

“I bet you your book [Kinflicks] is an immense success. The point is, that no woman has written one like it. Before, men have written this kind of book.”

- Doris Lessing to Alther, January 7, 1975

Lisa Alther, Doris Lessing, Françoise Gilot, Robert Gottlieb, and Others **[Archive]: The Lisa Alther Papers**

(1952-2018)

\$225,000



A large archive consisting of manuscripts, letters, and associated documents, ephemera, audio and video files, belonging to the bestselling American writer Lisa Alther. The author of six novels, including *Kinflicks* and *Other Women*, Alther is also known for her short stories and criticism, and her narrative histories of the Hatfield-McCoy feud (*Blood Feud*) and the Melungeons, a little-known Southern Appalachian ethnic group from which she is partly descended.



Born in 1944 in Kingsport, Tennessee, Alther launched her career in 1976 with *Kinflicks*, a classic coming-of-age novel which, as one *Times* reviewer recalls, “was all the rage among my high school set for its ... frank talk of erections and lesbian hook-ups.” The Lisa Alther Papers, spanning the years from 1952 to 2018, comprehensively documents the entirety of Alther’s career as a novelist and non-fiction writer.

It contains multiple manuscripts of her twelve major literary works, including a forthcoming seventh novel to be published by Knopf in 2019.

The manuscripts and other materials, **including over 130 letters by Doris Lessing**, provide insight into Alther’s writing process and the development of her signature black humor, and into the professional and personal relationships she maintained with editors and writers, including Robert Gottlieb, her editor at Knopf, and her 44-year friendship with Doris Lessing.

The collection consists of approximately 20 linear feet of material, housed in 17 Banker’s boxes and 1 oversize box, with most of Alther’s original ordering retained. The bulk of the material dates from 1969 to 2015, when Alther was a mother and aspiring writer and had just initiated a life changing correspondence with Doris Lessing, and including the rest of her subsequent career as author, teacher, and lecturer. The archive includes a total of 134 letters and 27 autograph cards by Lessing dating from 1969-2006, and an hour-long audio recording of Lessing interviewing Alther and her husband in 1972.

There are also 45 letters and notes by the French painter Françoise Gilot: lover and artistic muse of Pablo Picasso, and author *Life With Picasso*, Gilot and Alther became friends in New York City and collaborated on *About Women: Conversations between a Writer and a Painter* (2015). Also among Alther’s correspondence are 16 letters and 18 autograph notes by Robert Gottlieb, and several smaller files of letters from other important feminist writers and activists such as Blanche McCrary Boyd, Rita Mae Brown, Marilyn French, and Mary Meigs. Among Alther’s personal papers are 10 manuscript notebooks containing research notes and journal entries, a travelogue written during a 1965 trip through Europe, college course papers and newspaper articles dating from her years at Wellesley College (1962-66), and several hundred letters written by Alther to her parents from 1954-98.

An historically important collection, rich in content with numerous manuscripts and letters, documenting the works and life of this prominent American writer.

A detailed finding aid to the archive follows, in four parts: (A) Novels and other Literary Works; (B) Letters and Correspondence; (C) Personal Papers; (D) Unpublished Works, Articles and Interviews, & Other Professional Papers:

Part A: Novels and other Literary Works



I. [Novel]. *Kinflicks* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1976)

Final Draft Manuscript (first submitted to Knopf). Quarto. 795 typed sheets/pages (rectos), with manuscript emendations in ink.

Edited Manuscript (by Robert Gottlieb). “Edited MS by Bob Gottlieb” (at Knopf). Quarto. 795 typed sheets/pages, with inserted sheets (“a”, “b”, etc.). Edited throughout in lead pencil and red pencil.

Robert Gottlieb Correspondence. Letters and notes (TLS and ALS) from editor Robert Gottlieb (See Part B: Letters and Correspondence).

First Proof (25 August, 1975)

Quarto. Prelims + 489 pages with pencil emendations.

Advance Reading Copy. Signet paperback edition (March, 1977); publisher’s cover proofs and PR material.

Contracts, Royalty Statements, and Correspondence. One file folder. Includes a long TLS (November 4, 1974) from C. Michael Curtis (Fiction editor, *The Atlantic Monthly*), in which he lays out his criticisms of the manuscript, his suggestions/recommendations for publication, and his willingness to work with Alther on the book, if she so chooses.

Agreements. Four legal size file folders: includes author copies and/or duplicates of licensing and related agreements (with Knopf, NAL editions, Little Brown, UK, et al.) from 1975-98, re: Kinflicks and other works (Original Sins, Other Women, and Bedrock).

Reviews & PR material. One redwell accordion file folder: Press releases, catalog copy, flyers, posters, ads, etc.; newspaper and magazine clippings; a few miscellaneous letters.

Promotional posters. One printed portrait of Alther and two illustrated publisher's advertisements by Chatto & Windus (including one mounted on board).

Magazines (1976-86). Complete issues of 9 magazines featuring an excerpt from the novel, review, interview, and/or article about the novel or Lisa Alther: New Dawn, Harpers & Queen, Cosmopolitan, Vogue, and others, including German and Spanish language magazines.

Film Proposals. One file folder: Correspondence and proposed scripts (Warner Bros., Paramount Pictures, MCA, et al., 1975-2003; Screenplay by Sally Siegel: (Photocopy, 122pp., brad-bound.)

Other media. Jo Beth Williams reads Kinflicks (two-cassette tapes); "Kinflicks Redo" (CD-R).

Virago (Little Brown) Modern Classics edition. One file folder: Correspondence (1998-99); and publisher's PR materials, including cover proofs.

II. [Novel]. **Original Sins** (Alfred A. Knopf, 1981)

Early Drafts and Notes. About 1500 quarto sheets, consisting of: handwritten pages (in ink) and typed pages heavily annotated in ink (on rectos and versos).

Next to last Draft. Tall folio. 520 typed sheets/pages.

Final Draft. Quarto. About 1000 typed sheets/pages, annotated in ink and pencil.

Copy-edited Manuscript. Quarto. Over 1500 typed sheets/pages, edited throughout in ink.

Galley proof. With pencil and ink annotations.

Robert Gottlieb Correspondence. Letters and notes (TLS and ALS) from editor Robert Gottlieb (See Part B: Letters and Correspondence).

Reviews & PR materials, and related Correspondence. One redwell accordion file folder: Press releases, catalogs, flyers, advertisements, etc.; American and foreign language magazines; newspaper and magazine clippings; correspondence from American and foreign publishers.

Contracts and royalty statements. One file folder. Includes related correspondence.

III. [Novel]. **Other Women** (Alfred A. Knopf, 1984)

First Draft and Notes. About 500 quarto sheets, consisting of: handwritten pages (in ink) and typed pages heavily annotated in ink (on rectos and versos).

Early Draft. Quarto. About 200 sheets/350 typed pages, with ink annotations and notes, and including handwritten pages and notes in ink.

Early Draft. Quarto. About 500 typed (and typescript) sheets/pages with ink annotations and notes.

Early Draft. Quarto. About 450 typed (and typescript) sheets/pages, with ink annotations and notes.

Early Draft. Quarto. 434 typed (and typescript) sheets/pages, with ink annotations and notes.

Final Manuscript. Quarto. 434 typed sheets/pages, with ink annotations.

Copy-edited Manuscript. Quarto. 452 typescript pages, with ink and red pencil annotations.

Galley Master Proof. Large folio sheets. With ink and red pencil annotations.

Uncorrected Proof. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

Robert Gottlieb Correspondence. Letters and notes (TLS and ALS) from editor Robert Gottlieb (See Part B: Letters and Correspondence).

Contracts, Royalty Statements, and Correspondence. One file folder.

Reviews & PR material. One redwell file folder: Press releases, catalogs, flyers, posters, ads, etc.; newspaper and magazine clippings; one large-format newspaper advertisement laid-down on a board; two foreign language magazines.

11 Cassette tapes: Alther and Nancy Magnus (1982). Alther notes that Nancy Magnus was “Psychotherapist consultant for the novel,” and that these audio tapes served as the “Basis for Other Women.”

Film Proposals. Several draft screenplays by Caroline Babayan and related correspondence.

IV. [Novel]. **Bedrock** (Alfred A. Knopf, 1990)

Early Draft and Notes. About 1500 quarto sheets, consisting of: typed pages, computer printed sheets, and handwritten pages (in pencil and ink); all heavily annotated in pencil and ink (on rectos and versos).

Early Draft (No. 4). About 500 quarto sheets, consisting of: computer printed sheets, handwritten pages, and typescript pages, all heavily annotated in pencil and ink.

Early Draft (No. 5). Over 500 quarto sheets, consisting of: computer printed sheets, handwritten pages, and typescript pages, all heavily annotated in pencil and ink.

Copy-edited Manuscript (copy 1 of 2). Quarto. Over 600 sheets/pages with ink annotations.

Copy-edited Manuscript (copy 2 of 2). Quarto. Over 600 sheets/pages with ink annotations.

Galley Proof “Author”. Quarto. 325+ pages, with annotations.

Galley Proof “Natalie Bowen”. Quarto. 325+ pages, with annotations.

Galley Proof “Doug”. Quarto. 325+ pages, with annotations.

Setting Manuscript. Octavo. 325+ pages, with annotations.

Master and Author Galleys. Octavo. 325+ pages, with annotations.

Uncorrected Proof. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.

Victoria “Vicky” Wilson Correspondence. Letters (TLS) from editor Vicky Wilson at Knopf (1984-89).

Contracts & Royalty Statements. One file folder.

Agreements. Two legal size file folders: includes author copies and/or “duplicates” of licensing and related agreements (with Knopf and Penquin USA).

Reviews & PR material. One redwell/accordion file folder: Press releases, catalogs, flyers, posters, ads, etc.; newspaper and magazine clippings (including foreign language magazines); correspondence with publishers; several different cover proofs for the paperback edition.

V. [Novella]. *Birdman and the Dancer* (Illustrated with monotypes by Françoise Gilot)

(First published in Copenhagen, Amsterdam, and Hamburg, 1993-96; Republished in 2012 without Gilot’s illustrations in *Stormy Weather*).

Early Drafts & Notes. (a.k.a. “Fly Away Home”). Includes the first three drafts and additional drafts and notes: consisting of about 400 handwritten pages (in pencil) and computer printed sheets annotated in pencil (on rectos and versos).

Contracts, License Agreements, and Correspondence. Includes contract between Alther and Françoise Gilot (who created five monotype illustrations for the work); copies of Gilot’s illustrations (digital black & white and color prints); two legal size file folders of agreements (Dutch and German rights); correspondence from editors and publishers (including rejection letters).

VI. [Novel]. *Five Minutes in Heaven* (Dutton, 1995)

Early Draft and Notes. Over 1500 quarto sheets, consisting of: computer printed and typescript sheets, and handwritten pages (in pencil and ink); all heavily annotated in pencil and ink (on rectos and versos).

Early Draft. Over 300 computer printed quarto sheets, annotated (including notes) in ink.

Early Draft. Over 200 computer printed quarto sheets, annotated in pencil and ink.

Final Draft. Over 300 computer printed quarto sheets, annotated in ink.

Copy-edited Manuscript. Over 400 computer printed quarto pages, annotated in ink and colored pencil; with correspondence and galleys (preliminary pages only).

Uncorrected Proof. A Dutton Book, 1995.

Agreements. One legal size file folders includes author copies and/or “duplicates” of licensing and related agreements (with Penquin USA).

Contracts, Royalty Statements, and Correspondence with Editors. One file folder. Includes letters from editors Carole De Santi and Elaine Koster (at Dutton); Solveig Nellinge (of Bokförlaget Trevi Publishers, Sweden).

Reviews, PR material, and Correspondence. One redwell/accordion file folder: Press releases, catalogs, flyers, posters, ads, etc.; newspaper and magazine clippings; correspondence with friends and colleagues; cover proofs for the paperback edition.

VII. [Memoir]. *Kinfolks* (Arcade, 2007)

Early Drafts. About 1000 quarto sheets, consisting of: handwritten pages (in pencil) and computer printed sheets annotated in pencil.

Edited Manuscript. Quarto. 265 sheets/pages (rectos): Edited throughout in lead pencil and red pencil.

Edited Manuscript with Author's comments (8/21/06). Quarto. 265 sheets/pages (rectos): Alther's comments in red ink.

Final Draft. “Final draft of *Kinfolks*” [written in manuscript]. Computer print-out under the title: *Washed in the Blood: The Melungeons and me* by Lisa Alther. Quarto. 271 sheets/pages (rectos).

Copyedited Manuscript. Quarto. 265 sheets/pages (rectos: pp. i-xiv, 1-251). Edited in red ink.

Master Proof (1/18/07). Quarto. 256 sheets/pages (rectos: pp. i-xiv, 1-256).

Correspondence & Contract; PR materials, Reviews & Related Material. One redwell accordion file folder. Includes rejection letters and correspondence from the Martha Kaplan Agency (2005-07); Contract and Royalty statements (Arcade Publishing); and a printed copy of the book.

Research Materials. Two redwell accordion file folders, each with manuscript note: "Melungeon Research for Kinfolks & Washed in the Blood".

Research Materials (Other Media). Fourth Union: A Melungeon Gathering, 2002 (12 CDs); Thirteenth Union: A Melungeon Gathering, 2009 (5 DVDs); Wayne Winkler: The Melungeons; The Melungeons and the Media (2 cassette tapes).

Email Correspondence (on USB Flash Drive). Correspondence with editor James Jayo and others at Arcade.

Digital Files (on USB Flash Drive). Final manuscript; jacket; reviews; PR materials; PR schedule and expenses; Power Point presentation; contract.

VIII. [Novel]. Washed in the Blood (Mercer University Press, 2011)

Early Drafts of Part 1. Over 1500 quarto sheets, consisting of: handwritten pages (in pencil) and computer printed sheets annotated in pencil; and with penciled notes (rectos and versos).

Early Drafts of Part 2 (unpublished). Over 500 quarto sheets, consisting of: handwritten pages (in pencil) and computer printed sheets annotated in pencil; and with penciled notes (rectos and versos). This part wasn't included in the published book.

Early Drafts of Part 3. Over 500 quarto sheets, consisting of: handwritten pages (in pencil) and computer printed sheets annotated in pencil; and with penciled notes (rectos and versos).

Early Drafts of Part 4. About 1000 quarto sheets, consisting of: handwritten pages (in pencil) and computer printed sheets annotated in pencil; and with penciled notes (rectos and versos).

Final Draft. Quarto. 465 computer printed sheets/pages.

Research Material. "Maps and Charts for Washed in the Blood." One file folder.

Correspondence, PR materials, and Reviews. One redwell accordion file folder. Includes notes and letters from editor Marc Jolley (Mercer University Press), and others.

Email Correspondence (on USB Flash Drive). Correspondence with editor Marc Jolley and others at Mercer University Press.

Digital Files (on USB Flash Drive). PDF of finished book; catalog copy; notes from copyeditor; jacket; PR material; press release; summary; contract.

IX. [Short Stories]. *Stormy Weather and Other Stories* (Mercer University Press, 2012)

Early drafts and/or original published versions of 9 (out of 12) stories published in this anthology, and 1 unpublished story.

1. *Architect of Utopia*

Three annotated early drafts, including two typescript copies and one computer printed version.

2. *Birdman and the Dancer*

(See no. V above)

3. *Encounter* (a.k.a. "Over By Lunch")

Published version in McCall's (August 1976). Complete magazine.

4. *The Eye of the Lord*

Published version in The Iron Mountain Review (Spring 2001). Complete magazine.

5. *The Fox Hunt*

Two annotated early typed drafts; and published version in: Appalachian Heritage (Winter 2013).

6. *The Politics of Paradise* (a.k.a. "The Simple Life")

Five annotated early drafts: the typed manuscript annotated in pencil, three typed and typescript versions, and a computer printed version annotated in ink. Also included is a photocopy of the published version.

7. *Squeamish*

Three annotated early drafts: consisting of two typed manuscripts (annotated in ink and pencil), and a computer printed version annotated in ink; and published version in Claymore (October 1977). Complete magazine.

8. *Termites*

Three annotated drafts: consisting of two typed manuscripts and one typescript copy.

9. *Wedding Belles*

Published version in *The Sunday Express Magazine* (London: 1999). Photocopy.

Afternoon on Old Dome [Unpublished]

Three annotated early drafts: consisting of the typed manuscript annotated in ink; a typescript copy annotated in pencil; and computer printed version annotated in pencil.

PR Material & Reviews. Includes publicity CD-R, the jacket proof, and a copy of the printed book.

Email Correspondence (on USB Flash Drive). Correspondence with editor Marc Jolley and others at Mercer University Press.

Digital Files (on USB Flash Drive). Drafts of stories; final manuscript; page proofs; PDF of finished book; jacket; front matter; reviews; power point presentation; PR material; contract.

X. [Narrative History]. Blood Feud (Lyons Press, 2012)

First Draft & Notes. Handwritten pages (in pencil) on 5 quarto notepads and computer printed sheets annotated in pencil.

Reviews, PR material and Correspondence. Includes the book proposal (annotated) and related materials, catalogues, reviews, etc., along with one publisher's printed poster mounted on an easel.

Research Materials (other media). 4 DVDs and 2 CDs re: the Hatfields & The McCoys; 2 DVDs: "Twelfth Union: A Melungeon Gathering: Lisa Alther – Close to Home: Oppression from Within" and "Feud" by Bill Richard; 3 VHS tapes about "Melungeon" and "The Hatfields and the McCoys."

Email Correspondence (on USB Flash Drive). Correspondence with editor James Jayo and others at Globe Pequot/Lyons Press.

Digital Files (on USB Flash Drive). Edited manuscript; PDF of finished book; jacket; design folder; reviews; PR materials; Power Point presentation; bibliography; family trees of Hatfields and McCoys.

XI. [Memoir]. About Women: Conversations between a Writer and a Painter (Lisa Alther and Françoise Gilot)

Early Drafts. About 1000 quarto sheets, consisting of annotated typescript sheets/pages and handwritten pages (in pencil).

Nan Talese edits. 15 quarto sheets in facsimile.

Copy-edited manuscript with Françoise Gilot's comments. Quarto. About 200 computer printed sheets with MS Word Markup comments and pencil annotations.

Page Proofs. Quarto. About 250 sheets/pages.

Bound Galley. New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2015.

Design Folder. Possible illustrations by FG for About Women, and related material.

11 Audio Cassette Tapes. Of discussions with Françoise Gilot.

2 Computer Diskettes. "LA/FG MS." and "L. Alther Fashion Interview w/FG."

Email Correspondence (on USB Flash Drive). Correspondence with editor Nan Talese and others at Nan A. Talese/Doubleday.

Digital Files (on USB Flash Drive). Copyedited manuscript; final manuscript; Nan Talese's editorial comments; front matter; mechanicals; design folder; contract; finished book; photos from book; PR photos; reviews; jacket; PR materials.

XII. [Story]. *The Golden Tower: A Fairytale*
(Self-published, lisaalther.com, November 2016).

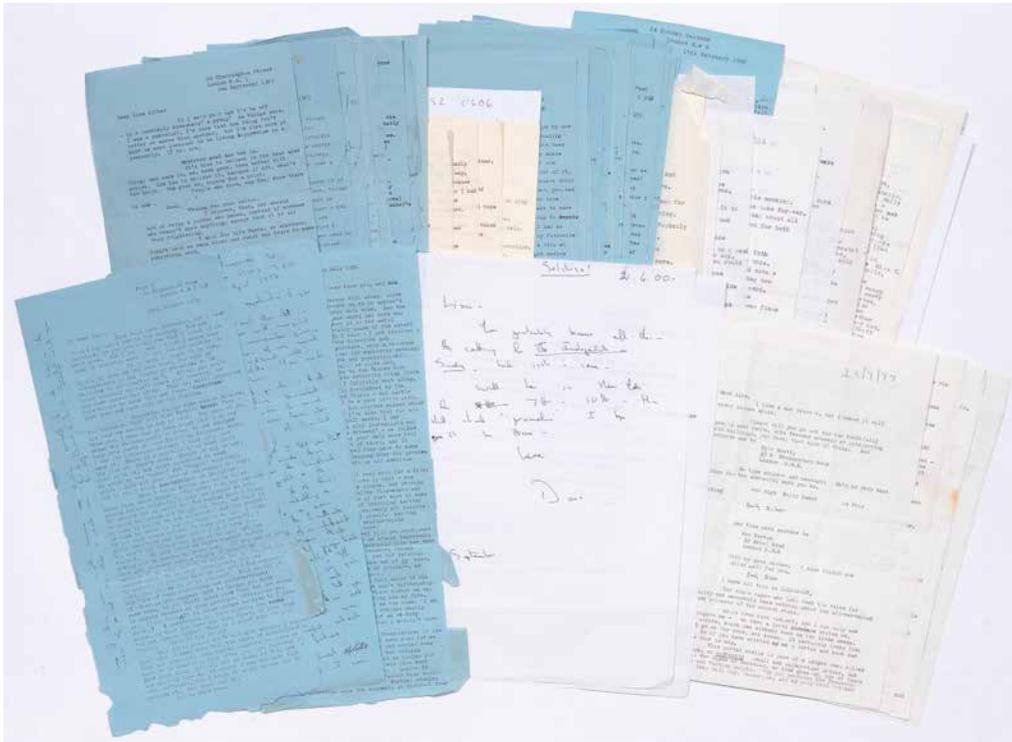
Draft. Seven manuscript sheets in pencil.

Draft. 17 sheets. Computer generated sheets with pencil annotations.

XIII. [Forthcoming Novel]. *Swan Song*
To be published by Alfred A. Knopf.

Annotated Manuscript. Quarto. Approximately 1,000+ sheets, consisting of computer generated sheets with numerous pencil notes and annotations, and hand-written notebook sheets.

Part B: Letters and Correspondence



I. The Doris Lessing Letters (1969-2006)

134 letters and 27 autograph Post Cards/Holiday Cards. Most of the letters are TLS with manuscript emendations and notes, including a few ALS, and 5 faxed letters. 105 letters and 20 cards are addressed to Lisa (including a few to Lisa and her husband Richard); 14 letters and 6 cards are addressed to Lisa's ex-husband Richard; and 6 letters are addressed to their daughter Sara. Also included are 9 letters sent to Alther's friend Ellen Jaffe, a New York City poet who swapped apartments with Lessing in 1972. Accompanying the letters are 5 annotated typed drafts of the first five letters Lisa Alther sent to Lessing (1969-70), and 7 computer-printed copies of her last 7 letters to Lessing (2005-10).

(1.) Doris Lessing to Lisa Alther (1969-2006)

105 letters and 20 autograph cards.

Lessing's letters to Lisa Alther are long and detailed, always interesting, and intimate. Their friendship began in 1969 with a "fan letter" from Alther: Lessing responded and by the summer of 1970, when Alther was traveling in Britain and Scotland, the two met several times for lunch at Lessing's apartment in London. Early on Lessing discusses marriage and child rearing, abortion and birth control, giving Alther advice and many details about her own life experience. In September 1972, when Lessing was in New York to give a series of lectures at The New School, she recorded an interview with Lessing and her husband. They continued to meet in London and the United States, in New York City and Vermont, until Lessing's death in 2013.

Most of the letters date from the first twenty years of their friendship (1969-89): Lessing advises Alther during the writing of her first novel (*Kinflicks*) and later works, and discusses several of her own works in progress: including *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, *Memoirs of a Survivor*, *The Good Terrorist*, *Fifth Child*, *Under My Skin*, &c.). Lessing also discusses her collaboration with the composer Philip Glass (including *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8*), and her ongoing researches into Sufi mysticism in collaboration with Idries Shah. Lessing often comments on her gardening, and shares with Alther her views on feminists (including Kate Millett, who gets a drubbing), and several contemporary writers, including Robyn Davidson and Salman Rushdie, whose tumultuous love affair elicits much attention from Lessing. She also often refers to the English writer Jenny Diski, whom Lessing took into her home in 1963.

A few selected excerpts from the letters follows:

TLS. Air Letter. 60 Charrington Street, London: 2 September, 1969.

(Note: In this letter, Lessing responds to Alther's 'fan letter' (cf. below: Alther to Lessing, 2 August, 1969) in which Alther asks Lessing about *The Four-Gated City*: "Is it that once the dead wood is pruned out, the human race can get on with evolving the psychic equipment to cope? Or is the devastation just the last in a long series of bad practical jokes? So that God ... is neither good nor indifferent but actively evil ...")

"Dear Lisa Alther / If I were your age ... I'd be off – in a community somewhere? A group? As things were, I was a communist ... It's nice to believe in the dead wood thing, and once it, we, have gone, then better will evolve. One has to believe it, because if not, what's the point. One goes on, hoping for a point. People who know, say they know there is one. Good. Thanks for your letter ..."

TLS. Air Letter. 2d Maida Avenue, London: 9 May 1970.

"Dear Lisa / I'm sorry. I'm a bad correspondent because I'm in the middle of my book [*Briefing for a Descent into Hell*] ... This book is very crazy. The basic idea is that what people are taught about the Greeks is mostly nonsense, and has become all dead through pedantry and lack of imagination. Right, so I've got a Professor of Greek and Classics to lose his memory and go off on a trip ... wherein he has all kinds of Odysseus-type adventures ..."

TLS. Air Letter. 2d Maida Avenue, London: 11 July [1970].

“My dear Lisa, / Very many thanks for the two books. I had not seen that particular Vonnegut [Cat’s Cradle] and I’ve been reading it all day, with my usual inordinate admiration for the man. What a writer. And what a book ... I may very well be going up to Scotland in August ... and I shall certainly be guided by your marked map. Jenny [Diski] will probably come too ... Are you still of a mind to have another baby? ... And your birth control clinic? There was a long piece in one of our papers about the expected flood of girls into New York State as a result of your new laws. Well, we have floods of girls coming here because of our laws ...”

TLS. Air Letter. 2d Maida Avenue, London: 31 July 1970.

“... Jenny is a girl who was expelled for moral turpitude (I exaggerate) from Peter’s school when she was fifteen, so she came to live with us, her parents both being non-copers. To put it mildly. I don’t know what she is, nothing legally, but I think of her as a sort of a sister.”

TLS. Air Letter. 11 Kingscroft Road, London: 10 December, 1970.

“When I was pregnant with my first baby, having realized I didn’t want to be married, and I didn’t want this baby, I shot off on an epic journey to Johannesburg, the big city, to get rid of it ...”

TLS. Air Letter. 11 Kingscroft Road, London: 14 January, 1971.

“About my having babies when I decided I didn’t want them, I obviously did, or wouldn’t have them. Or part of me did. I am sure we are made up of bundles of conflicting personalities ... / I know I was a mass of hostile personalities ... The whole business of being married, being a competent young housewife, having two children, was like a sort of charade. I did it very well – cooked and sewed and entertained. And then I left all that, walking out, and it was like leaving a dream. I then swung into another personality ... / I don’t things started to be real for me, until I was landed with a small child, had to keep him, and was by myself, coping. And I was by then nearly thirty ... / My son Peter is very vitriolic about everything I have ever done, and he is quite right. He had a ghastly childhood. / The great problem is this: all children everywhere seem to want mummy, daddy, siblings, security, and to be exactly like all other children. They like total conformity, everything bland and safe ... It is what poor Peter didn’t get, although I sweated away trying to do right. / When I fought with my parents so bitterly I imagined this was an ideological battle, that I hated what they thought and stood for. Now, since I’ve been put in their position ...”

TLS. Air Letter. 11 Kingscroft Road, London: 21 April, [1971].

“My rheumatism, sciatica and lumbago, rampant last winter, to the extent that I thought I would be crippled for life – I mean that, it was awful, have not appeared at all this winter ... I put it down to my eating and drinking all the things they say one should ... for instance, masses of garlic. Dandelion salads. Lemon and Honey on waking instead of gallons of black coffee. And of course Culpepper’s rheumatism pills ...”

TLS. Air Letter. 11 Kingscroft Road, London: 24 August 1971.

“First, many thanks for the wayward copy of the book, and also for the Vonnegut – which I see has remarks in the beginning similar to my remarks in the beginning of Briefing. I have a nightmare, often recurring, about my bringing out a book one day, word for word identical with a book out the same week by – now there’s a thought. Who? Mailer? / I shall be here in the second half of September, and

have just written down your London dates in my diary. If it so turns out lucky, I'll come with you ... I look forward to meeting your husband. And of course, to seeing you again ...”

TLS. Air Letter. 11 Kingscroft Road, London: 14 December [1971].

“Ideologies increasingly seem to me unimportant. Particularly when people’s ideas change from one year to the next, and each batch is taken so firmly and finally. My most revolutionary friend in the States has just written describing the mass return of himself and friends to ordinary life, away from communes, with the intention of taking degrees and equipping themselves for the rat-race “because of unemployment” – in terms exactly the same as he described the previous swing away from ordinary life, toward bombings, prison, communes etc. I have never before heard conformity described as a revolutionary programme. Ah well.”

TLS. Air Letter. 11 Kingscroft Road, London: 20 September 1974.

“Did I not write to you about your novel? I feel full of remorse. Well of course I will read it, or alternatively ask Bob [Robert Gottlieb] to – let me know. But the point is, the last book I thought he ought to publish he certainly read, and that was that. [...] / Before I forget, I’ve just remembered that one of the books I asked Bob to publish he did – Kate Millett’s, which wasn’t at all good. Apart from being extremely inaccurate. The bits about me were untrue. Does it matter? No, of course not ... Why don’t you just send your book to him and I’ll drop him a line and tell him to look out for it? After all, the main thing, as you know, is to get a special gleam into the publisher’s eye ... / Please give my love to Richard. And to your Sara. Please tell me in confidence what kind of things Sara likes now, so that I can be intelligent and not stupid about a birthday present? ... [P.S.] / *Memoirs of a Survivor* is being published by Octagon Press here, I having left Cape. This has caused the orthodox to mutter: You must be mad, since Octagon is one girl, Sally Mallam ...”

TLS. Air Letter. 11 Kingscroft Road, London: 10 October 1974.

“My dear Lisa, / Your book came yesterday, and I read it all day until one in the morning. You are paranoid so you won’t believe that I think it is very good. But I do. And I think I would have read it non-stop even if you had not written it. / In my view it ought to be cut. Again, as soon as you read that, you will be extinguished by the flames of paranoia to be referred to hereinafter as P ... / What I think should happen is this: never mind about Harper ... You should let me write to Bob saying that I think he would be insane not to publish this, but that in my view it should be cut somewhat. And the moment he says he wants to see it, send it to him ... No, don’t cut before you send it to him. Let him suggest. At this point he might suggest either giving you an editor or being one ... He is very intelligent, Bob is. My advice, if you can bear it is, after Bob suggests cuts, for you to do it yourself ... / Dear Lisa, please don’t collapse because I suggest some cuts ...”

TLS. Air Letter. 11 Kingscroft Road, London: 7 January 1975.

“... I’m glad things are working out with Bob. [Robert Gottlieb] The thing always to remember ... [Lessing expounds her view on the relationship between author, publisher, and agent.] ... Love to you. / As for a Happy New Year well, I don’t know about that. / I bet you your book [Kinfflicks] is an immense success. The point is, that no woman has written one like it. Before, men have written this kind of book.”

TLS. Quarto. 4pp. 24 Gondar Gardens, London: 1 September 1985.

“My dear Lisa, / Yes, I was looking forward to your coming, and had planned a dinner party and so forth, in cahoots with Jenny ... But of course I know about your breakup with Carey, discussed with Jenny, in all its facets, (what else?) but I am sure (lesbianism being exactly like h. sexuality as far as I can see) that Carey will be one of your dearest and tenderest friends, for there are few greater pleasures in life than friendship with a past love. Alas, I only have one or two such friends ... / Robbie and Salman. They are living together ... [In this and other letters Lessing discusses at length the love affair then going on between Robbie Davidson and Salman Rushdie. She is particularly astute in describing the attraction and clash between Rushdie’s conservative upbringing and sentiments with Davidson’s counter-cultural Bohemianism. As both parties are still very much alive, direct quotes cannot be included in the Finding Aid.]

TLS. Quarto. 3pp. 24 Gondar Gardens, London: 18 October 1985.

“My dear Lisa, / Butterflies! Last summer when I actually saw the first butterfly I called people to celebrate ... / Robbie and Salman – well, it goes on, dramatic and explosive ... [a long account follows] ... / Well, my dear Lisa – it would be nice to see you. / Much love / Doris / I forget to mention your girl-friend. / That old Greek philosopher, I forget which, who said he felt he had been delivered from some savage monster who had him in its grip, did not mean sex ... but being in love. Thank God I’ll never go through that again.”

Typed letter, Facsimile (faxed). Quarto. 1p. 24 Gondar Gardens, London: 27 August 2005.

“I’m writing a mad book based on the premise that we, females, were the basic human stock, and then they gave birth suddenly to “monsters” – can you imagine the shock, when the Clefts, with their smooth neat vulvas produced those infants with their bundles of tubes and lumps and bumps? Well, I am certainly enjoying working it all out but God knows what “they” will say ...”

(2.) Lisa Alther to Lessing (1969-70; 2005-10)

6 typed drafts (Self Mailers and quarto sheets) with pencil and ink emendations and manuscript notes (1969-70), including Alther’s first fan letter. Also included are 7 computer-printed letters from 2005-10.

Typed Letter (Draft). Quarto. 2 August 1969.

“Never having written a fan letter before, I hope this doesn’t come off too awkwardly. I’ve just surfaced from a month spent immersed in your fiction ... particularly The Golden Notebook and Four-Gated City ... And you have shaken me up so fundamentally that I imagine I’ll never be the same again ...”

(3.) Doris Lessing to Richard Alther (1976-03)

Note: Lisa’s ex-husband Richard, a writer and painter, is the author of three novels: The Decade of Blind Dates (2008: based on his “far-flung adventures as an emerging gay man”), Siegfried Follies (2010), and The Scar Letters (2013). Like Lessing, he also was an avid gardener. They remained friends until Lessing’s death in 2013.

14 TLS and 6 Cards. (11 Kingscroft Road; 24 Gondar Gardens, London):

16 January 1976 – 28 August 2003. Most are 2 or 3 typed pages with manuscript emendations. Like her letters to Lisa, Lessing’s letters to Richard are also detailed and intimate. In addition to discussing Richard’s writings and relationship with his (future husband) Ray Repp, she often refers to Lisa and

addresses many of the same subjects: gardening and homesteading, works in progress, Philip Glass, and her sons John (The Coffee Farmer) and Peter, etc. Included are 9 accompanying letters (computer-printed sheets with manuscript emendations) from Richard Alther to Lessing (1993-08).

(4.) Doris Lessing to Alther's daughter Sara (1974-75)
2 TLS; 3 typed notes, signed; and 1 autograph note.

TLS. Air Letter. 11 Kingscroft Road, London: 22 October 1974.

"I saw a blue china cat in a shop last week, and I bought it for you, since your mother says you like animals in small sizes for you room. / My daughter from South Africa sent me a wooden chameleon, carved by Africans, which is so life-like people get quite upset by it. Chameleons in life are upsetting because they keep absolutely still for what seems like hours, and then move extremely fast and in a rather creepy way and then keep still again. They also have a tongue many inches long which they whip out and stick flies with from what seems impossible distances ..."

(5.) Doris Lessing to Ellen S. Jaffe (1972-73)

9 TLS and 1 autograph post card; including 1 TLS from Alther to Jaffe. The New York poet and author Ellen Jaffe and Doris Lessing swapped flats (NYC/London) for two months in 1972. Lessing was visiting the U.S. (September – November), and Jaffe was moving to London to study psychotherapy. Lessing's letters were posted to Jaffe from both flats (11 Kingscroft Road and 140 E. 81st Street). Alther's letter to Jaffe describes her visit with Lessing when Lessing was staying at Jaffe's NYC apartment. (Jaffe moved to Canada in 1979. She is best known for her second book of poetry, *Skinny-Dipping with the Muse*. Earlier books include a young-adult novel which received the Moonbeam award for multi-cultural fiction).

TLS. Air Letter. 11 Kingscroft Road, London: 14 May 1972

"I have had a letter from Lisa Alther saying you are interested in the idea of living in this flat for a bit ... This flat, you should know, is not at all a luxury item. It is three rooms and minute kitchen ... in Kilburn. Kilburn is unfashionable, and is reputed to be 'rough' though I haven't noticed that myself. It is full of the Irish, the West Indians, the Nigerians. Very lively ... / ... I'm writing to the United States Embassy today about their giving me the certificate I need to 'waive my inability to enter' your county. This is because of my ex-politics ..."

TLS. Air Letter. 11 Kingscroft Road, London: 30 May 1972

"... I'm delighted I can use your flat ... If a young friend of mine [Jenny Diski] hasn't got her driving license by then ... you could use my car ... Jenny has a block against getting her license ... Also she is involved with a 'Free-School' – drop-outs from the orthodox school system ... She could tell you a lot of nice and nasty things about 'the system'. The story of this school is an epic ..."

TLS. 11 Kingscroft Road, London: 17 January 1973

"... you'll know more about this country than any of us, quite soon. To live in such places is to know how very un-typical is London. I once spent a fortnight in a mining village near Doncaster and I've never forgotten it. The ideas and thoughts and attitudes taken for granted by people like us in London are not anywhere near the consciousness of such places ..."

II. Robbie Davidson Letters (circa 1979-96)

7 letters (TLS) and 2 autograph post cards. All undated: one post card is post marked 1979 and one TLS sent from India bears a 1992 post mark. Several long and intimate letters sent from Alice Springs, Australia, London, India, and places unknown. Davidson discusses her travels and writings, Doris Lessing (whom she called the “Big D”) and others, including Salman Rushdie.

III. Françoise Gilot Letters

45 letters and notes from Françoise Gilot. (Retained by Alther – to be deposited into the archive at a later date).

IV. Robert Gottlieb Letters (1970-92)

16 letters (TLS) and 18 autograph and typed signed notes.

Most of the letters and notes date from the mid-1970s, when Gottlieb was Alther’s editor at Alfred A. Knopf. He edited Alther’s first three novels: *Kinflicks*, *Original Sins*, and *Other Women*. Also included are four notes from (1988-92), when Gottlieb was editor of the *New Yorker* magazine:

TLS. Alfred A. Knopf ... New York: Dec. 13, 1974.

“Sorry to have to tell you that you are indeed Swift and Competent, there by no doubt shattering a lifelong image of yourself as a messy drag. BUT YOU NO LONGER NEED THAT IMAGE. This is the scary moment in growing up – when we have to acknowledge that we’re there, with real powers, authority, etc. Demoralizing – but also exhilarating! / I Stand by for more manuscript ...”

TLS. Alfred A. Knopf ... New York: Jan. 31, 1975.

“By now (I hope) the entire manuscript has got to you, since I managed to go through the rest of it the night after I called you. And hopefully you can read all my marks, notes, etc. ... / What’s best, I think, is the contrast between what’s funny (and I suppose, in this book, you’re basically a satirical writer) and the real moments of seriousness. Mrs Babcock’s dying is really handled beautifully, and you should be pleased. / I’ll never believe in those birds, never. They are just too handy as *Running Symbols* ... But you’re in love, so there it is. I’ll survive ...”

TLS. Alfred A. Knopf ... New York: January 26, 1987.

“Thank you for your beautiful letter (beautiful to me). You have been consistently wonderful to work with ... to say nothing of also being a terrific writer ... / As for the future: I just don’t know what’s going to be on my plate once I turn up at those offices on 43rd Street ... If it’s all possible, of course I’ll be involved with the new novel ... I’ll certainly read it and opine ... / Meanwhile, though, there’s Vicky Wilson here, who has a passion for your work, and will be standing by ... And of course she and I are very close, and can work together ...”

V. Martha Kaplan Email Correspondence

USB Flash Drive: about 180 emails from Lisa Alther’s literary agent Martha Kaplan.

VI. David Carriere Email Correspondence

USB Flash Drive: about 150 emails from Lisa Alther’s publicist for *Washed in the Blood*, *Stormy Weather*, and *Blood Feud*.

VII. Letters from other Writers and Artists

Blanche McCrary Boyd (1982-83)

(Novelist, writer, and feminist: winner of the Lambda Literary Award and the Ferro-Grumley Award for Lesbian Fiction). 2 ALS and 1 TLS.

Rita Mae Brown (1985-95)

(Novelist, writer, and feminist: best known for her 1973 novel *Rubyfruit Jungle*, which dealt with lesbian themes in an explicit manner). 10 letters (TLS and ALS).

Marilyn French (1990; 1995-96)

(Novelist, writer, and feminist: best known for her 1977 novel *The Women's Room*). 5 letters (TLS).

Tess Gallagher (1984)

(Poet and writer). 1 TLS (2pp., with autograph postscript).

Marilyn Hacker (1994)

(Poet). 1 TLS and 1 autograph post card (undated).

Erica Jong (1976-96)

(Writer and poet). 11 letters and notes (TLS, ALS, and autograph cards).

Richard Marius (1999)

(Novelist of the American South and Reformation scholar). 1 autograph card.

Rollie McKenna (1987-88)

(Photographer, best known for her portraits of Dylan Thomas and other lions of English literature). 2 ALS and 5 autograph cards.

Mary Meigs (1987-91)

(Painter and Writer: openly lesbian, she was a member of the Cape Cod artistic circle that included Mark Rothko, Edmund Wilson, and Mary McCarthy). 3 letters (TLS and ALS) and 2 autograph cards.

James Merrill (1990-91)

(Poet). 2 autograph post cards.

Thérèse de Saint Phalle (1991)

(French journalist and novelist). 2 ALS (1991 and undated).

Alice Walker (1983-84)

(Writer, poet, and activist). 2 ALS and 1 autograph card.

Also included are letters from: Nina Bawden, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Helen Mirren, Toni Morrison, Mordecai Richler, John Sayles, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Elizabeth Spencer, Lily Tomlin, and others.

VIII. Fan Letters

One file folder containing over 80 letters and cards.

Part C: Personal Papers

Early School Years (1952-62)

Kingsport City Schools; Dobyns-Bennett High School, Kingsport, Tennessee:

-Newspaper articles from childhood; 9 school papers (in manuscript and typed); report cards; 3 issues of High School newspaper: "Indian Tribune"; clippings and ephemera; High School Diploma.

Letters to Parents (1954-98)

Hundreds of letters (ALS and TLS) and autograph cards.

Europe Trip (Travelogue: Summer of 1965)

One file folder of autograph letters written by Alther while travelling through Europe. Includes 3 Air Letters addressed to her parents, and 12 separately written accounts from various locations in France, Italy, Germany, and Amsterdam, each consisting of multiple quarto sheets. Also included are 6 letters (TLS) from Alther to Enid Bell written when Alther was living in London (1976-77); and manuscript: "Notes on a trip to Languedoc" by Alther and her mother (September-October, 1994).

Wellesley College Course Papers (1963-66)

Over 25 typed papers (with instructor's comments): almost all on literary subjects and authors (e.g., "The Mystique in Southern Literature" - April 8, 1965).

Wellesley College Newspaper Articles (1965-66)

One file folder of clippings (most neatly mounted on onion-skin paper sheets): of editorials and reviews (Books, Theater, &c.) published in *The Wellesley News*.

10 Personal Notebooks (Undated)

Quartos. 9 spiral-bound and sewn-bound Mead ruled notebooks and 1 Silvine ruled loose-leaf pad. All 10 notebooks are densely written in manuscript (in ink, with some pencil entries). Laid-in are additional materials (including manuscript writings).

Most notebooks consist of (1.) Alther's personal research notes and reflections on literary authors and subjects (classical and contemporary), philosophers, social theorists and historians, and other writers and artists. (2.) Alther's personal research notes and ideas pertaining to her novels/stories in progress, and related quotes, notes, &c.

Part D: Unpublished Works, Articles and Interviews, & Other Professional Papers

I. Two Unpublished Early Novels

The Mandala Tattoo. Quarto. 372 typed sheets/pages (rectos), with manuscript emendations in pencil and ink.

The Pollyannoiac. Quarto. 372 typed sheets/pages (rectos), with manuscript emendations in pencil and ink.

II. Unpublished Short Stories and Articles

One redwell accordion file folder containing about 17 manuscripts and accompanying notes, letters, etc.

III. Silver Moon Bay (Manuscript Drafts and Illustrations)

Two file folders containing several draft versions of Alther's story: *Silver Moon Bay*, including a script version: "Script for a Graphic Novel". Also included are original pencil drawings, color copies of illustrations by Lucy C. Byatt, and accompanying letters and ephemera.

IV. "Swan Song" (poem)

Manuscript drafts.

V. Articles published in Vermont Freeman (1971-74)

One file folder containing 8 complete issues and clippings.

VI. "Border States" published in Bloodroot

Published as a chapter in: *Bloodroot: Of Many Past and One: Reminiscences of Appalachian Women Writers*. Multiple copies of the chapter, and accompanying publisher's agreement and letter from the editor, Joyce Dyer.

VII. Drafts of Articles, Reviews, Introductions, and Talks

One file folder and three large manila envelopes: containing multiple annotated drafts, several with the published article or review attached. Includes Alther's first lecture given at the University of Marin (California), and articles re: Sarah Orne Jewett, Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor's *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, Mildred Haun's *The Hawk's Done Gone*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, etc. Also included are drafts of Alther's interview and NY Times article on the curator John Elderfield, and of her Boston Globe review of Gail Godwin's *The Good Husband*.

VIII. Articles and Reviews

Complete loose issues of magazines, newspaper book reviews, periodicals (along with clippings), containing articles and reviews by Alther (The New York Times Book Review and Magazine, The Women's Review of Books, New Society, Appalachian Heritage, and others. Also included is "How and Why Not to have That Baby" (1971) ghost written by Alther.

IX. Interviews

One redwell accordion file folder containing: complete issues of magazines, periodicals, and newspapers, along with clippings and related ephemera.

X. Audio & Video Recordings of Interviews and Talks

-[Reel-to-reel tape]. One hour/four minute tape of Doris Lessing interviewing Lisa Alther and her ex-husband about their research on a religious cult that Lessing was interested in. With a CD (transfer) copy.

-[Scotch Magnetic Tape (5 inch reel)]. "Tape 1 – Althers & Doris Lessing / Life Study Fellowship Interview". With accompanying CD: *Lisa and Richard Alther Interviewed by Doris Lessing about Life Study Fellowship*. Hinesburg, Vermont: 1972.

-[2 MP3 Data CD's]. "Doris Lessing, 5 Lectures / Life Study Fellowship"; "Doris Lessing Lessons / British man from 78s".

-About 34 audio and video cassettes and CD's of interviews with Lisa Alther and talks given by her.

XI. Literary Criticism

One file folder: containing complete issues of periodicals, offprints, etc., along with manuscripts of critical papers.

XII. Course Notes & Related Teaching Materials

Notes for Alther's courses in Southern Literature at St. Michael's College (1981) and Southern Women Writers at ETSU (1999).

XIII. Photographs for PR and jackets (circa 1975-90)

Several file folders of photographs arranged by photographer:

-Rollie McKenna. Contact sheets, 15 large format b&w prints (5" x 7" and 8" x 10"), and 1 color print.

-Jerry Bauer (3 large format b&w prints), Roswitha Hecke (6 large format b&w and color prints), Jill Krementz (3 b&w contact sheets), Barbara Klutinis (11 large format b&w prints), Mimsy Moller (13 large format b&w prints), Thomas Victor (8 b&w contact sheets and 1 large format print), and others (35 large format b&w prints).

XIV. Rejection Slips

On large manila envelope.

XV. Contracts and Royalty Statements (1975-2013)

Two file folders containing miscellaneous contracts, royalty statements, and related correspondence.

XVI. Alther's Published Books

Copies of most U.S. and foreign editions.

XVII. Published Books Consulted for Research

About two dozen books consulted by Alther in the writing of *Kinfolks* and *Washed in the Blood*; and about a dozen books consulted for the writing of *Blood Feud*.

XVIII. Anthologies and Commentaries

About a dozen anthologies including stories by Alther, or with commentaries on her work.

XIX. Miscellaneous Working Files on USB Flash Drives

-Open Road Integrated Media

(ebook publishers of Alther's first five novels): Email correspondence; contract; marketing plan; PR material; royalty statements.

-Jackets/Rights Reversions

Jackets for Kin flicks and Other Women; foreign contracts; reversion letters.

-Publicity

Miscellaneous PR materials and schedules.

-Talks and Articles

13 miscellaneous talks; 1 interview; 1 article (literary criticism).

Vita, etc.

Biography and bibliography; 1 interview; 2 works of literary criticism; foreign editions; editors and earnings; publication list; miscellaneous other vita. [BTC#407499]

