

Robin Dalton:

An Inventory of Her Correspondence at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Dalton, Robin, 1920-
Title:	Robin Dalton Correspondence
Dates:	1960-2006, undated (bulk 1968-1979)
Extent:	2 boxes (0.84 linear feet)
Abstract:	The Robin Dalton Correspondence consists of two boxes of typed and handwritten personal and professional correspondence, including letters, postcards, Christmas cards, newspaper clippings, typed manuscripts, press releases, three photographs, and promotional material dating from 1960-2006 (bulk 1968-1979).
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-05050
Language:	English
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchase, 2007 (R16506)
Processed by:	Amy E. Armstrong, 2009
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Robin (Eakin) Dalton was born in Sydney, Australia, in 1920. Her childhood, recounted in her memoir, *Aunts up the Cross* (1965), was spent living among eccentric relatives in the Kings Cross neighborhood of Sydney during the 1920s and 1930s. She met John Spencer at the age of 18, and the couple married in 1940 but divorced shortly thereafter. In 1946, Dalton departed for London, England, where she met numerous prominent members of international society. Her involvement in these social circles led to a brief career as a journalist writing a society column for *Truth* newspaper and a monthly travel article for the publication *Art in Australia*. Her affable character and personal associations led to varied career paths, including a period as press attaché for the Thai government during the 1950s.

In 1953, she married an Irish doctor named Emmet Dalton, with whom she had two children, Lisa and Seamus. Emmett died in 1958 at age 33, after which Dalton leased her London home and lived abroad for two years in Italy and Australia. Upon returning to England, and needing a way to support herself and her two children, Dalton worked as a television performer to fill unsold air space between television programs.

Through a series of fortuitous events, Dalton began what would become a highly successful career as a literary agent. John Heyman hired Dalton in 1961 to work in his agency's newly established literary department. Desiring different experiences and projects, Dalton went to work for John Redway and Associates, where she met and represented writer William (Bill) Fairchild, whom Dalton would later marry in 1994. Dalton enjoyed great success as a film agent during the 1970s and began working for Warren Tute. She later became an independent agent and established Robin Dalton and Associates. Through various partnerships with international agencies, Dalton represented such notable talent as Jill Bennett, Joan Collins, Margaret Drabble, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Iris Murdoch, Edna O'Brien, Sonia Orwell, John Osborne, Anthony Page, David Storey, Ben Travers, Peter Weir, Arnold Wesker, Tennessee Williams, and many others.

After 25 years as a literary agent, Dalton established a movie production company, Dalton Films. She produced *Emma's War* (1986), *Madame Sousatzka* (1988), *Country Life* (1994), and *Oscar and Lucinda* (1997).

In 1998, Dalton published her second book, *An Incidental Memoir*.

Sources:

Dalton, Robin. *An Incidental Memoir*. Ringwood, Victoria, Australia: Viking, 1998.

"Robin Dalton." Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com> (accessed 6 February 2009).

"Robin Dalton (Author)." Penguin Books (Australia).

<http://www.penguin.com.au/lookinside/author-profile.cfm?AuthId=0000000435>
(accessed 22 January 2009).

Waldren, Murray. "Robin Dalton." [first published in *The Weekend Australian*, 1998],
<http://members.optusnet.com.au/~waldrenm/dalton.html> (accessed 22 January 2009).

Scope and Contents

The Robin Dalton Correspondence consists of two boxes of typed and handwritten personal and professional correspondence, including letters, postcards, Christmas cards, newspaper clippings, typed manuscripts, press releases, three photographs, and promotional material dating from 1960-2006 (bulk 1968-1979). The materials are arranged in a single series in alphabetical order by correspondent unless otherwise noted.

Dalton's correspondence is primarily with authors and directors she represented as an agent, as well as other professional and personal associates. Topics include discussion and negotiations of contracts, projects, and details of professional and personal life. Dalton annotated some of the material with sticky notes, providing explanation and context. For preservation purposes, these notes have been photocopied and removed, and the copy placed before the relevant sheet(s).

The largest segment of material consists of incoming, outgoing, and third party correspondence with British playwright Arnold Wesker. To preserve Dalton's original filing order, this material is arranged in several ways: chronologically, by the title of Wesker's work, and/or by topic. The bulk of the Wesker correspondence describes activities related to productions of his plays: *Menace*, *The Merchant*, and *The Wedding Feast*.

Also present is a substantial amount of incoming, outgoing, and third-party correspondence between Dalton and British playwright John Osborne. Enclosures, such as newspaper clippings and three photographs of Osborne's home in Cornwall, England, accompany some of the letters and postcards. Also included in this correspondence is Dalton's file of newspaper clippings documenting Osborne and Dalton's attendance at the Australian National Playwrights Conference in 1977. Letters with Osborne's third wife, Penelope Gilliatt (married 1963-1967), fourth wife, Jill Bennett (married 1968-1977), and fifth wife, Helen Dawson (married 1978), are also present. A photocopy of an eight-page typescript written by Osborne entitled "Months in the Country" is included in the correspondence.

Other files contain correspondence and cards received from writers Dalton represented, professional associates, and personal friends. The 'Various' correspondence file includes letters from Alan Ayckburn, Beryl Bainbridge, Alan Bates, Robert Bolt, Anthony Burgess, Noel Coward [photocopy], Melvin Frank, Christopher Fry, Graham Greene, Christopher Hampton, David Hare, Lillian Hellman, Anthony Minghella, Earl Mountbatten of Burma [photocopy], Sonia Orwell, V.S. Pritchett, and Gerald Vaughan-Hughes.

Related Material

Related Collections at the Harry Ransom Center include the Anthony Burgess Papers, the Noel Coward Literary File and Photography Collection, the Christopher Fry Literary File and Photography Collection, the Graham Greene Collection, the David Hare Papers, the Lillian Hellman Papers, and the Arnold Wesker Papers.

Index Terms

People

Anderson, Lindsay, 1923-1994.
Bainbridge, Beryl, 1933-
Bolt, Robert
Burgess, Anthony, 1917-1993.
Coward, Noel, 1899-1973.
Dalton, Robin.
Frank, Melvin, 1913-1988.
Fry, Christopher, 1907-2005.
Greene, Graham, 1904-1991.
Hampton, Christopher, 1946-
Hare, David, 1947-
Hellman, Lillian, 1905-1984.
Jhabvala, Ruth Praver, 1927-
Minghella, Anthony.
Mountbatten of Burma, Louis Mountbatten, Earl, 1900-1979.
Murdoch, Iris.
Orwell, Sonia.
Osborne, John, 1929-1994.
Pritchett, V. S. (Victor Sawdon), 1900-1997.
Rubens, Bernice.
Storey, David, 1933-

Travers, Ben, 1886-1980.

Wesker, Arnold, 1932-

Subjects

Authors and publishers.

Literary agents.

Theatrical agents.

Document Types

Correspondence.

Series I. Alphabetical Files, 1960-2006, undated

Anderson, Lindsay, 1976-1979, undated	Container 1.1
Jhabvala, Ruth Praver, 1983-1987, undated	Container 1.2
Murdoch, Iris, 1980-1987, undated	Container 1.3
Osborne, John	
General	
1973-1987, undated	Container 1.4
Newspaper clippings; typescript, "A Month in the Country"; photographs, 1974-1985, undated	Container 1.5
Postcards and invitations, 1974-1986, undated	Container 1.6
Wives, 1975, 1984-1992, undated	Container 1.7
Rubens, Bernice, 1993-1996, undated	Container 1.8
Storey, David and Barbara, 1974-2006, undated	Container 1.9-10
Travers, Ben, 1976-1980, undated	Container 1.11
‘Various,’ 1963-2006, undated	Container 2.1
Wesker, Arnold	
General	
1968-1969	Container 2.2
1970-1971	Container 2.3
1972-1974	Container 2.4
1975-1976	Container 2.5
1977-1979	Container 2.6
1980-2006	Container 2.7
‘Menace-General File,’ 1960-1969	Container 2.8
‘The Merchant-General File,’ 1974-1979	Container 2.9

‘Connie Ricons-Italian Agent,’ 1969-1973

Container 2.10

‘Samuel French, Inc,’ 1978-1979

Container 2.11

'The Wedding Feast,' 1973-1981

Container 2.12

Letter, 21 April 1986

Container 2.13