

Guide to the Whitehorn letters, 1944-1949

How this guide should be used

This guide is a summary document of the contents of 110 letters. It is intended as an aid to navigating through the letters and has been a useful tool in establishing the order of the letters, many of which were undated. The letters are wordy and lengthy and a considerable amount of time should be set aside for their reading and appreciation. The letters have been scanned and are available electronically. They are stored as pdfs. Access to the original letters is not permitted.

Introduction

The Whitehorn letters are a collection of 110 letters sent by Doris Lessing to RAF servicemen John R.M. Whitehorn and Coll MacDonald. Some of the letters are addressed to both of them, others individually, and some she asks to have re-directed.

All the letters are signed 'Tigger', Doris's nickname.

Doris met these two young cadets and their friend Leonard Smith (Smithie) while they were training in Southern Rhodesia. At the time she was married to her second husband Gottfried Lessing and she was a member of the Communist Party.

She loved all three. She fell in love with Smithie but her primary love appears to have been John, a serviceman some 5 years her junior. In her letter of 17/1/1945 she writes "I love you all in undivided one-third shares."

The letters begin when the servicemen are still in Southern Rhodesia in November 1944, John having arrived in Rhodesia in late 1943 to do his flying training, stationed first in Bulawayo and then in Gwelo. By the middle of 1945 the three had left Southern Rhodesia and Doris writes to John and Coll at R.A.F. H.Q. M.E.F. (Middle East Forces) and R.A.F. S.E.A.A.F. (South-East Asia Air Force). John's service takes him to Egypt, India, Burma, and finally 6 months in Surebaya, Indonesia before they demob in autumn 1946.

Doris wrote separately to Smithie who wasn't always in close contact with John and Coll. Smithie later sold these 150 letters to the University of Sussex. Smithie was involved in reviewing the draft manuscripts for Doris's first novel 'The Grass is Singing' and many of her doubts and queries are recorded in these letters.'

Doris continues to write to John and Coll when they are at Cambridge University in 1947, and throughout 1948 to John at the British Federation of Industries.

The letters concern Doris's life in Rhodesia: her work typing for Parliament and a firm of lawyers; her involvement with the Communist Party and a left wing study group; general politics in Southern Africa, England and Soviet Russia; her relationships with family, friends and lovers; other people's relationships; the progress on her first novel, short stories and poetry writing; literature in general; domestic life and motherhood.

In May 1949 Doris, now divorced for the second time, finally boards a ship from Cape Town to London with 2 year old Peter. The final two letters are to John from her London address in May 1949.

Provenance

John Whitehorn died on 30 May 2003 and he left instructions for these letters, which were kept in a shoebox, to be returned to Doris, or given to the University of East Anglia.

When his widow, Marion, wrote to Doris on 30/6/2003 to tell her of John's death, she mentioned that she would send Doris the letters, but they were not sent.

It was only after John's widow, Marion, died in 2007 that his step-son Francis FitzGibbon found the letters and instructions, and got in touch with Doris.

Doris did not wish to re-read them and she instructed that they be offered to UEA, along with other papers she would soon be depositing.

In conversation some 10 years before, Doris promised her papers to Chris Bigsby, Professor of American Studies at UEA. These papers, covering the period 1969-2007, were deposited in the UEA Archive in March 2008.

The 1940s letters were deposited on 21/4/08 by Chris Bigsby who had obtained them directly from Francis FitzGibbon.

Francis FitzGibbon asked that John's name be associated with the collection. Hence they are known as the Whitehorn letters within the Doris Lessing Archive.

The gifting of the letters to UEA was discussed between Doris and John in correspondence towards the end of 1993. In a letter to John dated 9/11/1993 Doris had not wanted to re-read any of her letters to John or Smithie "There is a good deal of pain in those long ago far-away things."

Reference

DL/WHI

Dates

1944-1949

Extent

111 items

Medium

Letters, typescript and MS; a couple of telegrams, photographs and the odd note.

Biographical notes

Coll MacDonald died sometime before 1993. He was a schoolmaster.

Gottfried Lessing (1914-1979) Ambassador of the German Democratic Republic to Uganda. He and his third wife were killed in the riots against Idi Amin's rule.

Gregoire Boonzaier (1909-2005) South African painter and Communist. Was married to Marie and had two sons.

Photographs

Photographs of Doris's three children can be found in items 063, 073 and 074.

Description and arrangement

The letters have been numbered sequentially, 001-111, and are arranged chronologically. Envelopes, where included, have been digitised along with the relevant letter.

Related Collections:

153 letters of Doris to Len Smith (Smithie) 1944-1949, were sold to the University of Sussex. These letters were made available at the Keep in 2016. An introductory workshop was held on 3 March 2016 with talks by John Masterson and Pam Thurschwell (a copy of Thurschwell's paper is included with the Whitehorn letters at UEA).

Other Lessing papers and manuscripts (1940-1999) have been deposited at the [Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center](#), University of Texas at Austin.

Doris Lessing Archive, 1969-2007. Held at the [University of East Anglia Archives](#)

General notes

<u>Old place name</u>	<u>New place name</u>
Gwelo	Gweru
Marandellas	Marondera
Northern Rhodesia	Zambia
Salisbury	Harare
Southern Rhodesia	Zimbabwe
Umtali	Mutare

The Union

The Republic of South Africa

001 [Letter, Doris Lessing to John Whitehorn, 22/11/1944]

1 leaf. Typescript.

Doris asks John if he will be coming to Macheke.

Doris suggests he write to Flippy [an ex-girlfriend] “ ... you shouldn't hurt the girl's feelings ... ”.

She describes a recent weekend spent with Smithie (Leonard Smith).

Doris mentions having seen Coll MacDonald the previous day, he had been suffering from dysentery.

002 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 28/11/1944]

1 leaf. Typescript.

Doris confirms that there is accommodation for John and Coll at Macheke “they can fix you up, ‘in the same stable’ as Coll.”

003 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 9/1/1945]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Doris discusses books and what she remembers of her love affair with John. “I don't class you as an ex boy fr. yet ... but none of my ex boy frs. come up to you and Smithie.”

Doris mentions her colleague Flippy, and Flippy's engagement plans.

004 [Telegram, Doris to John Whitehorn, 14/3/1945]

1 leaf.

Telegram sent to John in Bulawayo. Confirms receipt of letters.

005 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, n.d.]

1 leaf. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Written on headed note-paper from Doris's employer Winterton, Holmes and Hill, Solicitors, Salisbury.

Envelope addressed to John c/o Grand Hotel Salisbury. “To await arrival.”

Doris makes suggestions for meeting John at the hotel the following day. She is “harrowed and alcoholic” after saying goodbye to Coll for the past three days as he leaves for the Middle East.

006 [Letter, Coll MacDonald to Doris, n.d.]

1 leaf. MS. Includes a typescript note on verso.

Coll apologises for a perfunctory au revoir "I'm very sorry I couldn't face any more after last night"

On verso is a typescript note from Doris to John saying she sent him a letter the previous day, and now encloses more books.

007 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, n.d.]

1 leaf. MS.

Doris is being sent to Bulawayo on business for a week.

008 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, n.d.]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Doris has returned to work. Flippy her colleague tells her of her relationship with Jimmy.

Discusses books and her relationship with her husband Gottfried Lessing "New Year resolutions as follows: he to be less possessive and me to be more faithful" "I have permission to spend the evening with you on condition that I remain faithful. Whether I will or not is another matter"

"This morning I received letters, all affectionate from one ex-husband and three exlovers."

009 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 17/1/1945]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Cadet J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F. Thornhill, Gwelo.

Doris will miss Coll and John when they go. She expresses her feelings for John, Coll and Smithie "I love you all in undivided one-third shares."

Mentions Flippy's relationships; politics in Rhodesia; socialising in Rhodesia; literature; and the sort of child she and John would have.

010 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 24/1/1945]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Cadet J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F. Thornhill, Gwelo.

Mentions her father's depression during and after the war; the poet Heredia; and the climbing of a kopje with John.

Doris thinks it would look odd if she stayed in a hotel in Bulawayo rather than with her brother Harry and sister-in-law Eve.

She discusses relationships, morality and honesty.

Doris writes "But then in this most bloody place one is bound to fall in love with anyone one can talk to. No, that is also untrue. I am not in love with Coll."

She describes a Saturday night spent with Gottfried and Coll.

Doris describes how at 9 years of age she asked to be called Tigger, and gives her real name of Doris May Tayler.

011 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 7/2/1945]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Cadet J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F. Thornhill, Gwelo.

Tells of Flippy and Jimmy's engagement; the Rhodesian class-struggle; and the personal relationships of acquaintances and friends including Mickey Halse, Joan, and Dorothy and Frank Cooper.

012 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 12/2/1945]

1 leaf. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Cadet J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F. Thornhill, Gwelo.

Concerns Doris's feelings towards John and her husband Gottfried Lessing. She pictures the "horrors" of the coming weekend when she will meet up with John.

013 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 15/2/1945]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Cadet J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F. Thornhill, Gwelo.

Doris had seen Coll the previous day and he was wearing a stripe signifying that he will be a pilot officer.

She describes Flippy's engagement as being of no practical purpose; her relationship with Gottfried and the conditions of their marriage; and literature.

Doris asks if Smithie is in Cape Town.

She describes Simon and that he is back "... he is taking some of the Left Club work off us."

Doris asks what John's father bases "... his intellectual morality on?"

Includes a few lines of poetry.

Doris will be in Bulawayo on the 23rd for Congress of the S.R.L.P. [Southern Rhodesian Labour Party] and wants to see John.

She describes a humorous incident in her study group.

She ends off: "I am now going to have lunch, a large and sensual lunch. I adore food."

She then asks John if he is going to Burma.

014 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 21/2/1945]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Cadet J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F. Thornhill, Gwelo.

Doris refers to Flippy as John's ex-girlfriend.

She describes the political articles she is writing for the Guardian; the views of the editors; and her colleagues Nathan Zelter and Mrs Maasdrorp.

She describes Gottfried's feelings for her; her matrimonial crises; and the reactions which she inspires in people. She compares Frank Wisdom and Gottfried Lessing.

Doris describes the announcement by Coll of Peter Wadman's death.

Gottfried had sought Coll's advice regarding their marriage.

Doris writes of the relationship between her and Coll: "... for while Coll loves me quite a lot, he also firmly considers me a hell of a bitch ... I really love Coll very much in a most unpassionate manner."

Doris is pleased Smithie is in England "... in the arms of Patricia. No, Priscilla. Which? Never can remember. I wrote him a very long letter, which he didn't answer. It is his loss, because now he has now never had the masterpiece which would have described Macheke."

015 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, Monday 26/2/1945]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Cadet J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F. Thornhill, Gwelo.

Describes a night spent with Eve (sister-in-law) and Phil Loveridge [i.e. Loveridge].

Doris arranges for a secret liaison with John.

016 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, Tuesday 27/2/1945]

1 leaf. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Cadet J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F. Thornhill, Gwelo.

Short letter arranging to meet John at the Windsor Hotel in Salisbury the following weekend. Points out that Coll, Peanut and similar people must not mention to Gottfried that John was in Salisbury.

017 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, Wednesday 28/2/1945]

1 leaf. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Cadet J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F. Thornhill, Gwelo. Doris has given notice on her job at Solicitors Winterton, Holmes and Hill, in order to write her "... immortal novel 'The Innocent in South Africa'"

She asks John to meet her at the Windsor Hotel the following Saturday.

018 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, March, 1945]

4 leaves. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Cadet J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F. Thornhill, Gwelo.

Written before Easter.

Doris describes a letter she had received from Smithie about his poor sexual performance with Patricia.

John had not materialised at the rendezvous at the hotel the previous Saturday. Coincidentally the girl at the counter was a former girlfriend of Gottfried Lessing.

Doris continues to write for the Guardian. On the 23rd she was due to go down to Umtali to address the Labour Party about Soviet Russia. Doris relates her first attempts at public speaking.

She describes the effects of the Industrial Conciliation Act; trade unions and race relations.

"I much prefer the people who say to hell with the class-struggle, and have a good time, to those a [i.e. who] float round talking about Marx and then become cultural comrades."

Doris is depressed about her son John "who is being most badly brought up." She describes his behaviour and how she was refused having her children for four days over Easter. Describes her sister-in-law who looked after Doris's children, John and Jean, for two years before Frank Wisdom married Dolly.

019 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 21/3/1945]

4 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F., H.Q., M.E.F.

Describes a rehearsal for a show which included fashion. Doris writes "I adore clothes ... but the class-struggle and clothes don't really go well together ..."

John sends all his books to Doris.

Doris relates a pavement conversation with Frank Wisdom concerning their children. "Since I was forbidden to see them for a year it is difficult to see what else I could do but neglect them."

Doris meets Wisdom again and they agree that she will have the two children for Easter and take them to Macheke "I feel a bit intimidated because I am so out of touch with them, and don't know what they eat, wear, etc."

Doris describes the reactions of her two husbands to her infidelities.

She describes two women she meets on the train to Umtali; and the weekend spent in Umtali speaking to the Labour Party on Soviet Russia; and flirting with Lofty.

Describes in detail her and Gottfried's views on the "... new Line in England, with a National Government", Marxism and nationalism.

She asks John to ask Coll to write to her, "... letters though more unsatisfactory, are candle flames in the gloom"

020 [Letter, Doris to Coll Macdonald, 4/4/1945]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

2 lettercards addressed to Pilot Officer Coll Macdonald c/o J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F., H.Q., M.E.F.

Written on 4/4/1945, stamped 5/4/1945.

Doris describes the writing of her new novel, and the characters therein.

[Mentions Lady Chatterley's lover].

"Peanut and assorted air force are coming to dinner, so am cooking things wildly and opening tins."

"I really miss you incredibly, especially on Saturdays, which tend to be bleak."

She asks if the desert is any better than Salisbury.

Doris is doing her best to revive her relationship with Gottfried

She mentions that John is a censor and asks if Coll is also one.

She has 6 avocado pears from a tree in Umtali and she is eating curried pickled fish.

She had drinks with Tom Lewis.

She asks Coll if they are going to Burma or Italy and asks what he has been doing in Cairo.

Doris had lost 8 pounds when John and Coll had left.

She had seen 5 American films and mentions *Lifeboat*.

She is tired of the study groups.

021 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 4/4/1945]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F., H.Q., M.E.F.

Doris describes the trip to Macheke with Gottfried and her two children; Gottfried's infidelity with Mrs Stanley; and the discussions which follow between them concerning their separate infidelities.

She describes how the war is affecting them – emotionally.

She describes her relationship with Smithie. "Being half feminine himself, he is the most profoundly unsatisfying person, though charming enough, that I have ever met. I couldn't understand at the time, with Smithie, why I was so bloody unhappy ... it was because it was such a cold blooded affair ... Straight sex, ... is very desolating."

She asks John about the low life in Cairo.

She describes her children and her concerns for her son John " ... he has a sadistic streak ... not in the least charming, and I regret to say, not a very likeable character."

Doris had been appointed to a sub-committee to improve the quality of Labour Party candidates.

She describes an eccentric man at her study group who is part of a Society for Fertility. (See also letter 031)

She has torn up the first chapter of her book three times. She misses John.

022 [Letter, Doris to Coll Macdonald, 5/4/1945]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

1 lettercard addressed to Pilot Officer Coll Macdonald c/o J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F., H.Q., M.E.F.

Describes conversations with Gottfried in which he gives her an ultimatum to stop writing to John. She asks for Coll's advice, and gives him some advice on marriage too.

Smithie is in Scotland waiting to be discharged so he can go down the mines. So too is Graham, and he and Patricia had "taken to each other."

She describes her own and Gottfried's unhappiness.

023 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 5/4/1945]

1 leaf. Typescript.

1 lettercard addressed to J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F., H.Q., M.E.F.

Doris asks John "Please do not write to me anymore." She says that she is going to try and make her marriage work, and asks John to go and cry on Coll's shoulder.

024 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 6/4/1945]

2 leaves. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F., H.Q., M.E.F.

A more upbeat and "final farewell" letter to John, describing how he would be implicated by Gottfried in a divorce.

025 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 12/4/1945]

3 leaves. Typescript. Includes envelope with postmark 21/4/1945.

Envelope addressed to J.R.M. Whitehorn, R.A.F., H.Q., M.E.F.

Doris shouldn't be writing but writes anyway and asks John not to reply.

"Peanut (do you know him) is more or less living with us at the moment ..."

Doris's mother had taken under her wing two pupil pilots.

She asks after Coll. "Have come to the conclusion that the reason why there was a large element of untruthfulness in our relationship was because I was constantly trying to pretend I loved him more than I did, in order to cheer him up. Which I did of course, but most unpassionately".

Explains why she can't wear hats, and the relation of her face to her figure. "I have a wide face ... and a wide figure."

The S.R.L.P. wants her to stand for Parliament.

Doris doesn't like decorations. She thinks that the U.S.S.R. is far more soviet than national and writes of her dislike for extreme nationalism.

Comments on her relationship with Gottfried. "G. seems to love me very much again ..."

She gives her thoughts on Smithie's views on gay relationships.

026 [Letter, Doris to Coll Macdonald, 3/5/1945]

4 leaves. Typed on recto and verso.

4 lettercards addressed to Coll Macdonald, R.A.F., H.Q., M.E.F.

Doris types for the Legal Assembly of Parliament, this is followed by typing "commission work." She loathes the study groups.

Mentions Harry Fraser waving the red flag; discussions on the working class and socialism. Doris is devastated at the death of Roosevelt. She discusses Facism and Germany.

She describes a girl staying with her mother " ... she is eighteen, bloody, shallow ..."

"Darling Coll, I don't insist on your being in love with me. You are at such pains to prove that you are not ... I like you enormously in a most unpassionate fashion."

Describes her social life, dancing etc; her friend Mickey and Mickey's husband suspecting her of adultery. She describes how Frank Wisdom put a private detective onto her " ... when G. and I were engaging in adultery."

She is nearly finished the first draft of her book, describes the characters and writing progress.

Describes her relationship with Gottfried "I hadn't sacrificed myself on goodness knows what altars to be iceberged." She tells of how she is coping with not writing to John. She thinks "... it is not good for John to be in love with me, not seriously ..."

Describes Gottfried's relationships with people in general, their wish to get out of the country, their current relationship, and the effect which a divorce would have on him.

Doris had not heard from Smithie for over a month. "He dislikes other people's emotions."

"I think I will come and live with you and John in a tent in the desert and eat peanuts with you."

Discusses Erhenberg's articles and Ernst Toller.

She tells Coll "It is not better to be alone. It is a dead end. One is alone in any case."

Discusses Smithies bisexual relations; the sexuality of the characters within her novel; her own sexuality; and Simon's opinions [on everything].

She discusses literature and Virginia Woolf.

"I think second sight depends on the amount of emotion you can project in any direction."

Discusses literature: *Friends and Relations* and *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

Doris would be going to Marandellas to address the Labour Party.

"Have been re-reading Proust with reverence."

She writes of her harrowed feelings when divorced from her two children.

027 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 8/5/1945]

1 leaf. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Coll MacDonald. Doris asks Coll to pass this to John.

Doris is gloomy as it is V-day and all she can think of is all the people who have lost their lives.

She had torn up all of John's letters which he had sent to her.

028 [Letter, Doris to Coll Macdonald, 14/5/1945]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

1 lettercard addressed to Coll MacDonald, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., M.E.F.

Smithie had written to her. He was acid about Coll.

She describes the V-day celebrations.

She and Gottfried are toying with the idea of getting themselves forcibly repatriated to Germany.

Writes about Athen and Costa.

029 [Letter, Doris to Coll Macdonald, 9/6/1945]

5 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

5 lettercards addressed to Coll MacDonald, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., M.E.F.

Thanks Coll for the photo of him with John.

Discusses Smithie's relationships with Patricia and Graham. Smithie is now a miner.

Tells of Simon's over-reaction to being ill. She describes her Assyrian nursemaid when she was little.

Mentions a former boyfriend Frank Cooper. She asks what Coll will do in Burma and discusses Smithie's occupation in the mines. She writes of a blitz against the refugees, an anti-semitic move. Doris has applied for her British nationality back. Describes a night spent with refugees; and a lunatic of a man called Hodson who was convinced of a branch of the British Government who telepathically made rebels impotent (see also letter 022).

Doris thinks her children view her as some kind of elder sister.

Describes her daily routine and relationship with Gottfried; a film called Summer Storm with George Saunders; the finding of a cure for bilharzia; and Flippy's escapades with an Airforce Squadron Leader.

Discusses the Labour Party in the by-election in Scotland; elections in the Union (of South Africa), Germany and the United States.

030 [Letter, Doris to Coll Macdonald, 23/6/1945]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

1 lettercard addressed to Coll MacDonald c/o H.Q., R.A.F., M.E.F.

Doris had started writing short stories, her novel put aside.

Discusses films and literature.

031 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 28/6/1945]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

1 lettercard addressed to P.O. J.R.M. Whitehorn, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., M.E.F.

Describes the pain of their relationship. Comments on Dostoevsky. Points out that John cannot reply to her letters. She advises John to find someone else. She describes her feelings towards Coll and vice-versa; asks if John has to go to Burma.

Refers to a telegram sent by John (enclosed).

032 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 11/7/1945]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

3 lettercards addressed to P.O. J.R.M. Whitehorn, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., M.E.F.

Doris and Gottfried had just spent a weekend with her parents, her mother, and her father who's health is failing.

Describes Smithies troubles with Graham's father.

The left wing in Salisbury are expecting a visit from the Soviet Consul from Johannesburg. Doris is still typing for Parliament.

033 [Letter, Doris to Coll Macdonald, 18/7/1945]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

2 lettercards addressed to P.O. Coll MacDonald, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., M.E.F.

Doris is writing three short stories and a novel.

Flippy is in a predicament as she is expecting a child with her Airforce Squadron Leader. This brings back memories for Doris's earlier predicament with Frank Wisdom.

Parliament is having night sittings and Doris is there until midnight. Some of them are drunk, "tight". She describes the debates which have gone on.

Doris will be going to Northern Rhodesia [Zambia] to type for the Parliament in August and November.

Mentions two books which she had received from John the previous week, Lady Chatterly's Lover and Baudelaire.

"Athen is going to Gwelo soon, ... have you heard anything of Costa, Athen thinks he may have been arrested".

034 [Letter, Doris to Coll Macdonald, 28/7/1945]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to P.O. Coll MacDonald, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., M.E.F.

Doris's guardian angel is the Duke of Marlborough (according to her father).

She describes the progress on her novel. She will rewrite the first draft. "...one of these days you will be able to say 'the novelist Tigger. Of course, I know her very well!' "

She describes the elections and party politics. Doris relates a production of the Merry Wives of Windsor.

She analyses the character and political career of Jan Christiaan Smuts. She mentions the internment camps in Rhodesia.

She continues to do work for the Guardian, Left Club, F.S.U. etc.

Mentions the poetry of Hopkins.

Asks what Coll thinks of [Ernest] Bevin being made Foreign Minister. "Their first mistake."

"Do you think everyone is made up of irreconcilable contradictions, or is it only me?"

Flippy is 3 months pregnant and will be marrying her "putrid pilot".
"Really, I am rather jealous. I can't think which is more satisfactory, having a baby, or writing a novel. Unfortunately they are quite incompatible."

035 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 15/8/1945]

4 leaves. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to P.O. J.R.M. Whitehorn, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., M.E.F.

Doris had received books from Smithie including Koestler and she describes her thoughts on this. Graham writes about his relationship with Smithie.

Doris describes her own journey to communism and what it means to her at the present. Discusses at length communism in Russia, India, Germany and Great Britain.

Doris is canvassing for Mrs Maasdorp.

She expects John and Coll may be at home, having left the desert.

036 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 27/8/1945]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Doris writes about the books she has read including 'On disbelieving atrocities'.

Smithie had written and Patricia was in love with someone else. Mentions Smithie's relationship with Graham.

Describes Flippy's wedding. "Bridegroom not so bad as I first thought. Quite nice, aged 21, long blonde moustache and masses of self possession. He is going to be a parson."

Doris includes a poem written by herself, influenced by Donne, Hopkins and Eliot.

037 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 30/8/1945]

5 leaves. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to P.O. Coll MacDonald, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F.

Letter written over a few days.

Doris had received a letter from Coll on V.J. day.

She gives a detailed account of Flippy and Christie's wedding day, and remarks on her first marriage: "by far the most terrible thing I ever did in my life was to marry F. Wisdom and duly produce a child I didn't want."

Doris asks after John and whether he has found another love.

Doris had submitted some poetry to a local editor, and she discusses poetry writing.

Mentions exercises and her attempt to lose weight.

Doris had despatched [Arthur] Koestler's 'Yogi and the Commissar', the letters of a British soldier in India, and poems of Hopkins, to John and Coll. She remarks on the Soviet Union, imperialistic views, and that she is trying to keep open minded.

"G says if I don't remain a Communist he will divorce me. Said I wouldn't be blackmailed into believing something I didn't think I ought to believe."

Mentions discussions at the Study Group on Soviet labour and class division.

Doris is back typing for Winterton, Holmes and Hill for a fortnight.

Discusses at length the relationship of Smithie and Graham and the disapproval thereof by Graham's father.

Doris refers to relationships with parents: "In my experience one shouldn't parley with parents. One should merely tell them to go to hell and walk out. In no time at all they come to heel and you come back on your own terms."

Relates a Saturday night out dancing. "I got tight as an owl." Discusses her rebellious nature.

Mentions the forthcoming visit of the Soviet consul.

Describes washing her hair with olive oil and looking like Anna May Wong.

Describes Gottfried's exhausting work schedule at the "tobacco place" and at the lawyers.

Advises Coll on his relationship with the married Elizabeth, and the good position he is in with the overplus of women in England. "... how peaceful it must be to live in a country where there are more women than men and men are therefore sexually satisfied and don't stare at you as if you were underdone steak."

Doris asks Coll what they do in India and in Karachi.

Doris describes her irritation with Peanuts and that his name was removed from the list of the last boat which left two weeks before.

038 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 24/9/1945]

4 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

4 lettercards addressed to P.O. Coll MacDonald, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F.

Refers to writings of Keats, Edith Sitwell and Binyon.

Describes Gottfried's rantings about intellectuals, and an analysis of intellectuals from a Marxist point of view.

Describes in detail the Soviet consul's visit. "I don't think I'll join the Communist party though. I might as well admit that I hav[e]n't the right temperament ... I have lost my faith in the Communist Party being necessarily the only way to Utopia ... All I know is that I want to be left in peace to write. The trouble is this. That no one with the exception of me, and possibly Gottfried, believes that it is anything but a waste of time my even trying."

Doris describes interruptions to her writing from her mother, Simon, Peanuts and Gottfried. She would like time alone to write. "I cannot believe that two people can live together without going mad. Well I go mad at any rate. The rubbish one talks. How polite one has to be ... "

Doris remarks that Coll and Smithie are the only two people she can speak freely to. She asks when Coll would be allowed home.

Doris refers to the pupil pilots at her parents place, and being careful what to say in their company.

039 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 29/9/1945]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

3 lettercards addressed to P.O. Coll MacDonald, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F.

Doris asks if Coll and John would like her to send food parcels to their parents in the UK.

She describes the post-war conflict between the Labour and Conservative Parties in the UK and between the Fascists and Communists in the Union under Smuts, and violent increase in antisemitism. She describes her mother's views on Fascism; antisemitism and industry in Southern Rhodesia; and the dissolution of the U.S.S.R.

Doris describes a French book she is reading 'An Honest Woman'.

Doris discusses the Communist Party in America and that she was shocked to see how they followed [Earl] Browder, and in France – [Jacques] Duclos.

Doris describes her way of cooking chicken; her poem on the sea; and asks whether she should send her Greek plays (in English).

Describes a night out at the theatre with a drunken Gottfried and Peanuts. Doris describes drinking and smoking habits. "There are times when I would gladly liquidate Peanuts."

Describes Flippy's ultimatum to Airforce H.Q. to put her on a boat [for the UK] to have baby.

040 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 7/10/1945]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

3 lettercards addressed to P.O. Coll MacDonald, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F.

Refers to Coll's homesickness; demobilisation plans; and dissolution with the Labour Party and its foreign policy.

Doris refers to her former lovers Frank Cooper and Steve, and Steve's subsequent conquests. (See also correspondence from F.N. Stephens, 2002)

Doris describes her novel and how the theme of death is unfortunately all over it.

She would not be going to Northern Rhodesia [Zambia] as the typist of an elderly gentleman.

Doris describes writing poetry; and how dancing is foreplay for sex. She muses on the fact that she will turn 26 later in the month. Describes her methodical sex-life since eighteen and her thoughts on living without it.

She would be going to Macheke for Christmas but would like never to see it again.

Remarks on a book 'Mammonart' by Sinclair Lewis on the uplifting purpose of art; and the writing of her novel, and its characters. She includes a poem on the Jacaranda tree.

Describes a tear-jerker 'While you were away last week', and other films.

Bertha had decided not to marry her boyfriend. Mickey and Aubrey "are engaged in frustrated love affair."

041 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 17/10/1945]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

3 lettercards addressed to P.O. Coll MacDonald, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F.

Discusses the poetry of Byron and the character of [a friend] Athen.

Doris is back at work in another lawyer's office. The weather is hot. She had visited her parents and the R.A.F. [pilots who were staying with them] had thankfully returned to England. The visit was still regarded as annoying, everyone in the household appears to be deaf and the dog is neurotic. Doris's father is ill.

Doris had received a letter from Steve who had been fighting with a unit of Yugoslav partisans "and is now working for the party in England."

Doris includes some lines written in agony while listening to some discordant riot of sound at her parent's place.

"... have discovered that I am the prey of at least ten different neuroses. ... Without a doubt, I am a romantic, looking for things in people [that] don't exist."

Mentions some people she had met: middle-class German Jews, and her English neighbour "I stick to my opinion that given decent conditions and a decent system, this country would be a wonderful place."

042 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 26/10/1945]

5 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to P.O. J.R.M. Whitehorn, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F.

Doris succumbs after months and writes to John from the office. She includes some lines of poetry.

Describes a revolutionary method of detecting bilharzia and curing it. Doris had been tested and was confirmed positive. She would be undergoing treatment.

Doris's work was interfering with the writing of her novel.

Doris is bored and fed up in S. Rhodesia. She wants to get out as far as the Union [South Africa] but is awaiting her British passport. Gottfried wants to return to Germany and Doris would give it a try but wants her UK passport first.

Describes the progress she is making with her novel.

Smithie had left the mine like he had left the airforce. He and Graham were doing nothing much. "... he appears to be lacking some co-ordinating principle or other ... He has a most feminine tendency towards hysteria."

Asks John "... are you in love with aforementioned coffee-planter's wife yet? If one has coffee-planter's wives in India."

Comments on the writings of Lamb, and Virginia's 'The Waves'.

Doris had just caused a fire in the wastepaper basket and remembers another fire she started in a former office.

Mentions Edith Sitwell's 'Street Songs' and the poems of Sydney Keyes.

Doris reports on her attempts for publication of her short stories and poems.

Writes of her exercises and the Xmas trip to Macheke.

Recounts a strike of the railway workers in Rhodesia.

Doris is exasperated by what her parents come out with. "... [they] talk and sound like an overdone caricature of Colonel Blimp. ... All the ancient and frosted lies about Russia".

Asks after Coll. Doris thinks he sounds acid and full of cynicism.

She asks if she could send some food home to his parents [in England].

Doris asks John not to become a lawyer, in order that he not be corrupted.

She mentions her 5 year old son John and his practical mind, and her beautiful daughter, Jean.

She tells a story of her "cookboy" and her attempts to convince him to eat unrefined mealie meal.

Describes a book 'Oblamov' by Goncharov and 'The Silver Phantom' about the ship 'Aurora' which Doris's brother was on. Refers also to Pope and Byron.

Mentions her bilharzia treatment again and the typing of debates in Parliament.

She asks John not to send any more telegrams as it would upset Gottfried.

043 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 10/11/1945]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

2 lettercards addressed to P.O. J.R.M. Whitehorn, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F.

Doris describes her stay at the Roman Catholic Hospital where she receives treatment for bilharzia.

Discusses the poetry of Hopkins and Edith Sitwell.

Mentions the East Indies business and that pilots from India had been taken to quell the riots.

Doris plans to finish the draft of her novel by the New Year.

She is envious of Flippy being in England.

She had made two frocks and enjoys dressmaking.

044 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 21/11/1945]

4 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

4 lettercards addressed to P.O. Coll MacDonald, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F.

Gottfried and Doris had quarrelled over her writing to John. "I think for G and I to get divorced would be idiotic." She writes about her relationship with John and wonders if it would have lasted in more normal circumstances.

Relates the complications surrounding Gottfried's naturalisation. Discusses the ideas of living in Germany, the UK or the Union (South Africa). Doris wants to spend about 3 months in the Union. "I don't believe in married people running together like two soft sweets in one paper."

Doris explains why she would not live with or marry John.

Discusses Flippy's life in England where she is staying with her in-laws (the Christies). Doris thinks the marriage will not last 2 years. Flippy's mother Mrs Berlin wants to return home to England.

Discusses the prospects of Coll and John being allowed to return home to England from India.

Describes a French novel, 'Micheline et L'Amour'.

045 [Telegram, Doris to John Whitehorn, 27/1/1946]

1 leaf.

"P/O John Whitehorn. 152 Squadron Singapore = Many thanks telegram. All my Love = Lessing."

046 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 1/2/1946]

5 leaves. MS. Written on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Addressed to P.O. J.R.M. Whitehorn, 152 Squadron, R.A.F., Singapore.

Doris tells John she is expecting a baby. "... I have felt for you enough to know what an ugly irony this is."

"... I look forward to having a child again, because I miss my two very much as you know, & I won't feel so lost without them." Doris thinks the child is a girl, who she refers to as Catherine.

Doris is planning to go to Cape Town "... while I can still work without causing comment."

She thinks Coll is annoyed with her and she hadn't heard from him in months.

"... please tear this one up when you get it."

Explains when it would be safe for John to write "... I think he [Gottfried] would be suicidal."

Doris had finished her novel that day and would be sending it to Smithie.

She tells John to read a book by Charles Morgan.

047 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 2/2/1946]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Addressed to P.O. Coll MacDonald, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F. and re-routed to 152 Squadron.

Describes the annual xmas trip to Macheke and meeting up with mutual acquaintances, including Athen.

"... I have learnt in the last year that I shall never be a good Communist."

"... while I prepared to believe that Russia's new system is a terrific advance on the past ... I am damned if it approaches even distantly my idea of a decent society."

"... the ruling classes will be the people with knowledge of technical processes."

Describes the Southern Rhodesian Labour Party (S.R.L.P.) and fears for it being controlled by the trade unions.

Doris would be going to the Union (South Africa) for 3 months, possibly as Mr Lamb's private typist for the Union Legislative Assembly, or as a typist to the Guardian. She would be there from April – July.

Explains how she dreams in poetic verse at night.

Doris asks after Smithie who was trying to get back to Cambridge.

Frank [Wisdom] had hurt his foot in a minor accident. He had met with Doris to discuss the children's education.

Doris writes about the 'Philosophy of Betrayal on Koestler and White' and discusses Marxism, Russia and Socialism.

048 [Letter, Doris to Coll Macdonald, 18/2/1945 [sic 1946]]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Coll MacDonald, 152 Squadron, R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F.

Doris describes her meeting with Mary Carmichael, who she hadn't seen for some years. She describes Mary's life events including her second marriage to Jack Allen, and comments "I was so delighted by the accuracy of my psychology that I went and had tea with her."

Doris describes how others had viewed the break-up of her marriage to Frank Wisdom.

Announces that she is going to be having Gottfried's baby towards the end of September. She discusses her own reactions, the reactions of Gottfried, Simon, Nathan [Zelter] and Lofty (who is in love with her, but not vice-versa).

Doris had asked to work for the Guardian in the Union [South Africa, Cape Town] for about 2 months.

She writes of Gottfried's family and their contributions and bravery during the war. His sister and brother-in-law, Irene and Klaus, and how they returned to Germany as Jews and Communists.

Discusses films and the film industry.

Doris's novel was finished three weeks prior and had been dispatched to Smithie.

Discusses at length her and Gottfried's future plans for living in Germany, and her wish to live in Cape Town. She refers to the choice of a life in poverty for the sake of the [Communist] Party.

Doris tells Coll not to be so unhappy, she thinks he "is in love with death" and tries to lift his mood.

049 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 20/2/1946]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Addressed to P.O. Coll MacDonald, c/o H.Q., R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F. and re-routed to 60 Squadron.

Envelope has post marks of 6 and 22 March. Letter written over a period: 20 February – 2 March 1946.

Doris relates a dream she had of Coll.

She describes her dressmaking.

Letter continued on 26th February. Describes Jack Allen who has fought for his health for the past 20 years and would that day be getting married in bed with Doris and Gottfried as witnesses.

Mentions having seen Frank Wisdom “ ... one might have thought we were nothing but slight acquaintances.”

Describes a split in the S.R. L.P., attempts for a fusion, the trade unions' involvement, and a congress in Gwelo.

Describes the wedding of Jack Allen and drinking Port for the first time.

Doris describes the ridiculous anti-Soviet Russia press releases in Southern Rhodesia and how her mother and brother were ecstatic at the prospect of England being at war with Russia.

Doris describes her brother Harry as being 24 and “ ... already quite dead.”

Describes Athen as packing for Athens and that his family has T.B..

Describes mutual acquaintances John Milner and Bill Kerr.

Signs off on 2 March and writes that she will be in Cape Town from the 15th March.

050 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 5/3/1946]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Remarks on the letter received by Coll.

“I get less and less of a communist as time goes on, in temperament, though remaining one by conviction.”

Mentions the ‘Yogi and Commissar’ and comments on John and Coll’s tough training in jungle work.

Doris tells Coll she is pregnant.

Doris begins to write about her next novel.

Mentions Smithies escapades with Patricia and how Coll doesn’t like him much. She also asks of Coll’s gentle resentment of John. She tells Coll to find himself a girl, and of John’s girl “there is no need to inform me six times in every letter how nice she is.”

Doris is pleased Coll doesn’t like the ‘Vicar of Wakefield’. She comments on the film ‘The Way to the Stars’ with Michael Redgrave.

Mentions Catherine (her unborn child).

“Please convey my most passionate affection to John. To hell with his girlfriend.”

051 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 22/3/1946]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to F..O. J.R.M. Whitehorn, 60 Squadron, R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F.

Doris has arrived in Cape Town after a 3 day train journey. She is working in the Circulation Department of the Guardian and canvassing in her spare time.

Describes the Communists in Cape Town and Gottfried’s difficulties in getting into Germany.

Relates a relationship she had when younger, with a much older Jewish man.

Comments on the current relationship she has with John. She is disappointed that Coll and John are no longer together as she won’t be getting any news of John through Coll.

Doris will “distrust the classics” for the rest of her life and she doesn’t like the exalting of a historical period or people.

Describes her reading tastes and compares the relationships she has with Gottfried and John.

Doris had sent two photographs of herself to Coll, one was for John.

She describes her feelings towards Smithie and on heterosexuality.

052 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn and Coll MacDonald, 2/5/1946]

5 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Written from Cape Town.

Doris mentions her maternal great grandmother who broke her kneck while hunting.

She describes her canvassing for the Communist Party.

Doris is trying to get Gottfried into the Union (South Africa) as she wants to live there. She doesn’t think they would get into Germany for many years to come.

Describes being pursued by three men, and a love affair with Gregoire Boonzaier (South African painter and Communist).

She provides progress on her pregnancy.

She remarks on John's love affairs and he being made an Officer.

Doris had received a letter from Steve "... the lad I had an affaire with when I left the swine Frank Wisdom". Steve informed her he was getting married.

Discusses views on Palestine and Gregoire's views on the English and Americans, he being Afrikaans.

Doris mentions the literature she has been reading, and Smithie's comments on her novel.

Mentions more about the elections and the Labour Party wins.

053 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 14/6/1946]

2 leaves. MS. Written on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Actg. Adj. John Whitehoen, 60 Squadron, R.A.F. "Netherlands East Indies."

Written in Cape Town.

Doris will be leaving the Cape in four days and is not looking forward to being back in Rhodesia where she will be faced with the Labour Party, typing, making clothes for herself and her expected child and finding a flat to live in. She apologises for not having written much but has been engaged in love affair with painter. [Gregoire Boonzaier].

"... marriage and me are not compatible The sooner I realise it the better. One day G will ... "

Doris had left the Guardian two weeks prior in order to have a holiday 80 miles from Cape Town called Oue__.

Mentions Smithie's wish to return to S.A.. Doris would start work on a play.

Doris would not be able to write to John once she has returned to Salisbury. "But I can't help feeling I am not long for Rhodesia."

054 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 11/7/1946]

4 leaves. Typescript.

"I received your excessively sour letter yesterday with raised eyebrows but with gratitude for what was received."

Doris is back in Salisbury and her and Gottfried exchange details of their respective affairs during the past few months. "The difference between us being that he made up in quantity for what I had achieved in quality." They decide at some stage they will separate without any fuss.

Doris writes about her intentions for living a single life with her child, and writing.

Describes old friends of the Lessings in London, Sir Arthur and Lady Morgan. Gottfried was in love with the daughter Margaret Morgan before the war. The Morgans visit Southern Africa. Doris's parents have them around and spend an embarrassing afternoon and evening grovelling, scraping, and trying to impress the Morgans. The political and economic views on America are discussed and Doris is humiliated by her mother. Gottfried and Doris agree that it was a pity he had not married Margaret.

055 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 22/7/1946]

3 leaves. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to F.O. John Whitehorn, 60 Squadron, R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F.

Describes love affair with Gregoire, his character, life-story, lovers and affairs.

Doris would leave Gottfried once their child is old enough. She relates the affairs Gottfried had while she was in Cape Town.

Doris is writing a play and awaiting Smithies return of her novel with alterations " ... so that I can get to work on it."

"I think you had better tear this letter up the moment you have read it. Please don't think I have written it to you to arouse pity or something."

056 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 14/8/1946]

2 leaves. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to P.O. John Whitehorn, 60 Squadron, R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F. and re-directed to Waimate, Marlborough, Wiltshire.

Doris describes her slovenliness " ... like a good Rhodesian I hope that the boy will have done something about it by the time I look next."

Doris has a dream in which she proceeded to lecture John on " ... the sins and evils of (a) drink and (b) women."

Doris is trying to cut down smoking 50 a day and is now chewing gum instead. She really wants a boy but thinks that's why she will have a girl.

Doris asks if John and Coll have left for England.

"My novel depresses me beyond words, it is a very bad novel." She includes a poem (written to John) which is being published by Poetry Today.

Doris updates John on the affair with Gregoire and the difficulties he has in leaving his wife. "Meanwhile I wait with much more trepidation than he, the birth of his son with the little Afrikaaner girl [Marie]."

057 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn and Coll MacDonald, 25/8/1946]

4 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to P.O. John Whitehorn, 60 Squadron, R.A.F., S.E.A.A.F. and re-directed to Waimate, Marlborough, Wiltshire.

Being pregnant had caused Doris to be tearful. She describes being pregnant.

"Aren't you tired of devastating pictures of married life?" She goes on to describe affair with Gregoire and her relationship with Gottfried on her return from Cape Town.

Describes how her brother Harry refused University to be with his parents instead, how his mother took on a large property she couldn't cope with in addition to nursing their father, and had two breakdowns herself. Doris tries to sort out their lives and describes the showdown at her parents home. "My family has always been a completely baffling part of my life."

Doris's son John is almost 7 and she discusses his schooling options.

Smithie had returned her novel and didn't think it was "too bad." "I think it is terrible, but will duly alter it. ... I loathe it. ... Am nearly finished a play which I don't think is too bad."

Doris would like to be in South Africa as there is a lot going on. The Indians are involved in a passive resistance campaign for their rights. Africans are burning their passes and mine workers are on strike. The Communist Party offices in Cape Town and Johannesburg were raided. There are political mentions which she cannot make as letters are still being censored.

Doris was pleased that Coll and John had not had to bomb anyone as such.

She mentions Smithie.

The last page is addressed to John:

Mentions the difficulties in putting up with each others' respective private lives.

Harry interrupts Doris during the course of writing and family matters are raised again.

"Don't go and get married darling. Apart from me, it's a mistake without much necessity for it."

058 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 24/9/1946]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to P.O. J.R.M. Whitehorn, 60 Squadron, R.A.F., N.E.I., S.E.A.A.F. and re-directed to Waimate, Marlborough, Wiltshire, and then Trinity College, Cambridge.

Doris describes how pregnancy is affecting her and how she spends her days. She wonders about the possible attributes and features her child will have.

“Are you still in the throes of supervising the struggle between Dutch and Indonesians?”

Mentions Smithies plans for Cambridge and his love affair with Graham, also his idea that when he and Doris are in the same country “ ... a magnificent love affair will result.”

Doris describes her family's problems and her parents ill-planned holiday to Umtali. “I shall take poison when I'm fifty. That's what Daddy said ten years ago, so probably I won't.”

Gregoire's son had been born while he was off with another girl. Doris thinks he should marry the child's mother Marie and he could thus have it both ways. She quotes a paragraph from Isherwood's *Prater Violet* which describes him perfectly.

Doris describes the influence the baby has on her and Gottfried's relationship: “I wish I didn't like Gottfried so much. I wish this wasn't his baby. Having this baby together has brought us much closer, like sewing together the edges of a wound ... “ She goes on to describe the physical experiences of pregnancy.

“I don't want Gottfried to know that I still write. It's significant that he can take Gregoire in his stride as the unimportant episode that he was (though a wonderful one) ...”

Doris describes her first two childbirths.

Doris would be buying tickets for 'Watch on the Rhine'.

059 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald , 11/10/1946]

3 leaves. MS. Written on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Coll MacDonald, Argyll House, Seaforth Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, and forwarded to Christ's College, Cambridge.

Written from Lady Chancellor Nursing Home.

Describes her labour and the birth of Peter Lessing. Also the books she is reading: *Lysistrata*, *The Duchess of Malfi*, and works by Dickens.

060 [Letter, Doris to John and Coll MacDonald , 26/10/1946]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Addressed to Coll at Christ's College, Cambridge.

"Smithie obviously finds my present state irritating, and so might you." Doris describes Smithie's reactions to Doris's pregnancy and new baby.

Doris's parents had gone on their holiday to Umtali. Her father had spent a very ill week in the Vumba hotel and was now in the Umtali hospital. They both drive everyone crazy and think no-one knows how to nurse like Doris's mother (a former nurse). "...the whole family has agreed long since that the sooner he dies the better."

Doris writes humorously about her letters to her Mother, they are exactly like the ones her mother sends her. In the meantime she and Gottfried are staying at her parents' place until their return. With them is Joan Falk (Doris's over-sexed second cousin who has an eye on Gottfried).

Doris describes her "entirely admirable" baby and her flouting of the rules by feeding on demand. "When I think what agonies I suffered over John and Jean, as a martyr to science, I could kick myself."

Doris recommends "The Squire", by Edith Bagnold, on the emotions of having children.

061 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn and Coll MacDonald , 18/11/1946]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Coll, Christ's College, Cambridge.

Doris remonstrates with John and Coll about their jibes at her preoccupations with a baby.

Doris's parents are driving her crazy and she wants to go back to her flat. "At least there are no dogs, cats, chickens or ducks in it and no one is deaf." Her mother does not follow doctor's orders "... it's useless to expect any member of our family, particularly me, to be logical."

Doris complains of Gottfried's association with Maryanne Anderson while she was in the nursing home. This in spite of an elaborate pact, the essence of which was that neither should indulge in affairs while in the same town.

Doris describes her mother's running of the household and her desire to have Doris and Gottfried and the baby to stay with them. The gutters are inspected; Harry's pet starts to chew Peter's arm; an Anglican sister visits her sick father and is shocked that Doris will not be baptising Peter; and Doris's mother gives rapid orders to the kitchen staff "in her own inimitable manner, a mixture of kitchen kaffir, slang, and words six syllables long ... I am beginning to see that in five years time all this will strike me as funny."

Doris urges her mother to slow down and have some leisure time as she is getting old. She quotes from Proust "until one has redigested one's life, one hasn't lived it." Doris's mother says "Good heavens, you wouldn't want me to brood, would you?"

062 [Letter, Doris to Smithie, Coll MacDonald and John Whitehorn, 10/12/1946]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to Coll MacDonald, Christ's College, Cambridge and forwarded to Argyll House, Seaforth Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex. The letters were typed with carbon paper for multiple copies.

Describes domestic life and motherhood.

Doris's brother Harry has got engaged " ...to a very nice, but dull girl."

Her father has two months to live and Doris writes about his accomplishments and failures. She contrasts her father's sinking spirit to Jack Allen's fighting spirit just before he died.

Dorothy Zelter was lending a hand baby-sitting. Lofty had two dying parents and a wife who didn't like socialists.

Doris believes there will never be equality of the sexes. "You will continue to get the best of things, and we will continue to revenge ourselves on you in the usual despicable ways to the end of time."

Hogarth has rejected Doris's 'Ancestors and Trees' and 'The Generations' for publication. She asks Smithie to send the novel to some other publisher and she will revise the play when she has time.

Doris comments on Andre Maurois's autobiography 'Call No Man Happy'. Refers again to Aristophanes and Doris concludes that everything goes back to Greece or the Mediterranean. "... our son shall certainly learn Greek and Latin, if nothing else."

Enclosed is a photograph of Peter Lessing at 3 weeks.

063 [Letter, Doris to Smithie, Coll MacDonald and John Whitehorn, 31/12/1946]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Doris describes spending Christmas with Phil and F.G. Loveridge in Plumtree after having nearly cancelled their plans due to her father's ill health. With reference to Phil: "... though very nice, she is not the woman friend I have been seeking for all these years."

"Bertha has now achieved her life ambition and been accepted by the Old Vic."

Doris asks Smithie to adapt her play for the radio. She asks for her novel to be sent to another publisher. "... it would do my morale a lot of good if it were to be published." She is writing another play called 'Crying for the Moon'.

Doris genuinely wants to go to Johannesburg and get arrested and imprisoned. "I can't send my hero to prison unless I have been there myself."

Her father is dying. She describes what's wrong with him.

Doris had met her two children, John and Jean in Bulawayo, and describes their development with pride. "Thank God there is no possibility of my going through childhood again."

She asks for newspapers and party pamphlets to be sent and gives an update on the resistance in South Africa, also those awaiting trial for sedition, including Betty Sacks, the editor of the Guardian.

Mentions Gregoire and that he has just made a £1,000 exhibiting his paintings.

Describes her dying father and his belief in the afterlife.

"I am not staying here for preference, which you [Smithie] appear to suggest ... The position is that they are still thinking about naturalising us ... I assure you I don't dither about like this for fun."

064 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn and Coll MacDonald, 25/3/1947]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Doris relates a dream she had of Coll and John at Marandellas.

She comes up with an idea for a comedy play 'Nora's Granddaughters' all about her leaving Frank Wisdom.

She thinks at last they are going to get somewhere to live. "Have decided not to smoke more than 25 cigarettes a day."

Refers to the F.S.U., the African strike and Frank Wisdom's concern for his position.

Describes Mr Senn who is building a property while staying at the Roman Catholic Mission. Doris plans to stay there so she can write.

Gottfried would be motoring to the Cape with Lofty. His first application was refused, and they said "Mrs Lessing needn't apply either." "I suppose that means they know about my working in the Guardian office last year ... The comrades in Cape Town have been committed for trial."

Doris comments on the newspapers she was sent. She writes about the virtues of learning Greek and Latin, and the history of the Greeks.

Describes seeing an Indian woman in a milk bar where “ ... all the Europeans shrank away.”

Describes Mr Green who visited the previous night and had written the first part of a trilogy on the history of Southern Rhodesia. His book was killed by silence in Rhodesia. A fascinating man who now had a flea in his ear. It was however the official reference book in the House of Commons and across universities.

Describes Mickey's marital problems. “I tell her she's weak to the backbone and deserves everything she gets ...”

The drought continues.

Doris wants to write plays about Lobengula and John Smith Moffat.

065 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 18/?/1947]

3 leaves. MS and typescript. Typed and written on recto and verso.

Mentions not getting John's letter from Java, and that he couldn't have got hers just before Catherine [i.e. Peter] was born.

Discusses her novel. She loathes it but would like it published. Expresses her frustrations at writing “I think, I shall give it all up. But I don't, and wont. I bloody well will write.”

Doris describes the wait in getting naturalised and that coming to England may take months or a year. She discusses her marriage, the possibilities for her and Gottfried to live separate lives, their differing views on educating children, and her ideas on marrying John.

Describes a quarrel with Smithie as he had expected Doris to live with him when she came to England and she did not want to. “... perhaps in due course he will become resigned to Peter and stop annoying me so much.”

“About Peter, I try put myself in your situation, and I quite see your point that you resent his existence.”

She describes her sex life with Gottfried.

The letter is finished by hand in a park. That evening she would be going to see 'Quiet Weekend' with Nathan Zelter, a Romanian Jew. She had been assisting Lofty with his courtships.

Doris's father remains very ill but will not die.

The trial of the comrades continues “down South” (South Africa).

Doris is surprised that Coll is back in the party and she asks where John stands politically. Doris feels that she isn't a good member but will remain until she is purged.

She asks for a photograph of John and says it will be all right if they correspond with restraint as Gottfried is doing what he likes anyway.

066 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 14/1/1947]

Letter out of sequence.

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Lettercard addressed to Coll at Christ's College, Cambridge.

Gottfried and Doris had been to see the film 'Fantasia'.

Smithie had just sent a letter "... pointing out that maternal affection is utterly unreasonable ..." He also mentioned that John had just departed to Belgium for Christmas.

Doris encourages John to write. Gottfried was refused permission to go to the Union (South Africa) for a holiday. Permission was also refused to Doris. The Royal family are expected in the Union and Doris can't wait to get it over and done with.

There is a drought and a maize shortage and inflation continues.

067 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 21/2/1947]

Letter out of sequence.

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Lettercard addressed to Coll at Christ's College, Cambridge.

Doris is still typing for Hansard.

She and Gottfried went down to Macheke the previous weekend. Doris describes various characters there, some of whom are known to Coll.

The drought persists "... when the veld should be sodden as a sponge – there are veld fires."

They are being inundated with the Royal family in the newspapers.

Describes Mickey and her husband's marital problems. They came to visit the Lessings. "For three hours we sat, glasses in hand, while we analyzed him with the utmost frankness ..."

The study group is doing well and Doris describes one of the members who is Viennese.

068 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 13/3/1947]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Lettercard addressed to Coll in Cambridge and re-directed to Argyll House, Seaforth Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex.

Doris is thrilled about Coll's new love affair.

Asks if she should send 'New Masses'. Mentions books by Kafka, Edith Sitwell, and Rosamund Lehman. "... women novelists outstrip the men today. Probably because suppression is still the best forcing-ground for art. That is why art can't be much good in the Soviet Union."

Doris asks after Smithie's Pat, whom she thought was having a baby.

She receives more letters from Gregoire "... nothing but detailed descriptions of his various amours."

She has finished her play "It is much better than the last."

069 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 11/4/1947]

3 leaves. Typed on recto and verso.

Lettercards addressed to John at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Describes finding lice in their beds at home, and an Easter weekend trip to Umtali to spend with Lofty and with Doris's three children. On the way they break down at Marandellas and spend the night there. Doris reminisces about a time spent there with John. Her and Gottfried discuss the immigration debate with a young man and then see Dr. Jopling, the local M.O.

"Then we rushed home in the glamorous moonlight, saying alas, if only we were in love, how perfect it would be. Not being in love, we started a wonderful quarrel at the tops of our voices all among the gum trees, but I damned if I can remember what we quarreled about now."

Describes the Royal Family's visit, "John and Jean being thoroughly disillusioned ..."

"Well, the Queen looked like a grocer's wife on bank holiday, as usual ..."

Doris had sent the play off to John. "Being all about shortages and frustration it should catch the Great Heart of the British Public."

She describes John and Jean. "He is a long, tough, forthright child. I haven't any connection with him at all. For that matter I never had. We treat each other with respect and circle around each other warily ... [Jean] is an affectionate and sensitive infant. I wish I could have her, but I can't, so that's that."

Parliament would be starting the following week "... which is very concentrated work, but paid well, and we are so broke I must do it."

"About the novel, when Cape refuses it, I should just leave it. I really don't see why anyone would publish it."

She still wants to spend time on the Lobengula play.

Gottfried is going to the Cape for a month if they will let him in, otherwise P.E.A. (Portuguese East Africa). She thinks they will agree to part company [divorce] as soon as its possible to do so.

She asks after Smithie and discusses Smithie's character.

Coll had finished with his love affair to Elizabeth "Apparently (reading between the lines) she tried to annex him completely." He was now in love with someone else.

She asks about John's career in economics.

070 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 4/5/1947]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Lettercard addressed to John at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Writing of Peter: "There is nothing more satisfying than a nice friendly baby, irritating though they may be."

Doris has finished 20,000 words of her new novel in 10 days. "I have had an idea suddenly presented to me for a magnificent play, and now a novel which must come after this one. Why aren't I on a desert island all by myself for a year?"

They must go to the pictures with Aubrey. "But he's numb, like wet cotton-wool."

She complains of the chaos and noise around her.

Doris bemoans the fact that everything she has ever done has been ugly and hideous.

She gives instructions about publishing her play. "But it is a hideous play. I should like to write something very beautiful. Tear it up. I don't mind."

Doris meets a little boy at the clinic and she sees John in him.

She has difficulty in writing her novel "... the next bit wont come clear yet."

071 [Letter, Doris to Coll MacDonald, 12/5/1947]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso

Lettercard addressed to Coll at Christ's College, Cambridge.

Doris may have found a decent place for them to live.

She had dreamed of Coll leading Marxist study groups.

Doris comments on a book 'King Jesus' and Thomas Mann's 'Magic Mountain'.

Peter was beginning to crawl at 7 months.

Doris thinks it would have been nice if John had a sister.

Doris's brother, Harry, was getting married and then coming to England for an ear operation and would spend 6 months there. Doris was jealous since she hadn't been once. "I am really very fond of my brother. We have never quarrelled in our lives."

Doris will write to her Godmother Daisy and she writes of her uncle Harry who eloped with a young woman at the age of 70.

072 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 28/5/1947]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope. Envelope addressed to John at Trinity College, Cambridge.

They have found a flat and would be moving within the week.

John can write to her "in moderation."

Doris discusses Smithie and his lack of willpower. "I have spent all my life with people who believe in amazing deliverancies ..."

The previous weekend they had gone to visit the Zimbabwe ruins.

"You can have all of Aristophanes as far as I am concerned, excepting the Lysistrata, but give me Euripides."

"I think the next time I write a play, I shall have a chorus."

Doris discusses Coll's love affairs.

Doris recommends P.C. Snow's 'Strangers and Lovers' and Compton Mackenzie's 'Men and Wives'. She did not get on with Arnold Bennett's 'Old Wife's Tale'.

073 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 24/6/1947]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope and a photograph.

Envelope addressed to John at Trinity College, Cambridge and re-directed to Waimate, Marlborough, Wiltshire.

Doris lists what features she remembers of John.

She writes about Smithie and his reaction to the possibility of her being with John once she returns to England.

Peter has whooping cough and Doris instructs that this letter be fumigated.

Enclosed is a photograph of Peter Lessing. Doris sees this as being wicked since John had (a) asked for a photograph of her and (b) wanted to forget her baby's existence.

She describes breastfeeding Peter.

She asks for feedback on her plays.

Doris discusses 'The Trial' by Kafka.

She relates part of a religious letter from her Godmother Aunt Daisy.

Doris humorously describes the wedding plans for her brother and future wife Monica. She had bought him 'Van der Velde's Ideal Marriage'. "Have long since come to the conclusion, after sad experience, that one can read books on sex till one is purple with suppressed passion, but unless one is born with the knack, its no good. Like cooking."

Doris asks if he and Smithie would like food parcels, how John's affair with the blond girl is progressing, and whether he still loves her.

She writes a poem and includes it.

She is reading John Hersey's book on Hiroshima.

She asks what John will do now he is a Professor of Economics.

Doris's cousin was writing music criticism for the Times.

074 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 7/8/1947]

4 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope and 2 photographs.

Envelope addressed to John in Waimate, Marlborough, Wiltshire and re-directed to the Brevet Club, 11 Chesterfield St., London. W1.

Describes at length the last bloody, final bust-up with Gottfried just before Peter was born. Doris suggests John break off their relationship if he wishes.

Doris is thrilled John has given up economics. "You have no idea how much people who take economics intimidate me."

Describes John (her son's) intellect at seven years old. "I remember him just after he was born, five minutes old, looking bored, disgruntled and browned off."

Describes Jean's beauty "It is nice for girls to be good looking, although, of course, it wastes an awful lot of time."

She relates a private conversation between the two children and herself in which they ask if she is going to give Peter away as she gave them away.

Doris encloses a poem entitled 'Jealousy'.

Doris thinks 'Crying for the Moon' may be all right on the stage.

Doris is collecting rejection slips from publishers, it is only in the South African papers where they think she is wonderful.

Doris will go to Johannesburg and finish her novel. She thinks 'Ancestors and Trees' was "bad".

Lofty had found a girl friend and everyone was away to leave Doris in peace to write. Yet she gets lonely if left alone for long and writes "I couldn't not be married."

Included is a poem on the drought 'The Victims'.

She describes Gottfried's affection towards his son and Peter's dependence on her. She suggests Coll has an advanced case of Oedipus complex.

She asks if John ever sees Smithie. "In some disreputable way Smithie is very much a part of me. I couldn't do without him."

Doris jokes about John being in the Foreign Office.

Doris describes the marriage of her brother to Monica.

She asks John to re-read slowly and with concentration the paragraph with an asterisk.

John should write to Flat 1, 119 Fife Avenue, Salisbury and there is no need to disguise his handwriting, "... shall not be bullied over this any more."

Enclosed is a poem to Lenin and 2 photographs.

075 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, ?/8/1947]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John in Waimate, Marlborough, Wiltshire, re-directed to c/o T.L. Thomas, White Horses, Tremethwick [i.e. Tremethick], Cornwall.

Doris had given up her flat temporarily for her brother and new sister-in-law and is staying in her parents home. "... my mother's house does something to me and I no longer become rational, if I ever am. I hate her, her furniture ... "

Describes Carl, a Jew from Vienna who was a member of their study group, his move to Southern Africa, and his love affairs. This story gets Doris thinking about her infidelity with Smithie and how it made no difference to her or Gottfried. Doris thinks she has made a new friend in Carl but knows Gottfried will not like him as soon as he knows Carl likes Doris.

Uys Krige, the S.A. writer had asked to see Doris's mask play. Doris recommends 'The Personality of Man' by Tyrrell. She is also reading the Spanish Empire in America and Aechylus and Athens.

John had sent Doris a letter which was opened by her brother by mistake. An amusing story follows of Harry conveying the contents to Doris.

076 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 25/9/1947]

3 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope. Envelope addressed to John at Trinity College, Cambridge, and re-directed to Waimate, Marlborough, Wiltshire.

Doris describes her long-felt wish to go to England, and the complications with their naturalisation application. Once in England she and Gottfried would separate in a "civilised" fashion. In the meantime Doris thinks about how a temporary move to England would work out.

Phil Loveridge comes to stay with Doris and Gottfried, "... the only woman I know whom I like without any reservations whatsoever ... " Quarrels ensue between Doris and Gottfried, one in particular about an inheritance of £200, and Doris is accused of extravagance. She and Gottfried quarrel further about the "adviability" of her going to England.

Doris vows to have no more children. "... you [John] are the only person I have ever really wanted to have a child by."

077 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 29/9/1947]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Doris's father had died that morning. She reflects on his death, her parent's marriage and how her father was used in the last war, "... broken up, and then flung aside for the rest of his life."

Doris jokes on how she could support herself and her son in England.

She thinks John's sister may be somewhat naïve. "I was awfully romantic when young. I combined the most profound knowledge of technical details about sex with the most extraordinary innocence. Don't ask me how, it was so."

The letter is continued the following day when Doris must visit her father's corpse. She describes the pompous funeral she would like to give him.

"This household ... gets more and more like a Checkhov play. We sit around, making remarks at cross-purposes, being silkily polite."

Doris urges John not to be a school master, "... all the ones I know that I like, radiate a sort of Newstatesmanish progressiveness and enthusiasm for the right that has a scoutmasterish effect which depresses me beyond words"

"The only sane attitude of mine, I think, is a wide-eyed belief in imminent catastrophe combined with the unlimited belief in the indestructability of mankind, but the atom bomb will certainly blot out half of us, but life will go on."

Gregoire thinks Doris should join him in the Union. His divorce is coming through but he also thinks he should marry Marie, the mother of his child. Doris writes "The child has developed Gregoire's conscience as far as it can be developed which isn't very far."

Two days later and the letter is continued.

Doris wants to write a novel about her parents. Her current novel is getting mixed reviews from Phil [Loveridge] and Gottfried. Phil thinks it will be wonderful if she pulled it off. Gottfried thinks it stinks.

"I am going to learn to write plays and slowly slowly write this novel for myself only. That is the only way to write anything. No more poetry, which is no good."

The drought continues and temperatures fluctuate wildly. In July [winter] they were sweltering. Peter keeps getting colds.

Phil would be leaving in a few days.

078 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 20/10/1947]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Trinity Cambridge in Cambridge.

Doris must get on and write her monthly column for the Labour Forum. She is nervously conscious about how she writes as people's thinking is twisted.

She thinks about her and John's respective activities with the time difference of two hours between England and Rhodesia.

Doris writes of the confines a child brings. "I haven't yet met a woman who isn't bitterly rebellious, wanting children, but resenting them because of the way we are cribbed, cabined and confined."

"Our grandmothers had night and day nurseries, head nurses, under nurses and nursery maids. Our granddaughters will have creches that one can trust and good nursery schools. We have neither."

079 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 18/12/1947]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at 56 Kingsley Way, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London, N2.

Doris has not received a letter from John in 6 weeks. Smithie writes and wants her to join him in London.

Doris asks if its practicable for communal living arrangements when she comes to London. She asks John to look out for a single mother for her to share a flat with.

She asks after John's job.

Doris misses Coll and points out she saw him nearly every day for two years. Coll is vindictive about the English. He is going to Scotland as a don. He has left his girl and the Party, and will vote Labour from then on. Doris writes "I shall always vote communist, be delighted at communist victories, and remain somewhat sceptical."

Doris explains her plans. She thinks she will be in England by June. Gottfried will divorce her from Rhodesia and will give her custody of Peter until he is sixteen. "We have reached the stage of fundamental indifference and good friendship ..."

The landlord wants them out by the end of February and they may need to live with her "ever-loving mother." She will tell her mother about the divorce just one week before she leaves.

Doris had finished Mary and Dick [The Grass is Singing] and despatched it to the publishers. "Obviously the book will never be published in Southern Africa, How could it be?"

080 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 6/1/1948]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Doris was writing an article on Southern Rhodesia for a magazine edited by Smithie.

They didn't go away to Macheke. "It drips with nostalgia, and I don't like nostalgia. A form of sentimentality to which I am particularly prone."

Between Christmas and New Year they went to a dance at the Highlands Park [hotel]. A scandal broke out with Gottfried and Sheila Falk (Joan Falk's sister). "I tell her, poor lamb, since she is new to the country, that there are only two ways to behave here. One is to do as you please and ignore other people. A method I only recommend if one has developed a really tough skin. The second is to become a thorough hypocrite, which is hard work, but ensures a peaceful life."

She had quarrelled with Nathan "because he gets offensive when drunk."

Doris is tired of the theorising and tight dogmatism of communism. "... I shall ever remain a communist by conviction but not by temperament ..."

Doris asks John if they can go to the zoo when in England. She wants to see a lion for the first time. She wants to go to choir practice, hear High Mass, visit Madame Tussauds, go to Covent Garden before dawn, and she had never been to the ballet. She asks about London fashion.

She confirms that she and Gottfried had definitely settled on a divorce.

081 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 14/1/1948]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Peter develops a high temperature. The doctor incorrectly diagnoses measles. Doris writes of his "October sickness".

They had been out for dinner with Nathan and Dorothy.

Doris explores the options for her and Peter's living arrangements when they come to London. She wonders how she will cope with it all and suggests communal living. "I have often wished I had been born working class and not of the struggling middle class always on the downgrade."

Discusses her feelings for Smithie, his homosexuality and his taking for granted that she would live with him.

"I think it would be a good dea if all three of us congregated round a round table and said out loud all the things we thought about each other."

Relates a confrontation between her man servant and the white neighbours next door, after the servant and his friend were found to be making too much noise after 10pm.

082 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 12/2/1948]

3 leaves. MS. Written on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Doris wishes John would write more. She sends him some parcels.

Doris had not been well and had experienced a dropped uterus. She asks after Coll and Smithie. Smithie had suggested she come to live with him and his sister in Cornwall. She asks what sort of job she should be looking for when she comes to England.

083 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 14/2/1948]

1 leaf. Typewritten. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Doris would have her retroverted uterus “stitched up” and remain in hospital for 14 days. Her doctor was also offering to tie her fallopian tubes.

084 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 24/2/1948]

3 leaves. Typewritten. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

There is a delay in Doris’s hospital treatment as there are too many British immigrants for the services available, this goes for housing and other services as well. She remarks on how common this operation is among Rhodesian women. Doris would also have her appendix out and her fallopian tubes tied at the same time. She regrets not having had John’s baby, “I should have got pregnant that night at Macheke.”

Doris describes dying capitalism and emerging communism. She thinks Britain should become more socialist, and base its trade on the Russian bloc. She sees the U.S. plunging into a big slump. She cannot see the incumbent Labour government aligning itself with Russia since it will always see communism as a greater danger than capitalism. Doris thinks one should point out the dangers of binding oneself to the U.S. as there is a risk one would be dragged down with it.

She mentions a grim flick ‘Waterloo Road’ and the hypocrisy she feels towards their friends, Nathan and Dorothy Zelter. She describes their characteristics and relationship.

A night out to the pictures ends in a scene as Dorothy gets irritable with Nathan flirting with Doris. Accompanying them were Mr Senn [an ex-peasant from Switzerland], Mr. Seiler [a Swiss peasant proprietor of a restaurant in Rhodesia], Gottfried, and Doris's mother.

Doris had re-written her novel, cutting out Howard and leaving Mary and Dick. She was more hopeful that it may get published although " ... it's theme will not recommend it."

Doris criticises the works and writing of Virginia Woolf, Jane Austen and Rosamund Lehman.

"If things ever come to the worst I can earn my living dressmaking. Perhaps they won't come to their worst and I can earn it writing, which is such a blissful dream it is bound not to come true."

Doris discusses her relationship with Smithie.

085 [Note, Doris to John Whitehorn, March 1948]

1 leaf. Typescript.

It is unclear which letter this note refers to.

"John, this very out of date letter was found in the bottom of our car yesterday. I thought you might as well have it."

086 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 15/3/1948]

1 leaf. MS. Written on recto and verso.

Lettercard addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Doris discusses her own and John's feelings about her sterilisation. "But darling why didn't you say so? I did implore you after all to say so."

"But it is a pity I didn't send you that long letter of analysis which I tore up really this [?] modesty."

"Damn you John, if you had only said, I wouldn't have had them done."

087 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, ?/3/1948]

3 leaves. MS. Written on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Postmark reads 17/3/1948.

Written from the General Hospital in Salisbury.

She mentions having written a letter to John – “a long involved analysis of my contradictory emotion about getting sterilised.” She tore it up.

088 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 25/3/1948]

2 leaves. MS. Written on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Written from hospital.

Doris should be writing to Coll. She asks after John's latest girlfriend. She remarks on the more relaxed divorce laws in Southern Rhodesia compared with England.

She writes about dressmaking and fashion.

Coll had left the [Communist] party and Doris would not be joining it when in England.

Her ship would leave on 19th May. [In fact Doris only finally sailed for England around 10th April 1949].

089 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 7/4/1948]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Refers to Doris and Gottfried's naturalisation.

Doris updates John on her health. “ ... I don't regret that fatal step ... What a relief to be finished with this sordid business of contraceptives.”

Doris receives a letter from Gregoire asking Doris to marry him.

Smithie has written to Doris. “More malicious, spiteful, catty letters you couldn't imagine.”

“But this divorce looming in front of me tires me, and there is so much sewing I must do. (Lack of proportion there).”

090 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 17/4/1948]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Refers to Doris and Gottfried's naturalisation.

“But I ask you in parenthesis whether spending the war years producing three children for cannon fodder in the next war isn’t as important as supervising internees?”

“I am beginning to feel like one of Kafka’s heroes (surrounded like a fly in the web of innumerable invisible clinging frustrations).”

Her sailing has been put back to the end of June or beginning of July.

She will not stay with her relations when in England. “In all fairness, one can’t expect the most stolid and respectable and godfearing middleclass to be nice to a double divorcee. I am already a black sheep ...”

Doris wonders if John will still find her attractive.

She asks what the British Federation of Industries thinks about the coming slump.

091 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 25/6/1948]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso.

Doris has been typing for Parliament, Hansard, and the Select Committee.

Some of her short stories had been printed or aired.

The Nationalists had won the election in South Africa and she was less hopeful that her novel would be published.

Doris is having an affair with a Welshman and former actor who is running the local broadcasting station. “A more neurotic, touchy, difficult person I have never met. I love him dearly, but he is hard work!”

Coll has written to Doris and he appears, when drunk, to be pleasurably wallowing in despair. “He has decided he is going to get married (when he has found the girl, of course).”

Doris tells Coll that Smithie appears to be revelling in a complicated love affair with his Patricia who’s husband “doesn’t mind”. “My experience of husbands who “don’t mind’ in theory, leads me to believe that there will be fun and games all round soon.”

“I have come regretfully to the conclusion, much against my natural instincts, and, for that matter, most people’s natural instincts, that once married there is nothing for it but fidelity.”

092 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 28/9/1948]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Doris was surprised when the United Party instead of the Liberal Party one a landslide victory in Southern Rhodesia.

She gives an amusing description of the respective representatives and election campaigns, including those of the Labour Party.

Doris and her progressive crowd could not hope for success and so from the outset "loftily drew aside our skirts and said we should have nothing to do with it."

Doris enquires after John's sister's engagement. She thinks she is too young. "What is to be gained by this, I ask you with tears in my eyes? Why shouldn't she have a love affair or two first?"

Doris had just finished a play which she thought was quite good. She describes how she spends her days: mornings are spent cooking, bringing up the baby, being a good wife and mother; a portion of her day is spent writing; the afternoons are for attending to her lover John Parry; and the evenings for politics and entertaining.

She goes on to list John Parry's manifold talents and compares him with Smithie. Doris is struck by how many things Smithie can do.

Doris had been trying to write detective stories but with no success.

093 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 10/11/1948?]

2 leaves. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at 38 Harrington Gardens, London, SW7.

Dated the 10th although postdate is 6/11/1948

Describes arrangements for the custody of Peter. It had been agreed that Doris would sue Gottfried for construed desertion. The divorce would be heard in February 1949. Doris would spend a week in Johannesburg, a week in Cape Town, and sail to England on 16th March 1949.

Doris explains her feelings towards Smithie and that he has high expectations for when she arrives. She prefers not to live with him in Cambridge and asks John to find her a place to live. She drafts an advertisement which he could use in finding a housemate for Doris and Peter.

Doris explains her advantages and disadvantages as a housemate.

094 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 23/11/1948]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Doris is booked to sail on the Umtali on the 1st, 2nd or 3rd of March, and will arrive in Tilbury, [London] in 16 days or three weeks.

She is still concerned about finding a place to live.

095 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 28/11/1948]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Doris explains she is putting no pressure on John [or Smithie] "I don't promise to love anyone; just as I don't expect anyone to love me, but it will be so lovely to see you ..."

Smithie had now suggested she could stay with his friends Mike and Marjorie.

Doris asks John what personal effects she should bring, aside from her typewriter, sewing machine, etc.

She is tired from the legal proceedings relating to the the divorce. "I hate seeing personal things translated into what the world thinks."

Doris asks about the nationalisation of steel and the Belcher scandal. [John Belcher, a Labour M.P. and Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade was said to have accepted gifts in return for favours from Sydney Stanley].

Doris asks why Coll will be relieved at not seeing her. "People will always be pleased to see him, but no one will ever, at any time, lose any sleep over him."

096 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 9/12/1948]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

This letter was opened in error and a note of apology can be found on the envelope.

Doris is disappointed that John will be in the U.S. when she arrives in England.

She is concerned about committing to stay with Mike and Marjorie and asks John what he thinks.

She acknowledges John and Smithie's feelings about Peter being a nuisance but she will not have her third child wrenched from her.

Doris is anxious that Smithie will find her too calm when she arrives, while he will be hurling insults at her.

She apologises for the tedious favours she is asking of John.

097 [Note, Doris to John Whitehorn, 1948/1949?]

1 leaf. Typescript.

Doris pleads with John to love her to “distraction”. She looks at everything she will be pulling apart in a matter of weeks and seeks comfort and reassurance that she won't be arriving to absolutely nothing.

098 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 16/12/1948]

1 leaf. MS.

It occurred to her that her letter saying [she was arriving in] March and not January may have caused John to say indignantly: “This is the last straw.”

Doris is working on the launch of a new magazine in January.

She writes that Smithie had said she could stay with Mike and his new wife [Marjorie], but that she didn't know them.

“I won't see Coll, I am so sorry.”

099 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, undated]

1 leaf. Manuscript. Written at the end of 1948?

Gottfried and Doris's naturalisation had come through 3 months before but their file had been mislaid.

Doris would let John know her ship bookings. “It seems as if I will be along in a couple of months.” She wanted to see Coll before he left.

She asks John if he will still be a little pleased to see her.

100 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 20/12/1948]

1 leaf. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Doris is very busy and she has 12 short stories in her head. She wants them printed “... and that means money.” She is typing for select committees. “And then I am up to my eyes in work for this new N.B. that is starting in January.”

She is waiting to hear about progress on the publication of her book. “It's not too bad at all.”

Peter is sick hence Doris is spending more time with him.

She has a jibe at John who may find an attractive American [on his trip across there].

101 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 11/1/1949]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

She describes a difficult conversation with an agent concerning the facilities and punctuality of the Umtali - the ship she will be sailing in.

Doris apologises for having to be vague about her date of arrival.

She asks after John's Christmas. Doris danced and ate. "I adore eating and dancing and drinking."

102 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 13/1/1949]

2 leaves. MS and typescript.

Doris would be flying part of the way to the Cape. Having never flown she is excited.

She mentions staying with Mike and his wife when she comes to England.

Doris is excited at the prospect of seeing John. "Shall we dance? ... Do you remember when we danced, drunk as owls, in that farmhouse in Macheke?"

Peter has chickenpox.

She sends John a copy of the new paper she has helped produce.

Doris had sent a short story to Colliers in America and they had asked for more specimens of her work. She is excited because they pay in pounds rather than shillings.

103 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 2/2/1949]

1 leaf. Typescript. Typed on recto and verso. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Doris had just returned from Bulawayo where she had been gaining advertisements, articles, etc. for their new paper. There she had seen Harry and Eve Friend and Simon Pines. "I am very fond of Simon."

She also meets a wealthy Jew who is dying of cancer and who proposes to her. Doris tells his story.

She has done very well getting advertisements for the newspapers. "You would be surprised what a good saleswoman I am."

She asks with diffidence why John hasn't written to her.

Doris would be flying from Bulawayo to Johannesburg where she would be staying with Haimi Schneier.

104 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 5/2/1949]

1 leaf. Typescript.

Doris asks John about a business proposition made to her by her friend Mickey Halse. Doris has been offered the typist position in a new office in London for Central African Airways.

She asks whether £30 per month to begin with is a suitable London wage.

105 Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 14/2/1949]

1 leaf. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John at Federation of British Industries, 21 Tothill St., London, SW1.

Doris asks why she hasn't heard from John. She will be sailing on the 23rd March and is pleased as it will give her more time to see Johannesburg and John will be back in England when she arrives.

Gottfried thinks he has an extraordinary talent for making money. Doris explains why they haven't any money. She will be lucky if she arrives in England with £10.

She thinks she will arrive in England around the 10th of April.

Doris asks if John thinks she ought to marry her rich jew, and signs off "Yours, somewhat huffily, T[igger]".

106 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 22/2/1949]

3 leaves. Manuscript.

Doris's address ('til 20th of March) is given: c/o Haimi Schneier, 37 River Street, Lower Houghton, Johannesburg.

"Got the divorce over this morning." Doris explains what happened.

Her ship would only be sailing on the 26th of March.

Her job with Mickey [Halse] may start in May or June.

If accommodation is particularly awkward Doris and Peter could stay with her godmother.

It is unlikely that Doris will arrive in England before the 20th of April. She asks when John will be back from the U.S.

Doris has received an odd letter from Smithie about Mike [concerning accommodation].

She is engaged in a complicated psychological farewell to John [Parry], she would prefer an uncomplicated roll in the hay with Gregoire.

107 Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 28/2/1949]

4 leaves. Typescript. Includes envelope.

Envelope addressed to John, c/o Walter A. Kimbel, Suite 1219, 2 Park Avenue, New York City.

Doris describes a couple of exhausting weeks spent with Haimi and his wife Shirley, how she became embroiled in their marital problems and finally managed to escape.

She landed up in a filthy boardinghouse in Cape Town. She met up with Gregoire but decided she did not want to continue where they left off. "... the spell had gone."

108 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, 21/3/1949]

1 leaf. Typescript.

Doris's ship is not expected to sail before the 5th or 10th of April as it was held up in Beira. She is expecting to be in England by the end of April.

She had been living in Johannesburg in incredible luxury and was now in a boardinghouse with bugs and no bath.

Her novel was being published in the U.S. by Houghton Mifflin.

She wonders if there is any chance of having somewhere to live when she arrives.

109 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, May 1949?]

1 leaf. Typescript.

Written from 5 Westbourne Terrace [near Paddington Station, London].

Doris asks John to be a reference for her as she is hoping to secure a flat. She will rent out two of the rooms to a female who will mind Peter for a couple of nights a week. "... please inform them I am [financially all right] and don't tell them about the borrowed ten shillings on which I am living."

110 [Letter, Doris to John Whitehorn, May 1949?]

1 leaf. Typescript.

Written from 5 Westbourne Terrace [near Paddington Station, London].

Doris had not taken the furnished flat after all. She had now fixed up with a flat in Pembridge Gardens [Notting Hill Gate], and would be sharing. "It has everything."

In the meantime she will stay with Helen "... such an incompetent female."

Smithie would be visiting and she asks John if he would also visit.

She had met up with her godmother and said she would go to church with her.

111 [Poems by Doris Lessing]

3 leaves. Typescript.

2 poems, one entitled 'Abelard' and another with no title, the opening line which reads: "Oh my swan, my charmer ..."

[BG 20/1/09, 23/6/16, 11/9/16]