

Doris Lessing / Margaret Drabble Correspondence

Provenance

This collection of correspondence was received by the University of East Anglia Archives on 14 February 2011; a donation from the novelist Margaret Drabble Holroyd (MD). It remained unlisted until after the death of Doris Lessing in November 2013.

Correspondence is primarily from Doris Lessing (DL) to her friend MD.

Reference

DL/MD

Dates

1978-2008

Extent

1 box of correspondence, 1978-2008

53 letters + 3 envelopes

83 postcards

5 cards

6 photographs of DL with the Christopher Fry (playwright), Michael Holroyd and MD.

1 photograph of DL with MD.

4 press-cuttings from Italian, Spanish and English newspapers on DL's award of the Nobel Prize for Literature, 2007-2008.

Printed introduction to DL's short stories, written by MD (6 leaves), 3/5/08.

1 typed essay on DL (unknown author; 10 leaves)

Typed verse [by DL?] "P is for pumpkin" (1 leaf)

Scope and content

Correspondence is primarily from Doris Lessing (DL) to her friend MD. One letter, presumably written early on in their relationship, is addressed to Margaret Drabble.

Material not from DL includes a postcard of thanks from Iris [Murdoch?] to MD and another from John Fowles to MD, 31/7/91. Two letters are from MD to DL, March-April 2005.

The handwritten postcards by DL include references to social engagements, lunch and dinner arrangements and often incorporate a note of thanks. They frequently provide information on DL's travels and engagements.

The letters, which are mostly typed, cover a variety of topics including the books which DL is reading, and include references to DL's and Peter's poor health.

Two letters are closed (Data Protection Act 1998, s.40).

Related collections

UEA Archives holds 50 letters and postcards from MD to DL, 1982-1984, 1990-2007. This forms part of a larger collection of 29 boxes of general correspondence deposited by DL (ref DL).

Selective description from individual letters and postcards

DL writes of a visit from her daughter, whom she hasn't seen for 12 years, and her grandchildren, whom she's never met, 30/12/78.

DL declines an invitation from MD with Steve and Robbie because of complications relating to Peter. She writes of the "special impact" which MD has on Peter, 31/12/79.

DL tells MD that a former partner, Clancy Sigal, had written an article about her in the NY Times Book Review and she is having to change her telephone number because too many journalists know it. [Postcard, March 1992].

DL includes in her letter to MD of 29/7/92, a letter she wrote to Quentin Bell (3/3/92; brother of Vanessa Garnett) on de Salvo's interpretation of Virginia Woolf.

DL meets Catharine Stimpson and describes her visit to Mexico City, 26/10/93.

An observation on the respective rise and fall of Antonia Byatt's and MD's stocks, 29/6/94.

DL clutches a salmon in a crowded Dublin airport, a gift from Harper Collins. She shrugs off an article written about her and motherhood by the Daily Mail, 16/10/94.

DL gives a lunch for Bing Taylor and gets cross with Salman [Rushdie] because she has "to make all the running", 15/5/95.

Peter is in Zimbabwe, 25/3/96.

DL writes of a prize she has won and the good wishes she's had from the King and Queen of Spain, 5/7/01.

DL writes of her and Peter's ill health, 5/10/01.

Letters from both DL and MD discuss the works of the Japanese author Kenzaburo Oe, March-April 2005.

DL writes of motherhood, 12/6/06.

DL has lunch with Tom Maschler [publisher], 20/3/08.

MD corresponds with Professor Bryan Sykes, Wolfson College, Oxford, regarding DL's query on her ancestry and genes. Peter is sent a gene sampling kit, May-June 2008. [Letters are included from MD and Bryan Sykes].

DL discusses her short stories, her experiences in Germany, and her other works, 12/12/08.

DL writes of a party she attended for Tom Maschler [undated].

