repainted a lot, not only bookshelves, but also details like a footstool, the toilet-roll holder, two wicker baskets, my alarm clock and some lamps. I invested in a new mattress, a sofa, a set of black metal shelves, four lamps, a piano tuning and a total reorganization of all books and papers. Nandi's bedroom is converted into an office. It's so pretty I hesitate to rehang my pictures!

All this seems symbolic of my decision to remain in Sweden at least for the next few years. First Nandi should finish her education and then it will be time to think about my retirement and the pension due to me. Have given up on the idea of ever making a lot of money, difficult to do so in my line of business, where the sellable assets are my time and skills, and there's a limit to self-exploitation. So I am trying to think in a practical way about my future.

Turned 50 in December and celebrated with two parties, one in each of my home towns. We were 24 at Andy's Bistro in Cape Town on the last Friday in November, where we were served fabulous food and drank estate wines I bought with Ronnie when we were returning from five days with his three daughters at the mineral springs in Montagu. Nearly 60 friends attended my buffet dinner in Stockholm on Sunday 13th December. Nandi was mistress of ceremonies, made a couple of her own speeches and had everyone in fits when, to hail that part of my life, she read a poem in a German accent. Other speakers represented the Dinner Group (we meet once a month and take it in turns to serve food), South Africa, the solidarity movement, my women friends, my Jewish heritage and my Swedish family (my step-son, Samuel, did the talking). An old friend, a professional jazz and blues pianist who lives in the south of Sweden, came to play for me and the party was held in beautiful rooms overlooking Lake Mälaren. We did our own catering and two of Nandi's friends helped with the serving. I wore a top of gold sequins embroidered with black beads and couldn't have felt happier.

The only cloud on my personal horizon is that I am behind with work I promised. Do check your address file to see that you have the slight changes to my phone number and zip code.

*Oh dear me! I was checked + asked to find these photos still lying in my drawer. Hope it's not too late. Sorry. Lots of love,*

***Bellmansgatan 24, 3r., S-118 47 Stockholm, Sweden. Tel & fax: +468-643 1173***

*Made*

27 July 1993

Dearest Madi,

The reason I delayed over replying to your letter was because of the book; I've been so shattered and depressed about the way the publishers have fucked me up that it is only now that the matter is more or less resolved that I can bear to write about it.

Trivial upsets, really, compared with what you have been facing, the total demanding overall necessity to fight the cancer and the necessity to find ways of dealing with the treatment - to get your body wholesomely right, operating on its own. I really feel for you and understand very well. I don't know if I told you about Keith; he had a malignant growth in his mouth - had to have eight teeth removed, horrible operation - but no chemotherapy because the surgeon was convinced that they had totally disposed of whatever it was (they could not categorise it). Two years later, lump in neck; this time, after removal, radio and chemo-therapy, a treatment that has affected some glands and changed the shape of his face, but he is well, and so far no recurrence. But he also complained of the tiredness that went with the treatment. The whole affair had quite a strange, positive effect on him, first in his very up-beat and positive attitude towards the operations, etc, (months of prothesis for his teeth) but also about his change towards life generally and himself: the first time he was able to confront and accept his past in SA and what had happened to us. Previously he had shut it out totally, refused to remember or talk about it, or read my books.

But for you I'm sure that alternative foods and healing treatment is the thing, although we have to accept much of the medical establishment's knives and drugs, and I'm happy it was caught early, so the prognosis is good (my sister-in-law had to have both breasts amputated and glands under the arm, and that was years ago and she's been clear ever since.) When I think how all of us battle through our lives with so many extraordinary events it doesn't seem fair for such random, malicious happenstance to be visited on us as well.

The booksaga. My publishers, Jonathan Cape (very good imprint) are one firm in the conglomerate, Random House, which is an American, not British, firm, and in turn is part of a financial empire run by a man, Newhouse, who makes, among other things, Reebok shoes. So when Random House, and Cape, lose money because of the depression, they start shuffling around their authors, give priority obviously to the money-makers. The managing director of Cape, David Godwin, gave me a horrible run-around. He flattered and appeased me constantly while keeping on postponing publication - from last year to January this year, from January to July (it appeared twice in Cape's booklist) and then from July to September, despite my protests; I gave in under pressure from both him and my agent, with the promise of a launch at the WM Book Week in September (the thought of a trip mollified me somewhat.) Then in March he came from London to Oxford to tell me he had decided to publish the book as

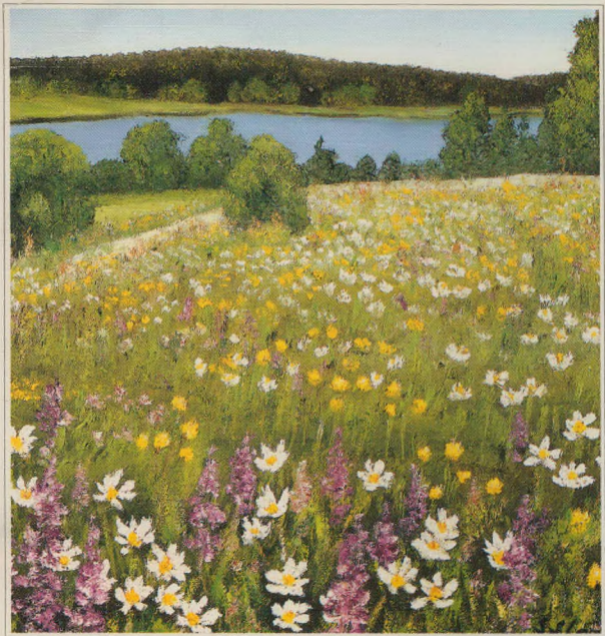


as a 300-page trade paper-back. The book is more than 600 pages, was accepted as that and listed as that and paid for, and it was all in breach of contract, the date, size, etc. Well, long story, but litigation was not on; I demanded that he publish according to contract, as it now stands, or relinquish all rights on the book. I wanted to find another publisher, but that, obviously, even if I had, would have postponed publication for ages. He gave in, but said he would publish in March, which I think is the worst possible date (everyone looking forward not back). But shortly after this, a new manager was appointed over him, he left Cape, I had interview with the new personnel, they were very nice and apologetic about what he had done, and will publish the book as it stands now, but it won't be until some time next year - eighteen months later than it should have been.

I'm happier now Godwin has left Cape, but it's been traumatic for me - three years hard work, the way I felt obligated to all who I interviewed, the fact that I felt it was recording something very important. I began to lose faith in the book, and in myself. Maybe I, and my wonderful editor Candida (who Godwin sacked ~~and~~ that's why it all happened) had been wrong - she thought the book was so marvellous and important. Perhaps all this has affected my ability to start painting again. I talk about it, I intend to, I want to - and I don't. I mess around, find I can fill days, weeks, with just ordinary things, going to Sainsbury's, doing the washing, cooking, a little bit of this and that (minimum housework, I'm still a slut about that) reading the Guardian (takes ages), doing a bit of gardening - lots to do there, and it's beginning to look wonderful, writing a few letters . . . Well, say my friends, why not? (the implication: at your age); but for me it is not enough. I want to produce, create, write, paint (have a great idea for a book I will never write). The Oxford scene, its elegant colleges and cobbled streets is just not for me to draw or paint, it's for pretty little watercolour or pastel sketches of courtyards and towers. I would like to be sketching in the shantytowns (with an adequate armed bodyguard of course) that's what I feel involved with.

I daresay this letter will arrive after Edith's visit, so I will have to write to her separately. Much love, Madi, and please keep me informed, about yourself, about Nandi (my love to her) and all. By the way, how do you like Joyce Diseko? Strange thing happened, I was meeting someone at the Oxford bus station when she appeared and said 'Have you heard that Chris Hani has been shot?' I hadn't, it was lunch time that day. Keep your head down and concentrate on your own work and life, because it is unbearable to look up.

Lots of love



22nd Nov 74

Dearest Hilda,

Have just returned from a weekend in Berlin. Celebrated my new (3 1/2 mo) mans 50th birthday there. We saw Edith, who told ~~us~~ <sup>me</sup> about her card + your letter, so I was prepared for your letter to me. It is so important to have good friends, particularly women, with whom one can share the good + the depressing.

A few years ago I discovered an A+D vitamin combination + began taking 1 per day during the dark period of the year. As a result, my annual depression lifted. A+D are also known as sunshine vitamins here. Worth a try? It is scientifically accepted <sup>now</sup> that lack of sun leads to depression.

Glad you liked Stellan! Am very happy that he + Nandi found each other + I hope it lasts. Like N's father, S puts his political ideals before his private life + that's not easy to live with.

Dearest Hilda, I hope you <sup>soon</sup> get the treatment you need + that the pain goes away. N. bought me "The Rift" in SA - Thanks for the offer! Take care + much love - Madi

SVERIGE 5.50 EUROPA



Prioritaire  
#17A

ms Hilda Bernstein  
57 Lock Crescent  
Kidlington  
Oxon OX5 1 HF  
England



25/8/95.

My dear Hilda,

It's four months since you wrote. Guess I'll never become a good correspondent. But to answer your questions: My "new man" called Ove lasted about 3 months. After the weekend in Berlin, where we saw Edith, we broke up. It was obvious from the start that it wouldn't last - can you see me spending most evenings in one pub or another, for the rest of my life? - but I indulged + really enjoyed it while it lasted. My health is fine + I'm full of energy + zest for living.

How has your summer been? Have you now recovered from your operation? Wonderful expression - "40, but trapped in a worn-out casing" Myself, I don't think I want to be 40 again, but 52 has been a great year, so far.

Sorry I missed your birthday - many good, if belated, wishes.

It's 20 years since we shared a bed  
Amsterdam. Seems much more re-  
cent. Doubt that you know what your  
friendship has meant to me. As well  
as having this wonderful exchange  
as colleagues, you've also been my  
spiritual "mother in the struggle".  
When the going has been tough, eg  
with hindwe, just thinking about  
you has been a comfort.

So you shouldn't be too surprised  
if a shiny young 18/19 year old  
with flamed hair contacts you  
in the next few months. That will be  
Karin Glass, my brother's second  
daughter, who is going to London  
for a few months + asked for a  
few addresses.

Did you get off to Ethiopia in  
June? I would think that it would  
be a trip that would give you  
inspiration for a while to come,  
especially for your drawings.  
Will that be the Xmas card motive?

I took a drive with a friend of many years standing to Berlin + Tours, to visit friends. Should have been lovely, but sides of her emerged that I never knew existed. Still, saw Edith a couple of times. Like you, a younger woman in a frail casing. She's a bit lost now that the book is finished, but I'm sure she's told

## BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS

you about it. Perhaps also about our visit to the wrapped Reichstag. That was great fun + Edith heard the wings of history flapping by.

© Five Seasons  
Artist: Tom Birch

Nandi + Stellan separated in May. He's in detention since late July for another action against the IAS planes + she left for Toburg on Weds. Working with "Children + Violence Trust" for four months as part of her social work course requirements.

Dear Hilda take lots of good care of yourself. Regards to Denny. Much love, Mads



*Here's to a HAPPY, HEALTHY, PEACEFUL, PRODUCTIVE  
& PROSPEROUS 1995!!!*



19th December, 1994.

Dearest Hilda,

Thank you for your letter and beautiful card. Your creative energy amazes me! Yet I was not surprised by the contents as Edith mentioned your letter to her when I saw her in Berlin. I wish there was something encouraging to say, but it all sounds like platitudes.

Some of the following you know, still I hope that there will be something of interest. Though 1993 was tough for me, 1994 has been both kind and brimming with promise, on all sorts of levels. I certainly would not mind having another year as good as this one.

Firstly, the elections in South Africa come to mind. When I left in 1972, it was a dream with mirage-like qualities. Now it has happened! South Africa has a democratically elected government for the first time in its history!

So many of my Swedish friends and acquaintances (but none with a South African background were selected) went to help with the peace monitoring and as election observers, that I would have been green with envy if I had not managed to go down myself. I'd been given a grant for a trip by an association for cancer patients and traffic accident victims and used this money to go to Cape Town. There I joined one of the teams of internal observers sent out by IDASA (Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa). We worked north of Cape Town in the Lamberts Bay and Clanwilliam area, where I had spent some quality time first with Bill and then with Stephen (ex-husbands), so the monitoring entailed unintended and personal dimensions for me.

Healthwise, I was between the chemotherapy and radiation treatment, which meant that I had few reserves of energy and that there were several friends whom I never got round to seeing. Now I've had the second three-monthly check-up since the end of the treatments and my oncologist has given me a clean bill of health. Each such visit is a vital step towards the ultimate goal: that in ten years time I shall have as small a chance of getting breast cancer as any other woman in the population.

1994 was a year of travelling. First I went to visit Fried in the Hague. She is the last of my mother's cousins and we had two wonderful weeks together. Is there higher praise than to say that we laughed a lot? Saw two of my childhood friends and their partners in Holland. From one I bought designer jerseys and from the other's computer I got a remarkably accurate horoscope. Also popped over to Neuss near Düsseldorf, where I saw some of my mother's old friends. That was Jan-Feb.

Next came Cape Town in April-May. Spent a memorable May 1st on the top of Table Mountain in clear blue sunshine and embarrassed Ronnie by swimming in his pool every day at a time of year when every sane South African had long since stopped. Heard him explain to several visitors, "My sister comes from Sweden". Ronnie's fifth child is expected in January and his oldest daughter, Lara, is in Israel and loving it. The middle daughter, Karen, has just finished school and I think that Natalie is starting high school.



In June, directly after the radiation therapy I took off with my friend Agneta for Italy, where we spent two relaxing weeks in a Swedish hotel on the west coast at the expense of the Union of Journalists. They have a recreation fund for journalists and I won one of their trips. During the day I rested or we lay on the beach or went sightseeing and every evening we sat in the bar watching a most charming barman mixing cocktails. We took coach trips to Rome and Florence. It was my first visit to Italy and after driving around Tuscany (Agneta hired a car) I begin to understand why so many people are so charmed by the country.

Sweden had a heatwave during July. Even I felt justified in uttering the odd moan when the thermometer rose above 30° and stayed there. The first two weeks of August I spent at a health farm, courtesy of the county council. After ten days I couldn't look at another grated carrot, yet didn't join those who stole down to the café at the end of the road to drink coffee. I spent my time listening to lectures on health, good food, weight, bones, fats and sugars, and other things that are good (or bad) for you, exercising and swimming and being pampered by a masseuse and bath attendants.

I returned on a Sunday, nearly 10 kg lighter than when I came back from Italy (I'd put on a lot of weight during my illness and started eating mainly fruit and vegetables as soon as the holiday was over), and was glowing with health. That very evening I met a man who subsequently fell for me, while I was head over heels in love. We did a lot of socialising, some mushrooming and spent his 50th birthday in Berlin, where we saw you. It was wonderful during the three months that it lasted, though Nandi was a bit surprised to have a teenager for a mother. Now I find it's comfortable to slip into my normal persona and my friends have welcomed me back to sanity.

My final trip of the year will be to spend Christmas in Gothenburg with Nandi and Stellan. They went to South Africa in June-August and Stellan travelled round a lot, while Nandi spent her time in Cape Town. She is enjoying her studies, though is tiring of Gothenburg. Her friends are in Stockholm and she misses them badly.

My flat is looking better and better. A new white display cabinet along one wall of the living room shows my inherited silver, glass and porcelain to advantage and gives me great joy. My one concession to my bourgeois South African background is a built-in cocktail cabinet. The paintings and carpets from my mother's home fit snugly into the flat. Acquired two leather covered swivel armchairs and an inlaid coffee table. Bought elegant chairs for my dining table to match the colours in the kitchen and, after water damage, had to choose linoleum to match the chairs!

Met Jay Naidoo, the Minister responsible for the Reconstruction and Development Programme. He paid a brief visit to Sweden and the South African Embassy arranged the meeting. (Still not used to being able to go there, instead of standing outside and picketing the place.) Naidoo made an impassioned and eloquent appeal to all South Africans to return home and participate in building up the country, irrespective of why they left or when. Though I've been asked when I'm coming home by many people, it was the first time for quite a while that I've seriously considered it. Spent a week or more thinking and finally came to the conclusion that it seems sensible to plan to return in three years time, i.e. in 1998. Nandi should be finished studying, I will have past the magic five-years-and-still-healthy barrier and will still be energetic enough to do a good day's work.

One of the most interesting jobs I'm doing is to act as information officer and secretary to a conference to be held in Stockholm in July-Aug 1996 under the auspices of IAPS, the International Association of People-Environment Studies. The theme is *Evolving Environmental Ideals, Changing Ways of Life, Values and Design Practices*. We're expecting mainly architects, townplanners and social scientists. My work grows from 10-90 per cent between September this year and the conference, and is very varied, from writing minutes to doing the layout of the information.

Glad you enjoyed Stellan's visit. Hope you like and are using the individual bread boards and butter spreaders. They were painted by Nandi's granny, who is about ten years older than you. I never thanked you properly for your letter after your SAn visit. One day we shall get together and swap more detailed experiences of that amazing period.

Much love, *Madi*

*The prison authorities want Stellan to spend his Xmas + New Year holidays inside - sheer nastiness to choose this month - but he's appealing...*

Here's to a **HAPPY, HEALTHY, PEACEFUL,**  
**PRODUCTIVE & PROSPEROUS 1994!!!**



Dear Hilda & Rusty,

1993 was, to put it mildly, an eventful year. In December, the last white parliament in South Africa dissolved itself. The first non-racial elections are due to be held in April. It remains to be seen whether they will be democratic, free and fair. Mozambique is tremulously moving forward, licking its wounds but apparently managing to keep the fragile peace. Angola is not so lucky. The war that broke out after the 1992 elections is bloodier still than the previous carnage. Israel and the PLO have signed an agreement that, for a while at least, looks like bringing peace a little closer to the Middle East. Hope is in the air.

The domestic front has not been quiet, either. In April a routine mammogram revealed a small tumour in my left breast. It was operated on in May and turned out to be a mixed form of cancer that had induced some changes in the lymph glands. So I am now undergoing chemotherapy which will be followed by radiation therapy of the affected breast and afterwards I will probably be given anti-estrogen hormone therapy. Will be sick-listed for about a year. The prognosis is excellent and I feel fine and am able to work parttime.

I'm reading a lot about this illness and am getting into more mental and spiritual sides of life, as part of the ways in which I am combating the disease. Have also had a good look at my diet, made some changes and more may be in the offing. Tremendous support has been forthcoming particularly from friends here and in Cape Town. It has helped a lot.

Other sad events were that my mother and her close friend and cousin Hens in Holland departed this life within two months of one another. Feels strange to have lost such integral parts of my life and history. Miss them both and, as is usual when you are grieving for someone you love, I am constantly finding little things I'd like to share with one or the other.

The good news concerns Nandi. She finally finished school in June, having done part of her studies during a seven week trip to India. She spent four weeks at a Sikh farm and returned a more harmonious and together person. Within a few days of her return she met Stellan, a tall, goodlooking, warm and loving man, who is committed to disarmament and active in the Plowshare Movement. They got engaged in August (to live together for at least a year, prior to deciding on a longer commitment). They share a flat in a collective with two other blokes who are members of the same peace movement. Nandi managed to get into the courses she wanted to and is now studying social science and pedagogics.

I still enjoy my flat that was renovated last year. A portrait of my mother's grandmother and father and some ornaments in silver and porcelain from my mother add to the feeling of home. Soon more pictures, some books and two carpets will arrive from Cape Town.

We enter the New Year with hope and the deep and sincere wish that the New Year Wish at the head of this letter will come true not only for you and for us, but also for the troubled parts of the world that we hold so dear.

Thank you for your goodwishes. Hope you get the postcard I sent a month or so ago. Here, at last, is the news from me, personally. Hope all is well with you + that the severe winter we're promised will treat you gently.

All my love + every good wish — Mado

11 APRIL 1995

Madi dear,

It seems a long time since I talked to you, and I am wondering how you are, how your life is going, and want you to tell me about your ~~me~~ health and about your new man ( what's his name, anyway?)

I thought winter would never end, and sank into a gloom as deep as the miserable dark, dank, depressing days of January and February. But suddenly it is all changing. I had a wonderful letter from Edith about the Rift - I read it over several times, and this combined with the yearly miracle of English Spring - masses of daffodils and now a garden glowing with tulips - so beautiful I can't stop looking at them. And lighter days, lighter evenings, even the sun shining for several days. So it's all life renewing itself.

And I'm still hobbling on one stick - I thought by now I would be fully mobile, but it seems a slow process, although it all went OK (I'm referring to my hip replacement operation, in case the grape vine has not been operating fully). Two months now. Horrible operation, but a great relief to have had it done and believe that it will last out the rest of my life - unless the other gives in. I hope not.

We had a sad time with Tam Baker's death. Did you know Julius and Tam? We were friends for - oh, forty years. She was so warm, loving, bright, a fastidious woman, and deteriorated with a brain tumour unbearably but at least fairly fast. We are a small number of oldies left behind by the tide, which has gone out such a long way (to South Africa) that I feel we are like little bits of broken planks and seaweed left at the shore's edge. Rusty & I lead rather boring lives in this pleasant town where we now do not really know anybody, as Sadie Berman and her husband both died. We are rather ancient, Madi, so our contemporaries are either contracting awful illnesses or else just dying on us. I will be 80 on the 15th of this month. Actually, I'm only 40, except that I've got trapped in this worn-out casing that hinders my activity.

BUT  $\frac{1}{2}$ - I'm going to Ethiopia in June, despite Rusty insisting we haven't the money. It's a long, long ambition, and we have friends there who have invited me - us, if R can breach our cash reserves as I am doing. If not now - when?

My kids are all OK. Keith and his Julie finally got married (after a relationship of about 12 or more years) and he has bought a house in Brighton, with room enough for visitors. Keith won the R Nikon Press Photographer of the Year prize - substantial cash and cameras, for his pictures of Rwanda, South Africa and other places. Can you bear to look around our world? I can't. I've got a new theory: if we could find a way of controlling testosterone, the world would be a better place. Karl Marx? No. Testosterone and fundamentalism - control them to change the world.

Much love to you, and Nandi

14 September 95

DEarest Madi

Your letter arrivd just as I was about to write to you and say: Where are you? and how are you? And now I'm hurrying to write something before you leave for SA. Oh, I wish I were going too, I want to go to Parliament and watch them in action, and tour around old friends making them put up with me (and put me up) for periods (particularly those old Jhbg friends who have 'returned' to the Cape, and found themselves beautiful homes in lush Cape suburbs.)

And it was news to me that Edith had finished her book - she hasn't written. I didn't want to plague her while she was busy. Now I will.

How was my summer? I made such slow progress with the hip replacement, and I'm still walking with a hobble, which doesnt seem to improve (because I don't do enough exercise), but I took this handicap with me to Ethiopia. After manfully resisting the whole idea, first of my going, then of him going as well, I think Rusty felt that he couldn't let this little old woman hobble around Ethiopia without any help - and someone to carry her bags; so he finally gave in, and came too. Did I ever tell you what Rebecca West said about men? 'I can't see any real reason for the existence of men, except ~~xxxx~~ that they're useful when you want to move the piano.' I'm not relegating Rusty to that category, but the truth is that I can't really carry bags and cases around any more, and he is very useful when travelling.

If I had days and days to write to you I could tell you about Ethipia, it is such a rare, beautiful, country incredibly interesting and full of mythology and of beautiful people. We stayed wih Eve & Tony Hall in Addis - she is woring on an ILO funded project among rural women - Fuelwood Carriers - providing alternative training and ways to earn a living from the stripping of forests and carrying of loads of wood up to 35 kilos on their backs to sell in Addis. Addis is a vast shanty-town, dotted with Western-style buuildings here and there, Hilton hotels, air offices, banks, and lots of new hotels going up, but basically belonging to the anarchic, totally uncontrolled and undisciplined traffic, the goats and their kids and donkeys, and people, and the rows of shops that are tin and mud shanties. We, privileged, stayed in an ex-patriate compound with Eve & Tony, where you have luxuries such as hot showers, electricity, ect. But once you leave Addis, even in what are considered their main towns, you are back in deepest undeveloped Africa. This makes travelling for the tourist rather tough, but in my opinion it's worth it. We flew in small planes to Bahadar, Gondar and Lalabela, where I saw at last the great churches carved out of solid rock that I've dreamed about for something like 30 years; and flew over the Semien mountains, the most breath-taking andwonderful sight I have ever seen, where the great cataclysmic upheavels that tore the land apart and created the Rift Valley has shaped incredible ranges, endless, a hundred grand canyons. Tough going. Tell you all about it some day when we meet (why not come via England instead of flying direct to SA?) Ethiopia is oh so poor. I felt that South Africa's shantytowns are quite luxurious compzred with theirs. This is an undeveloped (economically-speaking) society, so there is not that great variety and availability of industrial waste from which the people build their shanties.

We left Addis on a cool, overcast morning, the rainy season was just beginning - and arrived back at Heathrow that evening in burning heat. And had wonderful hot summer days fro ages, everything turned dry, the grass and fields looked like Jhbg in winter; and we all gave up trying to work much, sat out in the garden. Now it's all gone back to normal, grey days, dull clouds, dark evenings. So I've started to draw and paint, as always deeply dissatisfied with what i'm doing, but enjoying the doing just the same.

It was good of you to say that my friendship has been important to you. Ditto. That's why I keep on writing letters, feeling that this network we have woven should not be broken. I've often pondered this theme of women friends, and why men don't have the same kinds of friendships among themselves - at least, not that I have observed. And this exchange of friends - viz, you and Edith came together through me, and she is extremely happy with the relationship. And Edith came to me through Janet Stevenson who lives in Oregon, and who is another part of this network - if you go to that part of the world you will make another friend there. When I tell people that I'm greedy for money, they think I'm joking, and laugh. But I really am - I want money not only to go to Paris to see the pyramid at the Louvre, to go to SA every year in the English winter, but also to do an annual tour of women friends, visiting each just for a few days, not to interrupt their work too much, but to sit and talk . . . food and talk, two of the things I enjoy most, next to travelling. (And I want to talk to you about the wrapped Reichstag, as I have always had the greatest contempt for Christo & his wrappings.)

There was a memorial meeting in London for Jack Simons - pretty awful, the speakers, I mean, god, how people ramble on saying nothing (like this letter) I wrote to Ray and received a really lovely letter, telling me about Jack's last day, all in Ray's wonderful, rambling style. How I wish it had been possible for us in 'those days' in the SA underground to keep all the little notes, such as the ones I received from Ray, almost daily when we were planning the Women's Federation. Someone was doing a biography of her, but I heard that it wasn't any good and isn't being published. I wish someone else would do it before she dies - at least get the material from her.

This letter has already been delayed a couple of days by other things, that's why I've lost the threads of what I was writing about . . .

Much love to you and to Nandi. I hope therea are no broken hearts lying aropnd.

*Nandi* x x x

ENDS.

But I am looking forward to going back, very much so. I really hope to go soon. I've lost both my parents while I was away - my father when I was in Tanzania, my mother while I was in Zimbabwe. It was hard. Because it's then that you feel strongly that you wish you could have gone back, to be with people, family. But I felt fortunate that I had at least known where my family was, and I had some contact with them. And that was a very big consoling factor, at least. Ja. So many of my comrades did not even have that.

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