

# A Sleep + A Wake: In Transit

— by Paula Szuchman

1.

M, In answer to some of your questions: The house is for living in, on weekends and holidays — definitely not a real-estate venture, though I would like to drive property values up by “putting the town on the map.” Some well-placed articles in glossy magazines, some rumors spread among real-estate writers, etc. etc.

More important, I want it to be a real artist’s retreat - where our friends can go and cocoon for weeks and months at a time and do their stuff - write, paint, sing out, exhale in, etc. - in exchange for nothing more than a seed in the garden and a mark on the wall. That’s my dream. At night, we can go out into the river and chant, summon up the ghosts and invite them to dinner.

I did get the job at The Post. Did I tell you? I’m a newspaper girl. A real Lois Lane. Actually, I’m terrified and petrified. I suddenly realize I’ve been taking my freedom — from the man — for granted. I want to go home and hide under the bed. But I know it’s a great chance and I’ve got to do it. The best part is, I can hire my friends to write for me — so if you ever have a story idea — Travel-related, obviously, you’ve got to pitch me. It doesn’t pay well — \$300 for 700 words — but it’s easy and free travel, anywhere you want to go.

As for rejections, I say again: Would that I could be rejected like you. I just sent some poems to a British magazine called *Tank*. It’s big and glossy, with fiction by guys like Dave Eggers, crazy fashion spreads, and political attacks on everyone from Margaret Thatcher to the U.N. A friend of mine just wrote something on her journey across the bandit-ridden Jordan-Baghdad highway — her final destination: Saddam Hussein’s birthday party. Don’t know if my stuff will be a fit.

Do not worry about your liner notes — it is not a burden but a joy. And it gives me something to do in the shower. xo, p

2.

M, Here are your belated liner notes. I’m sorry it took so long. Don’t feel like you have to use them, do feel free to change them, esp. line breaks. Seriously. They’re only words from me to you. Perhaps it will be a collaboration and that’s fine with me. I tried to stick to the length of your notes from the last Travel CD and stick to the logic of songs as place names. Can’t say much except most of it came to me while listening, as I said, in the shower, also on the subway, then later, at the beach. Who can say? —P

3.

At the end of the line, the Printing Press met us. How had we come to be here each night, the bathroom attendant pushing us back inside? What is it with trains? Took the last one to meet doctor von shock, an island of couples grouped into threes. Again? They asked. Now who? What’s there? A hill in flashlight propaganda, on which our guides made resolutions, faked fire. If only it were this easy: Ford the river, hang the hammock, lead the horse to water. But the traveler does not work that way. When he walks out of the jungle (rubbing the mud from his feet) and into the museum of modern, he is filled with prepositions. The album cannot hold them.

*Postscript*

M, I love what you’ve done. Specially the capped and uncapped Travel/travel Did you change Now what? Who’s there? to Now who? What’s there? The exchange is so straightforward, but the way you’ve broken it up (couples grouped into threes) adds this layer of intimacy that I actually heard in the CD too.

(Confession: I gave it away to my friend Dale whose birthday it was last week and who spends much of his time in a studio alone playing with sound. He is from Ohio, which cinched the deal. I hope you don’t mind. I figure I’ll buy another copy when it’s all said and done and display it in my new cubicle.)

What do I mean by intimacy? I think I mean liner notes within liner notes, many layers making for closer connections between them, b/t peoples/musics. It sings. —P

*Paula Szuchman is a writer and editor living in Brooklyn, New York. She writes for Travel + Leisure, The New York Post, Wallpaper, and The Daily Telegraph. Her poems have appeared in Spork and 88. When she is not writing or editing, she travels the world in search of the speediest room service, often without ear plugs. She is also an auxiliary police officer and an amateur gardener.*