



## The New York Public Library Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

### **Babette Deutsch papers**

ca. 1880s-1982 [bulk 1920s-1960s]

MssCol 778

Processed by R.F..

### **Summary**

**Creator:** Deutsch, Babette, 1895-1982

**Title:** Babette Deutsch papers

**Date:** ca. 1880s-1982 [bulk 1920s-1960s]

**Source:** Gifts from Babette Deutsch and Avrahm Yarmolinsky, 1938-1956; Adam and Michael Yarmolinsky, 1983; and purchases, 1983-1987

**Abstract:** Babette Deutsch (1895-1982) was a poet, author and critic. Collection consists of correspondence, copies of her published and unpublished works, research and teaching notes, personal papers, photographs, and memorabilia.

**Alternative Form Available:** Selected correspondence available on microfilm; New York Public Library

**Preferred citation:** Babette Deutsch Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

**Processing note:** Processed by R.F.; machine-readable finding aid created by Melanie A. Yolles.

### **Creator History**

Babette Deutsch, the daughter of Michael and Melanie (Fisher) Deutsch, was born on September 22, 1895 in New York City. After matriculating from the Ethical Culture School, she attended Barnard College and graduated in 1917 with a B.A.; in 1946 she received an honorary D. Litt. from Columbia University. On April 29, 1921, Deutsch married Avrahm Yarmolinsky, chief of the Slavonic Division of The New York Public Library (1918-1955), who was himself a writer and translator. They had two sons, Adam and Michael.

Deutsch made valuable contributions as a translator of Russian, German and French poetry, as a critic and editor, and as an author of novels and children's books. However, her permanent gift to literature is her poetry - free verse and rhymed poems which are sensitive and serious, yet sparked with humor. Critics have said that her phrasing is brilliant and swift, and that her chief charm is the completeness with which she renders and realizes a subject.

While she was an undergraduate, Deutsch began contributing to the periodicals *North American Review* and *The New Republic*. After her graduation, she worked for a brief period with the *Political Science Quarterly*, and also wrote several critical essays, among them one on Thorstein Veblen, for *Reedy's Mirror*, Marion Reedy's one-man journal of opinion. Shortly thereafter, Veblen asked Deutsch to be his secretary while he was teaching at the New School for Social Research in New York City.

Deutsch's first book of poems, *Banners*, was published in 1919. From then until 1962, she wrote ten volumes of poetry including *Honey Out of the Rock* (1925), *Epistle to Prometheus* (1931), *Take Them, Stranger* (1944), *Coming of Age* (1959), and *Collected Poems, 1919-1962* (1963). Among her novels are *A Brittle Heaven* (1926), *In Such a Night* (1927), *Mask of Silenus* (1933), and *Rogue's Legacy* (1942). Her criticism includes *Potable Gold* (1929), *This Modern Poetry* (1935), *Poetry In Our Time* (1952, 1956, 1963), and *Poetry Handbook* (1957, 1962, 1974); and in collaboration with her husband, she edited and translated *Modern Russian Poetry* (1921), *Contemporary German Poetry* (1923), and *Two Centuries of Russian Verse* (1966).

Deutsch's poem *Thoughts at the Year's End*, which was published in her book *Five for the Night* (1930), won the *Nation* Poetry Prize. She was Phi Beta Kappa poet at Columbia in 1929, taught at the New School for Social Research from 1933 to 1935, and was a lecturer in English at Columbia University from 1944-1951, and a guest professor from 1952 to 1971. She was also Honorary Consultant to the Library of Congress from 1960 to 1966. Deutsch died on November 13, 1982.

## Scope and Content Note

The Babette Deutsch Papers, 1860s-1982, contain personal and professional correspondence, copies of her published and unpublished works, research and teaching notes, photographs, and memorabilia of the poet and literary critic. The bulk of the collection documents the period of the 1920s through the 1960s when Deutsch was most active in the literary world.

The General Correspondence includes letters written to Deutsch by other poets and critics and, occasionally, her replies. The correspondents discuss primarily literary matters and often include copies of their poems. A separate series, Correspondence re *Contemporary German Poetry* (1923), contains letters from German and Austrian poets whose work Deutsch anthologized. Lists of prominent correspondents in each of these series can be found following the series description.

Deutsch herself is better represented in the Family Correspondence. Included here are the letters she wrote during her trip to Russia in 1923-1924 in which she comments on the new Soviet state and the various literary figures she and her husband, Avrahm Yarmolinsky, met there. Yarmolinsky, Chief of the Slavonic Division of The New York Public Library, is represented in this series by a small amount of general correspondence and numerous love letters written to Deutsch in 1920-1921.

Some of Deutsch's literary work, 1919-1981 appears in the collection in typescript, including poetry, novels, essays, and works for children, while her scrapbooks, 1917-1947, contain clippings of her book reviews. A few essays by Yarmolinsky are also present. The Photographs series contains a fine collection of portraits of Deutsch, her husband, parents, and grandparents.

**Arrangement:** Ten series: I. General Correspondence; II. Family Correspondence; III. Correspondence re *Contemporary German Poetry* (1923); IV. Business Correspondence; V. Writings; VI. Research Notes and Teaching Materials; VII. Memorabilia; VIII. Personal Papers; IX. Photographs;

## X. Oversize Materials

### Key Terms

#### Subjects

American literature -- 20th century  
Austrian poetry  
Criticism  
German poetry  
Poetry -- History and criticism  
Poetry -- Publishing

#### Occupations

Authors  
Critics  
Poets

#### Genre/Physical Characteristic

Photographic prints  
Scrapbooks

#### Geographic Names

Soviet Union -- History -- 1917-1936

#### Names

Alling, Kenneth Slade, 1887-  
Belitt, Ben, 1911-2003  
Boyle, Kay, 1902-1992  
Cohen, Morris Raphael, 1880-1947  
Combs, Tram, 1924-  
Deutsch, Babette, 1895-1982  
Deutsch, Melanie Fisher  
Dewey, John, 1859-1952  
Edel, Leon, 1907-1997  
Edman, Irwin, 1896-1954  
Garrett, George, 1929-2008  
Howes, Barbara  
Mumford, Lewis, 1895-1990  
Nemerov, Howard  
Tate, Allen, 1899-1979  
Yarmolinsky, Avrahm, 1890-1975

## Container List

### Series I. General Correspondence 1901-1981

Approximately half of the correspondence is from Kenneth Slade Alling and dates from 1940-1958. Many of these letters are on the subject of poetry and literary criticism. The remainder of the correspondence includes letters chiefly from contemporary American writers -- authors, poets, critics, reviewers, and publishers, primarily between the 1920s and 1970s. Many of the letters discuss poetry and publishing, and comment on specific literary works including those of Deutsch. Their value lies in their literary commentary. The series contains over 50 of Deutsch's outgoing letters filed by the name of the recipient. The majority are written to Ben Belitt, Tram Combs, and Leon Edel. The series also includes photocopies of letters from prominent American writers to Deutsch which were sold to the Phoenix Book Shop.

Arranged alphabetically.

- b. 1 f. 1 A-Ale
- b. 1 f. 1-6 Alling, Kenneth Slade 1940-1955 May
- b. 2 f. 1-4 Alling, Kenneth Slade 1955 June-1958
- b. 2 f. 5 Alt-Be
- b. 2 f. 6 Bi-By
- b. 2 f. 7 C
- b. 2 f. 8 Combs, Tram
- b. 3 f. 1 D
- b. 3 f. 2 E
- b. 3 f. 3 F
- b. 3 f. 4-6 Garrett, George P [1959?]-1979
- b. 3 f. 7 Garr-Gu
- b. 3 f. 8 H
- b. 4 f. 1 I-J
- b. 4 f. 2 K
- b. 4 f. 3 L
- b. 4 f. 4 M
- b. 4 f. 5 N
- b. 4 f. 6 O-P
- b. 4 f. 7 R
- b. 4 f. 8 S
- b. 4 f. 9 T
- b. 4 f. 10 U-Z
- b. 4 f. 11-12 Unidentified

## Series II. Family Correspondence 1905-1939, 1981

The series includes letters written by Deutsch to family members and letters written by members of her family to her and to others. The few letters written by Deutsch during her adolescence reveal early attempts at verse. Most of her letters in this series are written to her mother, Melanie Fisher Deutsch, and to her young son, Adam, during her trip to Russia in 1923-1924. These letters, which include several snapshots and sketches, describe revolutionary morés in the new Soviet state, public reaction to Lenin's death, her meetings with prominent poets and other cultural figures. Two letters by Yarmolinsky, including one to Lewis Mumford, are also among the letters from Russia.

The bulk of the series is composed of Yarmolinsky's love letters to Deutsch, 1920-1921. These letters also include a few postcards of Shakers in Mt. Lebanon, New York. The letters dated "I Anno Domini" date from 1920, "II Anno Domini" from 1921, etc. His general correspondence includes social letters as well as a few letters on his work in Russian and East European studies. There are also six letters to him from André Maurois and one from Richard Wilbur. The numerous letters to Deutsch and Yarmolinsky from Melanie Fisher Deutsch, 1923-1924, concern family matters.

Arranged chronologically for each correspondent.

- b. 5 f. 1 Babette Deutsch 1905-1923, 1981
- b. 5 f. 2 Babette Deutsch (letters from Russia) 1923-1924
- b. 5 f. 3-4 Melanie Fisher Deutsch 1923-1924, 1930
- b. 5 f. 5 Adam Yarmolinsky 1923
- b. 5 f. 6-7 Avrahm Yarmolinsky 1920-1939
- b. 5 f. 8 Avrahm Yarmolinsky (general correspondence) 1922-1934
- b. 6 f. 3 Series III. Business Correspondence 1952-1981

Most of the letters are written between 1977 and 1979 to Deutsch from American publishers. There are also copies of letters from Deutsch. The correspondence concerns permissions to reprint Deutsch's writings, payments, and royalties.

Arranged alphabetically.

- b. 6 f. 1 B-L
- b. 6 f. 2 M-Z; unidentified

## *Series IV. Correspondence re Contemporary German Poetry* 1921-1922

These letters were sent to Deutsch from prominent German and Austrian writers whose work she wanted to translate and anthologize. The letters discuss the poets' work, the projected anthology, and copyright matters, and include biographical sketches, clippings, and copies of poems, occasionally with Deutsch's translations. The anthology was published in 1923, although not all of the poets with whom she corresponded were included. A list of the correspondents appears at the end of the finding aid.

Arranged alphabetically.

## Series V. Writings 1919-1981

The series consists of poems (copies and clippings of published poems as well as those rejected for book publication), translations of poems, reviews, literary criticism, and essays written by Deutsch. The prose writings on poetry, literary criticism, fiction and religion include typed copies of "Three Powers of Poetry," and "The Hither Side of Styx." Present also are typescripts of novels and works for children, articles on Russia By Deutsch and Yarmolinsky for the Foreign Press Service, and three scrapbooks of clippings of reviews by Deutsch published in the *Evening Post*, *Dial*, *Reedy's Mirror*, *Smart Set*, *Century*, *The New Republic*, and *The Nation*, among others. There are also correspondence, reviews and notes on books published by Deutsch as well as notes on various readings presented on radio broadcasts or in public appearances, and notes on recordings by the Library of Congress, Yale and Columbia Universities.

Included in the series is "A Checklist of the Works of Babette Deutsch" (1969) by Judith Cook.

Arranged alphabetically by title of work or by genre.

- b. 7 f. 1 *Bible Poetry* (Typescript)
- b. 7 f. 2 *A Brittle Heaven* 1926 (Typescript)
- b. 7 f. 3 *A Checklist of the Works of Babette Deutsch by Judith Cooke* 1969
- b. 7 f. 4 *Collected Poems (1919-1962), correspondence and reviews*
- b. 7 f. 5 *Collected Poems (1919-1962), rejected poems*
- b. 7 f. 6 *Collected Poems (1969), rejected poems*
- b. 7 f. 7 *In Such a Night, (1926)* (Typescript)
- b. 8 f. 1 *A Life* (Typescript)
- b. 8 f. 2 *Mask of Silenus (1933)* (Typescript)
- b. 8 f. 3 *Mister Pish-Tosh-Bosh (1933)* (Typescript)
- b. 8 f. 4 Poems
- b. 8 f. 5 *Poems, 1901-79*  
(See also: Selected Poems & Prose, 1901-81)
- b. 8 f. 6 Poems rejected for book publication 1924-1945
- b. 8 f. 7 *Poetry* (Typescript)
- b. 9 f. 1 *Poetry Handbook, 1st ed. (1957), correspondence and reviews*
- b. 9 f. 2 *Poetry Handbook, later editions, (1962-1967)*
- b. 9 f. 3 *Poetry In Our Time, 1st ed. (1952), correspondence and reviews*
- b. 9 f. 4 *Poetry In Our Time, 2nd ed. (1963), correspondence and notes*
- b. 9 f. 5-6 *The Poor Thief's Legacy, (1942)* (Typescript)
- b. 9 f. 7 Prose 1925-?
- b. 9 f. 8 Prose: Articles on Russia 1923-1924
- b. 9 f. 9 Prose: Articles by Avrahm Yarmolinsky 1924-1929
- b. 10 f. 1 Readings and recordings
- b. 10 f. 2 Reviews by Deutsch
- b. 10 f. 3 Reviews by Deutsch 1917-1921 (Scrapbook)
- b. 11 f. 1 Reviews by Deutsch 1922-1925 (Scrapbook)
- b. 11 f. 2 Reviews by Deutsch 1925-1947 (Loose pages from oversize scrapbook)  
(See Series X. Oversize materials for scrapbook)
- b. 11 f. 3 Reviews of Deutsch's works 1919-1970

Series V. Writings (cont.)

- b. 11 f. 4 *Selected Poems & Prose, 1901-1981*  
(See also Poems, 1901-79)
- b. 11 f. 5 *The Shell, typescript and related papers*
- b. 12 f. 1-2 *This Modern Poetry (1935)*
- b. 12 f. 3 Translations of poems by Yvan Goll
- b. 12 f. 4 *Walt Whitman, Builder of America (1941)* (Typescript)

Series VI. Research Notes and Teaching Materials 1947, 1960s

The series includes lecture notes on the poets Yeats, Eliot, Pound, and Stevens, as well as quotations from their writings. There are also clippings and articles by various writers including "The Teacher" by Deutsch. In addition, there are notes and annotations to poems for seven poetry workshops which were conducted by Deutsch in 1960-1961.

- b. 12 f. 5 Lecture material--GS English 44
- b. 12 f. 6 Poetry Workshop 1960-1961
- b. 12 f. 7 Notes on various authors, copies of poems, etc

Series VII. Memorabilia 1891-1977

This series consists of a few mementos from Deutsch's childhood, programs of events attended, including performances by Isadora Duncan and Yvette Gilbert, and other ephemera. Present also are Deutsch's baby book and copies of the Barnard College yearbook, *The Mortarboard*, for 1917. A few periodicals are also included such as the *Mark Twain Quarterly* inscribed by Cyril Clemens, an article signed by Louis Bromfield, and the *Trinity Review* issue on Wallace Stevens.

- b. 13 f. 1 *General* 1891-1977  
(See also Series X. Oversize Materials)
- b. 13 f. 2 *Baby book* 1895
- b. 13 f. 3-5 *Mortarboard* 1915-1917
- b. 14 f. 1 *Periodicals* 1915-1917

Series VIII. Personal Papers 1909-1982

The papers include writings about Deutsch from newspaper and periodical articles, Deutsch's clippings on various subjects, and personal notes such as a vault list. There are also awards, citations, and honors including certificates from Phi Beta Kappa, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, and an honorary Doctor of Letters from Columbia University. In addition, there is a desk calendar for 1979 and a guest book for Deutsch's memorial service.

- b. 14 f. 2 Clippings, writings about Deutsch, personal notes
- b. 14 f. 3 Awards, citations, honors  
(See also Series X. Oversize Materials)
- b. 14 f. 4 Desk diary 1979
- b. 14 f. 4 Memorial service guest book 1982

Series IX. Photographs ca. 1860s-1970s

The photographs in the collection are almost entirely of Deutsch and her family. They include numerous portraits of Deutsch taken throughout her life, photographs of her husband, son Adam, parents, grandparents, aunt, and cousins. In addition to modern photographs, there are also ambrotypes, tintypes, cabinet cards and cartes-de-visite.

- b. 15 Photographs of Babette Deutsch
- b. 16 Photographs of Deutsch's relatives, including Avrahm Yarmolinsky

Series X. Oversize Materials

This series includes all oversize items removed from other series in the papers.

- v. 1 Scrapbook of book reviews by Deutsch and Yarmolinsky 1926-1947  
(See also Series V. Writings -- Reviews by Deutsch, loose pages from oversize scrapbook, 1925-1947)

Series X. Oversize Materials (cont.)

- o. 1 Broadside: "By Dark Cocytus' Shore" by Edmund Wilson, signed, #25 of 85
- o. 1 Broadside: "Happy Birthday, George" tribute to George Garrett from friends  
1979
- o. 1 Broadside: "Little Movie Without a Middle" poem by George Garrett, signed,  
#84 of 126 1978
- o. 1 D.Litt. diploma of Babette Deutsch 1946
- o. 1 Poster by Michael Yarmolinsky celebrating Deutsch's D.Litt. degree