

**Inventory of the John L. Balderston Papers, 1915-1950**

\*T-Mss-1954-002

Billy Rose Theatre Division



The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts  
New York, New York

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## Descriptive Summary

Title: John L. Balderston Papers, 1915-1950

Collection ID: \*T-Mss-1954-002

Creator: John L. (John Lloyd) Balderston .

Extent: .5 linear feet (1 box )

Repository: The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.  
Billy Rose Theatre Division.

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## Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open to the public. Photocopying prohibited.

Preferred Citation: John L. Balderston Papers, \*T-Mss 1954-002, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

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## Biographical Note

John L. Balderston was born in Philadelphia and began his newspaper career in 1912 while still a student at Columbia University as the New York correspondent for *The Philadelphia Record*. He was a war correspondent for the McClure Newspaper Syndicate during World War I and then director of information in England and Ireland for the U.S. Committee on Public Information. In the early 1920s he was editor of *Outlook Magazine* in London and then head of the London bureau for the *New York World*. Balderston retired from the newspaper field when *The World* went out of business in 1931.

Balderston had had his first success as a playwright with the 1926 London production of *Berkeley Square* that he wrote with Jack Squire, the editor of *The London Mercury*. The play was not produced in the U.S. until 1929 with Leslie Howard in the lead. He also wrote books and screenplays. Balderston often worked in collaboration and specialized in horror, fantasy and romantic adventure scripts. Scripts he worked on include *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *Red Planet*, *Gone with the Wind* and *Gaslight*.

## Scope and Content Note

Collection contains correspondence, scripts, scenarios and notes documenting Balderston's work on plays and screenplays. Includes letters from co-authors, George Moore and Jack Squire; correspondence concerning *Berkeley Square* and *Dracula*; various scenarios for *The Brook Kerith*; a draft of *Clown of Stratford*; memos and notes regarding *Frankenstein*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Red Planet* and projects on Andrew Johnson and August Strindberg; and an incomplete autobiographical sketch.

## Organization

- Series I: Correspondence
- Series II: Writings

## Series Descriptions and Container Listing

### Series I: Correspondence, 1915-1949

6 folders

Alphabetical

This series of professional correspondence includes both incoming and outgoing letters and has two folders arranged by play title: *Berkeley Square* and *Dracula*, rather than by author. Includes one letter each from David O. Selznick and Jack Squire and many letters from George Moore. Letters by Balderston are on the state of the world as World War II approaches as well as on his playwriting.

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|------|------|--|
| b. 1 | f. 1 | Correspondence / George Moore, ca. 1915-1922<br>1 folder   |
| b. 1 | f. 2 | Correspondence / David O. Selznick, 1942<br>1 folder<br>Letter to John L. Balderston.  |
| b. 1 | f. 3 | Correspondence / Sir John Collings Squire, 1927<br>1 folder<br>Letter to John L. Balderston.   |
| b. 1 | f. 4 | Correspondence / John L. (John Lloyd) Balderston, ca. 1936-1942<br>1 folder<br>Letters by Balderston.  |
| b. 1 | f. 5 | <i>Berkeley Square</i> / John L. (John Lloyd) Balderston, 1929-1949<br>1 folder<br>Letters mostly incoming to John L. Balderston concern his play <i>Berkeley Square</i> . |

- b. 1 f. 6                    *Dracula* / Bram Stoker, 1930  
1 folder  
Correspondence of John L. Balderston concerns the film rights for *Dracula*.

**Series II: Writings, ca. 1916-1950**

13 folders

Alphabetical

This series contains multiple varying typescripts of *The Brook Kerith*, about the life of Jesus, written with George Moore; a typescript and manuscript draft of *Clown of Stratford*, the Bacon-Shakespeare play he wrote with Jack Squire; various notes, memos, scenarios and partial scripts, mostly by Balderston, on *Frankenstein*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Red Planet*, *Murder in the Church*, *She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed*, and other projects, perhaps never produced, on Andrew Johnson and August Strindberg. Also contains a partial autobiographical sketch, typescript with manuscript revisions.

- b. 1 f. 7                    Autobiographical sketch / John L. (John Lloyd) Balderston  
1 folder  
Incomplete draft [n.d.] on his theater and movie career, a typescript with many handwritten revisions, was composed for Screen Biography and "abandoned as worthless, but it does contain some factual material."
- b. 1 f. 8                    *The Brook Kerith* / George Moore, 1916  
1 folder  
Typescript scenario, incomplete, with some handwritten pages, includes letters by George Moore to Balderston.
- b. 1 f. 9-11                *The Brook Kerith* / George Moore  
3 folders  
Typescript scenarios [1917 and n.d.] in various versions.
- b. 1 f. 12                  *Clown of Stratford* / Sir John Collings Squire, ca. 1925-1927  
1 folder  
Manuscript and typescript draft for the Bacon-Shakespeare play, *Clown of Stratford* by Balderston and Jack Squire.
- b. 1 f. 13                  *Frankenstein* / Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, ca. 1928-1934  
1 folder  
Typescript analyses concern how the versions of the play and the movie differed. Balderston was a screenwriter for the 1931 movie *Frankenstein*.
- b. 1 f. 14                  *Gone with the wind* (Shooting script) / John Van Druten, 1939  
1 folder  
Partial shooting script [10 p.] by John Van Druten and John L. Balderston.
- b. 1 f. 15                  Proposed film on Andrew Johnson / John L. (John Lloyd) Balderston, 1942  
1 folder  
Memos by Balderston on his Andrew Johnson project.

- b. 1 f. 16      *Murder in church* (Script), 1938  
1 folder  
Handwritten script [7 leaves] is called "sketch in one act by R.H.B."
- b. 1 f. 17      *Red planet* (Treatment) / John L. (John Lloyd) Balderston, 1950  
1 folder  
Letters and memos by Balderston concern his treatment changes for *Red Planet* which became the movie *Red Planet Mars* (1952).
- b. 1 f. 18      *She-who-must-be-obeyed* (Scenario), 1932  
1 folder  
Typescript scenario [2 p.], author unknown. "Metro, 1932" is handwritten on top.
- b. 1 f. 19      Project on August Strindberg / John L. (John Lloyd) Balderston  
1 folder  
Typescript memo [n.d.] by Balderston is a scenario about August Strindberg.