Nadine Gordimer Papers Recently Acquired by Lilly Library

The archives of South Africa’s Nobel Prize-winning novelist Nadine Gordimer head the list of this year’s important acquisitions by Indiana University’s Lilly Library. The collection includes manuscripts of her novels and stories; notebooks in which she recorded her research for the social, historical, and political background of her books; television scripts she wrote based on her stories; speeches, articles, and papers; and about four thousand letters she received largely from 1948 through 1979, along with copies of her own letters for the same period. Her more recent correspondence will join the collection at a later date.

Gordimer is noted for the sensitive picture she has drawn of how the political turbulence of her native country affects the lives of its people. Her writings, which span more than forty years, illustrate the corrosive effects that apartheid, social restrictions, and police-state authoritarianism have on the lives and sensibilities of individuals, black and white, of all sections of South African society.

The collection is rich not only in the various drafts and versions of her writings, but also, in some instances, in the research notes that document her sources and show the great care she has taken to be accurate in even the smallest details. For *Burger’s Daughter*, as an example, there are detailed notes on the early histories of the Communist party in South Africa and the African National Congress; four pages of typed, single-spaced questions sent to an individual who had been involved in a political trial to obtain background for the trial in the book in which Lionel Burger and his wife are the accused; correspondence with a friend who had done research in Paris concerning the conversational preoccupations of the French during the period in 1975 dealt with in the novel; an exchange of letters with English correspondents concerning dialect and idioms used by a Yorkshire character; and much more documentation relating to other aspects of the novel. Similar materials are present for other books. A guide to these materials is available from the Lilly Library.

The correspondence in the collection is particularly interesting. Gordimer’s own letters are not the brief notes so frequently exchanged these days between persons who also communicate face to face or by telephone. Perhaps because of South Africa’s great distance from Europe and the United States, her letters tend to be long and informative—more like those of writers who lived before widespread use of the telephone.

WILLIAM CAGLE, DIRECTOR
LILLY LIBRARY

Visiting Scholar Studies Gordimer Collection

In late May, Nancy Topping Bazin, professor of English and Women’s Studies at Old Dominion University, Virginia, arrived on the Bloomington campus to begin a four-week residency studying the recently acquired Gordimer Collection. Dr. Bazin’s research at the Lilly Library, assisted through a Ball Brothers Foundation Fellowship, is for her current book project with the University of Mississippi Press, *Sex and Politics in Nadine Gordimer’s Novels*.


For her current research project, Bazin is focusing on the multiple ways in which Nadine Gordimer views sexuality and politics as intersecting in people’s lives. Bazin considers the South African writer’s intense interest in exploring “the interconnections between the political, the personal, and the intimate” to have a significance which extends beyond the South African settings of Gordimer’s work.

“During political crises,” Bazin observes, “evidence suggests not only a radical questioning of political, social, and economic structures, values, and relationships but also a questioning of sexual and personal relationships.” Given the increasing multicultural nature of societies around the globe, Bazin believes explorations by writers such as Gordimer “into the relationship of sexuality to social change, to the situation of black women, and to the imbalances created by sexism and racism” will become increasingly relevant for contemporary societies throughout the world.