

**THE CULTURAL BROKER: BABETTE DEUTSCH AND
TRANSATLANTIC MODERNISM**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the multifaceted contributions of Babette Deutsch, emphasizing her role as a cultural broker within the modernist tradition. Deutsch's diverse oeuvre, spanning poetry, fiction, translation, and literary criticism, is re-evaluated through the lens of cultural brokerage, a concept rooted in anthropological discourse. The study delves into her impact on American literary modernism, her feminist literary contributions, and her pivotal role in facilitating transnational literary exchanges. By situating Deutsch within the frameworks of cultural mediation and linguistic interpretation, this research elucidates her efforts to challenge nationalist and instrumentalist assumptions in literature.

The project establishes a theoretical foundation for analyzing Deutsch's work, providing detailed analyses of her transnational poetry, feminist modernist narratives, innovative translation practices, and critical engagement with American literary production in the early to mid-twentieth century. Deutsch's poetry is celebrated for its rich intertextuality and thematic diversity, addressing both personal and universal themes while reflecting her engagement with various cultural and literary traditions. Her translations are highlighted for their cultural impact and poetic qualities, positioning her as a key figure in enriching American literature with diverse voices. Her critical writings advocate for a cosmopolitan approach to literature, challenging restrictive definitions and promoting an inclusive vision of American identity.

Deutsch's legacy as a cultural broker is underscored by her ability to navigate between diverse cultural influences, thereby fostering cross-cultural dialogue and enriching American literary discourse. This dissertation not only reaffirms Deutsch's significance in literary history but also proposes an expanded application of cultural brokerage as a theoretical framework for understanding transnational and multiethnic literary dynamics.

To my parents for their financial and emotional support,
To my children, Heidi and Finn, without whom this
would have been completed many years earlier,
And above all, to my ever-wonderful wife, my
pouch rock, my sugar momma, my 269,

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: BABETTE DEUTSCH AND TRANSATLANTIC

MODERNISM

*The Painter of Dante's awful ferry-ride
Declared the world only a dictionary,
Words, words, whose separate meanings must go wide
Unless the visionary
Compose them, so his eyes are satisfied.*

Babette Deutsch

Babette Deutsch's literary career started with the publication of her first volume of poetry titled *Banners* (1919), and shortly after, her prominence as both poet and translator began to grow. Until 1962, Deutsch published over thirty sizable works, including nine volumes of poetry, three well-received anthologies of translated poetry, four novels, and five books of criticism. Yet in the annals of twentieth-century American literature, the name Babette Deutsch rarely conjures the same degree of recognition as those of her contemporaries—Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, Amy Lowell, William Carlos Williams, or Louis Zukofsky, to name a few. Despite her prolific output and critical acclaim, Deutsch has often been consigned to the periphery of literary discourse, overshadowed by more celebrated figures. While her success as a critic and translator is partially acknowledged, Deutsch's significance as a poet and writer remains largely overlooked. Her marginalization within the canon of modernist literature warrants closer scrutiny. This dissertation seeks to redress this oversight, presenting a comprehensive reassessment of Deutsch's legacy and advocating for her rightful place as a seminal figure in the modernist period.

Marginalization in Literary History

The marginalization of Babette Deutsch is evident in her notable absence from literary criticism. She is conspicuously missing from significant anthologies, including but not limited to the *Norton Anthology of American Literature* (2017), the *Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry* (2003), *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* (2010), *The Oxford Companion to Modern Poetry* (2019), and *The Oxford Book of American Poetry* (2003). These anthologies are celebrated for their comprehensive and expansive view of American literary history, and they were developed to combat the erasure of marginal authors, providing a more representative literary canon that reflects diverse voices. *The Heath Anthology*, in particular, was developed to challenge “the narrowness of what was taught as ‘American Literature’,” and to institute a “major broadening of coverage” by “representing different cultural voices” (xxxiii-xxxvii). It is renowned for its revolutionary approach to canon revision in the late twentieth century, influencing subsequent anthologies by incorporating dozens of previously unheard-of writers, and yet, Deutsch is nowhere to be found amongst its pages.

Deutsch’s absence extends beyond these anthologies as well. The first volume of an authoritative and extensive history of modern poetry, for instance, details the development of “at least a hundred and thirty” chief contemporaries in order to “attain a more inclusive, impartial and complex understanding than can be obtained when we focus as we usually do, on only a few writers” (Perkins vii); however, it fails to give Deutsch so much as a nod regarding her poetic contributions. Granted, Deutsch does have a singular mention in *The Cambridge History of American Literature. Volume 6, Prose Writing*,

1910-1950¹. And she has two paragraphs (seventeen lines) dedicated to her out of the 624 pages of *The Cambridge History of American Literature. Volume 5, Poetry and Criticism, 1900-1950*, but those paragraphs barely cover biographical information (paying more attention to her supposed mentors) – “She grew up in New York City, and attended Barnard College, where she studied under the progressive historian Charles Beard and, later, assisted Thorstein Veblen at the New School of Social Research” – let alone discuss her literary output or perform any literary analysis. Of course, critics cannot be expected to pay tribute to every poet, translator, and writer of the modernist period; however, Babette Deutsch remains notably absent despite these inclusive efforts, highlighting a significant and persistent gap in the recognition of her contributions to literary history.

Even with the increased emphasis more recently on cross-cultural exchanges and global literary artifacts brought about by the advent of World Literature and the growing focus on transnationalism in academia over the last two decades, Deutsch remains left behind.² Scholars continuously downplay the importance of translators and cultural go-betweens, and this oversight contributes to the ongoing marginalization of writers like Babette Deutsch, whose value lies in their creative forms of circulating transnational

¹ “Later, Cowley, Dos Passos, Babette Deutsch, and Witter Bynner wrote poems; Millay wrote both the best-known poem about the case, “Justice Denied in Massachusetts,” and an impressive poetic essay, “Fear”; Upton Sinclair wrote *Boston* (1928), a careful historical record of the case; and Maxwell Anderson collaborated with Harold Hickerson in writing the play *Gods of the Lightning* (1928) and wrote the play *Winterset* (1935).” (127).

² Lawrence Venuti's critique of nationalist paradigms in comparative literature further underscores the exclusionary practices that marginalize figures like Deutsch. For more information, see his chapter, “Hijacking Translation.” *Contra Instrumentalism: A Translation Polemic* (2019).

literary capital.³ Deutsch's work as a translator and critic played a crucial role in introducing and interpreting international literature for American audiences, yet this contribution is often overlooked in favor of more traditionally celebrated literary figures. Her translations and critical writings facilitated cross-cultural dialogue and enriched the American literary landscape. These contributions not only expanded the scope of literary appreciation but also underscored the profound impact of integrating diverse perspectives into the literary discourse.

Deutsch's absence from the literary canon raises important questions about the factors contributing to her marginalization. While her identity as a German-Jewish woman might have influenced earlier perceptions of her work, the persistence of her exclusion in more recent anthologies and scholarly discussions suggests that other factors might also be at play. For instance, how might her political views and perceived conservatism, especially in a predominantly left-leaning academic environment, have influenced her reception? Furthermore, how does her role as a translator impact the recognition of her contributions compared to traditional authorial roles? These questions highlight the complexity of Deutsch's marginalization and suggest that a reevaluation of her work could shed light on broader patterns of literary exclusion. By reevaluating Deutsch and her literary output, this project seeks to not only answer these questions, but address her marginalization.

³ Jahan Ramazani, for instance, is one such author that neglects Babette Deutsch in his popular books, *A Transnational Poetics* (2009) and *Poetry in a Global Age* (2020). Unfortunately, Ramazani's groundbreaking books that relay on nationalist paradigms and instrumentalist thinking have become models for discussion in World Literature regarding transnational exchange and literary moments of cultural brokerage. The instrumentalist assumptions in Ramazani's analysis are reflective of the dominant modes of thinking within American academia.

Cultural Brokerage Revisited

Deutsch's diverse cultural background, rooted in her German-Jewish heritage and cosmopolitan upbringing, imbued her work with a rich tapestry of influence. From German and Russian literature to Japanese haiku, Shakespearean drama to Greek mythology, Deutsch's literary universe was characterized by a synthesis of disparate cultural strands. Her Jewish identity, in particular, served as both a wellspring of inspiration and a nexus of community, shaping her creative output in profound ways. As a cultural hybrid, Deutsch occupied a unique position as a transnational locus – a cultural broker – whose interpretive and creative endeavors transcended national boundaries, influencing both her contemporaries and subsequent generations of writers.

Central to this dissertation is the exploration of Deutsch's role as a cultural broker, drawing on theories of cultural brokerage and translation studies. By situating Deutsch within the nexus of cultural mediation and linguistic interpretation, this study aims to elucidate the mechanisms through which she facilitated literary border-crossings and produced texts with global resonance and reject instrumentalist and nationalist assumptions as evidenced by Jahan Ramazani's *A Transnational Poetics*. Yet to understand Deutsch within this context, it is important to first define cultural brokerage, and its related terms (transnationalism, insularity, Anglophone) as seen throughout this dissertation.

Although cultural brokerage has faded from anthropological discourse over the last two decades, it can prove useful in understanding the global hierarchies regarding language and literature and provide a framework to understand Deutsch's role as a cultural broker. By reconceptualizing this theory of transnational exchanges that has been mostly prevalent in discussions of public-facing institutions (museums, art councils, radio stations, festivals)

as an effect of individual mediators such as Babette Deutsch, her modernist contemporaries, or other literary consecrators in their social, cultural, political, and even economic roles, we can open new vistas for critical analysis and awareness of both the modes and practices for receiving and disseminating literary forms, movements, and genres across borders.

The genesis of "cultural brokerage" traces back to 1949, amid discussions on African colonization, delineating the indispensable role of mediators adept at navigating the intricate interplay between local systems and overarching entities (Gluckman, Mitchell, Barnes). Armed with an intimate understanding of both colonizer and colonized cultures, these brokers endeavored to mend rifts and facilitate access to essential resources. The term, "cultural brokerage," in other words, according to Eric Wolf, originated to represent a mediator who would "stand guard over the critical junctures of synapses of relationships which connect the local system to the larger whole" (1075). As time progressed, the concept transcended its anthropological origins, permeating fields like conflict resolution and interlingual accessibility, where it underscored the mediation of cultural exchanges.

Fredrik Barth's 1959 elaboration on cultural brokerage, for instance, delved into the social structures within ethnic groups, particularly spotlighting the Swat Pathans. Here, brokers emerged as linchpins in resolving disputes and preserving societal equilibrium, often through the astute interpretation of cultural norms and values. Strategically selected for their affiliations with influential institutions, these brokers wielded substantial sway over conflicts, thereby charting the course of future social dynamics (O'Neill 11). Barth's model of cultural brokerage is important as it sets the standard for understanding the political, cultural, and even geographical implications of an individual broker's

interpretation, dissemination, and consecration of written texts (laws, pacts, and scripture) as the resolved conflict would become the then precedent for future mediations in the Pathan community.

Jeremy Boissevain's subsequent refinement of Barth's concept portrayed brokers as adept network specialists, proficient in facilitating access to resources transcending institutional boundaries (Boissevain 148). In the milieu of capitalism, brokers deftly leveraged strategic contacts for personal gain, assuming the role of indispensable intermediaries in exchange relationships. Their centrality and command over specialized knowledge conferred upon them a pivotal position in fostering constructive cross-cultural interactions. Despite the switch in focus from a tribalist state to a capitalist state, for Boissevain, the broker's role remains the same: fostering positive relationships between opposed cultures (or subcultures) through interpretive mediations (encoding and decoding) that are not only produced by the brokers themselves but that directly impact the broker's status within the societal structure.

And in his seminal work in 1997, *Reflections of a Culture Broker: A View from the Smithsonian*, Richard Kurin broadens Boissevain's definition even further, and explains that "Cultural brokers study, understand, and represent someone's culture (even sometimes their own) to nonspecialized others through various means and media" (19), and to do so, both institutions and individuals,

empirically and interpretively study the culture to be represented, arrive at models of understanding, develop a particular form of representation from a repertoire of genres, and bring audiences and culture bearers together so that cultural meanings can be translated and even negotiated (22-23).

Granted, in the context of Kurin, the "translators" refers not so much to interlingual translation as to "cultural translation" in a Latourian sense of "displacement, drift,

invention, mediation, the creation of a link that did not exist before and that to some degree modifies two elements or agents” (Latour 32).⁴ As such, translation, in all forms, is clearly a practice that serves the project of cultural brokerage in establishing networks between different agents in different cultures. To this point, Marc Jacobs even notes that modern discussions refer to cultural brokers as “intercultural intermediators or translators” (317).

As this foray into anthropological discourse shows, cultural brokerage is the process of mediating communication between opposing groups under the auspices of bicultural access, aiming to achieve cultural centrism for all involved (including the broker). In the context of literary globalization, cultural brokerage plays a crucial role in managing the exchange of linguistic and literary capital across different cultures. Babette Deutsch, drawing on her understanding of diverse cultural perspectives, engages in translation practices driven by her desire to preserve her own culture in the face of American homogenization (as will be explored in the following chapters). Through her literary work, Deutsch effectively shapes how foreign texts are received and disseminated, positioning herself as a key cultural broker.

To this end, it is important to define certain terms associated with cultural brokerage, that have been adopted as common rhetoric within World Literature, to allow for a more nuanced and accurate analysis of Deutsch’s impact and the dissemination of literary texts and trends within a global framework. Although *transnationalism* is often used in modern discussions to describe the movement of ideas, cultures, and people across

⁴ Yet “cultural translation” is a sheer tautology: all translation is cultural insofar as it mediates between different cultural media and constituencies. By distinguishing between translating media by using the term “cultural,” scholars run the risk of marginalizing interlingual and intralingual translation by assuming that language can somehow be separated from culture, which is not the case.

national borders, this dissertation interprets the term as more aggressive in meaning. Derived from Jahan Ramazani's *A Transnational Poetics*, *transnationalism* (and its derivatives), in this dissertation, refers to the ways in which writers not only draw inspiration from diverse sources and incorporate multiple languages or cultural references into their work, but how these authors appropriate, re-interpret, and disseminate foreign cultural artifacts to better their own culture. *Transnational* projects, then, are seen as simultaneously vulnerable and susceptible, aggressive and colonizing in relation to the source and receiving cultures of the writer's time and place.

In contrast, *insularity* refers to a narrow, inward-looking perspective that is limited to one's own national and/or cultural context. *Insularity*, as seen within this project, can manifest in writing as a fixation on national identity or a resistance to engaging with external or diverse influences. And often times, *insular* writers hold instrumentalist beliefs – subscribing to the logic that a text possesses fixed meaning. Lastly, although we need to be aware of the preconceived weight attached to the term *Anglophone* given its association with postcolonialism over the last few decades, this dissertation relies on a broader interpretation of the term, referring to bodies and texts that are interpellated by English-speaking ideologies. *Anglophone* as descriptor, in other words, places its subject within the larger system of English-speaking ideologies, influences, communities and networks. By analyzing Deutsch's works through these lenses, we can unveil the intricate mechanisms underpinning literary transnationalism and emphasize the indispensable role of individual mediators in shaping American cultural discourse.

Deutsch as Cultural Broker

Born in 1895 in New York City – a time marked by both increased immigration and increased xenophobia – Babette Deutsch’s ethnic hybridity positioned her uniquely to become a cultural broker. Her background, emerging during a pivotal period in American identity formation and cultural dynamics, influenced her role in bridging diverse cultural perspectives. The daughter of German Jewish descendants who learned English but continued to speak German, especially at home, Deutsch belonged to an ever-growing community of German Americans who were stigmatized amid the anti-German sentiment brought about by World War I. Marc Shell reminds us that millions of German Americans, in general, were in a position of affluence near the end of the nineteenth century:

Many German Americans believed that German would eventually become an official American language; a few people argued that all Americans should learn to speak German ... hundreds hoped to found a New Germany following the model of New France or New England. In any event, by 1900, there were millions of German speakers in the United States ... The German American ethnic group was well educated, wealthy, and influential. (258-259)

Nonetheless, with the coming of The Great War, German culture in the United States rapidly declined. President Theodore Roosevelt declared in 1917 “we must have but ... one language. That language must be the language of the Declaration of Independence” (as quoted in Shell 259). In that same year, ambassador James Watson Gerard went as far as warning German Americans that “Every citizen must declare himself American – or traitor” (Gerard). And shortly after, in 1919, Woodrow Wilson echoed a similar sentiment, decrying the divided loyalty of “hyphenated Americans” (Wilson). German Americans and the institutions that supported their interests came under attack both cosmetically – the names of towns, foods, schools, and streets were changed – and physically with vandalization, tar and feathering, and lynching. The discrimination had taken on legal

forms as well with the establishment of the Espionage Act of 1917, which was used broadly to suppress German American interests. German language instruction also came under attack: it was barred from classrooms in most parts of the United States in 1919. Deutsch, navigating the intersections of her German and Jewish identities, experienced profound displacement. Her German-Jewish heritage placed her at a unique crossroad of marginalization, reflecting the broader anti-German and antisemitic sentiments of the time. The distinction between her German background and her Jewish heritage was significant, as both identities faced different forms of discrimination. This complex interplay of identities – German, Jewish, and German-Jewish – became central to her work and shaped her contributions as cultural broker. Her experience navigating these marginalized identities underscores the multifaceted nature of her cultural position and the discrimination she faced.

Still, despite Deutsch's intercultural position, her personal status remained constant and quite unshaken during the tumultuous interwar period when American nativism had been bolstered, and hyphenated Americans faced legal persecution, political extrication, cultural suppression, and social isolation. After all, Deutsch and her parents, Michael and Melanie (Fisher Deutsch), had enjoyed prosperity. Living in Manhattan, Deutsch had a privileged adolescence: she attended the prestigious and private Ethical Culture School before matriculating at Barnard College, where she graduated in 1917. She published her first poems during her undergraduate years in well-known periodical including the *North American Review* and the *New Republic*; and shortly after her graduation, she was hired as the personal secretary for Thorstein Veblen. Deutsch, and her husband Avrahm Yarmolinsky, also benefited from prolific publishing tenures and a comfortable economic

status, with Deutsch maintaining an exceptional teaching career. She was the Phi Beta Kappa poet at Columbia University in 1929, taught at the New School for Social Research from 1933 to 1935, and was a lecturer in English at Columbia University from 1944-1952, and a guest professor from 1952-1971. It is clear that Deutsch's ethnic hybridity and multilingualism (fluency in English, German, Hebrew, and Russian) granted her unmediated access to values of multiple cultures, and although Deutsch's status had remained, for the most part, untouched by nativist sentiments, she had to remain careful in her advocacy of the foreign. And to give a preview of this dissertation, her young adult novel, *The Welcome* (1942), is a testament to her role as a cultural broker and the delicate balance between her cultural heritage and advocating for foreign influences. The novel reflects her deep engagement with the experiences of hyphenated Americans and her commitment to fostering cross-cultural understanding.

The Welcome, informed and inspired by Deutsch's personal experiences, offers a window into the world of young hyphenated Americans, and provides insights into how Deutsch views her position within American society. Granted, unlike her young German protagonist, Ernst Keller, Deutsch was not a refugee; however, it's clear that she sympathized and related to the struggles of displacement and assimilation that Keller faces within the novel. Deutsch depicts Ernst Keller in his New York school as a "newcomer," a "stranger" within an "outlandish accent," a "pale and skinny" boy who "talks like a German" (6,8-9), and who struggles to find his place in a new country and a new culture. And she showcases her preferred vision for American society – one that fosters and accepts cross-cultural exchange – through Ernst's interactions with his one American friend, Dwight "Thursty" Thurston. Ernst shares stories and knowledge of his culture, including

the harrowing journey that brought him to the US, providing Thursty – and the readers – with a deeper understanding of the immigrant experience. And rather than rejecting or discriminating against Ernst, Thursty openly accepts him and even applies his new knowledge in his personal life. For instance, Thursty continuously compares his notion of home – living with his family in New York – to Ernst’s position in which he lacks both the physical structure of a house and a family unit (30, 35, 68, 158-159). As a result, Thursty redefines his understanding of the concept, believing “home” has no fixed meaning. This portrayal of the interplay between home and displacement, especially through their relationship, highlights the interconnectedness of the source and receiving cultures as seen by Deutsch.

Assimilation and Americanization are also addressed in the novel. From the beginning, Ernst and Thursty struggle to understand representations of cultural capital. In one instance, they need to draw a map of the US with “pictures of American heroes,” which leads to great confusion, as they mix up Paul Bunyan (of lumberjack lore) with John Bunyan (*Pilgrim’s Progress*). Ernst also fails to understand Thursty’s insistence on including the Lone Ranger. Thursty explains, “the Lone Ranger’s greater than a lot of presidents, and all the vice-presidents, and he’s as American as – Thanksgiving.” Unfortunately, “Ernst knew nothing about Thanksgiving” either (22). Although it could be argued that Thursty is a cultural broker here as Ernst was when discussing his own culture, Thursty’s lack of knowledge regarding his own culture and his prioritization of superficial expressions of culture, express Deutsch’s concerns regarding the definition of American culture. This conclusion is further emphasized in the children’s discussion of Christmas, in which the American children come to realize that there are no real “American” Christmas

songs because “Americans come from pretty much everywhere; the only natives are the Indians” (170). Deutsch’s portrayal of a German refugee living in New York, who brokers his own culture while facing discrimination and perceiving American culture as merely a collection of foreign cultures, exemplifies her effort to promote cultural exchange and highlight the complexities of multiculturalism. Through this character, Deutsch underscores the importance of mutual understanding and the dangers of cultural homogenization in America.

Revitalizing Deutsch’s Legacy

This dissertation, then, seeks to unravel the theoretical underpinnings that informed Deutsch’s critical commentary and creative output. By examining her theoretical assumptions regarding the nature of poetry, fiction, translation, criticism, and the author’s role, we gain a deeper understanding of the ideological current that shaped her literary sensibilities. Further, these readings of Deutsch will advocate for a hermeneutic and global approach to literature that rejects nationalist paradigms and instrumentalist tendencies that dominate American academia. Given the prolific extent of Deutsch’s literary output, this single-author critical study aims to provide a comprehensive reassessment of Deutsch’s legacy by structuring the chapters according to medium and cultural association.

Chapter 1, then, comprehensively examines how Babette Deutsch’s poetry engages with her Jewish heritage and how she acts as a cultural broker within her modernist framework. The chapter is divided into several sections, each addressing a different aspect of Deutsch’s work and its broader cultural and literary significance. It introduces Deutsch as a mediator within the modernist literary movement, emphasizing her role in bridging diverse cultural traditions through her poetry. Her work synthesizes various influences,

creating a unique poetic voice that reflects both her Jewish identity and broader modernist themes. The chapter delves into Deutsch's engagement with Jewish themes and issues, analyzing how she addresses questions of Jewish identity, heritage, and the diaspora within the context of Jewish literary traditions and the broader modernist movement. It highlights her contributions to the representation of Jewish experiences in early 20th-century literature. Additionally, it explores Deutsch's connection to the Imagist movement and her incorporation of Japanese poetic forms, such as haiku, into her work, examining how these influences intersect with her Jewish themes and create a cross-cultural dialogue within her poetry. The analysis also focuses on her use of T.S. Eliot's literary techniques, particularly his method of allusion and intertextuality, to enrich her poetry by weaving together references from Jewish texts, modernist literature, and other cultural sources. This section depicts her skill in creating layered, complex poems that resonate with multiple literary traditions. Finally, the chapter addresses the theme of lament in Deutsch's poetry, particularly in relation to Jewish history and experiences of suffering. It examines how she uses lamentation as a poetic form to express collective grief and resilience, linking her work to both ancient Jewish traditions and contemporary modernist concerns. Throughout, Chapter 1 argues for Deutsch's significant yet underappreciated contribution to 20th-century literature, calling for a reassessment of her work within the broader context of modernist and Jewish literary studies.

Chapter 2 explores Deutsch's contributions to feminist modernist fiction by focusing on her literary works that center on female experiences and perspectives. The chapter is also structured into several sections, each examining different facets of Deutsch's engagement with feminist themes within the modernist context. It provides an overview of

the feminist literary tradition and situates Deutsch within this broader movement, discussing her awareness of and response to the challenges faced by women writers in the early 20th century. Emphasizing her role in advancing feminist ideas, the section highlights Deutsch's efforts to carve out a space for female voices within the male-dominated modernist literary scene and her contributions to feminist literary criticism. I delve into Deutsch's first work of fiction, *A Brittle Heaven*, analyzing its themes, characters, and narrative techniques to explore how Deutsch portrays the struggles and psychological depth of her female protagonists. It examines the feminist undertones of the work, addressing issues such as autonomy, identity, and societal expectations imposed on women. Similarly, I analyze another key work, *In Such a Night*, for its use of modernist techniques like stream-of-consciousness and fragmented narrative to convey female subjectivity and resilience, reflecting broader feminist concerns of the period. The discussion extends to Deutsch's use of western canonical figure in her feminist modernist works, using *Mask of Silenus* and *The Rogue's Legacy* as case studies to illustrate how she reinterprets classical figures from a feminist perspective, challenging traditional gender roles and narratives. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive analysis of Babette Deutsch's contributions to the feminist modernist tradition, arguing that her innovative narrative techniques and thematic concerns make her a significant figure in feminist modernist literature, deserving of reevaluation within the feminist literary canon.

Chapter 3 focuses on Deutsch's literary translations, which are celebrated for their poetic qualities and cultural impacts, positioning her as a significant figure in American literature. I begin by acknowledging that her translations are praised by her contemporaries for their disciplined interpretation and aesthetic sensitivity. To understand her importance

in translation, however, I advocate for a hermeneutic approach to translation, influenced by Schleiermacher's model and Venuti's assimilative approach that insists translation transforms source texts into their receiving culture, while emphasizing their autonomy and artistic integrity. I argue that Deutsch had a similar understanding of translation – as a hermeneutic act akin to cultural brokerage – and she weaponized her translations to challenge dominant literary norms and cultural hegemonies, particularly during periods of political and cultural upheaval in Germany and Russia. Deutsch's editorial role further emphasizes her dual identity as a cultural mediator and advocate for foreign literary voices, strategically selecting and translating poets to introduce their works to American audiences, enriching the American literary scene with diverse voices, while downplaying national tensions (anti-German sentiment during interwar period). Her translations, then, emphasize marginalized poetic values, broadening American modernism's cosmopolitanism and rehabilitating postwar German and post-revolution Russian cultures. By innovatively altering syntax, lexical choices, and poetic forms, Deutsch enhances accessibility and aesthetic appeal while navigating between fidelity to the original and adaptation to the cultural context of her audience. I conclude the chapter by noting her dissident practices in translation challenge conventional instrumentalist thinking, making her anthologies pioneering efforts in fostering cross-cultural dialogue and enriching American literary discourse.

Chapter 4 delves into Babette Deutsch's role as a critic and cultural broker, highlighting her extensive career in literary criticism and advocacy for global literary exchange within Pascale Casanova's framework of literary consecration. I argue that Deutsch critiques the insularity of American literary production, challenging critics like

Louis Untermeyer and Daniel Gregory Mason for their restrictive definitions of American poetry. Rather, she advocates for a cosmopolitan approach that embraces the diversity and complexity of American artistic expression, positioning herself as a champion of authenticity and innovation in literature. Deutsch consecrates Walt Whitman as a quintessential American poet who bridges English and American literary traditions, emphasizing his inclusive vision of American identity and departure from traditional poetic forms. Because of her allegiance to modernist aesthetics, I am actively aware that Deutsch occasionally tempers her political stance, particularly evident in *Poetry in Our Time* (1952), where she critiques poets like e.e. cummings and Allen Tate for what she sees as an excessive political commitment detracting from their artistry, while praising the British Auden group for balancing social issues with artistic integrity. Her selective engagement with politics reflects a broader preference for modernist principles, influenced by figures like Whitman and the Imagists, valuing linguistic precision, innovative form, and sensory engagement in poetry. These tensions between artistic innovation and political engagement in her criticism have led to inaccurate assessments that unfairly place Deutsch within a conservative agenda, thereby tarnishing her legacy. And I conclude that her legacy should lie in her efforts to promote a cosmopolitan and inclusive vision of American literature, navigating the complexities of cultural mediation and contributing to the global literary dialogue.

Throughout this project, Babette Deutsch emerges as a multifaceted and influential figure whose contributions span poetry, fiction, translation, and literary criticism within the context of modernism, Jewish culture, American literature, feminism, and cultural mediation. And although this dissertation only focuses on a single author, I hope to

demonstrate an expansion of cultural brokerage as a literary theory that could be applicable to a broader range of authors and literature that express cross-cultural and transnational characteristics, reading these works not with a focus on nationalist paradigms, but on the different modes of expression that emerge from literary border-crossing and writing as diverse, multiethnic, and polyglot individuals.

CHAPTER 2

“BRIARS OF DESPAIR”: CULTURAL BROKERAGE IN BABETTE

DEUTSCH'S JEWISH-THEMED POETRY

The first step of a renaissance, or awakening is the importation of models for painting, sculpture or writing.

Ezra Pound

Babette Deutsch's career as a poet was prolific; she published over ten volumes of poetry, received numerous awards including *The Nation's* Poetry Prize in 1926 and the Julia Ellsworth Ford Foundation Prize in 1941, was granted an honorary Litt. D. from Columbia University, served as an honorary consultant of poetry at the Library of Congress from 1960 to 1966, and in December 1979, she was even invited as an honoree to a White House celebration “saluting poetry and American poets” (Carter). The reviews and criticisms by her contemporaries were overwhelmingly positive and perhaps best summed up by the words of Marianne Moore: “If the briars of despair ever were a quandary for compassionate, dexterous, knowledgeable Miss Deutsch, they seem but a figure of speech, as one contemplates her depth, range, straightness, and commanding stature as a poet” (Moore 65). And her proven influences on other poets were both local – Louis Gradin, Kenneth Slade Alling, Dorothy Richardson, George Garrett – and transnational – Emanuel Carnevali and Albert Ehrenstein.

Deutsch's cultural and literary significance rests not so much in her poetic style or in genre-changing revelations, but in her career-long insistence on representing marginalized cultures and disseminating them into American literature. Her innovative styles of adaptation and imitation, as she borrows poetics formalisms from a variety of transnational sources, provide insight into the global trends of American modernism.

Discontent with the American poetry scene as a transnationalist, Deutsch openly expresses her distaste for her American contemporaries' acceptance of political and cultural isolationism; their adherence to traditional English forms; and most importantly, their blatant antisemitism during the interwar period. This chapter, then, centers on Deutsch's intended solution to such problems: elevating the linguistic-literary value of Jewish culture by rejecting mainstream American poetry (and its biased associations) through the imitation of foreign, or otherwise marginal, poetic forms including the haiku (different from Pound and the Imagists), the Eliotic method, and lamentations.

Modernist Mediation

To understand the complexities and multiplicities of Deutsch's poetry, however, it is important to recognize the divide between transnationalist approaches to American literature that openly sought cross-cultural and global influences, and isolationist approaches that wished to cut off global ties and prioritize domestic scenes in the early twentieth century. Deutsch belonged to the former group of transnationalist academics and artists (predominantly modernists) who believed in a polyglot American language, a language reflective of cultural relativism that evolved through contact with the foreign and embraced global influences, which they feared would be otherwise censored in the wake of the homogenization of US English. Deutsch speaks of the hegemonic turn towards isolationism during the interwar period in her article "Understanding Poetry," when she notes that "The first World War and the Russian Revolution and their consequences shook the poets of my generation" (70). As the United States settled into a post-war period of disillusionment, American readers were increasingly receptive to isolationist literary works that questioned American involvement in international affairs and that prioritized domestic

scenes. The crucial event of American mainstream literature during the 1920s and 1930s was the First World War and it brought with it a fear of the foreign. In their vivid descriptions of the war and its traumas, and in their disgust and disillusionment with the whole affair, Lost Generation writers would provide an important source of post-war isolationism.

American writers, as a whole, were on their way to producing one of the greatest literary outpourings, and the literature produced by this group, which had come to reflect their political views, was startlingly insular. Take, for example, the works of those that had direct experience with the war, John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway. Revoking his support for American involvement in the war, Dos Passos wrote in a letter from the warfront in 1917, “The war is utter damn nonsense – a vast cancer fed by lies and self-seeking malignity on the part of those who don’t do the fighting” (Dos Passos). His next five novels took aim at American involvement in foreign affairs and its political internationalism to keep the United States culturally provincial (*Chronicles*). Ernest Hemingway, whose patriotic idealism took longer to fade, also critiqued the war in his writing, most notably in his novel *Farewell to Arms* (1929) and his short story *Soldier’s Home* (1925). Hemingway was much more forward with his calls for isolationism as well, “Never again,” he wrote in 1935, “should this nation be put into European war through mistaken idealism, through propaganda, through the desire to back our creditors,” referring to the European political state as a “hell broth” (“Notes” 460). Their anti-war stance, while strongly critical of American participation was not purely pacifist either; instead, it reflected a form of isolationism. Dos Passos and Hemingway, for example, believed that while the war might have been necessary in some respects, it was not a role for the United

State to play, advocating for a retreat from foreign entanglements rather than outright rejection of the war's existence. Their disgust with the conflict, therefore, led them to argue against US involvement in any foreign affairs, favoring a more insular approach to international politics.

Even among the expatriates that relocated abroad, there was a provisional isolationism as most of them resisted assimilation to their new cultures, often clinging to their circle of Anglophone writers and American traditions. Joseph Freeman, a member of the American community in Paris during the 1920s, provides an insight into this isolationist conclave abroad: "we were outsiders in Europe, but that was just what we wanted to be, privileged aliens who were not responsible to the society in which we lived, Americans in Paris" (183). He continues by commenting on the irony of the situation, "I realized how attached I was to many things which at home I had pretended to despise – movies, jazz, the American language," and that the longer you stayed in Paris, "the better you liked New York; the better you liked New York, the longer you wanted to stay in Paris" (183). Other American writers were more forward regarding American centrism both in writing and their residence. In 1925, Sherwood Anderson commented that, "The American who tries to escape by running off to live, say in Europe, is putting himself out of it altogether. To get at the story he has got to stay where the story is" (34). Regardless of their whereabouts, these feelings had naturally seeped into their writing.

Disenchanted with this turn in American literature, transnationalists, on the other hand, attempted to establish a tradition at once multilingual and avant-garde by signaling foreign values through the mediations of foreign texts. These American modernists were well aware of the consecrative potential that cultural brokerage, or the international

mediation of global artifacts and their characteristics as a literary practice had to offer: “The first step of a renaissance, or awakening,” Pound wrote in 1914 (despite the onset of the war), “is the importation of models for painting, sculpture or writing” (228). And they took advantage of the proliferation of globalizing technologies in the early twentieth century, or in Deutsch’s words, “machines” that “give man a longer arm and a swifter foot” (“Understanding Poetry” 70), and that eased the travel of the individual, their artistic works, and associated ideologies across national borders. Some transnational modernists used such technologies¹ to leave the United States and travel freely in search of linguistic-literary value elsewhere: certain expatriates of the Lost Generation (not all were entirely insular) found home predominantly in the historic cultural hubs – U.K., Spain, France – of Western Europe; key players of the Harlem Renaissance (Locke and McKay) looked for inspiration in their trips abroad to Germany; leftists (Deutsch and Hughes) tried to affirm their political beliefs in the Soviet Union; and some even explored the literary traditions outside of Western cultures through their Eastern travels (DuBois and Pound). Others “at home” sought to circulate foreign materials throughout American cities to expose readers to cultural constituencies that challenged American normativity. And others still participated in both physical relocation and the brokerage of foreign materials.

There are many other examples to express the increased interest in multilingualism and cross-cultural exchanges during the modernist era if modernist travels are not enough: the foreign contributors to *The Dial* (including Thomas Mann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Oskar Kokoschka, Constantin Brâncuși, John Eglinton to name a few), the non-translations

¹ Although I’m specifically referring to airplanes here, there were other “technologies” developing during the time that allowed for “the travel of the individual, their artistic works, and associated ideologies across national borders” such as radio broadcasting, television, telephone systems, and automobiles.

in William Carlos Williams's *Al Que Quiere!*, the Jamaican-English of Claude McKay, Gertrude Stein's infamous remarks regarding her transnational and expatriate identity: "America is my country and Paris is my home town" (Stein, as quoted in Ramazani, 61). Jahan Ramazani says it best in his discussion of Robert Crawford's criticism of modernism as a nationalist event, "The modernism Crawford sees as 'essentially provincial' (270) is instead profoundly cross-cultural, translocal, and transnational" (28). The remarkable thing about modernist transnationalism and its reliance on cultural brokerage is that, in its insistence on the aesthetic autonomy of a text (whether it be an original composition or a secondary text such as an adaptation, translation, imitation, or other), it inspired the production of extractive practices, which pulled (or borrowed) foreign literary discourses from a broad range of global sources to challenge the status quo in the domestic setting. These transnationalist projects were undertaken by American modernists unmistakably with the intention of being poetically revolutionary. And they inscribed subversive characteristics in their texts – convoluted or inverted syntax, archaism, increased play of the signifier, polysemy, elaborate stanzaic forms and sound effects, nonstandard dialects, textual features that frustrate immediate intelligibility, interpretation, empathic response – that deviated from the normative publishing standards of their time. Deutsch was one such practitioner, whose innovative styles of adaptation and imitation provide insight into the global currents of modernist literature, as she brokered foreign poetics from a variety of sources into the US poetry scene to combat the growing monolingualism and xenophobia that had come to dominate the mainstream American literature during the interwar period.

The Jewish Question

Not all cultures, however, were considered legitimate sources of literary-linguistic value for the modernist practices, and the Jewish culture was mostly disregarded in line with American antisemitism. Cultures with rich histories, sizable speaking populations, and strong literary traditions captivated modernists for their transnational endeavors. These cultures were valued based on factors like the age of their language, the renown of their poetry, the sophistication of their literary forms, their traditions, and the impact of their translations (Casanova 410). Yet despite possessing these characteristics, the Jewish culture was rarely prioritized as a legitimate source of linguistic-literary value, because American antisemitism, which had begun centuries earlier, remained as a hegemonic ideology throughout the US in response to a large influx of Jewish immigrants in the early to mid-twentieth century.

Nearly two million Jews emigrated from the Russian empire between 1881 and 1914, with another surge following shortly after as consequence of the October Revolution in 1918 (Dawidowicz 8). And as with any large diasporic event, its presence was felt in modern discourses as American social, political, and cultural paradigms shifted to incorporate and/or reject the new Jewish population. Most Americans were less than receptive regarding Jewish immigrants, and antisemitism became a new norm. According to Hasia Diner, the rise of antisemitism during the early to mid-twentieth century can be tracked through opinion polls in which average Americans “admitted to their belief that Jews benefited from the suffering of Christians” (212), and that even in “1938, almost 50 percent of Americans answered affirmatively when asked if they had a low opinion of Jews” (212). This cultural shift was also apparent from the headlines found in the popular

periodicals of the time: “The Jews in the United States”; “Race Prejudice Against Jews”; “Jewish Criminality”; “Is the Jew Getting a Square Deal?”; “Will the Jews Ever Lose Their Racial Identity?”; “Because You’re a Jew”; “Is a Dreyfus Case Possible in America?”; “The Hebrews of Eastern Europe in America”; “Are the Jews an Inferior Race?”; “The Conquest of America” and “Jews in the White Slave Traffic” (Dinnerstein 59).

Most of these articles focused on the possible outcomes regarding the assimilation of Jews into American culture, and although they could be dismissed as, to use a more contemporary phrase, tabloid journalism, the scandal-pushing journalists were not the only ones swept up in antisemitic hysteria. Scholars and critics alike also hastened to voice their opinions regarding the “inherent Jewish trait” of “criminality” (Dinnerstein 59). Academic journals consistently published essays that concerned themselves with the notion that Jews were resisting assimilation and wished to stay as an unintegrated race, embodying an opposition to the native population: “The Jew is winning everywhere. By fair means or by foul means he wins” and Jews “beat us in the schools, in the colleges, in business – everywhere, and we are not used to being beaten.” (Dinnerstein 59). One of the clear foundations of the prejudice, according to Leonard Dinnerstein, was the fact “that Jews were not Anglo-Saxons and consequently thought to be unassimilable” (Dinnerstein 59) despite the efforts of Jewish cultural hubs, like the 92nd street Young Men’s Hebrew Association, to engage in cultural education and cross-cultural sharing.

Both major and minor writers during the early twentieth century seemingly bought into the demonization of Jews as well. Referring to the waves of Jewish immigrants as “the Hebrew conquest of New York” (129) and to New York as “New Jerusalem” (129), Henry James employed a distasteful lexicon to describe the Jewish population in 1907 including,

“nimble class of animals” (130), “human squirrels or monkeys” (130), and an “antlike population” (130), while critiquing their fertility and materiality (129-136) in his portrayal of the American scene. In letters to Hutchins Hapgood in 1933, Theodore Dreiser offered his opinion on the matter in similar terms, noting Jews “are money-minded, very pagan, very sharp in practice and usually, insofar as the rest is concerned, they have the single objective of plenty of money, by means of which they build a fairly material surrounding” (Dreiser 651). His solution to the alleged Jewish refusal to “a program of race or nation blending here in America” (Dreiser 663) was not a reduction in antisemitism but for Jews to be removed to their own nation:

There are lands as well as nations . . . which should be willing and able to furnish them forth not only with an entirely adequate country but with the loans and equipment necessary to start them upon an independent and, as I see it, certain to be successful and even glorious career as a nation. (Dreiser 663)

Even Edith Wharton’s Jewish characters (e.g., Sim Rosedale in *The House of Mirth*) evoked antisemitic stereotypes.² And it’s been well-documented that especially those leading the transnational efforts against American isolationism, such as Eliot and Pound, were antisemitic. Despite its abundant traditions, expansive mythos, and rich history, Pound goes as far as calling the Jewish culture “sterile” in 1920, analogizing American Jewish influences on literature with the Jewish ceremonial practice of circumcision by noting the “curtailment” and “maiming” of American literary practices by Jewish authors, leaving the American literary scene “wholly castrated” (Pound 154).

² Pantirer, Elizabeth, "Anti-Semitism in American Realist Literature: Edith Wharton’s Sim Rosedale - a Thorn in American Identity" (2020). *Theses, Dissertations and Culminating Projects*. 479.

Despite the antisemitic tendencies of her peers and the devaluation of Jewish culture, Deutsch kept her faith. She was a proud member of the Jewish community who made significant contributions to American Jewish culture. Raised in a Jewish household by her parents, Michael and Melanie (Fisher) Deutsch, and married to a Russian Jewish émigré, Deutsch placed a high value on her Jewish identity.³ Not only did she pay homage to her Jewish heritage and faith through her written works, but she often devoted her free time to volunteering at Jewish organizations. Beginning in 1939, for example, Deutsch was a recurring volunteer at the 92nd Street Young Men's Hebrew Association (now called the Unterberg Poetry Center at the 92nd Street Y), where she provided poetry workshops to a predominantly Jewish audience that consisted of amateur poets who were underrepresented in the American poetry scene. In its first years, the poetry center had remarkable success. It became an intellectual hub, and some of Deutsch's peers as both lecturers and students included well-known writers such as Allen Tate, Mark van Doren, W. H. Auden, Sterling Brown, Dudley Fitts, Robert Penn Warren, Countee Cullen, George Barker, William Carlos Williams, Louis Zukofsky, and Charles Reznikoff. Even so, the poetry center's triumph of cultural understanding did little to impact the otherwise dominant antisemitism at the turn of the twentieth century, which remained for the following decades.

Nonetheless, Deutsch actively prioritized the linguistic-literary value from Jewish culture in the face of such discrimination. Her first volume of poetry, *Banners* (1919), touches on some of these themes, such as in the opening lines of exaltation in her poem,

³ See the series of letters between Deutsch and her mother during Deutsch's trip to the Soviet Union, 1923-1924, in which Deutsch not only details the treatment of Jews under Communism, but reminds her mother (who is caring for Deutsch's son, Adam, while she is abroad) to instill the importance of faith.

“Psalm for the New Zion”: “Lift up your voices, daughters of Zion! / Sing and rejoice with cymbals” (1-2). And although Deutsch had not yet found her poetic voice in her first volume (the reviews were quite mixed), her Jewish faith and identity remained as central motifs throughout her career up until the biblical allusions of her last original collection (disregarding retrospectives), *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral* (1954).⁴ The following poetry collections, then, are not only fair representations of her overall poetic production, but they highlight the evolution of Deutsch’s poetic forms as she mirrors modernist trends, and adapts, imitates, and borrows from both domestic and global sources for her own poetry and Jewish subjects. Granted, not all of Deutsch’s poems have Jewish content, but given the recurrence of Jewish themes through seven volumes of poetry over three decades (1919-1954), and Deutsch’s personal thoughts regarding the “Jewish question,” they certainly have cultural value.

Honey out of the Rock: Imagism and the Japanese Answer

As the title suggests, Deutsch’s second volume of poetry, *Honey out of the Rock*, published in 1925, was meant to be a sweet refreshment pulled in contrast from the rocky crags of the homogeneous mainstream American literature. And, for the most part, it was considered just that – a far cry from her first volume – with the reviews being quite positive: “Miss Deutsch has played every card in her hand with the utmost skill; she has developed every faculty of her intelligent mind,” (Monroe 103) and the volume is filled with “sharp intensity and even sharper sensibility” along with “more spontaneous freedom...than we have run across in a pink moon” (Harte 58). Yet Deutsch’s title wasn’t simply self-congratulatory, as it both references her source material and prefaces her intentions. More

⁴ “A word, the world being a poem by God / Each evil tuned to make a splendor sing, / Ordered by God” (“The Poem” 7-9)

importantly, *Honey out of the Rock* exemplifies Deutsch's first true attempts regarding poetic experimentation and cultural brokerage, as she adapts Jewish source texts into American verse through Japanese formalisms.

Quoted (albeit as an English translation) from the Ketuvim ("Writings"), the borrowed title of Deutsch's poetic volume, *Honey out of the Rock*, points her audience to a scriptural passage that reflects the status of the American Jew in the 1920s, which is the dominant theme of the poems included within it. Deutsch commonly used the Tanakh ("Old Testament") as both inspiration and source material, and this specific allusion regarding Jewish scripture is one that falls in line with other Jewish modernist poets of the time such as Karl Shapiro, Charles Reznikoff, Muriel Rukeyser, and Delmore Schwartz. In 1957, Louis Zukofsky discusses such a maneuver regarding scripture in his letter to Deutsch: "...the references merely lead the readers to verses in the O.T. [Old Testament] that move one very much and are the substance of my stanzas – and if the reader finds the sources more moving it's as I intended." (Zukofsky 1957). Although the passage Deutsch alludes to in the title of her poetry volume isn't as "moving" as Zukofsky's singular poem, "A Song of Degrees," it still implores Jews to keep their faith, reminding them of the rewards of a pious life: "He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee" ("מִשְׁנֵאֵי יְהוָה יִבְחָשׁוּ-לָּו וַיְהִי עֵתָם" ("לְעוֹלָם" (Psalm 81:16), while offering punishment for those that have either abandoned their faith or choose to stand against it: "I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries" ("לֹא עָמִי שָׁמַע לִי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּדַרְכֵי יְהִלְכוּ" (Psalm 81:14). The subtext here is clear as Deutsch is not only foreshadowing the main themes of

the poems inside but is both taking aim at the rampant antisemitism that had become the norm and prioritizing the Hebrew Bible as a legitimate source of linguistic-literary value.

Deutsch's poetry collection and its scriptural nods represent the cultural and linguistic estrangement that she must've felt during her younger years. She was forward in her writing (albeit ambivalent regarding Zionism) in the 1927 *New York Herald Tribune* that there "is no doubt that an answer, even partially right, is supremely needed" regarding "the perennial Jewish question" (Deutsch F13), and that she was "not prepared to say that Zionism is the wrong answer" or "that it is the only right answer" (F13). Unwilling to fully support Zionism, Deutsch was insistent on the polyglotism that a Jewish American literature could provide, but she feared the Jewish imaginative genius couldn't be carried out entirely through a Gentile language, or more specifically in her own words, "the English tradition" (F12). Deutsch is critical of works when only the English tradition is used for Jewish experiences, as it was with Maurice Samuel, noting, "they present a poem in lieu of a program" and that "what should be stated in objective terms, the necessary course for contemporary Jewry to follow, is stated in mystic terms of gossamer substantiality" (F13). Such was the case as well for "the inarticulate would-be poet" (Deutsch E2) Sherwood Anderson and his "Roman circus" of a poetry volume *New Testament* (1927), which Deutsch berates: "He fumbles not merely for words, but for ideas, for emotions. Nothing comes clear but the fact of this puzzlement, and he did not need to write a new book to testify to that. It is one of the diseases endemic to the age" (E2). She titles the review "Betrayal" for Anderson's poor depiction of Jewish culture, for instance, in "A Young Jew," (especially given Anderson's non-Jewish background), because his portrayal of the Jewish experience is bogged down by his insistence on imitating the

English-language forms of other American Gentile artists who did not know the Jewish experience (including Walt Whitman and Djuna Barnes). A Gentile writer (Anderson) continuing a Gentile tradition of poetry through a Gentile language (English) was an inappropriate vehicle, according to Deutsch, for Jewish subject matter. Yet if the English tradition (and its canonical practitioners) was insufficient in expressing Jewish experience, how could American Jewish literature be produced? She was skeptical herself of such a transnational task, reflected partially in her quote of Maurice Samuel:

Had not all the greatest human achievements – a Faust, a Hamlet, a Don Quixote – been the product of men deeply rooted in a specific locality? ‘Not through narrowness do the world’s greatest creators cleave to tradition ... man turns to the creation of tradition instinctively. Torn from one tradition, he begins to weave another equally potent’ (F13).

And so, torn (and/or) rebelling against the American Anglophone tradition, Deutsch, who had not yet found a home in the barren isolationist literary scene, reached out, as other modernists did, to the traditions of the East.

Japanese poetry, including haiku, had prominent influences on American Imagism, which in turn, had a profound effect on American modernist poetry. Deutsch was certainly swayed by the poetics of Pound in her younger years. He was a cultural broker in his own right, and his appropriation of Japanese Noh; his use of Chinese, Italian, and Greek in the cantos; or his Italian pamphleteering are all foreignizing discourses that accumulated linguistic-literary capital. Intent on fostering an international literature, Pound despised the Romantic and Victorian poets that preceded him not just for the “desert of bleatings” in Wordsworth or “muzzy Tennyson,” (Pound 110) but for their contented provincialism. He wrote in 1918, “That is to say, the Napoleonic wars made Europe unpleasant, England was sensibly glad to be insular. Geography leaked over into mentality,” (265-266) and rather

than seeking inspiration transnationally, “England cut off her communications, intellectual communications with the Continent. An era of bigotry supervened” (266). It is certainly hypocritical of Pound to be critiquing bigotry, but his theories and practices in translation and in his original compositions, however reactionary, were much more aligned with the literary experimentalism of pre-twentieth century Germany. Although he had written inimical reviews of German poetry, Pound did praise the tradition of foreignizing translations – mainly Rudolph Borchardt’s translation of Dante (1908) that used archaic German to provide a historical effect for the Renaissance poet’s work. Pound practiced his own form of cultural brokerage through foreignizing translation as well. In his translation of the thirteenth-century Italian poet, Guido Cavalcanti, he opted for an archaic “pre-Elizabethan” English to establish “a verbal weight about equal to that of the original” (Pound 103), despite the chronological lapse between the English used and medieval Tuscan. And as the main conduit for East Asian poetics during his time, he relentlessly and unapologetically extracted literary resources from eastern nations (primarily China and Japan) in hopes of producing global modernisms such as in his “translucencies” (Eliot 15) of Chinese poetry in *Cathay* (1915) that earned him the title of “inventor of Chinese poetry for our time” (Eliot 14).

Deutsch’s determination to find an appropriate form for her Jewish poetry led her to investigate, and imitate, Japanese poetics (mainly haiku), because she wanted to prioritize Jewish experience, and simultaneously innovate what she perceived to be a stagnant and isolationist American poetry scene (similar to Pound). Her increased interest in both the spiritual and cultural aspects of her Jewish heritage and the Japanese haiku tradition allowed her to draw connections between these two seemingly distinct cultural

and literary spheres. And as she delved deeper into Japanese poetry, Deutsch's ability to bridge the gap between her Jewish and Japanese interests revealed a complex interplay of cultural prioritization and imitation within her poetry. Deutsch relies on the characteristics (as she sees them) of Japanese poetry – simplicity of language, production of one image, preservation, connection with nature – to highlight Jewish subject matter. The question, then, becomes – how does Deutsch's understanding of these Japanese formalisms facilitate her production of Jewish poetry? The answer lies in her second volume, *Honey out of the Rock*; however, to understand the answer, it is important to first recognize Deutsch's perceptions regarding haiku, and how those perceptions differ from her American contemporaries (Pound and the Imagists).

The introduction of the haiku into American literature still remains a cloudy topic, as some critics are hesitant to pinpoint Pound's source of inspiration regarding Japanese poetics, and other Anglophone critics fail to recognize the Japanese divisions regarding haiku, mainly Masaoka Shiki's (and consequently Noguchi's) modernist defection from classic standards, and its related theory altogether. Deutsch's understanding regarding the tradition of haiku differs from the Imagists' understanding, because, for Deutsch, the haiku requires a higher level of spiritual involvement, which is why she prefers it for Jewish poetry. As such, Deutsch and Pound draw inspiration from different Japanese poets, despite Deutsch's preference for his Imagist movement. Although Hugh Kenner, one of the most eminent critics of Pound, warns readers that “the history of the Imagist Movement is a red herring,” and explains one must “keep one's eyes on Pound's texts, and avoid generalities about Imagism,” (56) Pound likely established his sense of haiku from Yone Noguchi.⁵

⁵ Granted, the common belief, and one such generality to avoid, is that T.E. Hulme and Pound studied Japanese poetics through the Harvard sinologist Ernest Fenollosa; however,

Yoshinobu Hakutani's reminds us that Noguchi is mainly responsible for the dissemination of the haiku into the US literary scene, as he had a direct relationship with Ezra Pound, posited a similar literary theory as seen in Pound's essay "Vorticism," and Noguchi's English language haikus were "praised by Willa Cather, Joaquin Miller, and Gelett Burgess in America, by Bliss Carman in Canada, and by George Meredith, William Rossetti, Thomas Hardy, and others in England" (68). Noguchi and Pound also shared a similar lexicon regarding the topic, with the two poets preferring the more archaic spelling of "hokku," as opposed to "haiku," which was rare for both Japanese and Anglophone poets during the early twentieth century.

It is an important differentiation to note, because Noguchi's notion regarding hokku was a far cry from its classical roots exemplified by such poets as Basho, Buson, and Moritake, whom Deutsch prefers. His philosophy was a perversion of the modernist musings of Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) and Shiki's controversial essay "Criticism of Basho" in which Shiki "advised his followers that haiku should be a depiction not only of nature but also of humanity and that humanity should be represented by the author of a haiku himself or herself" (Hakutani 45). Noguchi "was not entirely persuaded by Shiki's manifesto but was nonetheless drawn to his modernist techniques of haiku," (Hakutani 45) allowing room for subjectivity and monism, while trying to "achieve the ecstasies of the self in nature" (51). And aesthetically, Noguchi criticized the West for the "tendency of wordiness," (Hakutani 71), noting that the hokku should produce "one image" that narrows

Yoshinobu Hakutani reminds us that "the standard explanation seems questionable" not only because Fenollosa "had a poor command of the Japanese language," but because Yone Noguchi's "later poetry collected in *The Pilgrimage* and his literary criticism, *The Spirit of Japanese Poetry* in particular, were widely circulated" (47-48) among Anglophone audiences.

the distance between “perceiver from the perceived,” or in Pound’s words “a thing inward and subjective” and “a thing outward and objective.”

Deutsch, like Pound and Noguchi, also believed the haiku should produce one image, maintain a relationship with nature, and establish a connection between the “inward” and “outward” or the “perceiver from the perceived,” but she prioritized the haiku first and foremost as a practice in spirituality. Deutsch notes in her *Poetry Handbook* (albeit decades later) that the purpose of the haiku is to “present a clear picture so as to once rouse emotion and suggest a spiritual insight” (59). It makes sense given that Deutsch’s early encounters with haiku came not from Noguchi or Pound, but through Arthur Waley’s translations of the early classics. Waley was a preeminent scholar of Eastern works and translated multiple volumes of Japanese poetry into English in the early and mid-twentieth century. He also held the belief, as he mentions in the foreword of his collection, *Japanese Poetry: The Uta* (1919), that behind traditional Japanese poetry (whether uta, haiku, or tanka) was “a background of Buddhism,” and that religious ideas are rarely “more directly expressed” than in traditional Japanese form. And in her 1921 review of both Waley’s and Noguchi’s books, Deutsch gives preference to Waley’s interpretations:

Whether it is because he is writing in a foreign language, or because English cannot have packed into it the associations of thousands of years and the treasure of half - forgotten philosophies, the Japanese poet [Noguchi] fails to produce the effect achieved by Waley in his translations from these very old lyrics. (207).

It certainly seems odd for Deutsch to prefer the translations of a Westerner over the original compositions of a Japanese poet; yet her preferences reveal a confirmation bias in her imitative agenda. Waley’s translations highlight what Deutsch believes the principal characteristics of Japanese poetry to be, and what she wishes to import into American

literature. She says as much in the same review of Waley's translations, conflating his interpretations with the actual characteristics of the original Japanese texts:

Japanese poetry is utterly distinct from the sick languors of the eighteenth-nineties. It is crisp and terse, rich and brief. *Weltschmerz* is heavier when it goes half-uttered. Beauty, like music and fragrance, is sharpest when it is passing. The western poet can learn from these old poems a new intensity: written, like the characters for the New Year, to mean new jewels." (208)

Although Deutsch is seemingly talking about Japanese poetry directly, she had no working knowledge of Japanese, and as such, most of her contact with Japanese works came through English-language mediations. And although the traits she highlights undoubtedly share similarities with Yone Noguchi's *hokku* and Ezra Pound's Imagism, there are certainly discrepancies in understanding Japanese poetry and its potential within Anglophone writing. These discrepancies are highlighted by Noguchi's, Pound's, and Deutsch's translations of the same poem originally composed by Moritake. The haiku in Japanese is as follows:

Rak-ka eda ni
Kaeru to mireba
Kocho-o kan

Which Pound translates as:

The fallen blossom flies back to its branch:
A butterfly.

Noguchi translates as:

I thought I saw the fallen leaves
Returning to their branches:
Alas, butterflies were they.

And Deutsch translates as;

The falling flower
I saw drift back to the branch
Was a butterfly.

Whereas Pound and Noguchi are more lenient in disregarding form (Pound has only two lines, Noguchi breaks the syllabic count) Deutsch adheres to the strict formal requirements of traditional haiku. And unlike Pound, who, in his war against the subjective, removes the “I” from the poem altogether, Noguchi increases it - “I think” - and Deutsch maintains the surface-level experience. The discrepancies exist, because to Deutsch, Japanese poetry provides the ability to revel in suggestion, relate experience, and convey both imagery and tradition.

Deutsch’s use of Japanese characteristics is brought forth in *Honey out of the Rock*, especially when dealing with Jewish subject matter. Take, for example, “The Valley of Aijalon,” a poem that is included in the volume’s second section and consists of three rhyming quatrains written (mostly) in iambic pentameter. The poem is once again adapted directly from the Hebrew Bible and references the tale (in the book of Joshua) of the Israelites’ conquest of Canaan, in which Joshua led the Israelite army against the Amorite kings. It’s a critical moment in Jewish canon as it affirms Jewish followers as God’s chosen people through divine intervention. Deutsch highlights its importance through themes of memory and preservation:

I have forgotten precious things:
Wisdom in books, the words of lovers,
But not the shadow on the waters
Cast by a hidden sea-gulls wings.

I have forgotten many a pledge
Given and taken – fear and hunger
That once were knives – but not the pewter
Of olives from a mountain’s edge.

The tired brain gathers and lets go
Faces and cities, wars and weathers,
But keeps one sun as still as Joshua's
On honey-bright unbroken snow. (60)

At a first look, Deutsch's poem seems far from avant-garde and even further from Japanese inspirations as she keeps to the traditional iambic meter with a familiar rhyme scheme and stanzaic structure. Early on in her career, although skeptical of the English tradition, Deutsch was hesitant to fully abandon it. Donald Davidson, in his 1931 review of Deutsch's poetry, reminds us that she was caught between the warring advocates of *vers libre* on the one hand, and a resurgent traditionalism on the other, or in his own words, she "hovers between the 'free' and the regular" (437). The result was an amalgamative poetry of varying traditions that did not fully commit to breaking Anglophone tradition as other more notable modernists did, but that is still important to the overall movement, nonetheless. And despite the traditional form, her syntax here is "crisp and terse" and her lexical decisions are "rich and brief" as she employs vivid imagery and sensory language to convey her message as she believes is done in traditional haiku verse. And the compound adjective "honey-bright" is a prime example of the Japanese influence on Deutsch's syntax as she notes the importance of such adjectives in Japanese poetry in her review:

As a jest lies in the ear of him that hears it, so the worth of the seemingly slight lines lies in their rich allusiveness. What appears to the Occidental as trivial, rings for his Eastern brother with the slow echo of a temple bell ... Thus, the literal reading is not 'My heart ... is like a swift river,' but 'My heart ... swift-river-like.' The Japanese for 'waking up startled' is 'having woken-startled.' Mr. Waley translates as 'the Lightning' what is really the Thunder-God flashing.' (205)

Therefore, rather than producing the poetic line that would be considered more syntactically appropriate in Anglophone verse and would introduce a simile while

preserving the iambic meter, “On unbroken snow as bright as honey,” Deutsch opts for economic reductions, “On honey-bright unbroken snow.” In the same light, she deviates from the iambic meter in lines that are important to the overall theme and that contain natural elements: “Of olives from a mountain’s edge,” or “But keeps one sun as still as Joshua’s.” The use of substitutions, such as the trochaic foot in the latter example with “keeps,” adds emphasis to words of value by disrupting the expected rhythmic patterns. This draws attention to the significance of preserving a specific and singular image – “one sun as still as Joshua’s” – echoing the concise and focused imagery found in haiku. The thematic focus on the preservation of fleeting moments and vivid natural imagery mirrors the haiku’s emphasis on capturing the essence of a singular moment in time. This approach to image making, deeply rooted in the haiku tradition, demonstrates Deutsch’s ability to bridge Jewish subject matter with Japanese literary practices, highlighting a transnational exchange of cultural and poetic forms. By integrating Japanese poetic techniques into her Jewish-themed poetry, Deutsch positions herself within a broader, transnational modernist movement that seeks to transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries.⁶ Deutsch’s deliberate fusion of these distinct traditions exemplifies her innovative approach and situates her within a unique niche of modernist experimentation.

It is also in this notion of preservation that Deutsch skillfully merges Japanese form with Jewish source material as well. As the battle in the original tale progressed, Joshua

⁶ Although Deutsch’s brokerage of Japanese poetics to convey Jewish subject matter was unique, it certainly shared similarities with other poets of the time, mainly the Objectivists. Deutsch even acknowledges these similarities in a letter to William Carlos Williams in 1949. She defends the Objectivists from Rexroth’s critique, finding his analysis of their poetry “silly,” and noting that Reznikoff and Oppen were part of the “To” group from which a movement arose because of a dissatisfaction with Imagism. Nonetheless, Reznikoff and Oppen’s poetry exemplifies Japanese techniques that trickled down from Noguchi and Pound’s Imagism and into Objectivism.

prayed for the sun to stand still, granting the Israelites extended daylight to secure victory. Miraculously, the sun did not set until the battle concluded, allowing the Israelites to achieve their military objectives. Although the biblical account has linguistic-literary value within the Jewish tradition in its own right (the importance of divine intervention, validation of Joshua's leadership, symbol of God's faithfulness), Deutsch adapts the account to push forth both her cultural agenda – the preservation of American Jewry – and her poetic agenda of the time – Imagism. As the sun stands still and preserves the day within the passage from Jewish Scripture, Deutsch's haiku-inspired poem is intended to preserve a singular moment (“one image”), emphasizing its significance and the emotional resonance it holds. As such, “The Valley of Aijalon” focuses on specific instances (Joshua's defeat of the Canaanites, for instance) or sensations (nostalgia for the Mount of Olives) that have remained deeply ingrained in the speaker's memory against a backdrop of otherwise forgetfulness.

This selective attention to individual moments not only aligns with the haiku's traditional emphasis on the present and its impact, but the highlighted moments revel in natural imagery and Jewish myth, including references to sacred Jewish spaces and texts: “But not the pewter / Of olives from a mountain's edge,” “But keeps one sun as still as Joshua's / On honey-bright unbroken snow.” “Of olives from a mountain's edge,” for instance, is certainly reflective of the Mount of Olives that overlooks the Valley of Aijalon, is located within Jerusalem, and holds religious significance in Judaism as it is believed to be the origin of resurrection when the Messiah comes. On the other hand, the still sun of Joshua is a direct reference to the Israelite conquest of Canaan. By remembering these instances and cultural locations associated with Jewish tradition, and by emphasizing those

moments through “crisp and terse,” “rich and brief” lines that use natural imagery to promote “one image” of presence and spirituality, Deutsch reimagines Jewish source material through Japanese formalisms.

The formal elements of the haiku, in other words, are not important, in themselves, to Jewish culture, but they provide Deutsch with a vehicle through which she can showcase traditional Jewish symbols in her poetry, elevating its linguistic-literary value and contributing to Jewish cultural memory. Debra Ramsay explains in her book (2015) “memory is understood as a dynamic process that blurs whatever lines are thought to exist between the public and the private and that facilitates the connection between self and culture in an ongoing integration of past, present, and future” (20) and that “when memory making is understood as an ongoing process, it becomes clear that media cannot be considered as impersonal mechanisms for simply recording and somehow storing the past” (20). In this way, Deutsch’s use of an American idea of Japanese poetics not only serves her image-making goals but also actively challenges the suppression of Jewish culture within the United States by realigning the mediated memory of American culture to include Jewish experiences in the early to mid-twentieth century. Her innovative adaptation exemplifies the dynamic process of cultural memory, where form and content together facilitate the preservation and integration of diverse cultural identities.

Many of her other poems within *Honey out of the Rock* follow suit, including the “Biblical Ballads” (12), which are adapted from biblical tales and include Japanese formalisms, such as “The Death of Sarah,” “The Pledge of Benjamin,” and “The Meeting of Jacob and Joseph.” These three poems adapt key aspects of Jewish faith and scripture into structured poetry with iambic meter and consistent rhyme schemes (AABB). Deutsch

does not rewrite the biblical stories, but rather narrows their focus, prioritizing the didacticisms that each one possesses, which are highlighted in their opening biblical epigraphs.

Not all her poems, however, are as straightforward in their Jewish themes. Other poems in the collection promote Jewish culture through more subtle means, such as defending against Jewish stereotypes while still maintaining the notions of preservation. Take, for example, the poem titled “Avatars,” that despite being included in the same section as “The Valley of Aijalon,” varies greatly in form, as it consists of thirty unrhymed lines divided over two stanzas. The first stanza focuses on the speaker’s adoration for the value of certain material goods (avatars) that stems from their association with history and tradition, which stands in stark contrast to the second stanza that portrays the speaker defending themselves from an unnamed reprover.

“Avatars” drops traditional American English verse for a more Imagist (haiku-inspired) free verse with lines such as “Like stones that mellowing mosses climb” (4) and “And the black Persian shawl of my great-grandmother” (9). The poem contrasts the notions of materialism and spirituality. A common stereotype regarding American Jews was an obsession with material goods, and Deutsch’s poem is clearly constructed to combat such notions. To her, the material goods of the first stanza, which consist of both domestic and natural artifacts - “soft rugs, and softer flowers,” (12) “The silver and the cedarwood, the purple, the fine linen,” (13) “...the furniture / Cherished of time” (5-6) are avatars of things “aged and fine, familiar and secure” (18). The material possessions, in other words, represent the culture, ancestry, faith, and history of her people; they offer not so much in economic value as sentimental value.

Yet Deutsch's speaker is "reproved" (20) for their materialism by an unknown figure that is associated with a spiritual high-ground. The last lines exemplify that this reprover is Christian: "You whose sole linen / is the weave abhorred / that was the loin-cloth of the Galilean" (28-30). And from Deutsch's suggestive language, we can decipher that the speaker does not partake in Christianity, and even looks down upon it. The word "abhorred" reveals the speaker's attitude toward the Christian reprover's perspective, while "Galilean" is a clear reference to Jesus Christ but not from a Christian viewpoint, as "Galilean" is not part of the traditional Christian lexicon, especially when referring to the figure of Jesus Christ. If it were from a Christian standpoint, the epithet used for Jesus would much more likely be filled with adoration: "Savior," "Messiah," "Son of God," "Lord." The term "Galilean," however, has been traditionally used from a historical and geographic perspective when discussing the figure of Jesus Christ, and by the time Deutsch's poem was written in the 1920s, it had become synonymous with "Christian" (OED). Deutsch's speaker, then, must identify as non-Christian given their use of the term, and through this perspective, Deutsch is attempting to undermine the condescension of her Christian counterparts (the reprovers), portraying their materialist stereotype of Jews as uninformed, as the adored materials in question reflect Jewish traditions and their cultural heritage, which the Christians fail to understand.

Epistle to Prometheus: Symbolism and the Eliotic Answer

Although similar Jewish themes had remained throughout Deutsch's career as a poet, by the end of the 1920s, Imagism had all but dissipated, and Deutsch had begun to move away from the Imagist roots, including her Japanese inspirations, and began instead, to look for new methods to promote the linguistic-literary value of American Jewry. And

with the ushering in of a new decade, Deutsch had become a disciple of the Eliotic method (she mostly adapts his use of collage, quotation, and symbolism), despite his antisemitic prejudices.⁷ In 1931, she tried her hand at an epic poem in accordance with such poetic experimentalism entitled, *Epistle to Prometheus*. This section, then, aims to depict how Deutsch attempts to undermine Christian tenets and challenge American antisemitism through Eliotic means as her poetic allusions frame the Crucifixion as nothing more than a bedtime story, and her use of collage omits Christian edict.

“It is easy to forget what a dominant figure Eliot was...” writes David Kellog in 2020, “just how much his poetics determined the acceptable, how much his position as an editor and critic determined what was read and discussed” (115). In 1931, Edmund Wilson had written “Eliot has done more than perhaps any other modern critic to effect a reevaluation of English literature” (115). Deutsch had even put it in her own words in 1936, noting:

Eliot is the most influential of those who have made symbolist technique an active principle of English verse, and one has only to examine the lyrical output of the decade between 1917 and 1927 to see how deeply, if belatedly, this influence penetrated Anglo-American work. It is responsible for the emphasis upon musical nuances; the interest in a subtler and more involved consciousness; the use of a more flexible, more various vocabulary, juxtaposing the lyrical and the anti-poetic, to convey these shades; the ready resort to synesthesia; expression of an experience in terms of a sense other than that which first apprehends it, as the blind man explained scarlet to himself by the clangour of a trumpet. (138)

⁷ Although Deutsch never comments directly on Eliot’s antisemitism, it can be assumed from her conversation regarding Pound, that she can separate poetic potential from authorial prejudice: “Pound was Eliot’s preceptor...the better smith, forger, inventor, and that no little of what later verse-makers have learned from Eliot is due rather to the dishonored expatriate. Whatever his [Pound’s] faults...he has made a major contribution to English verse” (*Poetry in Our Time* 151).

It makes sense that Deutsch was swept up in his wake. Eliot was a primary figure in the modernist push for global meaning and transnational brokerage that had aligned with her agenda. Take, for example, the modernist projects of T.S. Eliot, his series of multilingual quotations in *The Waste Land* (1922) or his allusions to the Bhagavad Gita in *Four Quartets* (1941). It is not surprising given Eliot's history; he immersed himself in Indian philosophy and Sanskrit during his graduate studies, and in a 1915 review for the *New Statesmen*, the young poet attacked "cultivated British officials in India" for "ignoring what the young and educated Indians of to-day are thinking" in favor of "a perpetual rehash of what they imagine to be the philosophy of Vedas" (389). In 1942, he was a member of a diverse group of writers who met in a BBC recording studio to "discuss the influence of India on English literature for the BBC programme Voice" (Morse 133). He was with George Orwell, William Empson, Mulk Raj Anand, Venu Chitale, J.M. Tambimuttu, and Una Marson. And even earlier, in his 1919 essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," he implores poets to remain "impersonal" because "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape of emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality," (1) and to do so, one must laboriously subsume the works of their forefathers in order to depersonalize the text by placing the poetry in a systematic and global relationship with other texts and other authors. Eliot's theory and his continuous attempts to find literary capital beyond national borders of English-speaking countries had strongly affected American modernism.

Babette Deutsch was no different than other poets who were influenced by Eliot, and nearly a decade after Eliot had published *The Waste Land* – with its polyglot discourses and contradictory affective ranges – Deutsch's *Epistle to Prometheus* followed suit as an ambitious project. The poem surveys human history through ten sections, with each section

pertaining to historical, cultural, and social rebirths on a global scale – ancient Greece (section 2), the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (section 3), the fall of Rome (section 4), the English Renaissance (section 5), the French Revolution (section 6), the Industrial Revolution (section 7), the Russian Revolution (section 8), and the struggle for Indian independence (section 9). The sections vary in length and form: for instance, the fifth section consists only of a Petrarchan sonnet,⁸ but the third section is more than eleven pages of free verse. All ten sections are invocations of Prometheus, whose symbolic weight as punished creator and fore-thinker speaks for itself.

To understand Deutsch's participation in the Eliotic method, however, we must recognize the specific formal traits that Deutsch borrows from Eliot as a vehicle for her Jewish content. In her book, *T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land as Place of Intercultural Exchanges: A Translation Perspective* (2014), Roxana Birsănu reminds us that the Eliotic method in "the attempt to connect moments of past history and the disconnected universe of the present," relies on the "extensive use of literary allusions, the sources of which mark a trail from Antiquity up to the latest artistic works" and that in doing so, all "the sets of

⁸ Be with me now, Prometheus, for this light
Is yours, this dazzle yours, this jewelled blaze
All yours, who down the ruinous unkempt ways
Stepped softly, till the stale and dungeoned night
Woke. Oh, be with me, knowing how the sight
Flinches before that Indian wealth of days
On which, discovered, such hot radiance plays
As makes hell shrink, heaven fade: earth shines so bright.

Great Thief, you are free! This flesh you sometime shaped
From Rome's stiff jaws draws forth the honeycomb
Hymettus built. Here is the Titan race
Framed but to work the lively gold you raped.
The gods were exiled, – giants lead them home.
Man slept, – he starts, he stares into Your face!

myths and the other examples of the creative human mind are put to work to create a complete image of human civilisation in its various stages: Hebraic, Greek, medieval, renaissance, and modern” (75). It is a description that applies to Deutsch’s project as well, as she not only draws from the same sources in her portrayal of “human civilisation,” but provides such allusions in a fragmented form. Look no further than this passage from section six (regarding the French Revolution):

Ballades are good for singing,
but the time
is out of tune, and I’m no lutenist.
I am a woman writing to a myth,
a figment, but with marks upon its wrist,
a creature of no country and no nation. (54)

In the three opening lines, Deutsch not only alludes to the three writings of notable male figures: Shakespeare’s “The time is out of joint,” Pound’s “For three years, out of key with his time” (Pound 185), and Eliot’s “I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be” (Eliot 9), but she juxtaposes the allusions with a feminine aside: “I am a woman writing to a myth.” In each of the three works, the male protagonist (speaker) is disillusioned with their current state of affairs because of a prototypical male trope: Hamlet avenging his father (and finding his own patriarchal authority), Hugh Selwyn Mauberly’s attempted revolution against his poetic forefathers, and Prufrock’s exemplification of the tortured psyche of the modern man. And although the feminine aside can be perceived as un-Eliotic, being direct and statement-oriented, it doesn’t detract from Deutsch’s participation in the Eliotic method, because she is using Eliot as a framework for her own didacticism. Deutsch’s juxtaposition, then, has a clear message as her female speaker is not only suffering from her own form of disillusionment “with marks upon its wrist,” but is isolated from “country”

and “nation” given the male-dominated literary history previously alluded to in the opening lines. And by invoking the “myth” (Prometheus), Deutsch’s speaker subsumes the identity of punished creator with “figment” existing simultaneously as a dual reference to “woman” and “myth.”

Granted, allusion is not the only ingredient for the Eliotic method. “Another method by means of which Eliot manages to bring together and give coherence to ‘a broken heap of images’,” writes Birsanu, “is collage, a technique frequently encountered among modernists. By means of this method with cubist effects, the poet gathers and superposes various languages, cultures, temporal and geographic spaces, with the intention of annulling the mimetic representation of reality” (75). To understand *Epistle of Prometheus* as shaped by Eliotic influences by collage, see the quotations, framed as epigraphs that are superpose various languages and cultures, and that begin each one of Deutsch’s ten sections. The quotations are pulled from a variety of sources: Apollodorus, Plato, the Book of Luke, Boethius, William Shakespeare, Gustave Lanson, Thorstein Veblen, Vladimir Lenin, a Gujarati hymn, and Herman Melville, ranging from antiquity to modernity, and reflecting the themes and historical periods of the section they precede. While epigraphs might seem more rigid and separate compared to Eliot’s fluid collage, Deutsch’s strategic use of these quotes creates a similar effect of intertextual layering and temporal dislocation, thereby contributing to the poem’s overall thematic cohesion.

Deutsch also makes some interesting editorial decisions regarding the epigraphs (and their translations) that may speak to her agenda at large: a proverbial rewrite of history, alongside Kellogg’s insistence that the poem is in fact “historical.” Take, for example, Deutsch’s omission of the context for the epigraph that begins the ninth section: “The

pathway of love / is the Ordeal by Fire” (77), which is part of a much longer Gujarati *Christian* hymn that begins “The way of the Lord is open only to heroes, to cowards it is fast shut,” (1) and in which the “Ordeal by Fire” is representative of Christian Ascetism, or “Give up thy life and all that thou hast, so thou mayst assume the name of the Lord. / Only he who leaves his son, his wife, his riches, and his life, shall drink from the vessel of God” (2-3). Through the omission and placement within the context of Deutsch’s central narrative, Deutsch alters the meaning, similar to Eliot’s decontextualization, with the “Ordeal by Fire” becoming representative of the Promethean drive behind Deutsch’s social rebirths as opposed to a Christian edict. Such an omission is also in stark contrast to some of the other epithets that include full passages and are preserved in the original language like the French excerpt from Gustave Lanson’s work. Despite the structural differences, Deutsch’s use of epigraphs (and omission) aligns with the Eliotic method in its intent and effect. Both approaches aim to create a multifaceted text that draws on a wide array of cultural and historical references, thereby generating a rich intertextual landscape. The question then becomes in what ways does Deutsch’s use of the Eliotic method coincide with her Jewish agenda or vice versa as seen in the omission above? And the answer assuredly lies in the third section.

Although some critics have labeled the third section as “the Christian story,” it is anything but. Certainly, Deutsch portrays the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (without the resurrection) and begins the third section with a Christian epithet taken from the Book of Luke in the New Testament of the Christian Bible: “I came to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I, if it is already kindled” (25). Yet because Deutsch is sure, once again, to omit any context from the passage, including the speaker, the epigraph is ambiguous and vague,

belonging as much to Prometheus within its newfound setting as much as it does to the figure of Jesus Christ. And as in *Honey out of the Rock*, Deutsch takes great pains through her lexicon to avoid portraying the Christian version of Jesus (savior, redeemer, Son of God), opting instead, to portray Jesus as mortal man, prophet, and Jew: “the Son of man in glistening garments standing,” (34) “Hang there a little longer, Jew,” (34) “His prophet,” (31) and “You have been hanging there a long time, carpenter,” (30), and she refers to the Hebrew Bible as “most holy Torah” and “the Law” (32-33). By doing so, Deutsch is not only undermining a founding tenet of Christianity (removing the divinity of the Holy Trinity), but she creates a sympathetic character for the American Jewish reader of the time: a persecuted outcast, a Jew. There is more to Deutsch’s poetic work than lexical decisions, however, as she rewrites “the Christian story” in the framework of a bedtime story, further marginalizing the historical and cultural importance of the Christian faith through emphasized similarities as both bedtime stories and religion lead to the inoculation of “values, norms and behaviour patterns into the minds of the young generation” (Hrivikova 19), while appropriating the story as an extension of Jewish myth through Eliotic means.

Deutsch begins the third section with an invocation of Prometheus, willing the Titan to sleep to ease his suffering (brought on by the liver-consuming eagles), and offering a lullaby:

Lie still, lie still
It is not well for prisoners to be fed.
Shut your great eyes.
Lie still
Oh, lullaby... (28-29).

The speaker then tells the tale of Jesus Christ but with interjections from the songs and stories of children. See, for instance, the following passage:

A curse of God
is that which is hanged, -
this the Zealots and the gentle Essenes,
this the Pharisees,
this the hard-fisted Sadducees alike
have known aforetime:
a curse of God is that which is hanged.
Jew, Jew curly-headed Jew!
Here's a piece of pork,
Here's a Roman fork,
For the curly-headed, curly-snouted Jew!
You have been hanging there a long time, carpenter.
It was the third hour when they lifted you
to that height. (30)

The use of a nineteenth century American antisemitic children's ditty to introduce the crucifixion of Jesus Christ may seem to be a peculiar decision to some critics. Jonathan D. Sarna, however, explains that this tune was the most common "schoolchild ditty in the English-speaking world of the nineteenth century" (169) and that it possesses a "stark ultimatum" for the Jewish population (170) - to assimilate or else. Within the context of the children's song, "pork" stands as "the food prohibition that kept Jews and Christians apart" and "thus symbolized that which kept the Jewish people together, preventing their complete assimilation into non-Jewish life" (170), while "Roman fork" doubled as representation of a crucifix and "a traditional symbol of civilization, culture and refinement" (171). It makes sense given Deutsch's agenda; her conflation of Jesus Christ with bullied Jewish child, given the similar ultimatums, would unquestionably resonate with her audience. Christian readers would once again have to come to terms with their own hypocrisy as followers of Christ and persecutors of their Jewish peers, while Jewish audiences can identify with the "Son of man" and his resistance to assimilation.

Deutsch builds on these notions in the next stanza with another, albeit less recognizable, allusion to both the New Testament and to children's literature:

You went up
into the mountain.
Below you lay
the valley spoiled by the fox,
by Herod spoiled. (31-32)

Those familiar with the New Testament may recognize Deutsch's allusion to Jesus's insult regarding the Judean King, Herod: "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils," (Luke 13:32). Jesus, however, was not relying on the associated meaning of "fox" that is common in English – crafty or sly – but rather calling Herod "unclean" ("טמא") the antithesis of the lion⁹ that Herod thought himself to be. In the same manner, Deutsch's phrasing, "spoiled by the fox" is an exact phrase borrowed from two collections of popular children's bedtime stories published in 1917 and 1922 by Howard R. Garis, *Bed Time Animal Stories* and *Uncle Wiggily Indian Hunter*. As a children's author and mother of two, Deutsch, would have most definitely been familiar with Garis's work as they not only had national appeal, but because he was a prominent figure in her local area as well (publishing out of Newark and New York City). And the antagonist in Garis's works just so happens to be a fox who "spoils" the activities of the fun-loving protagonists through his unclean ways as in "'Oh, my poor marshmallows!' cried Jumbo, when he saw that they were all spoiled by the fox rolling in them" (Garis 132) or "The Fox and the Wolf thought they'd spoil the May Party" (Garis 18). Such allusions allow Deutsch to rewrite the Christian story through a mythological (or perhaps folk) framework, devaluing the literalness of Christian hermeneutics regarding biblical texts and the associated values

⁹ Jerusalem Talmud, Shevi'it 39^a, chpt. 9, halachah 5.

(Christian superiority). And by producing an epic poem that, despite not receiving critical attention, had effectively followed in the footsteps of T.S. Eliot, Deutsch, again, bolsters the linguistic-literary value of American Jewish experiences.

Yet despite its cultural significance (at the very least as a representation of Eliot's influence), *Epistle to Prometheus* has received almost no critical attention over the last century despite a few mixed reviews and even fewer articles. "But there is no first-rate poetry in the book," Jessica Nelson North writes in 1931, "in spite of its major proportions and its great variety of rhythm" and despite containing "much that is original and stimulating" (167). Robinson Jeffers, on the other hand, calls it "a splendid poem," and recommended Deutsch in 1932 for a Guggenheim fellowship after reading it. Stanley Kunitz detected "a number of rare and excellent virtues" but found that "the poem leaves one imaginatively and emotionally cold" (162). A more positive critic was Donald Davidson, who noted Deutsch "displays a genius for concentration that is remarkable" (437). But despite the turmoil regarding Deutsch's poetic achievements, they all agreed, and perhaps Kenneth White said it best, that Deutsch "adopted a method honored by T. S. Eliot" (307-308). Even so, White was not thrilled with Deutsch's adopted "method of quotation" (308) because, to him, Deutsch quotes "lesser poets" (308) than Eliot. According to David Kellogg (one of the very few academics to have discussed *Epistle to Prometheus* at any length), however, White's charge "misreads both *Epistle to Prometheus* and *The Waste Land*" because "Deutsch and Eliot quote some of the same writers, and Eliot's quotes in *The Waste Land* include phrases lifted from popular lyric and unpoetic speech" (119). More importantly to Kellogg, White fails to see the difference between the two works: "*Epistle to Prometheus* differs from *The Waste Land* not in the kinds of

quotations it uses but in *how* those quotations are deployed. Simply put, *Epistle to Prometheus* contains little of Eliot's parataxis and none of his shifting perspective" (119).

Granted, Deutsch's poem relies less on parataxis than would be expected in the Eliotic method, which leads Kellogg to assert that "Deutsch's approach is discursive rather than dramatic, didactic rather than illustrative" (119). However, there are moments when Kellogg provides specific observations that contradict his argument regarding Deutsch's lack of shifting perspective: "All ten sections address the mythical Titan Prometheus directly, though the first section begins with a voice addressing the author, a kind of reverse epic trope, an invocation *from* the Muse" (118) or "Let me suggest another possibility. The last three lines of the passage quoted earlier contain an interesting uncertainty, where 'figment' and subsequent lines probably modify *myth* but may modify *woman*." (120). Such contradictions lead him to the ungrounded conclusion after three pages that "*Epistle to Prometheus* attempts to apply a mythic method to a historical poem, adopting the trappings of Eliotic modernism but not its consequences or effects" (121). Even more disappointingly, despite portraying Eliot as a global figure with a transnational agenda of cultural brokerage, Kellogg entirely fails to recognize some of the same tactics within Deutsch's poem. His analysis, however, does have truthful moments: Deutsch's poem does have a "central drive" and comes across as being both "modernist" and "didactic," but he still fails to see the bigger picture: Deutsch's foreignizing practices in her epic poem produce their own network of cross-cultural literary connections, relying on allusions for continuity between the fragmented bits of discourse.

Take Them, Stranger: Holocaust Poetry and the Answer of Maternal Lament

The previous two sections of this chapter have strived to portray how Deutsch prioritized Jewish culture by promoting Jewish values in the American literary scene through marginalized poetic forms; however, Deutsch's sixth volume of poetry, *Take Them, Stranger* (1944), hardly followed suit. Despite this divergence, Deutsch's inspiration for the collection – a reaction to the global affair of World War II – and her poetic embodiment of the role of lamenting Jewish mother deserve a share of the conversation given this chapter's focus.

By the 1940s, Deutsch's chameleonic ways had begun to settle down and her poetry had begun to reflect her original voice, relying less on the mythological symbolism of Eliot and/or the economic reductions associated with Imagism, because *Take Them, Stranger* was not only reactionary to the ongoing war, but in some ways, autobiographical. Deutsch was emotionally involved in World War II as someone of German Jewish descent and a mother (her son enlisted and served in the US Air Force in 1944, the same year the collection was published). And her poetry no longer championed the same optimism for polyglot discourses and Hebraic values in earlier volumes, but rather took the form and intonation of lament, which is made clear by the titles of some of the included works: "To Napoleon, in an Evil Time", "The Sick," "For a Young Soldier," "Dawn in Wartime," "Solitude," "Loss," "About Hell," "Despair," "Bad Times," "In This Thick Evil," and "The Cliff" (11-12). Still, lament itself has been consistently acknowledged as a construct associated with Jewish thought¹⁰ beginning with Lamentations in the Bible, and Deutsch leans on it in line with her agenda. Yet, according to Caroline Sauter, lament is paradoxical:

¹⁰ See Scholem, "On Lament and Lamentation."

“the language of mourning – which finds its peculiar and precarious expression in lament – is a language that aims at self-annihilation, and thus at silence, without, however, ever achieving it, because it is caught up in ‘expressing’ mourning” (Sauter 212). How, then, can lament be expressed, and how does such an expression reflect the preservation of American Jewry? Ilit Ferber and Paula Schwebel believe the answer to be quite simple: lament is “performative and embodied” as its border “is not only textual” (xv) but physical, and that such a corporeal performance of lamentation “had helped preserve collective memory in a community” because it can serve “as an instructional model for future persecuted generations.... and helping them reaffirm their faith” (306).

Deutsch enacts such performative lamentations by embodying the roles of poet, lamenting woman, bereaved mother, and community member. Take, for example, the free verse poem “To My Son,” that is included in the second section, and consists of a three-page, eight-stanza poem in which the speaker (Deutsch) addresses her son after he enlisted in the armed forces.¹¹ The poem keeps to Deutsch’s themes of preservation as the speaker wills her son to “remember / the songs we sang, lapped in the warmth and bright / of the nursery” despite “now the black-out of the frontiers” that “kills the light in the eyes” (58, 1-15), with the songs reflecting the global values that Deutsch holds dear, exemplified by a French folk song she sang to her child: “*Malbrough s’en va t’en guerre / Ne sait quand reviendra*” (16-17), and British naval song: “*Farewell and good-bye to you, Spanish ladies, / Farewell and good-bye to you, ladies of Spain*” (18-19). It is evident, however, that despite her strong words, the mother figure, “who felt your heartbeat, boy, before you had

¹¹ Although the son remains unnamed in the poem, given the time the poem was written (1944), and Adam Yarmolinsky’s enlistment date (1944), it can be assumed his departure was the inspiration.

breath to cry with” (45), is lamenting the loss of her son to the war efforts: “Youth is the time to dance. No more: / We have lost your music” (22-23). Deutsch’s experimentalism is further highlighted by her use of unconventional verse forms and striking juxtapositions. The poem’s fragmented structure, shifting between personal reflection and global cultural references, exemplifies her innovative approach. The integration of diverse cultural songs within a free verse framework creates a layered, multifaceted experience that transcends traditional poetic boundaries, showcasing Deutsch’s commitment to pushing the limits of form and content. Such experimental techniques underscore her personal lament and reflect a broader engagement with cross-cultural dialogue.

It is such a lament that Galit Hasan-Rokem describes in his article regarding Jewish expressive culture: “Laments are above all about separation and the severing of ties between mothers and their children, or other relationships often configured as ties between mothers and their children” and that this type of lament “as an artistic performance” is also “an affirmation, not to say a celebration of the continuing life of the lamenter’s body, and at the same time a recognition of her body’s transience, thus also confirming the comfort found in the transience of pain and separation” (37). Using Hasan-Rokem's model in the case of Deutsch’s poem, which was inspired by her actual relationship with her son, then, it can be argued that Deutsch’s lament for their separation is simultaneously a celebration of the preservation of her body, a Jewish maternal body, a body deeply associated with culture, faith, history, and tradition, and that is admittedly transient.

And building off Hasan-Rokem's model, Vered Madar explains in her chapter, *Women’s Oral Laments: Corpus and Text – The Body in the Text* (2017), that women, who are not mothers but who subscribe to Jewish feminine discourses, can be cultural loci

(participating in the production of a Jewish cultural memory) by presenting a “mother-child relation” while being “external to this relation” (75). “She is usually a woman who has known suffering and loss,” Madar writes, “often an elderly woman, though not always in the chronological sense of the word” (75). And this woman conveys her lament “through questions and motherly gestures” and attempts to contact the child “through fundamental actions such as feeding, or guarding against a cold wind or terrifying darkness” (75). It is an analysis that certainly seems applicable to the speaker in Deutsch’s “For a Young Soldier,” a free verse poem that has a similar form and theme as “To My Son.” The speaker, however, is unknown, but it can be surmised that she is “elderly” through her use of the descriptor “young” regarding the soldier, and she connects to the soldier through a motherly line of questioning: “How to reach you?” (10), “Do you dream of what lies behind you / or ahead?” (21-22), “How can a woman scale this wall, this war? Or pierce its iron / through with all the tools of love?” (25-27). And such a maternal embodiment by a non-mother figure, according to Madar, elicits “a sense of identification among those listening to a lament” thereby strengthening the community. Even more interesting, it seems the “young soldier” that Deutsch’s speaker is addressing belongs to a nation on the other side of the war, the other side of the wall: “Having this knowledge, I dream of our meeting / In a world without walls,” (37-38), reflecting her need to still preserve a global community. Deutsch’s experimental approach to lament is evident in how she transforms traditional lament forms through modernist techniques. In her poetry, lamentation is not merely a personal expression of grief but becomes a dynamic and multifaceted exploration. She disrupts conventional structures by employing fragmented imagery, juxtaposing cultural references, and using free verse to convey complex emotional landscapes. This method

allows her to convey lament not as a static, traditional form but as an evolving, interactive experience that challenges readers to perceive mourning in innovative ways. Her integration of diverse cultural elements and her shift from traditional lament forms to more experimental expressions underscore her attempt to push the boundaries of poetic convention and expand the scope of lamentation.

Perhaps, more importantly, it is such a global community that Deutsch is lamenting the most, because despite such attempts to prioritize foreign influences, including Jewish experience in the face of American antisemitism as in Deutsch's case, Deutsch, along with the other modernists, all but failed. Her collection was met with much less critical praise than its predecessors. "She seems to cling to a youthful love of the word for the word's sake," writes Inez Boulton in 1945, "that distorts the central idea of the poem until it is in some cases completely lost," while comparing Deutsch to "a beautiful lady tripping over draperies too elaborate for the occasion" (268). David Daiches shares a similar sentiment in the same year, noting that "very few of these poems astonish and shock us with the recognition of real poetry which is an unmistakable and unforgettable experience, very many of them please by subtlety of thought and effectiveness of expression – they *interest* rather than shake us" (147).

Her poetic innovations and writing during the modernist period were neglected in the decades after. American writers, in general, continued to broker foreign-language texts into US English, of course, but the modernist experimentalism attracted very few disciples. And those who were practitioners, like Deutsch, found their work dismissed by critics as an anomaly of minimal cultural value. Even major poets, Pound included, were subjected to belittling, in this instance, by Dudley Fitts. "We may look upon *The Seafarer*, certain

poems in *Cathay*, and the *Noh Plays* as happy accidents,” Fitts writes, and that Pound’s translations of Cavalcanti fail “because he has chosen to invent a no-language, a bric-a-brac archaizing language, largely (in spite of his excellent ear) unsayable, and all but unreadable” (19). These harsh criticisms were not only symptomatic of American isolationism, but of larger issues regarding the US literary scene during the early twentieth century, which was shaped by a persistent preeminence of discourses that maintained ethnocentric values and standardized literary forms. Works that prioritized cultural relativism and cross-cultural sharing were otherwise suppressed, because the state of American politics and art had become growingly insular due to the American people’s postwar disillusionment, despite the advancement of globalizing technologies.

Given such a prioritization of isolationism after the World Wars, minor authors like Babette Deutsch stood little chance, and their works were ignored or forgotten in pursuit of more insular literary discourses. The rise of American regionalism, for instance, emphasized specific geographic areas of the U.S. and agrarian characteristics. Authors like William Faulkner and Eudora Welty produced works highlighting the cultural, dialect, and local color of American (Southern) experience. This focus on regional specificity often led to a narrower, more localized perspective in literature, overshadowing broader, cross-cultural explorations and innovations. Despite Deutsch’s best attempts at introducing Jewish themes to the American reader and revitalizing American poetry through the advancement of innovative forms such as the haiku, the Eliotic method, and lamentations, she remains less than marginal in dominant accounts of American literary history. Ultimately, Deutsch’s struggle to gain recognition despite her groundbreaking work

highlights the broader challenges faced by writers who endeavor to bridge cultural divides in an increasingly insular literary landscape.

CHAPTER 3

“LEAN DAYS FOR HEROINES”: BABETTE DEUTSCH AND FEMINIST MODERNIST FICTION

Where does such an implicitly or explicitly patriarchal theory of literature leave literary women? If the pen is a metaphorical penis, with what organ can females generate texts?

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar

The dominant bias against women in the US in the early twentieth century has been well documented and well discussed, requiring little, if any, recapitulation. More importantly regarding the aims of this chapter, Deutsch actively confronted gender discrimination, from challenging publisher bias to resisting objectification by contemporaries. Against these challenges, Deutsch contributed significantly to fiction, pushing the boundaries of conventional literary norms and advocating for feminist ideals, while advancing feminist discourses within the broader cultural context of the early twentieth century United States.

In order to understand Deutsch's feminist fiction, however, it is important to first note how Deutsch personally felt the sting of such gender chauvinism during her writing career, as she told Arthur Martin.¹ And it was something that had followed her for most of her life. In 1979, at 84 years old, Deutsch complained in a letter to Simon Karlinsky that a publisher opted for Charles Johnston's translation of *Eugene Onegin* over her own, despite Johnston's translation possessing "faulty diction, awkward rhymes, misreading of character, in fine, a helplessness in handling the poem that meant a betrayal of it" (Deutsch

¹ In a 1978 letter to Arthur Martin, Deutsch decries "when publishers feed her discouragement," noting that her earlier works were "not merely ignored" but "seriously injured" by her first publishers due to gender discrimination.

1979). Karlinsky (and Ronald Hingley) agreed that Deutsch had a higher quality translation, and as such, the perceived slight, in Deutsch's opinion, regarding the publisher's preference of Johnston's egregious translation, is a rejection of Deutsch's gender as opposed to an acceptance of Johnston's work, and it resulted in "a loss which" she "could ill afford and a critical affront" that she finds "hard to bear" (Deutsch 1979).

Such pushback from publishers, which was symptomatic of larger social issues, had, of course, frustrated Deutsch; yet these frustrations paled in comparison to the way she felt dehumanized by some of her contemporaries. The Italian American writer, Emanuel Carnevali, for instance, reduces his encounter with Deutsch to a singular sentence in his autobiography: "We [Emanuel Carnevali and Louis Grudin] went to see Babette Deutsch who showed us her leg covered by a stocking full of indecent holes" (Carnevali 116). In a 1966 letter to Kay Boyle, Carnevali's editor at the time, Deutsch takes issue with Carnevali's account, calling it a "libelous description" and "false memory," and she insists that "Carnevali was fantasizing." She offers Boyle a more detailed report of the night in contrast with Carnevali's:

I was flattered that these young poets considered me one of "the best writers of New York." And I showed them, I remember, several poems, at least one of which was a highly colored piece of romantic fiction purporting to be autobiographical. I have no co-py of it. I did NOT show them my "leg," covered or uncovered, and I never wore "a stocking full of indecent holes." Indeed in those days, when I was living at home and badly spoiled, if there was a small hole it was promptly and exquisitely darned by my mother (Deutsch 1966).

Deutsch continues by demanding Boyle include a "footnote in future printings" to indicate Carnevali's falsehood as Deutsch considers it "painful" that the sole mention of her was "a piece of pure and shameful falsification" (Deutsch 1966); yet no footnote was ever

included. Carnevali's reduction of Deutsch to her physical attributes (with no known feud between them) rather than acknowledging her identity as a poet highlights the gender disparities prevalent during that era, underscoring the obstacles marginalized female writers encountered. Deutsch's resistance to such objectification, though it might be interpreted as conformity to middle-class sexual norms, actually showcases her firm determination to stand against such patriarchal and oppressive treatment. Her stance reflects a profound sense of feminine pride and an understanding that the guise of modernity often masked forms of sexual exploitation, failing to bring true liberation. Despite facing criticism from the bohemian community, Deutsch's stance isn't one of prudishness; rather, it demonstrates her refusal to conform to conventional patriarchal norms.²

Speaking of his mother, Adam Yarmolinsky explains that despite such resistance to patriarchal norms, Deutsch was in fact “not a feminist,” but “she did not let men put her down.” Yet Yarmolinsky’s distinction between Deutsch’s rejection of her male counterparts’ sexism and actively promoting feminist tenets is a bit suspect; especially, given his testimony regarding Deutsch’s aversion to domesticity. She felt she was “not cut out to be a mother,” Adam Yarmolinsky notes in an interview, because of her over pursuit of humanitarian causes, and as a result, Adam and his brother, Michael, spent their

² Deutsch was well aware of the existence of patriarchal standards even before Carnevali’s libelous account, and she sought to dismantle them through her engagement with literature and activism. With the latter, Deutsch exemplified her dedication to the feminist cause through humanitarian donations and commitments to organizations such as the World Center for Women’s Archives, for which Deutsch was an active sponsor. The organization had the intended purposes of making “a systematic search for undeposited source materials dealing with women’s lives and activities, interests and ideas, as members of society everywhere” and to “encourage recognition of women as co-makers of history” (Smith College 1).

childhoods in the care of full-time nursemaids. This seems contradictory to his claim, as Deutsch's rejection of traditional gender roles in favor of her career aligns with feminist principles of the time. Additionally, Adam's testimony towards his mother may be biased, as he likely felt spurned by his mother's absence during his childhood. Perhaps that is why Adam suggests that both Deutsch and her husband were "more successful as literary people than as parents" (Yarmolinsky 1985).

Although Deutsch may have failed in her dual role of author and mother, at least in the eyes of her son, she was certain that literature, not motherhood, could provide a solution to the suffering experienced "as a member of the contemned sex" ("An Unimpressive Autobiography" F17). In a 1926 review of Leah Morton's autobiography, *I am a Woman – and a Jew* (1926), in which Morton discusses her difficult work-life balance as a mother, Deutsch exalts Morton for her identification of the source of gender inequality (male bias and expectation):

She [Morton] did this in the teeth of opposition from her very employers – good bourgeois souls, with prejudices against married mothers who held jobs outside of the home. She did it against her husband's tacit wish that she occupy herself with more ornamental and less arduous tasks ("An Unimpressive Autobiography" F17).

Yet Deutsch considers the autobiography to be subpar, challenging Morton's "history as a feminist," because Morton portrays her domestic life as blissful – "Her [Morton's] marriage – she is tiresomely insistent on this point," Deutsch writes, "was superlatively happy," ("An Unimpressive Autobiography" F17). Such an optimistic portrayal of the domestic (and patriarchal) sphere, according to Deutsch, sends the wrong message, or conceals it entirely, so that "one is not sure what moral she [Morton] wishes to point," ("An Unimpressive Autobiography" F17). Consequently, Deutsch elaborates that Morton "hardly merits the more exalted title" of "writer," because although "one may rejoice with

her that she is satisfied with her present status,” the reader “cannot quite see what bearing her private struggles have upon the pressing question of women and their careers,” because Morton has successfully “managed to run both a home and an office” (“An Unimpressive Autobiography” F17). It could be argued that Deutsch’s observations regarding Morton stem from some deep-rooted insecurity – Morton’s success in the same roles (mother and writer) that Deutsch less-successfully occupied could cause some form of reflected appraisal and resentment; however, given Deutsch’s history fighting for equality for other cultures through other mediums, it is much more likely Deutsch felt Morton’s prose was a wasted opportunity in its reformatory potential.

For Deutsch, poetry was not enough either. After publishing her first two poetry collections (in 1919 and 1925), Deutsch split her energies over the next few years between poetry and writing fiction, producing four novels over the span of a little more than a decade (1926-1943). Her prose tugged on similar threads of activism that were brought forth in her poetry, but that needed a different outlet. And her novels set up an imaginative discourse with the reader different from that maintained in her poetry, but that also included dialogues with her modernist contemporaries and forebearers. Even so, the respect she had garnered as a poet was hardly transferable to her status as a novelist. Other than a few kind words from friends³ and cliché compliments – “It’s [her fiction] the same absorption that your poetry has for me, a deep tenderness without nonsense, and thought with body and human passion” (Edman 1927) – the reviews were quite negative. As a result, none of the fictional works mentioned in this chapter have been reprinted since their original publication.

³ Deutsch had received complimentary letters from multiple peers including Irwin Edman, William Carlos Williams, Dorothy Richardson, and Albert Ehrenstein.

Yet with the advent of culture studies and its reliance on feminist theory, along with the prevalence of culture studies in modern academia, Deutsch's works ought to be re-evaluated as Deutsch explores, complicates, and even challenges the then heteronormative understanding of gender that was dominant in the US during the interwar period. Rebelling against the literary patriarchy of her time, Deutsch's prose reinforces the incipient feminism of contemporary modernist women writers (Woolf, Sinclair, and Richardson to name a few) as she channels similar experimental forms while prioritizing similar domestic scenes. And when Deutsch does expand the parameters of her otherwise domestic content, she openly appropriates historical figures (Francis Villon and Socrates) as vehicles for her feminist agenda. This chapter, then, aims to revitalize Deutsch's fiction through the exploration of its reliance on modernist formalisms, foreign figures, domestic settings, and most importantly, its promotion of a feminist tradition outside the confines of male literary lineage.

Feminist Literary Tradition

Deutsch's fiction was profoundly shaped by her engagement with British modernists, whose emphasis on subjective experiences and removal of extraneous conventions influenced Deutsch's portrayal of feminine consciousness and her attempt to provide women with their own cultural history outside of patriarchal norms. This section, then, aims to elucidate how such influences had a formative effect on Deutsch's writing. Although Woolf had, for the most part, been the main conduit of feminist modernism in the Anglophone world during the interwar period, Deutsch predominantly modeled her first work of fiction after the works of Dorothy Richardson and May Sinclair. Regarding the works of these two authors, Deutsch writes in 1919:

Just as they [impressionists] covered a canvas with tiny points of color till it quivered with luminosity, so Miss Richardson, and Miss Sinclair after her, crowd their pages with close colored moments. There are long dark stretches in both books. But the effect of this method is always vivid and intense. Every part of their canvases throbs with immediacy. In each case the author is dealing not with the bony structure of a novel so much as with the intricate play of response nerves. (441)

Deutsch's words may seem like otiose pandering, but through her comparison of Richardson and Sinclair to the impressionists, and her emphasis on the "intricate play of response nerves," it is understood that she believes these writers strip away the extraneous conventions of the novel as a medium to realize the life within their subjects, much in the same way that Woolf tries to "dig out beautiful caves behind my characters" (Woolf 263), as she writes in an August 1923 diary entry. Such commentary also falls in line with R. Brimley Johnson's assertion in his 1920 *Some Contemporary Novelists (Women)* that "the new woman, the feminine novelist of the twentieth century" is "cutting away all that chokes the soul" (xiv, xxv). Deutsch was attracted to fiction that had, in some ways, followed "most nearly the method of the Imagists" (Deutsch 441), and that had removed superfluous detail to capture a clearer presentation of thought. And she emphasizes this notion in her 1939 review of Richardson's *Pilgrimage*:

The special quality which distinguishes Miss Richardson from these writers is her emphasis upon the feminine consciousness.... What she has actually produced is the history of a woman's mind, in the fullest sense of that word, a history so intimate and penetrating that, were it not for the testimony of a few men.... one might suspect that only a woman could appreciate her performance. (210)

For Deutsch, Richardson can capture such a "history" because she prioritizes the ordinary; the female protagonist "will presumably neither engage in any prodigious activity nor become the heroine of any profound private drama" (210). And although other readers may consider Richardson's heroine "a person of small importance," Deutsch contends that the

“interest is in the incomparable intensity and richness with which the quality of given moments is presented. The significance is that of life itself, in the mere living” (210). Yet to understand Deutsch’s commentary as it applies to her own work regarding feminine consciousness, it’s important to recognize what Richardson (along with Sinclair and Woolf) was trying to accomplish.

Richardson elaborates on her literary aims in a 1924 article, titled “Women and the Future,” which was published in *Vogue Magazine*. Set amongst condescending advertisements for the “careful housewife who always purchases the best foods for her table” and who “knows the swiftest rapier is as nothing to the three graces – culture, feminine charm, and amiability,” (132), Richardson’s article highlights the lack of literary foremothers and the absence of (and resistance to) a female cultural tradition. She explains that hegemonic cultural portrayal of women in media is controlled by men, and as such, an idealized and misconstrued “woman of the past,” who is dependent on and submissive to patriarchal standards, is both presented and commonly accepted as historical fact:

Nearly all of the prophets, nearly all of those who are at work constructing hells, or heavens, upon this loose foundation, are men. And their crying up, or down, of the woman of today as contrasted with the woman of the past, is easily understood when we consider how difficult it is, even for the least prejudiced, to *think* the feminine past, to escape the images that throng the mind from the centuries of masculine expressiveness on the eternal theme: expressiveness that has so rarely reached beyond the portrayal of woman, whether Madonna, Diana, or Helen, in her moments of relationship to the world as it is known to men. (130)

This misconception, and its mass-perpetuation, not only strips women of their past and cultural traditions, as the cultural memory fails to recognize the woman as individual, but it frames “the modern woman,” who deviates from patriarchal ideals, as a “primitive, uncivilizable woman rampant in the midst,” (130) encouraging her to be publicly shamed and ideologically dismissed. Richardson aims to “escape patronage” and “the arm of man”

(130) by providing women with their own cultural history that exists outside of a patriarchal (male) gaze. “Most people have too much life and too little realization,” Miriam Henderson says in Richardson’s *Pilgrimage*, “Realization takes time and solitude. They have neither,” (140). Realization, bringing heightened awareness to the most unconsidered elements regarding the daily lives of women, is the prioritized value of Richardson’s fiction, and consequently Deutsch’s fiction as well. The subsequent sections of this chapter, then, aim to elucidate how Deutsch attempted to achieve such a realization by giving a voice to women’s experiences through her own fiction beginning with her first novel.

A Brittle Heaven

With her debut novel, *A Brittle Heaven*, released in 1926, Deutsch attempts to undermine the venerated values of mainstream heteronormative American culture by portraying same-sex relationships as inspirational, female sexual awakenings as creative genesis, and marriage as insignificant to defining womanhood. The narrative follows Bianca Ernesti from her early years to the moment she becomes a mother, mirroring the author's upper-middle-class background and the turn-of-the-century milieu. Bianca's journey reflects the classic bildungsroman structure, delving into her upbringing and the cultural shifts around her. The storytelling, influenced by prominent female modernist writers like Sinclair and Richardson, delves into Bianca's inner thoughts as she navigates family dynamics and societal expectations. Despite her privileged background, Bianca grapples with the limitations imposed by gender norms and social pressures, yearning to carve her path as a writer and cultural influencer.

Adopting its title from Emily Dickinson’s poem, “Each Life Converges to Some Centre” (1896), *A Brittle Heaven* was intended to be a distinctively feminine image of

power in a similar vein to Richardson's *Pilgrimage* or Sinclair's *Mary Olivier: A Life* (1919). Deutsch's novel, like her poetry, was innovative for its time, relying on modernist literary practices to promote marginalized discourses through both form and content. Regarding form, for instance, Deutsch plays with her narrative style, beginning with second person narration to capture the memories (and associated feelings) of Bianca's childhood:

You wandered out. You had nothing to do. It was raining. You stood at the window, downstairs, for a long time, looking at the rain. You went to the foot of the staircase and called up, unhappily. "Aunt Tracy," he said: "Why can't that child keep quiet?" You cried miserably to Mammy to come down and read to you. Mammy called down: "Can't you see I'm busy?" (9)

According to Monika Fludernik and her extensive bibliography (1994), second-person narration had only been minimally published (less than ten times) before Deutsch's novel in the recorded Western literary world,⁴ which is enough to justify the literary significance of *A Brittle Heaven*. Deutsch, however, only uses her second person narration for the first chapter (or first eighteen pages) before switching to third-person narration and ending in a first-person stream-of-consciousness. Such fragmented narration could lend the novel an air of "fits and starts" as the critics decried, but Deutsch is seemingly relying on varying forms of narration to continue the new fledgling female literary tradition of her contemporaries, as Sinclair's *Mary Olivier: A Life* consists of a similar form.

Deutsch praises Olivier's adept use of second-person narration, distinguishing it from earlier forms of second-person narration such as Rilke's 1910 novella, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (*Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*), with which Deutsch was familiar. Although she describes Rilke's novella as a "fantastic book" and

⁴ Granted, Fludernik admits the possibility of certain omissions because of her inability to access certain resources; even so, given the extent of her research and her thoroughness in verifying literary claims, it can be assumed second person narration was minimal in existence.

commends Rilke for his portrayal of memory – “what memory evokes is sometimes clearer and more vibrant than the current of immediate experience” – and how it elicits emotion, “the value of the book....is in the extreme subtlety of emotion which the author reveals in exploring common events” (J7), she condemns his use of the second-person narrative form, expressing a preference for first-person prose: “one wishes that the poet had thrown off all disguises and written this piece of prose frankly in the first person” (J7). In contrast, Deutsch’s commentary on Sinclair’s use of second-person narration in *Mary Olivier: A life* is positive. She appreciates Sinclair’s depiction of Mary’s experiences and character, noting how second-person narration affirms the spirit through the exploration of human complexities (Deutsch 441). Deutsch’s embrace of second-person narration regarding Olivier and not Rilke aligns with her broader aim of importing marginalized European forms of fiction to convey feminine experiences within the US context. She employs this narrative technique as a vessel for Bianca’s and her own childhood memories, aiming to enhance their vibrancy, clarity, and emotional weight, similar to Sinclair’s portrayal, ultimately offering readers a “distinct person” and highlighting the spirit defined by gender.

It’s not the only time that Deutsch draws a closer relationship between form and content within the novel to channel female experiences either. Take, for example, the final chapter in which Bianca gives birth to her first child. As she undergoes the physical and psychological burdens of labor (she second-guesses her decision to have a child), so too does her narration; her language, and the thoughts it conveys, simultaneously devolve from their logical (syntactical) norms:

let me die, now no more pain give up
I can't keep my knees apart, any more
I can't close my knees endless agony endless
the rhythm again strive, strive it will never

end the pain will go on the crying will go on
the pain will go on and on the crying go on
“Soon, now.” (324)

Honest descriptions of childbirth had mostly been avoided in Anglophone fiction in line with the conservative social decorum of the time, and Deutsch’s is one of the earliest to appear. Her prose in this section is poetic, and an argument can be made that her use of various-sized blank spaces between words is representative of poetic caesura – used here to emphasize the pause or hesitancy of the protagonist as she is thrust into the domestic role (motherhood) that she rejected for the larger part of the novel. It is a common interpretation and one that has all-too-often culminated in the critical conclusion that “Miss Deutsch’s natural inclination” is to give the novel a “poetic substratum” (NYT BR28).

I find, however, that there is more to Deutsch’s spaces than the bleeding through of her poetic sensibilities, as they come to mirror the structured breathing associated with childbirth; more specifically, Deutsch captures through her form the rhythms of breathing exercises (perhaps even the “pant-pant-blow” or “hee-hee-hoo” methods) that are commonly performed during labor in the delivery room.⁵ Throughout the stream-of-consciousness section, the spaces are formed in cyclical fashion, repeating the pattern of two abnormally large spaces followed by one even larger space, or two short exhales followed by a large exhale. In this case, what is most interpreted as Bianca’s (and Deutsch’s) hesitation/rejection of the domestic sphere doubles as a modernist interjection of active readership – coercing the reader to participate alongside the experiences of the

⁵ Although what is now known as Lamaze wasn’t developed in 1951, psychoprophylaxis (including the “hee hee hoo” method) dates to the early 1920s. For more information, see Michaels, Paula. *Lamaze: An International History* (2014).

main characters; as Bianca breathes, so does the reader.⁶ And the only time the repetitive breathing cycle is broken, is when two larger spaces fall on either side of the word “strive,” emphasizing its importance, and speaking to Deutsch’s feminist spirit. Such formalisms are most certainly indebted to Woolf, who, in her 1925 essay “How Should One Read a Book,” identifies her ideal reader as a co-producer, a “fellow-worker and accomplice,” approaching books with an open mind and “imagination, insight, and judgment” in order to give life and meaning to a narrative (Woolf 21). Deutsch’s continuation of Woolf’s modernist formalisms, alongside Sinclair’s and Richardson’s, not only sanctifies her feminine forbearers, but solidifies her own place within the fledgling tradition of feminist writers.

William Drake seemingly recognized this when he included Deutsch in his 1987 anthology, *The First Wave: Women Poets in America, 1915-1945*; however, his analysis of her novel *A Brittle Heaven* fails to fully appreciate the significance of her subversion of traditional gender roles and the constraints imposed by patriarchal publishing standards, ultimately overlooking the complexity of Deutsch’s portrayal of female experiences. Although Drake’s work prioritizes “poets” as its subject matter, he includes Deutsch in his volume not because of her poetry, but for her content in *A Brittle Heaven* and her physical participation in reformative movements. Speaking of Deutsch as literary figure, he writes:

Radical women poets like Babette Deutsch were understandably reluctant to conform to male intellectual models Her path was guided at almost every point by her revolt as a woman against the enveloping presence of male power. She was determined not only to survive, but to win; there is none of the attitude of “making the best” of being a woman, the settling for tragedy, that is seen in some earlier poets, like Teasdale. (149)

⁶ Interestingly, as much as this poetic technique of active readership drives Deutsch’s early fiction, it seems absent from her poetry.

Yet Drake's textual analysis paints another picture – one in which he concludes that Deutsch did, in fact, yield “to conventional heterosexual standards that require a woman to limit significant emotional relationships to a male mate, and reveals a commitment to finding compromise and accommodation with men rather than revolutionary change in male-female relationships” (54). His argument is primarily based on an early scene within the novel in which Bianca dreams of a close sexual encounter with her friend, Trudy:

In a moment they were in each other's arms. They lay there, close, close, – Bianca could feel Trudy's heart beating against her own breast. They drew apart. Bianca touched Trudy's hair and began playing with the silky strands of it till her fingertips tingled. Trudy lay still. Bianca could hear her breathing in the dark. She said no word. Bianca was ashamed. And happy. She had never been so happy before. The lift and fall of Trudy's breast, the smell of her hair, the rich darkness of the room, were mingled in a painful wonderful ecstasy. Trudy...Trudy... (46-47).

Although Drake acknowledges that Bianca and Trudy “come excitingly close to a sexual encounter” (53) and that “Deutsch catches this prophetic glimpse of a radical feminism” (152), he is disappointed in her decision to “not develop its implications” (152). For Drake, the transience (and dream state) of Bianca and Trudy's fling, coupled with Bianca's eventual marriage to a male partner, undermines the novel's feminist potential, as Deutsch:

falls back on the psychological truisms of her time: the Bianca/Trudy relationship is explained as a stage of adolescence that both will outgrow as they approach the ‘normal’ heterosexual world of adulthood – an indication that Deutsch hopes to work out her rebellion within the existing social pattern (152).

He suggests that Deutsch's feminist commitment was diluted by her other political causes (a rejection of communism and fascism) and her catering to an “elitist male tradition” (163)

that dictated publishing standards during the interwar period, which is evidenced by her larger focus on male poets in her poetry criticism.⁷

Drake overlooks significant factors in his critique of Deutsch's portrayal of female relationships and marriage, including the broader societal context of heteronormative publishing standards and the innovative stylistic choices made by Deutsch, thus contributing to the very literary patriarchy Deutsch was warring against. Even if Deutsch adjusted her fiction to align with patriarchal publishing standards, it's unfair to condemn her for it. There were, of course, unspoken heteronormative publishing standards dictating the presentation of female characters (and their relationships) in the early twentieth century; and women, just like men, influenced by the prevailing ideological conditions of their time, often internalized the biases that oppressed them, as evidenced by Dorothy Whitis's 1926 critique of Deutsch. The review, titled "Lean Days for Heroines," denounces the then current trends of female authors writing non-conforming female characters, such as "Miss Deutsch must have been tempted to follow the primrose path and make her a boozing homo-type, or else so much of a lady that she had no part in the modern world into which she was born" (13). Drake, in other words, is hoisting an unfair burden on Deutsch's shoulders to champion feminism through all aspects of her personal and professional lives. Such generalizing commentary also fails to acknowledge Deutsch's reputation as a supporter for the equal rights of the homosexual community; a reputation that resulted in the gay rights activist Dale Jennings requesting articles from Deutsch for publication in his magazine, *ONE*. And although Deutsch kindly rejected Jennings, she insisted in her 1953

⁷ "Deutsch (in her 1963 revision) gives thirty pages to Eliot, twenty-eight to Pound and twenty-six to Yeats, besides numerous additional references. Only 16 percent of the poets dealt with are women, the majority of them mentioned in only a line or two" (Drake).

letter that “the heterosexual majority should be informed about deviation and that homosexuals should know more about themselves” (Deutsch 1953).⁸

Like depictions of childbirth, candid portrayals of adolescent same-sex sexual relationships were revolutionary for the time, and to read Bianca’s dream as an adolescent fling is to both decontextualize and misunderstand it. The subsequent paragraphs following Bianca’s dream are left intentionally ambiguous but are nonetheless important to Bianca’s development and Deutsch’s feminist charge. “Suddenly she knew. She had done nothing. She had dreamt... She saw it again distinctly: the crooked stain,” the novel continues, “The impression was so vivid that she pushed away the covers. Her gown was creased and warm from being twisted about her hot, tossing, unconscious body all night” (48). With Bianca’s age, it could be argued that the source of “the crooked stain” is Bianca’s first menstruation, which could signify a transition into womanhood. Yet given the events of the preceding paragraph, it seems much more likely that the stain was the product of masturbation:

Mixed with the early morning drowsiness was a sense of strain, the effort to win back some odd, terrible dream, without sinking into it again, without waking herself by the need to recall it clearly. But she was awake. The

⁸ And even if the prior example was disregarded, I remain unconvinced that Deutsch did soften her fiction for accessibility given her history going toe-to-toe with publishers. Her submitted poem to *The Dial* in 1929, for example, was rejected due to the then editor Marianne Moore’s poetic sensibilities. According to a personal exchange between Deutsch and Moore, Moore wanted to change the title of Deutsch’s poem, shortening it from “Moment at Croton Dam” to “At Croton Dam,” while also revising the third line as Moore writes: “retitled At Croton Dam can be published if a line is changed” (Moore). The line in question was one that disrupted the otherwise cohesive iambic pentameter of the poem, and so Moore felt the third line needed to be altered to adhere to the overall meter. Deutsch disagreed and refused Moore’s edits, and so Moore rejected the poem: “Cannot publish At Croton Dam because Miss Deutsch feels no change can be made in third line” (Moore). Although the rejection caused by Moore’s heavy-handed approach frustrated Deutsch (she explicitly told Hart Crane so), she remained loyal to her work, preferring to preserve its original form over having it published. Her actions reflect her words to Jennings, “any manuscript of mine that I am not ashamed to publish I am not ashamed to sign” (Deutsch 1953). Drake’s underlying suggestion that Deutsch pandered to male publishing standards seems to be unaware of Deutsch’s history and her dedication to her causes.

unpleasantness was touched with excitement now. The excitement was chastened by a feeling of guilt. Bianca had done something wrong. She couldn't remember what it was. But it was dreadful. It was unspeakable. It was interesting in a way that nothing else was interesting. (48)

Bianca was not only awake consciously, but sexually. Her recognition of the feminine through both the physical stimulation of her female body (masturbating) and focus on another woman (Trudy) as the object (or catalyst) for her sexual desire speaks to Deutsch's prioritization of a female tradition – metaphorically emphasizing intellectual exploration rather than purely emotional engagement. As in her critique of Richardson, Deutsch illustrates analytical thought process in understanding and reflecting on her own feminine experience. The passage shows Bianca's struggle to recall the details of her dream and her conscious effort to understand it. This effort to “win back” the dream (feminist tradition) and recall it “clearly” points to an intellectual engagement with her subconscious thoughts. Bianca's mixed feelings of strain, excitement, guilt, and curiosity reflect Deutsch's own feelings towards the possibility of female modernist tradition.

Up to this point in the story, Bianca has been suffocated by a mother and two aunts whose only interests are domestic, and who facilitate patriarchal stereotypes -- “Mammy believed the whole duty of her sex lay in the feeding and flattery of the other” (208). Yet after Bianca's awakening, the patriarchal sphere diminishes both literally and figuratively. Her father (“Papa”) dies suddenly in the next twenty pages, and Bianca finds her poetic voice as a medium to reject the domestic identity imposed upon her by the confined women of the past. Her fetishization of Trudy is confirmation of her emerging self, and it shapes her future interactions with other characters, mostly men. Drake recognizes such an emergence, writing the following: “Bianca wishes to assert her own power of creativity without resorting to hierarchical thinking, which requires one person's success to be at the

cost of another's," (154) but he imposes the very same patriarchal limitations on Deutsch and her character in his analysis of Deutsch's portrayal of marriage.

Bianca's marriage to Michael Morris doesn't happen until much later in the book (page 277 out of 330), and Drake finds their marriage uninspiring:

Deutsch's wishful depiction of such a liberated marriage is unfortunately somewhat vague. Bianca's husband is drawn one-dimensionally as simply an agreeable man who puts his wife's novel-writing above his own interests, even sacrificing his dreams of a career in the theater in order to support a family" (154).

Drake, however, is again missing the bigger picture; what he deems "vague" is a conscious and innovative stylistic authorial decision on behalf of Deutsch. Bianca's marriage happens primarily unmentioned and off-screen, which not only minimizes the importance of something that had been discussed by other characters throughout the novel as a woman's top accolade (reflective of the heteronormative ideologies of the time) but lends more space within the book to Bianca's internal thoughts. Granted, leading up to their wedding, Deutsch does provide an existential reflection on the matter: "She was afraid of the whole complex of marriage....Marriage is every day, every night – waking on hot summer mornings, when the sheet is an unbearable weight glued to your body, when you hate being alive at all, and having to talk to a strange face on the pillow near you..." (274-275). Yet after they are married, Bianca's anxieties dissipate – not because she has achieved domestic bliss, but because, for Deutsch, a blissful marriage (as it was in Morton's book) should not be the primary focus within the prose of women writers.

Although reviewers recognized what Deutsch was trying to do regarding her feminist literary activism – "It is the story, as others of this generation before it have been, on an intelligent girl's adjustments to the life without and comprehensions of the life

within” (NYT BR28) – they remained unconvinced that she hit her mark: “*A Brittle Heaven* is too thick for a slice of life, and not meaty enough for a soul-searching sandwich” (van Doren 123). One such *New York Times* reviewer even noted that despite telling a story “which rings true, which for the most part is very interesting, and is pervaded by a clarified and accurate intelligence,” Deutsch’s novel “is not, however, a particularly vital book” because “it is sympathetic, but not infectiously so; clear-sighted, but not illuminating” (BR28). One reason the novel was not a success, according to Dorothy Whitis, was the overly detailed content: “In a biographical novel such as this one, the difficulty is likely to be that too much has been given. The heroine has so few moments of privacy. We are forced to look on from the days when she lies on her back in a cradle until she has reached maturity and the author decides to drop her” (Whitis 13). And for another critic, the meaning was obfuscated by its form – “it goes by fits and starts, in a manner more like the eccentric progress of actual events than the continuous ascent toward a climax that we should find in literary art” (TSR 471). These criticisms, however, once again reveal a persistent prejudice against ethnodeviant values (non-conforming cultural or societal norms) that challenged standardized literary forms and mainstream ideologies. And despite such negative reviews, Deutsch’s integration of same-sex relationships, female sexual awakenings, and critiques of traditional gender roles into her literary narrative paved the way for a more inclusive and diverse representation of human experience in American literature.

In Such a Night

Although similar themes had remained in her second novel, Deutsch began more advanced experimentation with form and content, delving further into the literary trends

set by the British female modernists. Following her debut fiction publication in 1927 with *In Such a Night*, Babette Deutsch showcased a notable departure from her earlier work, despite some shared themes such as childbirth. This second novel unfolds over the span of a few hours during a house-warming gathering among 1920s social elites, employing multiple character perspectives. Drawing significant inspiration from Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Deutsch constructs a narrative set within a single-day party scenario, featuring a character named Leonard Hogarth, a nod to Woolf's husband and their mutual publishing house, along with a more intricate use of stream-of-consciousness technique. Beneath the veneer of social interactions at the home of hosts Pauline and Max Peacock, unspoken tensions simmer. When one of the attendees, Evelyn Mayne, begins experiencing labor pains, the facade shatters, revealing psychological conflicts and personal revelations. More importantly, *In Such a Night* exemplifies Deutsch's sharpened attempts regarding prosaic experimentation and feminist didacticism, as she borrows Woolfian formalisms to convey her perceptions of modern motherhood.

Woolf's large-spanning influence on the modernist movement, especially regarding the portrayal of gender, had, of course, trickled down to other writers. Take, for example, Woolf's investigation of gender roles and social expectations in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *Orlando* (1928), and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), her theoretical musings in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), or her series of lectures at Cambridge on the subject of "Women and Fiction." Yet even as a keystone in feminist literature, Woolf is only marginally discussed in relation to motherhood, despite its centrality in her writing. Before beginning *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf openly admitted that the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay were based on her parents. And both Julia Stephens and her literary counterpart, Mrs. Ramsay, resemble

(through Woolf's descriptions⁹) the "Angel in the House" that she was so insistent on killing. What does it say then that Woolf wants to commit literary matricide? Does she want to stop thinking back, in her words, "through our mothers if we are women?" Must the female artist kill the mother in order to create, or can motherhood and art be reconciled?

Because Deutsch was closely inspired by Woolf for her second novel, it's important to understand Woolf's answers to these questions; and the answer, undoubtedly, for Woolf was yes – the mother needed to be killed. Mrs. Ramsay's death, for instance, in *To the Lighthouse* serves as artistic liberation for her daughter, Lily. Lily can only complete her painting after the death of Mrs. Ramsay, whose memory haunts and obsesses Lily until she kills her symbolically by finishing the painting. It's a scene that is certainly reflective of Woolf's own comments regarding her mother and the creation of the novel:

Until I was in the forties - I could settle the date by seeing when I wrote *To the Lighthouse*, but am too casual here to bother to do it - the presence of my mother obsessed me. I could hear her voice, see her, imagine what she would do or say as I went about my day's doings when [*To the Lighthouse*] was written, I ceased to be obsessed by my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her. (80-81)

Woolf's creative genesis at the death of the mother figure fits in with her larger literary agenda given the associations of domestic confinement surrounding mothers during the time, and it certainly had its fair share of copycats. Babette Deutsch was no different from the other female novelists who were influenced by Woolf, and in 1927, *In Such a Night* followed suit in disrupting such domestic associations of motherhood. Yet Woolf and Deutsch's relationships with motherhood were significantly different. Whereas Woolf

⁹ "She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it - in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others" (Woolf).

views her mother (and her untimely death when Woolf was only thirteen) as both obstacle and inspiration, Deutsch had a much more positive relationship with her mother.¹⁰ And unlike Woolf, Deutsch also had two biological children; perhaps this is why Deutsch opts not to kill the mother figure, but to highlight the incongruity of domestic motherhood and the lifestyle of the modern working woman.

Inspired by her experiences with her own son¹¹ and Woolf's emphasis on spontaneous language, Deutsch provides insight into the work-life balance of the modern mother through a child's eyes, and his spontaneous language, in "Jimmy," one of the better-crafted chapters of the novel. The chapter takes place early in the story and portrays Max and Pauline Peacock preparing to host their party. And from the onset of the chapter, an underlying tension is portrayed in the relationship between Jimmy and his mother, Pauline Peacock, as Pauline fails to give Jimmy her full attention:

YOU HAVE A RED DRESS ON MUMMY WHY DO YOU HAVE A RED DRESS ON?
'Hands off, darling. Oh-h, I'm not half dressed. Shall I ever...' DON'T GO

¹⁰ For further information regarding Deutsch and her mother's relationship, see Deutsch's letters from the Soviet Union, written in 1923, directed to her mother.

¹¹ Deutsch experienced such incongruity in her own life, which is not only observed in her and her son's earlier comments regarding her incompatibility with the domestic role, but in her enthusiasm when her professional literary sphere and domestic sphere overlap. Consider Harriet Monroe's attempt to publish an anthology of poems by children in 1917, or her publication of four-year-old Judith Perlzweig's poems in 1926, and Babette Deutsch's vexed reaction to not receiving the same attention or opportunity for her son's (Adam's) work. "Had I known..." she wrote in a letter to Monroe, "I would have taken care to submit the following verses by my young son, Adam Yarmolinsky" (Deutsch 1924). Adam was only two-years-old at the time, and Deutsch had crafted his child-born spontaneous language into poetry for an attempted publication, including: "dog says bow-wow / duck says quack-quack / road says / no things" (Deutsch 1924) and "On Waking at Night," "what makes all the twilights / come here?" (Deutsch 1924). Such spontaneity in language was commonly prioritized by Woolf and her disciples, who relied heavily on the stream-of-consciousness form, but sourcing the language from children and using it to describe the mother-child relationship was uniquely Deutsch, and she brings such a relationship forth in her novel.

MUMMY DON'T GO DON'T GO 'No, dear, I'm not going. We're going to have company here. Now do hurry and hop into bed'," (12).

In the first few lines of the chapter, Pauline not only ignores her child as she prioritizes the party, but places Jimmy in the care of the nursemaid, Martha, and bans any guests from seeing him, exclaiming: "WILL THEY COME TO SEE ME IN THE BATHROOM? 'No. Martha, no one is to see him! Mr. Peacock's orders" (17). The ban, according to Jimmy and his simplistic language, is because "Mummy does what Daddy says" and "the matter is Daddy he wants Mummy" (17). Pauline's (and Max's) suppression of motherhood for the appeasement of her husband speaks to the social expectations of the 1920s, and although it is perhaps representative of a typical parental interaction during that time, Deutsch's commentary against such expectations comes through her stream-of-conscious and point-of-view, as Pauline's maternal absence is clearly felt by Jimmy, whose train of thought keeps coming back to his absent mother during his bedtime routine: "Mummy gone Mummy petting all the rooms – not me" and "I don't hear Mummy where is Mummy... If I want a drink of water who will come...Where is Mummy... maybe Mummy went away" (17-19). This is compounded by the fact that Pauline's party, as the reader learns later on, is thrown with the intention of networking and elevating their family's social status, or to have people look "at the house and at Pauline and at himself [Max] through the appropriate roseate light" (212). Pauline, then, seemingly embodies the Woolfian dilemma – she cannot simultaneously realize the multiple roles cast upon her as a woman – mother, wife, hostess, and worker, and in this case (as well as Deutsch's), her relationship with her son suffers. Pauline, in other words, needs to kill her role as mother to succeed as networking socialite and wife.

Yet even when a woman can embody the multiple social roles expected of her, more often than not, for Deutsch, they aren't recognized by her peers; rather, a woman's identity is conflated to a singular role. As such, despite Pauline and Max's attempts to suppress motherhood at their party, it still finds a way to disrupt the evening in the form of Evelyn Mayne. Evelyn, a soon-to-be-mother, attends the Peacock's party against Max's wishes:

If only Evelyn had had sense enough to stay home! If Will Mayne had had sense... Max hadn't wanted to invite them. He had said, 'Mayne will drag his wife along – he's a model husband since a baby's on the way. And Evelyn will crab the party – sitting in a corner and looking like the epitome of a maternity clinic.' (153)

The feeling, however, was mutual, as Evelyn, aware of the stigma surrounding motherhood, "wished he [Will, her husband] had pleased to come alone" (31) because "the consciousness of her swollen womb" would "disturb the vanity of husbands and remind wives of responsibilities they would rather have forgotten," (31-32). This stigma is further emphasized in Evelyn's internal monologue regarding women:

The women were the worst. The women who had come billowing up to her all evening, with knowing eyes and protecting smiles. The women who greeted each other, across her, with 'How's your family?' and rewarded her with patronizing curiosity for listening to their chatter. The women who assure her she would come through it like a streak. The women who informed her that the second child was much more of a problem than the first. The women who asked her if she planned to give up her work, or apply all her psychology to her own child (36).

Evelyn's recognition of others' perceptions of her as mother has her desperately wanting "to talk to a man" (38), not because "she wanted to be admired or caressed," but because she "wanted simply someone who would ignore the physical and mental complications of her present state, and accept her as an individual. As man to man, she thought humorously" (38). Yet even with a male audience, Evelyn fails to find solace, as she remains objectified – not as a vessel for a child – but as an object of sexual desire:

She became conscious suddenly of a stranger's attention drawing her eyes by its pure power to eyes that stared, claiming her, from the other side of the room. Lifting her head to meet them, she realized uncomfortably that the tall broad somewhat shabby man whose hard blue gaze held her, as though embraced, over the heads of the other people in the room, was regarding her not as a person at all, but as though she were some inanimate object, to be handled, appraised, set down and probably forgotten (38).

The dichotomy of objectification (as either mother or sexual desire) speaks to the patriarchal standards that both Woolf and Deutsch were warring against. For Deutsch, the success of feminism needed more than the prioritization of a female tradition; the movement needed to make evident the existence of the male gaze and its effect on women in order to disrupt it. Unlike Pauline, Evelyn cannot kill off her identity as mother given her physical state and the impending birth of her child, and so she suffers internally.

To make sure that Evelyn's internal perceptions were not dismissed as the frivolous musings of a pregnant woman, Deutsch pays special attention to the men's reactions to Evelyn's labor. Take, for example, the discussion of Will Mayne's initial reaction to the news that his wife has gone into labor: "It must be Evelyn. Will Mayne would be annoyed. He liked parties. He liked, also, to appear perfect in whatever role he essayed. He could not, under the present circumstances, play the part of the perfect guest and the perfect husband" (67). Mayne's cold reaction to the birth of his own child and the distress of his wife speaks to the hard line drawn between domestic and social spheres during the time, and it's reinforced by the other men's reactions as well. Max, for instance, can only think of Evelyn's labor as a black mark on his social standing: "But how absurd: as though Max had wanted to complicate his party with Evelyn's baby! The question was how the party would take it. It was Pauline's job to see that they took it quietly and didn't annoy Max too much" (155). And even Leonard, the supposed sympathetic male lead, thinks of Evelyn with contempt: "He cursed Will Mayne for bringing his wife here, only to thrust her upon

Pauline. He cursed Evelyn for acquiescing in Mayne's wish to have her with him" (92-93) and refers to her labor as an "inappropriate difficulty" (93). None of the male characters care for Evelyn's well-being (or the child's), and all of them consider the resurgence of the domestic sphere into the social setting (brought about by Evelyn's labor) as a personal slight against them; although women are expected to traverse between spheres while balancing multiple roles, it's inconceivable that men do the same.

Babette Deutsch's novel *In Such a Night* offers a compelling exploration of gender dynamics, the male gaze, and the challenges faced by working mothers in the 1920s. Despite receiving mixed reviews and even being deemed legally obscene in 1927 (most notably in Boston) (Ernst and Seagle 295), Deutsch's use of Woolfian stylistics and her unapologetic social criticism deserve a reevaluation. The novel sheds light on the struggles of women navigating societal expectations while balancing multiple roles, and its portrayal of gender inequality remains relevant today. Despite Deutsch's lofty aims, however, the reviews of her second novel were relatively mixed. Deutsch's work, given its inspiration, discernably drew comparisons to Woolf and such comparisons hurt the book's reputation. "Once 'Mrs. Dalloway' gave a party, with profound implications and exquisite consequences," Rachel Annand Taylor wrote in her February 1928 critique of Deutsch for *The Spectator*, "Since then other parties have happened in fiction, of a noisier, more headaching kind" (275). And a critic from the *New York Times* happened to agree, writing "Despite the vigor of the author's main idea and her magical facility in manipulating the thoughts of her characters, the latter never quite come alive," which led him to the conclusion that Deutsch's book "is a thin, inadequate book, based on a slender satirical idea, with a shadowy content which robs its idea of any intrinsic vitality it may originally

have possessed” (260). Others, like Irwin Edman, defended Deutsch from such criticisms: “I read the ‘Times’ review, and the man was an idiot. If those characters aren’t alive to him, he’s accustomed to think corpses are alive” (Edman 1927). Edman also noted in his 1927 letter to Deutsch that he admires “lots of things in it: the sheer technical adroitness of putting half a dozen lives into one short book and one short night; the music of the prose even where it is apparently vernacular, the hints and flashes of ideas and emotions that most novelists don’t know how to have, much less how to touch” (Edman 1927).

Neither the defenders of Deutsch, nor her detractors, were wrong; she, as many others did, closely followed in Woolf’s footsteps but with much less success. However, the backlash against the book deeply affected Deutsch, leading her to take a six-year hiatus from writing. Despite this setback, "In Such a Night" stands as a testament to Deutsch's commitment to challenging societal norms and her contributions to feminist literature.

Mask of Silenus and The Rogue’s Legacy

Up to this point, this chapter has aimed to portray how Deutsch prioritized the struggle for gender equality by promoting feminist values in American fiction through controversial depictions of domesticity and motherhood; however, Deutsch’s next two novels hardly followed suit in their subject matter, which is perhaps why they were met with much more critical praise than their predecessors. Deutsch’s last two novels, *The Mask of Silenus* (1933) and *The Rogue’s Legacy* (1942), were written nine years apart, and although they focus on different time periods and take different historical personas as their protagonists, they were written with similar intentions: to appropriate Western canonical figures to challenge the founding principles on which Western traditions were built. “It is a noble story, this of the life and death of Socrates,” writes a *New York Times* critic in 1933,

“and it is the supreme merit of this little work that Miss Deutsch both realizes in herself and makes realizable to her reader its extreme nobility and spirituality” (75); he concludes that the novel “deserves both reading and pondering” (75). Herbert Gorman shared a similar sentiment regarding *A Rogue’s Legacy* in another *New York Times* review: “Yet Miss Deutsch makes a valiant attempt and it is here, in her fictional treatment of the inside of Villon, his heart, his passions, his tortured mind and his unstable nature that the best portions of ‘Rogue’s Legacy’ are to be found” (BR5). In line with such positive criticism, Deutsch’s later novels deserve our focus as she interpellates¹² two historical figures as representations of feminist ideologies.

Deutsch’s selections regarding her historical protagonists certainly seem incongruous with her feminist aims and merit some explanation. Beginning with Socrates, not much was known about the personal life of the Greek philosopher. “No one knows, of course,” writes one critic, “whether the Socrates of Plato is the true Socrates or largely a fiction; but in the absence of knowledge – which is impossible – Plato's portrait must be accepted at its face value” (75). Such a void of historical fact allows Deutsch a creative space in which to operate, although her version was certainly influenced by Plato’s commonly accepted interpretation of the philosopher, and Deutsch makes sure to acknowledge this debt to Plato in her author’s note:

That I have borrowed heavily from him should extenuate the offense: the best things in this book are his. Thus, the speeches of Socrates at this trial are but free renderings of the Apology, and the final chapters follow closely Plato’s account of Socrates’ last days. I have attempted to stick to the facts

¹² In the Althusserian context, "interpellation" refers to the process by which individuals are hailed or called into subjectivity by ideological apparatuses, such as literature or cultural representations. Here, the use of "interpellates" suggests that Deutsch's novels actively engage with and position historical figures as symbols of feminist ideologies, thereby influencing readers' perceptions and understanding of feminism within the narrative.

as far as was possible in dealing with a man dead these twenty-five hundred years. Where liberties were taken with the narrative, it was in an effort to bring out the truth, since poetry, as the most influential of the Greeks has it, is a higher thing than history (vii).

Yet the rhetoric of Deutsch's note reveals an ulterior motive; by attributing the contents of her work to Plato ("the best things in this book are his") and by acknowledging her intentions to not deviate from Plato's consecrated version of Socrates ("the final chapters follow closely Plato's account"), Deutsch attempts to sanctify her work through the associated historicity of Plato's text. She urges her readers to conceive of her interpretation of Socrates as historically accurate, defending any deviations from Plato's portrayal as "an effort to bring out the truth," because Deutsch wants to rewrite the foundational principles of Western philosophy as proto-feminist – if Socrates, a founding father of Western philosophy supported equality for women, then modern men should as well; however, if readers are consciously aware of Deutsch's work as a mere fabrication, her didacticism is less effective.

In Plato's writings, Socrates's thoughts regarding gender equality (however minimal) are certainly revolutionary, as he argues for women to equally maintain political positions of power: "Therefore, men and women are by nature the same with respect to guarding the city, except to the extent the one is weaker and the other stronger" (*Resp. V*, 456a). And Plato is straightforward in crediting women -- Aspasia and Diotima – as both an inspiration and a source of education for Socrates regarding rhetoric and argumentation (Waithe 75). Yet other than these moments (and a few lines regarding Socrates's wife, Xanthippe), Plato's portrayal of Socrates and his relationship with, and views on, women are relatively limited. Deutsch, on the other hand, wastes no time imagining how such

relationships molded Socrates and his career as a philosopher, and she exaggerates his philosophical musing in support of principles touted by feminism.

Take, for example, the opening chapter in which the reader witnesses an intimate conversation between Xantippe¹³ and Socrates. Plato's original portrayal of Xantippe in the *Phaedo* suggests that she was a devoted wife and mother, but through continual adaptations, her character has been reduced to a formulaic shrew whose insufferable nagging and cold demeanor provide nothing more than one-dimensional comic relief.¹⁴ The Oxford English Dictionary even defines Xantippe as “an ill-tempered woman.” Deutsch counters these depictions by producing a multifaceted and complicated character. Of course, when the reader is introduced to Xantippe in the opening lines, she is upset with her husband: “She had sworn to herself that she would not utter a word of reproach to her husband, though she was eaten with resentment against the pack of idlers who followed him about, and against him for suffering them gladly” (36), and yelling at Socrates for his late arrival – “Of course I sent for you. If you weren’t fetched, would you ever think of coming home” (39). Xantippe is also seen holding a grudge against Socrates for taking a second wife: “Myrto is a lady, although she does go traipsing off like a market-woman: she can never forget that her grandfather was Aristides, she can think of nothing but her ancestry and her looks. Of course, she is younger than I am” (78). Yet despite presenting these justifiable but stereotypical reactions, Deutsch immediately moves past them, instead, portraying Xantippe’s intimate nature: “it was strange to her to sit with him this

¹³ There are many accepted versions regarding the spelling of Xantippe. For this chapter, I use Deutsch’s chosen spelling.

¹⁴ For more information, see Arlene Saxonhouse’s “Xanthippe: Shrew or Muse,” Cambridge University Press, 2020.

way...strange to have Socrates so close beside her and know that for a whole night she would have him there, and no one to interrupt their privacy, whether they used to quarrel with one another or to sleep” (119).

And in their intimacy, Deutsch reveals the political climate, the Athenian aversion to Socrates, and the dangers he faces through Xantippe’s insightful dialogue: “‘Things haven’t turned out as you planned, eh?’ said Xantippe. ‘Though you’ve listened to your daemon instead of me’,” (135). Xantippe’s concern for her husband, despite her distaste for her current living situation, reflects the devoted wife that Plato discusses; yet Xantippe isn’t limited to such a role, as her concern grows through her active participation within the social settings around her:

‘Things have changed in Athens. We’ve lived through the war and the famine and the Terror. But the end isn’t here yet. Those democrats, they’re only waiting to get a bit of their own back.... You think you hear everything in the marketplace and at the barber’s. You don’t know what I hear when I go to the fountain for water or take the wash to be sunned. They haven’t forgotten that you used to dine with the dictator. Nor that Alcibiades was your pupil’ (200).

Although Xantippe is seen carrying out domestic chores, her sourcing of information and using it as council for Socrates subverts the passive and comedic nature of the trope through which her character is often employed. And this effect is further compounded by her sincerity – “It is because I love you,’ she whispered painfully” (218) – along with the agency she possesses over her own body: “She was only Xantippe, harshened with years and poverty and long uneasiness. But night was kind. And Socrates was still Socrates. She turned toward him with the wonder of an old wife, the faith of a lover. And he with a deep groan of content took her into his burly arms” (232). By providing these complexities regarding Xantippe’s character, Deutsch reshapes the historical perception of their

marriage, and Socrates's relationship with women in general. Xantippe is not simply a devoted wife and mother, but she is an active agent within her environment, an advisor to her spouse, and an equal to Socrates.

Deutsch adds to this commentary through Socrates's philosophical musings. In a discussion with compatriots and students, Deutsch's Socrates is reluctant to discuss the future of Athens, but quick to defend the importance of women within it: "But why do you plague me with prophesying? Surely in any case women would make better augurs than men. Women such as my mother, I mean" (803). And when prodded regarding his meaning, he explains:

Doesn't the shepherd or the beekeeper pay heed to the breeding of his flocks or the mating of his queen-bee, as the case may be? Why shouldn't the breeding of men be held in as high esteem as such work? The midwives have a deal more knowledge about the kinds of children born of different sorts of union than they are ever allowed to use. Can't you fancy a time when the wreaths and the prizes will go....to the midwife who shall deliver the finest child? (818)

Although through the given analogies, it seems Socrates is only valuing women for their abilities to birth and deliver children, it is revealed earlier in the story that he even considers himself to be a midwife: "And what else am I but a midwife?" asked Socrates delightedly. 'A midwife to other men's thoughts' (167). To Socrates, women are responsible for the future not only because they birth children, but because they are able to ideologically condition them. It makes sense then that he believes women would make better "augurs" to predict the future, as they actively shape it by disseminating hegemonic sociopolitical ideologies to the next generation through their proximity and roles as caretakers (midwives and mothers). Such a stance regarding gender equality, according to Deutsch's

interpretation, was one of the main reasons that Socrates is convicted of heresy – becoming a martyr for both intellectual liberty and Deutsch’s feminist beliefs.

It is a story Deutsch retells through her last novel *The Rogue’s Legacy* in 1942 through the rewriting of the life of the fifteenth century French poet, Francois Villon. As with Socrates, not much was known regarding the life of the rebellious and innovative Villon other than his criminal activity and exile from Paris: “Although certain aspect of Villon’s life, particularly his role in various criminal activities, are well documented, there are long stretches of his life about which we know virtually nothing,” (Fein 7). Such historical gaps prove to be the “most serious obstacle to the modern reader” of Villon because he “enjoyed making private jokes that only his immediate audience would be able to understand and appreciate,” which means most scholars “would find themselves precluded from understanding large portions of Villon’s poetic corpus” (Fein 1). Deutsch, however, was not interested in the scholastic pursuit of explicating Villon’s poetry, but rather rewriting the historical figure that had appealed to so many English-speaking Western canonical writers and poets in the early-to-late twentieth century (William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, George Orwell, Gerald Stern, Basil Bunting, and Robert Lowell), and so these gaps, as with Socrates, provided space for creative re-imagining.

Yet unlike Socrates, Villon was far from revolutionary in his thinking regarding the equality of women. Other than his ballade, “The Ballade of the Ladies of Bygone Days” (“La Ballade des dames du temps jadis”), there is very little in Villon’s corpus or history to mitigate his harsh treatment of women. Granted, some scholars will defend Villon’s “misogynistic digressions” as a product of his time -- “undoubtedly appreciated (and expected) by his male audience” (81) -- although that argument seems strained when put

into conversation with Socrates, who predated Villon by nearly 1800 years. Villon's relationship with women wasn't, as some scholars wish to believe, overly complicated: he was a womanizer who believed that lust and sexual promiscuity were inherent in women. Consider the later stanzas (45-63) of *Le Testament* (1461) in which a once lovely and lustful woman gives promiscuous advice to younger "working girls." "What drives women to love so freely and so many?" asks Villon rhetorically, "It is feminine nature" (608-610) he answers. And other than the few comments regarding his mother and sexual encounters with prostitutes (who are glorified in his writing), not much else is known regarding Villon's personal relationships with women.

This historical ambiguity, however, did not stop Deutsch from re-imagining women, or Katherine de Vauselles to be specific, as Villon's source of artistic inspiration. Although Villon mentions Katherine de Vauselles in his poetry -- "Who was it made me swallow this / Except Katherine de Vauselles?" ("Qui me fist macher ces grosselles / Fors Katherine de Vauselles?") (60-61), David Fein reminds us that not only is there little known about the historical figure -- "We know nothing of Katherine, although a family names Vaucelles resided in the general neighborhood where Villon grew up" (2) -- but that her sole mentioning in the poem (according to academic speculation) reflects an "amorous misadventure" that could be in reference to "an adultery case prosecuted in 1461" (2). Deutsch nonetheless ennobles Vauselles's importance within her novel, presenting her as an important character and influence within Villon's life; Vauselles, according to Deutsch, is Villon's singular motivation: "With the clangor and color of the greatest city in the world, with the fierce coarse life of the streets by day and the secret excitements of the night. With everything that made his verses. With the demoiselle Katherine" (14). And during his exile,

Katherine was the only thing giving Villon hope: “A hundred times he had imagined how Katherine would look, what she would say, when he presented her with the necklace at last. He had no wish to lose it to the abbess. But if it would buy his return to Paris, to Katherine herself...” (72). Deutsch’s love-struck Villon also turned down the company of prostitutes (in contrast to historical records): “Ysabeau put an arm around the lean throat and breathed a shuddering ‘ah-h.’ But Villon only pulled her ear and laughed” (7), because he was saving himself for Katherine as well (8).

For someone who was fascinated with “the terrible honesty and liveliness of Villon” and wanted to “bring him, alive and kicking violently, before men and women today” (2), Deutsch certainly diminished the misogynistic attributes of her protagonist. Deutsch’s decision, however, fit in with the dominant portrayal of Villon during the early twentieth century that was expressed in similar works, including Justin McCarthy’s romantic novel, *If I Were King* (1901), or its operettic 1925 adaptation by Rudolf Frimi, *The Vagabond King*. And although Deutsch seems to be erasing Villon’s controversial past, she is once again providing validity to her interpretation through associations with hegemonic cultural perceptions. To insist on a feminist interpretation of Villon’s otherwise ambiguous poetic works as the correct interpretation not only undermines the sexist connotations that may have drawn a sexist audience to the poet, but it ingrains feminist tenets as founding principles for Western poetry. By reaffirming a fictitious, but popular, belief that Villon was a romantic as opposed to a misogynist, Deutsch is once again trying to historicize feminism as an integral part of Western literary society.

Deutsch’s interpretation of Villon as less of a playboy and more of a romantic figure is a feminist endeavor, not merely romanticized revisionism. By reshaping Villon’s

relationship with women, particularly through the character of Katherine de Vauselles, Deutsch challenges the entrenched misogynistic narratives that have long dominated historical and literary depictions of the poet. Rather than simply glossing over Villon's documented misogyny and criminality, Deutsch reimagines his motivations and relationships in a way that emphasizes the influence and significance of women in his life. This approach serves to counterbalance the historical tendency to marginalize or vilify female figures in the stories of prominent male artists. By doing so, Deutsch not only humanizes Villon but also asserts the importance of the agency of women and their roles in cultural and artistic development. This feminist reinterpretation insists that women's contributions and influence are integral to understanding the full scope of literary history, thereby offering a more inclusive and equitable narrative. Thus, Deutsch's portrayal of Villon is not just a romanticized retelling but a deliberate effort to integrate feminist principles into the literary canon, challenging the audience to reconsider and appreciate the complexity of female agency and presence in historical contexts.

However, Deutsch's endeavors to challenge patriarchal standards within American academia and literary criticism ultimately proved relatively ineffective. Despite her efforts, she found herself overshadowed by prevailing patriarchal norms. Critics like Herbert Gorman denounced her novel for its "over-idealizing" portrayal of Katherine de Vauselles, suggesting that it did not accurately represent Francois Villon (Gorman BR5) because for Gorman, Katherine de Vauselles would not historically possess as much agency as Deutsch's character. Gorman's refusal to let Deutsch fictionalize a historical figure not only reflected the dominance of American patriarchy, but also highlighted broader issues within the US literary landscape, characterized by the hegemony of patriarchal values and

conventional literary forms. Both Deutsch and British female modernists saw their work dismissed by critics as culturally insignificant anomalies, with works advocating feminine perspectives and cultural brokerage marginalized.

In the face of this patriarchal trend, authors like Babette Deutsch struggled to gain recognition, their innovative works often ignored or forgotten in favor of less daring literary discourses. Deutsch's attempts to introduce feminine themes to American readers and invigorate American fiction through unconventional forms like stream-of-consciousness, second-person narration, and taboo topics largely went unnoticed. Her literary work was groundbreaking, daringly exploring taboo subjects like same-sex relationships, providing detailed, graphic descriptions of childbirth, and including themes of underage female masturbation. Her critique of idealized domestic life and feminist reinterpretations of historical figures, such as Villon, challenged prevailing gender norms and offered new perspectives on women's roles. Despite this bold content, her work often remained overshadowed by more conventional narratives.

This dismissal took a toll on her, particularly in her later years. Following a mastectomy in 1963 and the death of her husband in 1975, Deutsch experienced severe bouts of depression due to the critical neglect of her creative works, leading her to undergo electric shock therapy. Upon learning of Deutsch's late-life treatment, Kay Boyle poignantly asked in a manner that resonates with profound insight, and perhaps best summarizes this chapter: "Are you being penalized for your strength, courage, and resilience as a woman, poet, and friend" (Boyle 1978).

In conclusion, Deutsch's life and work were marked by a persistent confrontation with gender discrimination in various forms. From challenging biased publishers to

resisting objectification by her contemporaries, Deutsch actively contributed to the advancement of feminist ideals through her fiction. Her refusal to conform to patriarchal norms and her insistence on exploring feminist themes within her writing underscore her firm determination to advocate for gender equality. Despite facing criticism and obstacles, Deutsch's legacy as a novelist deserves re-evaluation, especially in the context of contemporary cultural studies and feminist theory. Through her exploration of modernist formalisms, engagement with historical figures, and promotion of feminist discourses, Deutsch's fiction continues to serve as a significant contribution to the ongoing struggle for gender equality and the liberation of marginalized voices in literature.

CHAPTER 4

“FOREIGN SOIL”: DISSIDENT PRACTICES IN BABETTE DEUTSCH’S

TRANSLATION ANTHOLOGIES

Translations are like the wrong side of a Turkey carpet, which useth to be full of thrums and knots, and nothing so even as the right side.

James Howell

Although Deutsch’s collections of poetry were well-received and award-winning in her lifetime, her anthologies of translations have frequently been regarded as her magna opera, garnering enthusiastic support from contemporary editors, critics, and peers. Harriet Monroe extolled *Contemporary German Poetry; An Anthology* (1923) as adept and comprehensive (55), while other readers contended that the translations are “disciplined and perceiving” (Taylor 429). William Carlos Williams and Dorothy Richardson corresponded with Deutsch, commending both her Russian and German translations for their aesthetic qualities (Williams, Richardson). George Garrett wrote to Babette Deutsch in 1960 to discuss his newfound appreciation for the translator after reading Deutsch’s translations: “I wasn’t looking at the translators at first, just reading along. Then a poem jumped off the page and flew around my head like a real poem, not like the usual ‘translation,’ it was yours....it was fun and it taught me so much about the whole effort of translation” (Garrett). And even Marianne Moore, despite the editorial dispute regarding Deutsch’s publication in *The Dial*, held her translations in high regard (Moore). In my view, the significance of her translations lies not only in their value as poems in their own right but also in their cultural impact insofar as Deutsch sought to broker both Russian and

German poetry into the U.S. literary scene during the turbulent interwar period when both cultures were persecuted, and their members were viewed as *personae non gratae*.

Translation as Interpretation

To understand interlingual translation as one form of Deutsch's cultural brokerage, however, it is important to recognize translation as an interpretive act, as an act of rewriting that at once transforms and assimilates a source text to the receiving culture. This understanding, known as the hermeneutic model, conceives of translation as “fundamentally variable interpretation” that “guarantees that a translation is relatively autonomous from its source text even while establishing a variety of interpretive relations to that text” (Venuti 2). It can be traced back to an 1813 lecture by Friedrich Schleiermacher – a German theorist and consecrator in his own right – on the different methods of translation. He believes there are only two methods: “Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him” (56). Inspired by German nationalist zeal, linguistic preservation, and linguistic development (through the enrichment enabled by the foreign) in the face of French cultural and military domination (The Napoleonic Wars), Schleiermacher began a “program of translation” (Casanova 6) to mobilize efforts of cultural brokerage that relied on the interpretive fluctuation translation offers. As such, he favors the first method he proposes as a means of accruing linguistic-literary capital. Schleiermacher believes that “the more precisely the translation adheres to the turns and figures of the original” (53) regarding both European and non-European classics, the more linguistic and literary resources the German language will absorb so that it can “most vigorously flourish and develop its own strength” through “contact with the

foreign” (62). It is an attempt at culture-building which would produce “a great historical whole that will be preserved at the center and heart of Europe” (62) through the brokerage of foreign texts that directly rejects the “Frenchifying” domesticating translation practices, exemplified by d’Ablancourt’s “les belles infidèles,” that submit European classics to the then hegemonic cultural values of eighteenth-nineteenth century France.¹

In calling for foreignizing translations to be produced “en masse” (62), however, Schleiermacher acknowledges that such translation discourses can only exist under two conditions: “that the understanding of foreign texts be acknowledged as a known and desirable state, and that a certain flexibility be granted to our native tongue” (55). The “understanding” here is procured and developed by “the well educated man ... who is well acquainted with the foreign language” (51). It follows then that Schleiermacher’s method of translation signals difference by assimilating the source text to the values of an elite cultural minority, his circle of academics, which means deviating from the popular. This is further evidenced by his advice to avoid language that is “quotidian” (53), and his reference to authors – Plato, Tacitus, Grotius, Leibniz – that were not well-known with the (presumably less-educated) working class of the eighteenth century. Schleiermacher, in other words, is attempting to enact literary refinement through specific consecrators (in this

¹ D’Ablancourt’s translation practices, known as “les belles infidèles” (the beautiful unfaithful ones), emerged in the 17th century and prioritized cultural adaptation, fluency, and elegance in the target language (French) at the expense of literal accuracy. These translations, often significant rewritings of the originals, aimed to make texts appealing and accessible to French readers. While praised for their readability, they attracted criticism for their infidelity to source texts. This approach highlights the tension between fidelity and readability in translation and prefigures modern theories emphasizing cultural adaptation and reader response (D’Ablancourt, 17th century).

case, professors such as himself) by having them selectively appropriate foreign classical texts based on their perceptions of the texts' cultural values.

Schleiermacher's hermeneutic model provides the necessary groundwork for understanding not only the variability of translation, but its violent potential as an appropriative and possibly dissident cultural practice. Almost two centuries later (after Schleiermacher's lecture was translated into English for the first time in 1977 by Andre Lefevere), this dichotomy was further developed (and perhaps further weaponized) by Lawrence Venuti. He proposes the methodological distinction between domestication, "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values," and foreignization, "an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text" (*Translator's Invisibility* 20), with foreignizing being an interpretation, not a reproduction, of the source text. By the time Venuti takes on Schleiermacher's terms, however, they have undergone a revision through poststructuralist thinking. The distinction between "domesticating" and "foreignizing" in Venuti does not constitute a strict (or even a loose) binary opposition insofar as he sees all translation as fundamentally assimilationist, a rewriting of the source text in terms that are "intelligible and interesting" (*Contra Instrumentalism* 2) in the receiving situation – therefore domesticating. What makes foreignizing such is that the domestic terms are marginal in various ways in relation to the dominant, the mainstream, and so foreignizing draws on what is relatively unfamiliar or even strange to broad segments of the receiving situation. What Venuti calls domesticating, then, is more thorough-going, because it draws on but questions what is dominant or mainstream, what is therefore immediately accessible, familiar, even comforting, possibly – in the end – self-congratulatory (since the experience

confirms what the receptor knows and values). So, domesticating/foreignizing contains a slippage. The virgule is simultaneously an equal sign.

Venuti, despite this slippage, opts for foreignization as well, noting that it can be used as a tool for “conceptualizing a revolt against the dominance of transparent discourse in current English-language translation” (*Translator’s Invisibility* 130). By developing affiliations with marginalized domestic values, Venuti argues, the translator can question both dominant values and the ideological hegemony of the receiving culture over other cultures, domestic as well as foreign, even as the foreign text undergoes assimilation to a domestic agenda. Yet foreignizing translation does not give back the foreign, only the foreign mediated by the receiving situation, thus a foreignism. Translation cannot “capture” or “preserve” the source text; it establishes correspondences and approximations, but always transforms since those are the means of its interpretation. It follows then that translations need to be addressed not as transparent reproductions of the source texts, but as works of cultural brokerage, simultaneously vulnerable and susceptible, aggressive and colonizing in relation to the source and receiving cultures of the translator’s time and place.

But if translation is to be seen this way, as a tool for the appropriation and distribution of cultural values, Casanova’s world literary system needs to be recognized as the dominant mode of understanding literary globalization. Keeping with a similar dichotomy as proposed by Schleiermacher and reformed by Venuti, Casanova notes that translation as mediation acts as a vehicle in which an unequal exchange of linguistic-literary capital between cultures occurs: either “translation-accumulation” takes place “when, through a collective strategy, the dominated national literary fields attempt to import literary capital,” or “translation-consecration” happens “when the dominating

consecrators import a text from a dominated literary field” (410). The forms, practices, and prestige that accompany canonical works are transferred through translation as a “power struggle” (410) between cultures.

Although English, German, and Russian are more dominant languages as opposed to more peripheral languages (e.g., Catalan, Khanty, Ongata) in Casanova’s hierarchy, Babette Deutsch still takes part in such a power struggle when producing translation anthologies because German and Russian and their associated ideologies were not dominant in US Anglophone culture during Deutsch’s period as a result of the World War and October Revolution. Deutsch was fully aware of the linguistic-literary hierarchies within the United States, and she feared that extinction of German and Russian cultural values given the rise of American xenophobia and the increased demand for political provincialism. And although she may have been unaware of Schleiermacher’s program of translation, she certainly understood the dissident potential of translation as interpretation in both theory and practice. She reveals this hermeneutical understanding of translation in the forewords of her two anthologies when she insists her translations are independent from their source texts: “yet in every instance the paramount consideration was not accuracy, but the desire to present a composition which would be as truly a poem as a translation of a poem” (*Contemporary German Poetry* viii).

Deutsch’s belief in writing a translation that can stand in its own right is quintessentially a part of modernist experimentalism, Poundian even. In his 1929 essay, “Guido’s Relations,” Pound boasts a similar perspective – one that he concludes by recognizing two forms of translation. The first “interpretive” form operates as a “metrical gloze” that adheres closely to the source text, which is positioned directly across the printed

page from the translation. For the second form, Pound explains: “I mean in cases where the ‘translater’ is definitely making a new poem, falls simply in the domain of original writing, or if it does not it must be censured according to equal standards, and praised with some sort of just deduction, assessable only in the particular case” (“Guido’s Relations” 105). Pound’s proposition is dialectical, at once yoking the values of translations to their aesthetic qualities while unburdening them from the shadows of the source texts. Yet as remarkable as Pound’s revelation is, and as much credit as he receives for his innovative take regarding translation, astoundingly, Deutsch beats him to the punch nearly a decade earlier in the foreword to her Russian anthology:

These [Russian poems] were not mere flowers for the plucking. They needed to be transplanted into strange soil, which was not hospitable to them all. Translation has been likened to “the wrong side of a Turkey carpet.” The question was how best to carry over, unbroken and undiminished, the colors and contours of the right side. We are attached to the idea that we have given as much to the originals as we took from them.... But juggling is a fine art, not unworthy of the service of Notre Dame, and the three bright balls of substance, form, and spirit were not always easy to keep in the air at once. (v-vi)

Although neither straightforward nor thorough, Deutsch lays the groundwork for a hermeneutical approach to translation, albeit a contradictory one. She begins with the instrumentalist assumption regarding the possible “reproduction or transfer of an invariant in form, meaning, or effect” that is contained in the source text and that she can “carry over, unbroken and undiminished.” Juggling, however, gets in the way: “the three bright balls of substance, form, and spirit were not always easy to keep in the air at once,” and as the balls fall, she seemingly recognizes the impossibility of the task. She understands the role culture (or “soil”) plays in the interpretive processes of both producing and receiving a translation and source text, and as such, she is fully aware that her translations will not give back the original compositions. These formulations regarding translation are

innovative not only for her time, but even in the present day when instrumentalism remains the dominant model in translation theory, criticism, and practice, and the hermeneutic model is so much as an afterthought. So, when Ezra Pound vituperatively asked, “Dear Miss Deutsch, What do you offer,” (Pound) perhaps he was blithely unaware that she had contributed to a dissident understanding of translation and cultural brokerage that he had only formulated a decade later.

Deutsch as Editor

With this hermeneutic understanding of translation, it follows that Deutsch’s translation anthologies *Modern Russian Poetry* (1921) and *Contemporary German Poetry* (1923) are a prime example of the cultural brokerage and foreignizing possibilities that translation as an unequal exchange of literary value has to offer. Deutsch, like her modernist peers, partakes in such transnationalist efforts and signals the value of foreign texts, through her roles as both translator and editor. By simply choosing to include in her anthology, say, lesser-known German poets, and consequently introducing German literary culture into the American poetry scene, despite the negative perceptions regarding German American diglossia during the early twentieth century, Deutsch “challenges the contemporary canon of foreign literature” in her receiving culture and maintains “a refusal of the dominant” (Venuti 125), regardless of whether her choice was “admittedly biased by personal taste” (*Contemporary German Poetry* vii).

This “personal taste,” however, is insightful as it reveals Deutsch’s agenda through both her selection of authors and her discursive strategies regarding the two anthologies. Deutsch intends to use her interpretative approach to appropriate the poetry of both Russian and German writers. She wants to rehabilitate the image of Germany in the American

cultural memory by producing the illusion of distance between the German populace and their recent war atrocities, while both downplaying the effects of the October Revolution and distancing herself from communism. She expresses her lofty political hopes regarding Germany in the foreword of her German anthology, noting that her effort was to “present such material as would mirror the trend of culture and the temper of the period covered” so that the anthology “may add a cubit to the bridge of understanding and reconciliation between the two peoples” (vii-viii). With this in mind, Deutsch includes a variety of authors under two sections: “Masters” (ix) which includes historical German authors the likes of Detlev von Liliencron, Arno Holz, Stefan George, and Christian Morgenstern; and “The Younger Group,” (xi) which is predominantly composed of poets associated with German Expressionism such as Iwan Goll, Albert Ehrenstein, Wilhelm Klemm, Georg Trakl, Georg Heym, and Gottfried Benn, and which amounts to the larger portion of the anthology. And despite a supposed difference in poetic style between the two sections mentioned, Deutsch includes German Expressionists – Franz Werfel and Elsa Lasker-Schüler – in the “Masters” section as well. The Expressionist movement’s extensive representation throughout Deutsch's anthology is a direct consequence of her agenda of reconciliation as she intends to cast the German populace in a sympathetic light.

This young, loosely associated group of writers, artists, and intellectuals had little in common except the recurring themes of anti-authoritarianism and anti-war, or according to Deutsch, a few “recurrent motifs,” and in style, “an eccentric febrile technique, a heightened emotional tonus” shared by individuals “of widely varying character” (xxii). Characterized by an overwhelming social and political pessimism, Expressionist poets relied on stripped-down poetics by utilizing strings of nouns and a few adjectives and

infinitive verbs to eliminate narrative and description to get at the essence of feeling. This pessimism is evident in their stark imagery and themes of decay, death, and suffering, reflecting a profound disillusionment with societal structures and the aftermath of war. See, for instance, the lines from Deutsch's translations of Trakl's "Amen," in which the decayed and moldering imagery evokes a sense of inevitable decline and hopelessness:

Decayed things gliding through the moldering room;
Shadows on yellow hangings; in dark mirrors
Arches the ivory sorrow of our hands" (144, 1-3);

or Rudolf Leonhardt's "The Dead Liebknecht," which suggests a grim resignation to violence and death with the unsettling depiction of a smiling corpse:

And with a glimmer
of keen
bright teeth,
his corpse is seen
to smile." (156, 9-13);

or lastly, Ehrenstein's "Suffering" that conveys a relentless passage of time and personal decay, symbolizing broader social degradation under authoritarian rule:

Loathsome as a spider
Time creeps over me.
My hair falls out,
My head greys, like a field
Where the last reaper
Swings his sickle" (143, 3-8).

These traits, according to Heinrich Mann, a founder and advocate of the German Expressionist movement, and his Expressionist manifesto *Geist und Tat* (1910), were produced with two goals in mind: to become agitators and to ally themselves with the people against authority (186). The pervasive sense of despair and futility in their poetry underscores their opposition to the prevailing social and political order, aligning their artistic expressions with a broader anti-authoritarian sentiment. Although at the time of the

anthology, German Expressionism was a marginal movement, Deutsch exaggerates their influence by introducing these poets to an American audience as a dominant German literary movement established in protest against the existing regime “to convey the mood and manner of current German verse” (Deutsch vii), and many for the first time (it was not until decades later that household names like Benn, Trakl, or Lasker-Schüler received book-length translations). In doing so, Deutsch combats the established perception of the German Hun – a war-hungry, sinister, militaristic savage – because the hope for reconciliation between Germany and the U.S. “however touched with skepticism, the editors did not surrender in offering the book” (viii). This is bolstered by the inclusion of German writers, such as Walter Hasenclever, whose works are not featured in the anthology, but who have autobiographical nods in the *Who’s Who in German Poetry* section, and who were then posterchildren of youthful dissidence, in Hasenclever’s own words, “against the war and the military caste” (190).

Deutsch’s use of German Expressionism, however, was not her first time partaking in dissident editorial practices. In collaboration with Yarmolinsky two years prior, Deutsch appropriated the works of Russian poets to distance herself and her husband from Bolshevism through the suppression of communist ideals and post-revolution politics. Deutsch gives reason to her wide-ranging editorial selections for her Russian anthology, noting that “some concession was made to historical considerations” and the “effort was to give a brief general glimpse of the classic poets and to treat in greater detail the moderns and contemporaries who are, to the translators, as to the readers, more of a living actuality” (*Modern Russian Poetry* v). Although Deutsch does provide a larger focus (and more physical space within the book) to modernists, her heavy-handed commentary for each

Russian poet reveals her preferential treatment towards pre-revolutionary poets; poets who were held in high regard with white émigrés, and who were symbolic of Imperial Russia. She even condemns the effects that the October Revolution had on poetry: “The crudity and naivete of the workmen’s poetry produced since the revolution is redeemed by a hard-handed grasp on reality” and that the poetry’s only benefit is “the return to realism” (xix). Interestingly, to Deutsch, the most attractive trait of post-revolution poetry is that it can, at times, point back to pre-revolution poetics. But Russian pre-revolution poetics hardly cater to Deutsch’s modernist tastes at that time in her career, which were much more aligned with the Imagists, and so this preferential treatment must be a consequence of Deutsch’s attempt to distance herself from the Russian sphere of influence.

Take her discussion of the great innovator Sergey Gorodetsky, who wrote symbolist, acmeist, proletariat poetry, and who mentored the new peasant poets. Rather than speaking of Gorodetsky’s accolades (as he had been writing for nearly two decades at the time the anthology was published) or his relationship with Anglo-American Imagism, Deutsch opts to downplay his aesthetic qualities and adaptability, noting that “this rather uneven and sometimes slovenly poet worshiped at many shrines” (146). Although this criticism may seem consistent with Deutsch’s editorial role in writing introductory material for the presented poets, there is a clear contradiction as Deutsch mentions in the foreword that “The principle of selection was, so far as might be, aesthetic” (v) and that “Poems were chosen less for their representative quality than for their immediate worth and, of course, their ability to stand the test of translation” (v). Deutsch does not clearly define the parameters of the translation “test,” but if aesthetics were of top priority, why include an “uneven” and “slovenly” poet if “representative quality” was not of importance? Perhaps

it is not Gorodetsky's poetry then that unnerves Deutsch but his political commitments with his "many shrines" referring not to poetic movements but political ones: "The poet became a jingo patriot when Russia entered the war, and later was as vociferously allied to the Bolsheviks as he had been to his Czar" (146). This line of reasoning also justifies Deutsch's omission of Gorodetsky's more popular and more political poetry (like his 1917 "Russia") in favor of his earlier works that espoused western influences in form (French symbolism) and ideologies (Yarila's connection with Dionysus emphasized by Deutsch's translation), and therefore would be more digestible for Anglophone audiences while suppressing the radical threat that the more modern workmen's poetry posed.

Yet Deutsch's agenda as editor is complex and contradictory at times, and her position becomes uneven as her loyalties are divided not only between dialectically opposed cultures, but between politics and poetry. She wants to improve the cultural relationship between Germany and the United States, and simultaneously suppress her family's ties with the Soviet Union and communism, all while bolstering American modernism through contact with the foreign. These preferences, whose prioritization seemingly change throughout Deutsch's career, lead to discrepancies and contradictions in Deutsch's commentary and handling of foreign modernisms. She lauds German modernism and deplores Russian modernism despite similarities in the poetic styles and movements. These discrepancies, however, can also be attributed to Deutsch's status within the United States. Although Deutsch was never going to be persecuted for her German American diglossia, her perceived allegiances to the Soviet Union and communism posed a very real threat. As a once classified CIA document (written in 1962) reveals, Deutsch and Yarmolinsky were under investigation for their associations with the

communist party because “Avraham was a member of the Board of Directors of the American Russian Institute, described by the Senate subcommittee as a Communist controlled auxiliary of the Institute of Pacific Relations” (43) and,

Deutsch, who writes poetry and with her husband, reportedly translates the works of Soviet authors from Russian to English for sale in the United States through International Publishers, cited by the House committee as an official facility of the Communist conspiracy. (43)

Although the investigation eventually concluded that Yarmolinsky and Deutsch’s records were ones “of strong and active anti-Communism” (43), the political pressures on Deutsch most certainly had an effect. Yet despite such political pressures, Deutsch’s allegiances still swayed between political-distancing and advancing modernism with her political agenda giving way to her modernist sensibilities at times, and vice versa.

Contradictions and In-Betweens

This continuous sway that affected Deutsch's decision-making as editor also impacted her translation strategies, and so it demands further exploration. It can be more overtly observed in her book of poetry criticism, *Poetry in Our Time* (1952), and more specifically, some of her anti-reformist rhetoric as, for instance, in her section of criticism regarding war-associated poetry produced by American poets the likes of e.e. cummings, Allen Tate, Archibald Macleish, Horace Gregory, Muriel Rukeyser, Kenneth Fearing, Wallace Stevens, and Langston Hughes. In a time when “the muse of Marx” (359) reigned supreme, Deutsch claims that the over-bearing political commitment of these poets is a “‘great anti-lure’ not because it took the poets away from the practice of their art but because it engrossed that art” (359). Deutsch’s criticism is not so much a suppression of politics here, but rather a proponent of modernist aesthetics. Her commentary is not always forthright, and at times, the tension between her need for political distance and allegiance

to modernism comes into play. Al Filreis observes this tension in the form of discrepancies in another one of his footnotes:

In her section on the Auden group, Deutsch concluded that the ‘devotees of the Social Muse in Great Britain were young men whose social sympathies did not destroy a lively interest in their craft.’ Earlier parts of the book on American poets of the 1930s drew the opposite conclusion about them. (358)

The distinction between Deutsch’s treatment of the two groups is an important one, and despite Filreis’s ambiguity regarding “Earlier parts of the book” (there are many, after all, in which Deutsch discusses American poets), she, for the most part, praises the Imagists, Eliot, and other American poets; so, it can be assumed he is referencing the section regarding American war poetry in which she writes “The convention that poetry must be aggressively revolutionary in tone.... was largely an American one” (360). But rather than asking why such discrepancies exist, Filreis quickly condemns Deutsch as part of a conservative conspiracy. If, however, her priority was entirely “antiradical,” (105) as Filreis claims it to be, why praise the communist poetry of the Auden group? And if she had become “antiexperimental,” (105) why laud other American poets, like the Imagists, during the same period?

Deutsch’s tastes were modernist, after all; she subscribed to the Imagist tenets set forth by Pound that included linguistic precision and rejected the static traditions of the 1890s, and so she translated to recover foreign poetries that might advance these values in English. These preferences can be glimpsed from the discrepancies that arise in her poetry criticism such as in her discussion of Wilfred Owen – the soldier poet who is undoubtedly political, and whose “school” Deutsch praises the Auden group for going to, despite his work notoriously being called “all blood, dirt, and sucked sugar stick” (351). Deutsch, however, is more hesitant than Yeats to discard Owen’s poetry regardless of its heavy

political message, and in her review, she seemingly conflates political messaging with the conventional, mainstream poetry she disfavors. So, when Owen's poetry follows the conventional standards of his time, it is "flawed by the obtrusiveness of the technical devices, as well as by irrelevant archaisms" (349) which come as a result of trying to find a "poetic structure equal to the emotion it was meant to bear" (349) in its description of World War I atrocities. Although it may seem from her commentary that the war is to blame, to Deutsch, poetic formalism falters under its subject's weight. When Owen dabbles, however, in a more innovative approach, an approach that mirrors Imagism, the war is no longer problematic as the subject in poetry:

In "The Show," the technical innovations are more effective.... "From a vague height," where his soul stands with Death, the poet looks down on "a sad land, weak with sweats of dearth." The flatness of the vowels helps to display the barren fields, pocked and scabbed with plagues that are not named. He describes what he sees crawling over that sad land in terms that actualize the hideousness of trench warfare. The imagery is sustained in all its powerful ugliness to the end. (349-350)

Note the line that Deutsch chooses to present to the reader -- its conversational tone, minimal phrasing, imagery. Concision, clarity, "flatness" to produce an image that is innovative, sustaining, and effective, are the poetic qualities that Deutsch holds most dear. She is not a political doctrinaire; she does not let her political distancing or even her cultural platforms interfere with her allegiances to modernism. If Owen's war poetry has potential value to Deutsch, she certainly cannot be either "antiradical" or "antiexperimental," but rather was opposed to the "conventional, usually insipid, see-no-evil verse" that espoused "Aesthetic-Decadent-Symbolist-Impressionist" (Perkins 100) formalism and had a stranglehold on American poetry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

This rejection of mainstream poetics can also be gleaned from her discussion of both friend and contemporary writer, William Carlos Williams. In an earlier chapter of

Poetry in Our Time, she lauds the Imagists for their foraging of foreign cultural values, specifically the “lessons in economy” presented by the Japanese Tanka and Haiku, or the “stop-short” quatrains of Chinese poetry crafted by Li Po (83). But despite Pound’s heavy lifting as the leader of the movement and a cultural broker in his own right, Deutsch finds that “H.D. and Dr. Williams proved most faithful to the tenets of the group” with Williams possessing a superior “concision and concreteness” that has “repaid his debt with interest” to Pound (99). But it is not just the Imagists that Williams transcends, as Deutsch elevates modernist poetry over mainstream poets, poets who have gained national reputations, with Williams being “More of a realist than Lindsay, more of a craftsman than Masters or Sandburg” and produces “poetry that cuts deeper” than his contemporaries (100). To Deutsch, Williams is *the* American poet, whose “staccato rhythms are those of American speech” and whose material “is the American scene” in which “Nothing is too slight, nothing is too mean, for his attention” because he “prefers simply to present the objects, the facts, even in his more complex pieces” and even when drawing on “foreign subject matter” (99, 100-101).

It is no wonder then that Williams only had positive words in his review of Deutsch’s book of criticism: “As far as I am concerned, she has come off with the prize: the best book, the most able, the most readable that has yet been written on the poem in its modern phase. I don’t know of any book I am so eager to sit down with and to have as my own” (Williams). Flattery, however, may not have been the only reason Williams enjoyed *Poetry in Our Time*. He and Deutsch had a lifelong friendship, that although bolstered by their geographical proximity, was founded on the shared interest in producing “THE POEM; that transcends all the talk about it” (Williams). It was an obsession that not only led to

countless epistolary exchanges between the two for over three decades (up until the time of Williams's death) but led to their joint definition of a poetic credence that denounces "exact symbolism" and the "obscurity of purpose" (perhaps in rejection of Eliot) in favor of a poem that is "dealing exclusively with sensation" because it "knows what cannot be 'known'," (Williams). Williams and Deutsch began to prioritize this "sensation" through marginalized poetic values and foreign influences out of a dissatisfaction with the then contemporary poetry. It is also this "sensation" as described by Williams and Deutsch, along with her political intentions, that inspires Deutsch's dissident translation practices.

Deutsch as Translator

Deutsch accumulates linguistic-literary capital from foreign sources to emphasize the marginalized poetic values that she discusses with Williams through her discursive translation strategies. By appropriating the Romantic forlorn poetry of pre-revolution Russian poets like Alexander Pushkin and German anti-war poets like Albert Ehrenstein, along with the more concise, realistically detailed verse of the Russian Imaginist and German Expressionist poets, Deutsch broadens the cosmopolitanism of American modernism while attempting to rehabilitate the images of postwar German culture and post-revolution Russian culture. And although Deutsch does imitate, say, Ehrenstein's and Pushkin's Romanticism or Benn's and Yesenin's modernism to some extent, which points to a notion of equivalence, she is aware that the translation discourse she chose for these authors does not reflect the conventional German or Russian of their days, and she does not care as "What we continually sought was to produce, in the end, a poem" (*Modern Russian Poetry* vi). What remains constant, however, throughout Deutsch's translations is her experimentalism. She was consistently innovative, relying on multiple concepts of

equivalence and producing a stylistic range that includes the clear and precise techniques of Imagism and nonstandard linguistic forms such as poetical archaisms and colloquialisms, while touting autonomous translation.

It is this hermeneutical understanding of translation that allows Deutsch to bring forth an Imagist interpretation of German Expressionism. If concision, clarity, the rhythms of everyday speech, and the focuses of everyday life as presented in her commentary on Owen and Williams are of value to Deutsch, then translating the expressionists in her German anthology are congruous with these aims. These parallels to German Expressionism, for instance, are highlighted in Deutsch's translation of Gottfried Benn's poem, "Man and Woman Go through the Cancer Ward" ("Mann und Frau Gehn durch Die Krebsbaracke," 1912). The poem, as the title suggests, taps into Benn's medical background, and provides an objective, static, and concrete focus of a cancer ward through a colloquial cadence. Deutsch's translation keeps a close formal and semantic correspondence to the poetic lines that depict these traits: "Here in these rows are wombs that have decayed, / and in this row are breasts that have decayed. / Bed beside stinking bed. Hourly the sisters change" (150, 20-22). Yet there are deviations in Deutsch's translation in its approximation to the source text. When a superfluous word can be found, Deutsch removes it: "Das Fleisch ist weich und schmerzt nicht" which could be translated as "The flesh is weak and hurts not" becomes "The yielding flesh is numbed" (150, 11), or "Hier dieser schnitt man / Erst noch ein Kind aus dem verkrebsten Schoß" drops the redundant "Hier"² (with "here this one was cut" becoming "this one was cut") (150, 14). And when the syntactical inversion that is common in the German language leads to increased verbiage in the English rendition, Deutsch opts for a more concise phrasing, with

“Nur sonntags für den Besuch läßt man sie etwas wacher” (“Only Sundays for visitation one allows them to be a little more awake”) becoming “But Sundays one rouses them a bit for visitors” (150, 17-19). By avoiding the archaic inversion and consequently a markedly poetical form of diction, Deutsch is also making her language more contemporary, more conversational. It is as if Deutsch is willing the American reader to feel “the understanding objectivity of the physician in his approach to his subject” (*Poetry in Our Time* 99), a descriptor she uses for Williams that can easily be applied to Benn, and this translation of Benn, as well.

Deutsch applies her Imagist interpretants to Benn’s other poetry as well such as in her translation “Lovely Childhood” (“Schöne Jugend,” 1912). Rather than attempting to create a stylistic approximation, Deutsch reduces Benn’s poem to exact the image by avoiding his heavy use of both alliteration and assonance, perhaps following Pound’s notion that it is for the “neophyte” to “know assonance and alliteration” (203). Therefore, “Der Mund eines Mädchens,” which could be translated as “The mouth of a maiden” to preserve the alliteration becomes “The mouth of a girl,” (149, 1) and “Die Brust aufbrach” (“The breast was broken open”) becomes “The breast was cut open” (149, 2), and “Die andern lebten von Leber and Niere” (“The others lived on liver and kidneys”) becomes “the others thrived on liver and kidneys” (149, 6). It is in pursuit of the image that Deutsch also seemingly fails to recognize the double entendre at play in Benn’s title “Schöne Jugend” (“Beautiful Youth”), which could refer to the “Mädchen” mentioned in the first line before the “Nest von jungen Ratten” (“Nest of young rats”) (149, 4) is ever revealed. Instead of producing a poem that revels in ambiguity as Benn does, Deutsch chooses a

more concrete image by translating “Jugend” (“Youth”) as “Childhood” and “Schöne” (“Beautiful”) as “Lovely.”

These decisions, however, are not simply aesthetic as they also neuter the political indeterminacy of Benn’s poetry. Bilingual German Americans were unsure regarding Benn’s political commitments; his loyalties, after all, did waiver between stark nationalism and disillusionment with the two world wars, and so, as one reviewer notes, his writing was characterized by “impetuous passions” and “unclear feelings,” which could either fuel the anti-German sentiment in the United States or possibly appease it (Mueller 316). Deutsch, however, forces her anti-war interpretation of Benn by militating against his lack of sentimentalism. To this effect, she curtails his jarring imagery, “The breast was cut open” rather than “The breast was broken open,” and her translation of the title “Schöne Jugend” as “Lovely Childhood” rejects the possible interpretation that Benn was glorifying the corpse of a child. A poem that seemingly idolizes the aesthetic ugly (gore, death, taboo), and that could easily be read in support of German war atrocities, (which Benn experienced as a medic on the frontline) becomes an anti-war poem through Deutsch’s discursive strategies.

Yet despite this large semantic transformation, it is important to note that the deviations in Deutsch's translations are not “wrong” or the products of some misunderstanding; instead, they are consequences of Deutsch’s application of two interpretants, or in Venuti’s terms, “factors that are formal (such as a concept of equivalence or a concept of style) and thematic (such as an interpretation of the source text presented elsewhere in commentary or an ideology in the sense of an ensemble of values, beliefs, and representations affiliated with particular social groups)” (*Contra*

Instrumentalism 2). These interpretants can be both voluntary and involuntary in their formal applications, e.g., devising paratexts for the translation as opposed to stylistic mannerisms of the translator, and in their thematic applications, e.g., the purpose the translation is intended to serve in the receiving situation as opposed to the translator's unbeknownst interpretation of the source text. Here, Deutsch strategically applies one formal interpretant in the translations' stylistic reductions – the removal of poetic devices, superfluous wording, and inversions – and a second thematic interpretant in her distinctive understanding of German Expressionism as anti-war and anti-military movement that shares similar ideological and artistic principles as American Imagism. In the application of these interpretants, Deutsch's German Expressionism comes to mirror her Imagist tastes.

Deutsch's allegiances to modernism and her attempted political distancing (as seen in her translations of Benn) impacted her Russian anthology as well, and more specifically, her translations of Sergei Yesenin. Yesenin was the leading exponent of the Russian Imaginist school, a school that Deutsch interestingly refers to as "imagist."² Although Anglo-American Imagism and Russian Imaginism were for the most part unrelated, they did share a similar credence – to capture arresting and unusual images through minimal wording. Deutsch acknowledges Yesenin's alignment with her poetic preferences through her favorable introduction to his work in which she mentions that "Yesenin is also one of the most gifted of the younger Russian poets" and "Whatever his political and literary associations, he is a poet *dei gratia*" (164). Yesenin's "political and literary associations"

² For more information regarding Russian Imaginism, its associated poetic theory, and resemblance to Imagism, see Ponomareff, C. V. "The Image Seekers: An Analysis of Imaginist Poetic Theory, 1919-1924." *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1968, pp. 275–96.

were like many poets living in Petrograd (St. Petersburg) during the early 1900s; caught in the social and spiritual transformation brought about by Bolshevism and the soon-to-occur October Revolution, he was a Bolshevik supporter whose poetry embraced the revolutionary climate.³ Despite Deutsch's cavalier dismissal of his political interests, they weighed heavily on his poetry (even after he grew disenchanted with Russian industrialization);⁴ Deutsch, however, goes to great lengths to conceal it in her anthology.

The first Yesenin poem (1915) presented by Deutsch, "Upon Green Hills," is only a minor excerpt (eight lines) of a much larger poem (twenty-four lines) titled "Табун" ("Herd"). By omitting the second and third sections from her translation, Deutsch alters the subject, while both reinforcing its modernist style and eliminating its political message. The excerpted section translated by Deutsch takes "wild droves of horses" ("табуны коней") as its subject and presents an idyllic scene in which the focus remains unchanged over four rhyming couplets:

³ Speaking of Yesenin's political commitments, Stanislav Kunyaev wrote insightfully in 1986: "Sergei Yesenin and his companions deeply concerned about the collapse of the old village, which began shortly after the abolition of serfdom and especially intensified at the beginning the 20th century. Maybe that is why they enthusiastically accepted both Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, because they hoped and believed that so close to their hearts a living future for peasant life was contained in revolutionary transformations" (Kunyaev 9). For more information, see Kunyaev, St. (1986). *O Russia, Flap Your Wings ... Poets of Yesenin's Circle*. Moscow.

⁴ The influence of Yesenin's political commitments on his poetry was well-known and well-discussed in Russian literary criticism, beginning with his contemporaries, who, in 1926, noted "The singer [Yesenin] of the revolution wants to merge the Easter ringing of temples with the red ringing of the revolution, the passionate bearer of Christ brings Easter songs to the selfless hero of the revolution, he wants to marry the religious with the revolutionary" (Lvov-Rogachevsky 1926). For more current information on Yesenin, see Sylaiev, Aleksander, et al. "Russian Poets and the October Revolution: Alexander Blok, Sergey Yesenin, Mikhail Kuzmin and Others." *Amazonia Investiga* 9.27 (2020): 436-444.

Upon green hills wild droves of horses blow
The golden bloom off of the days that go.

From the high hillocks to the blue-ing bay,
Falls the sheer pitch of heavy manes that sway.

They toss their heads above the still lagoon
Caught with a silver bridle by the moon

Snorting in fear of their own shadow, they,
To screen it with their manes, await the day. (165, 1-8)

There is no allegory, no political commentary, but rather an Imagist interpretation. Granted, Deutsch's prosody, her rhyme and iambic pentameter (with a modernist angularity), keeps a close formal approximation. The horses are rendered sempiternal and unchanged despite the last words of the last line pointing forward in time "ЖДУТ НОВЫЙ ДЕНЬ" ("await the day") because "the day," and all its allegorical and revolutionary potential are withheld in Deutsch's translation. Yet in Yesenin's original composition, it is clear that the imagist poet has political intentions. The day comes and goes, and the "herd of horses" ("табуны коней") in the first canto comes to reflect an unidentified "herd" ("табун") in the third canto. This unidentified herd listens as Gamayun ("гамаюн") – a figure in Russian folklore associated with intelligence, wisdom, and prophetic change – sings, and the herd dreams of "unknown meadows" ("неведомым лугам"), while the narrator declares his love for and dedicates his song to "Motherland" ("родина"). Written two years prior to the October Revolution, the poem reflects Yesenin's support for the growing communist ideals that would reform the Russian peasantry he had grown familiar with. Through Deutsch, however, the poem once again comes to reflect an apolitical image. This, like Deutsch's translation of Benn, is reinforced by her choice of title; rather than adhering to a close semantic approximation to the Russian "табун" with "Herd" or "Herd of Horses"

(as used in Cecil Maurice Bowra's later translations), Deutsch opts to remove the ambiguity, and with it abstraction, in favor of the more concrete image – "Upon Green Hills".

Deutsch's deviations, however, are not always in the forms of deletion or compression, and at times, although she prioritizes her poetic allegiances, her modernist agenda does give way to her overall intended depiction of the German and Russian poetry as the byproduct of acquiescent, sentimental, and docile cultures, whether that poetry be modernist and Romantic, or symbolist and Imaginist. David Perkins reminds us that many modernists "returned in some ways to the traditions of English Romantic Poetry (for the poetry of the Romantic period is to the modern world what the Roman classics were to Augustan England)" (100). Deutsch produces this Romantic effect through her lexical and syntactical decisions in her German and Russian anthologies. Take her translation of the "over-shadowing figure" Alexander Pushkin's 1830 poem "Verses Written During a Sleepless Night" ("Стихи, сочинённые ночью во время бессонницы"), which employs the poetical archaisms "Verses" ("Стихи"), "thy" ("ты"), "Art thou" ("ты"), "dost thou" ("ты"), and "beckon" ("зовёшь") (10, 8-13) to cast both the speaker and the poet, in Deutsch's terms, in "a reluctant light of a sophisticated intelligence" (Deutsch 4). Deutsch, like Pound's translations of Cavalcanti, tries to establish a historical air regarding Pushkin's poetry given his status as "a great and authentic initiator in literature" (Deutsch 3) during the Russian Romantic period. Still, these archaisms could be dismissed as Deutsch's inclination to use Wardour Street English – "a selection of oddments calculated

to establish (in the eyes of some readers) their claim to be persons of taste & writers of beautiful English” (Fowler 711) – something she has been accused of before.⁵

Yet the use of archaisms and their effects as intentional historicity are further evidenced by her altering of Pushkin’s poetic form. Deutsch alters the syntax in the seventh line, adding a comma after “Life” (“Жизни”) and replacing the end ellipses with a second comma, so, “Жизни мышья беготня... / Что тревожишь ты меня?” (10, 7-8) becomes, “Life, who stirs like rustling mice, / Why engage me in thy vise?” (10, 7-8). The result is a large semantic transformation. Instead of producing an open-ended and existential question after a stream of consciousness (as seen in more recent translations like that of Andrey Kneller), Deutsch’s speaker addresses “Life,” who has now been personified, and consequently, the subsequent lines of questioning are no longer unaimed, but are addressed to the figure of “Life” as well. It is also in this line of questioning that Deutsch has an even larger deviation through the insertion of her own poetic line in lieu of the original by replacing “Укоризна, или ропот / Мной утраченного дня?” (“Disapproving, do you grumble / Of the day I spent in Vain”)⁴ with “Art thou but the pale persistence / Of a day departed twice?” (10, 10-11). Deutsch’s use of “pale persistence,” a poetic expression seen in both poetry and fiction that aims to be poetic during this time (see D.K. Broster’s “Clairvoyance” or Tolkien’s *The Silmarillion*), consecrates Pushkin amongst more notable Anglophone writers and introduces alliteration (unlike her translation of Benn) to further romanticize the text at hand. In other words, Deutsch translates Pushkin in accordance with her interpretation of his works as Romantic, and as

⁵ “Miss Deutsch’s failures of perception, are her failures of expression. She often writes without realizing to herself what she is saying Similar failures in realization account for Miss Deutsch’s occasional use of Wardour Street English” (Flint 213).

such, she brings poetic devices and formal techniques commonly employed in Anglophone Romantic poetry to the forefront, prioritizing pre-revolution poetics, and suppressing the effects the revolution had on Russian poetry.

Deutsch gives the young provocateur Albert Ehrenstein a similar treatment in her German anthology by once again emphasizing the poet's Romantic effects. Her translation of Ehrenstein's "Heimkehr" ("Home-coming") uses the poetical archaism "perished" ("entwanderten") and characterizes the speaker as at once syntactically punctilious, by using "whom" ("meiner"), and sentimental, "loved most shyly" ("scheuesten Liebe"), with the subject no longer being girls or maidens ("Mädchens") but "women" (4, 9-10). These Romantic effects are also reinforced by her deviations from both syntactical and syllabic approximations. Deutsch once again reinvents the syntax, replacing a comma with a question mark in the third line ("You acacia trees of my youth?"), disrupting the rhythm of the sentence, and consequently producing an end-stopped line, and furthering the pause effect before the turn to the next stanza. As,

Wo sind deine alten Wellen, o Fluß,
Und wo sind eure runden Blätter,
Ihr Akazienbäume der Jugend,
Und wo der frische Schnee
der verstorbenen Winter? (85,1-4)

becomes,

Where are your ancient waves, O river,
And where are your rounded leaves,
You acacia trees of my youth?
And where is the fresh snow of perished winters? (140, 1-4)

At the time the two anthologies were published, Deutsch had favored a longer line in her poetic career, a line primarily built from smaller units of syntax, an end-stopped line that possesses strong punctuation. Towards this effect, Deutsch combines Ehrenstein's fourth

and fifth lines, and his tenth and eleventh lines so that “Und wo der frische Schnee / der verstorbenen Winter?” and “Es haben die zopftragenden / Mädchens meiner scheuesten Liebe” becomes “And where is the fresh snow of perished winters?” and “The girls with braided hair whom I loved most shyly.” By appropriating Ehrenstein’s forlorn poetry along with Benn’s concise, concrete verse and providing an imagist interpretation of expressionism, Deutsch broadens the cosmopolitanism of American modernism while attempting to rehabilitate the image of German culture.

Deutsch’s translations highlight the deviant decision-making of foreignizing translation through both source-text selection and discursive translation strategies that enable cultural brokerage. Her decision to translate the German Expressionists during the interwar period was foreignizing in its reinforcement of marginalized modernist poetic values and its portrayal of a remorseful, sympathetic German populace. Likewise, her suppression of communist tendencies in her Russian anthology had its own cultural and political effects. Yet despite these cultural contributions, Deutsch continues to be neglected because translation continues to be marginal in the study of literature, especially given the monolingualism of English departments in the United States. By prioritizing cultural brokerage, and the varying forms of literary border-crossing that it encapsulates, as seen in this chapter, we can gain new insights not only into American modernism but into the global hierarchies of literature, and perhaps put instrumentalism into question.

CHAPTER 5

“CONSECRATED CONSECRATORS”: BABETTE DEUTSCH’S CRITICISM AS TRANSNATIONAL CONSECRATION

If writers from dominated national literary fields wish to enter the world literary competition, they must work on importing capital, on gaining heritage and nobility by “nationalizing” the great universal texts which are recognized as universal capital in the literary universe.

Pascale Casanova, trans. Siobhan Brownlie

Although the last three chapters of this project have prioritized Deutsch’s primary creative works (poetry, translation, and fiction) as the mediums through which she actualizes her status as a cultural broker, her work as a critic is perhaps the most insightful regarding her agenda of cultural brokerage. Deutsch’s critical output spanned a little more than six decades, including the publication of four full-length books, and by 1932, she had already published over 700 reviews in multiple periodicals. And although her criticism evolved with the surrounding culture and hegemonic shifts in the American political and social stratum, she repeatedly emphasized the importance of literary globalization and a multicultural and multilingual approach to the production and reception of literature. To understand Deutsch’s importance as a critic, however, it is important to recognize global literature not as a congeries of isolated national literary canons, but as a global hierarchy in which national literatures are suspended in continuous exchange and competition.

Pascale Casanova’s theory of the world literary system, as discussed in the last chapter and as expounded in her 2004 book, *The World Republic of Letters*, provides such a framework for understanding the significance of Babette Deutsch as a critic and cultural

broker.³⁵ Casanova delineates a global hierarchy of literary value, characterized by the opposition between “dominating” literatures and their comparatively impoverished or “dominated” counterparts. This hierarchy is determined by the acquisition and dissemination of linguistic-literary capital, a value within a language determined by “prestige, the literary beliefs attached to a language, and on the literary value that is attributed to it” which are, in turn decided by “the age of the language, the prestige of its poetry, the refinement of literary forms developed in it, traditions, the literary ‘effects’ associated, for example, with translations and their volume” (410). Casanova’s notion that literary value is “attributed” rather than inherently possessed within a literary artifact is an important one, as her world literary system and its global hierarchy are maintained by “consecrators,” also known as “international mediators.”

These mediators are “special experts whose task is to select texts and thus determine the boundary between literature and non-literature, between what is ‘a must for translation’ and what is not, between the international and the national, the universal and the particular, modernity and archaism, etc.” (422), and they include “bilingual readers, travelers, specialists, publishers, critics, literary agents” (421). While some mediators, who recognize, access, and circulate linguistic-literary capital across national borders, operate visibly within established institutions, others function more discreetly, acting as invisible protagonists of the literary universe. Deutsch’s importance as a critic and cultural broker lies in her position within this system of mediation. Like the “consecrated consecrators”

³⁵ Since its publication in 2004, Casanova’s world literary system has become a dominant model of understanding in translation studies. Yet translation studies, as a whole, remains marginalized in American academia.

described by Casanova, Deutsch wielded influence through her personal creative works and critical insights. As a polyglot reader and critic, she occupied a unique position to facilitate cultural exchange and dialogue between different literary traditions. Through her writings as a critic, Deutsch served as a conduit for the circulation of literary capital, helping bridge the gap between dominant national literatures and emerging literary spaces. While Casanova's theory primarily focuses on interlingual translation as a form of cultural mediation, analyzing Deutsch through the lens of cultural brokerage expands our understanding of transnational literary circulations. This chapter, then, focuses on Deutsch as an embodiment of a Casanovan consecrator, as she uses her work as a critic to elevate the linguistic-literary capital of her peers that embody her vision of a transnational and polyglot American literature.

America in the Arts

Deutsch became a critic early on in her career, and by 1921 at 26 years-old, she had already published her expectations – a set of artistic values – for the contemporary American poetry scene. In an early work, titled “America in the Arts,” Deutsch encapsulates her vision of American literature and its place within the broader, international literary context. Her critical piece critiques the insularity of American literary production through a discussion of American music and champions a more cosmopolitan approach, reflecting her broader agenda of cultural brokerage. “An American poet declares that poetry is in advance of music in this country....” Deutsch writes, because “the composer has failed to develop a national school, a genuinely authentic American music. German classicism, French impressionism, Italian lyricism have a stamp of their own, which, whether like it or not, one recognizes as peculiar to itself” (Deutsch 303). And although

Deutsch acknowledges that “the poets, on the other hand, as many competent musicians agree, have triumphed over the diversity of a huge and complex group,” (303), she questions “what is ‘one hundred percent, American?’” (304) regarding the production of poetry.

Such a question leads Deutsch to not only reevaluate the commentary of more established contemporary critics including Louis Untermeyer, William Vaughn Moody, and Daniel Gregory Mason, but to define the parameters of American art as well. Regarding Untermeyer, Deutsch criticizes his definition of American poetry, relying on her interpretation of Emily Dickinson’s poetry to reject Untermeyer’s claim: “Louis Untermeyer claims that the essential character of American poetry as such is racy youth and energy. But these terms are inadequate to describe so definitely an American poet as Emily Dickinson...” (304). Emily Dickinson’s value, according to Deutsch, was in her sensibility and simplicity, and most importantly, in her understanding of poetry:

Two quatrains might stand as an epigraph not only to this book but to the body of her [Dickinson’s] work. The subtlety and power of which deserve our most concentrated attention:

The poets light but lamps,
Themselves go out;
The wicks they stimulate
If vital light

Inhere as do the suns,
Each age a lens
Disseminating their
Circumference. (Deutsch 280).

Dickinson’s words regarding the transience of poets and the immortality of their poems reflect the understanding of poetry that Deutsch hopes to posit – that poetry is a continuous

and global evolution that continues to inspire and be reinterpreted by subsequent generations, spreading the influence of poets transnationally.

It is because of this definition that Deutsch also rejects Mason's notion that proposes "nervous tension" and "constant restless motion" as two essential characteristics of American poetry (Mason as quoted in Deutsch 304). Deutsch believes Mason's criticism is born from urbanization and does not extend to more rural poets, including Robert Frost, and that such totalizing criticism was not applicable to the diversity presented in the body of American poets. And she presents the vast geographical and cultural landscape of the US as a main reason for the failure of contemporary critics to appropriately label "American" art:

One of the reasons why it is hard to talk about American culture is that we have no American capital from which it naturally flows. Abroad, in France or Germany, in Italy or Austria or even Russia, the capital has long been the cultural centre. Paris or Petrograd, London or Vienna were for years almost solitary lanterns, flashing their rays into the furthest corners of the dark provinces. The United States, on the contrary, because it boasts some three capitals, has actually none.³⁶ (304)

Yet for Deutsch, it is this diversity in culture that defines the American lived experience, and consequently, its art, and so she concludes that "American culture is polyglot," and that "it is obvious that an artist expressing the Oriental color and golden bloom of California would not be expressing at the same moment the overflowing ant-hills, the steel strength of Eastern cities." (304). By rejecting the sweeping characterizations of more well-known critics, and positing her own definition in opposition to them, Deutsch is not only trying to consecrate herself as critic in her fledgling career, but she provides a stage for her

³⁶ For Deutsch, the three American capitals are New York City, Boston, and Chicago.

transnational approach to literature and an elevation for cultural brokers – prioritizing American polyglots – who have an appreciation “of the foreign tradition from Palestrina to Stravinsky” (308).

Deutsch’s conception of a “polyglot,” however, is more than an appreciation of the foreign and transcends linguistic diversity to encompass a broader understanding of cultural pluralism within the American context. In addition to the absence of a singular geographic capital, Deutsch acknowledges the absence of a singular culture in the United States: “The nervous shriek of New York clamors stridently against the Anglicized Boston accent; the polite voice of the Back Bay is drowned by the raucous shout of Chicago. There is no cultural *modus vivendi*,” (304-305). And she suggests that American artists, including musicians and poets, should embrace this diversity and complexity rather than attempting to conform to a singular tradition. For Deutsch, a “polyglot” or cultural broker is an author that celebrates the eclectic heritage of their culture while also striving to express a unique “personality colored by environment not created by it” (308). Deutsch’s perspective then, emphasizes the importance of authenticity and innovation in American artistic expression, as she uses her role as a critic to consecrate artists who navigate the tension between tradition and contemporary experience to create work that resonates with universal human emotions.

Even so, if this definition of polyglot was the priority, Deutsch’s selection of poets who can be considered as the representation of early twentieth century American poetry might seem incongruous with her aims and merit some explanation. In an article written in 1946 (two decades after “America in the Arts”) for the *New York Times*, titled “Poetry’s Half-Century of Growth,” Deutsch discusses contemporary American poets that she

believes should be consecrated within the American canon. Her list includes E.A. Robinson, Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, Robert Frost, H.D., William Carlos Williams, T.S. Eliot, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Hart Crane. At first look, few of these poets seemingly represent Deutsch's priorities regarding polyglots and cultural brokerage (with Williams and Eliot being the exceptions), given their bodies of work mostly reflect monolingualistic (Anglophone) forms and innately American geographic subject matter (e.g., *Chicago Poems*, *Spoon River Anthology*, *Frost and New England*). Deutsch's selection of poets, however, can be better understood when considering her admiration for Walt Whitman, whom she idealizes as the canonical forefather of American poetry and a cultural broker in his own right.

Whitman

Deutsch's preference for Whitman as the virtuoso of American poetry is a clear through-line during her tenure as a critic, and although her biographical book on Whitman, *Walt Whitman: Builder for America* (1941) was written for a younger audience, it provides invaluable insights into Deutsch's perceptions regarding Whitman, his influence on American poetry, and cultural brokerage. In her biography, Deutsch portrays Whitman as the quintessential American poet whose work embodies the vast cultural and geographical diversity of the United States. She highlights his ability to encompass a wide range of voices and experiences, which she sees as a model for other American poets. And although she does not perform any textual analysis regarding Whitman's written works, she doesn't need to, as her priority is not to establish Whitman as a canonical poet (he was already well-known and well-discussed in the literary community), but to establish him as a cultural broker, and his inclusive cosmopolitan vision of poetry, as the keystone for making

American poetry distinctive and valuable on the global stage. Therefore, to further understand how Deutsch's criticism contributes to her agenda of cultural brokerage, it is essential to analyze Deutsch's perception of Walt Whitman and how his legacy informs her critical perspective.

Deutsch's approach to Whitman is witnessed as early as the third chapter in the biography, which begins with the assertion that Whitman, despite his American identity, retained an English heritage that no historical event could strip away: "no Revolutionary War could deprive him of one part of his English heritage" (29). Her suggestion is that Whitman's literary identity is deeply rooted in transatlantic cultural and literary traditions, and she furthers this connection through Whitman's identification with various Shakespearean characters: "Shakespeare was a familiar companion. Walt was the banished Duke in the forest. He was false Clarence, troubled by bad dreams. He was Lear on the heath, half mad with misery, wild with defiance of the elements and of human cruelty" (29). By likening Whitman to these iconic characters, Deutsch not only situates him within a revered literary lineage, which for Casanova, is a form of consecration through the association of prestige (Casanova 9), but she also underscores his role as a cultural broker, someone who bridges the gap between the English and American literary worlds. This is particularly telling in Deutsch's comparison of Whitman and Lear, who defies the elements and human cruelty, as Deutsch quotes Lear's defiant speech: "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow!" to demonstrate Whitman's own defiance and profound connection with the natural world, reflecting a deep poetic resonance that transcends national boundaries.

This blending of nature as representation of Whitman is further emphasized in Deutsch's use of sea imagery to universalize Whitman's vision. Deutsch describes the sea as "a good test of poetry, none better" (29), and imbues it with a "heart, vast as a planet's, beating in that swell and surge," (29). The portrayal of the sea as a vast timeless force (similar to Deutsch's discussion of Dickinson's poetry) parallels how Deutsch perceives Whitman's transnationalism. And the mention of Whitman's "forebears" not as American experiences or American writers, but as "the Vikings, the seekers of the Indies, the Hollanders and Britons" further situates him within a broad historical and cultural continuum, emphasizing his role as a mediator of diverse cultural influences.

In a similar light, Deutsch also contracts this multicultural and expansive vision of Whitman's poetic identity with the mundane reality of his work as a pressman, stating "On the seashore the printing-room seemed a mean and narrow place" (30). Such a juxtaposition highlights Whitman's struggle between the practicalities of everyday life and his broader, more profound poetic ambitions. His decision to leave the printing-room and pursue a more itinerant lifestyle is portrayed as an act of fidelity to his true self, aligning with Shakespeare's advice: "To thine own self be true" (as quoted in Deutsch 28), with which Deutsch's frames her discussion. By concluding her discussion of Whitman's beginnings, with a depiction of the poet as true to himself and indifferent to conventional responsibilities ("threw up his chance to become a notable editor" (30)), Deutsch manipulates his choices as an embodiment of authentic poetic and cultural values. In doing so, Deutsch elevates Whitman as a figure who, like Shakespeare, transcends his immediate context to contribute to a larger, transnational literary dialogue that not only grants prestige

to the American literary canon, but provides a set of principles (reflective of Deutsch's tastes) for successors to follow.

Deutsch's portrayal of Whitman as a cultural broker – who bridges American and English literary traditions – stresses her broader agenda of celebrating poets who embody a deep awareness of the multifaceted identity of the US. By positioning Whitman in a dialogue with Shakespeare, she consecrates him as a figure whose work transcends national boundaries, contributing to the global literary conversation. Although this consecration focuses on Whitman's individual legacy, it has broader implication in establishing a lineage of American poets who follow in his footsteps, engaging with both local and international influences. Whitman's expansive vision of the US and his inclusive poetic style resonate through the works of poets. And she measures her perception of canonical poets against their likeness to Whitman and his ability to capture the “various, coarse and rich complex that is the American scene, to which even the expatriates are responsive” (BR5). The closer they are to Whitman, in her opinion, the more prestigious are their works. Take, for example, her discussion of Hart Crane: “One of the sources of interest in ‘The Bridge’ is the fashion in which the poet [Crane] draws upon and transmutes to his own uses the bequests of Whitman, Poe and Emily Dickinson,” (BR7) or her discussion of Carl Sandburg: “Carl Sandburg, in ‘Chicago Poems’ (1916) and ‘Cornhuskers’ (1918), showed a kinship with Whitman, not only because of his large, loose, unrhythmed cadence, but also because he celebrated all sorts and conditions of men and women” (BR5-6). Even Robert Frost is seen through Deutsch's eyes as sharing similarities with Whitman: “Whitman, like Robert Frost after him, had first been more widely acclaimed in England than in his own country” (“Walt Whitman”145). Whitman, in Deutsch's view, set the

standard for American poetry by embracing the diversity and complexity of the nation, making him the archetype for subsequent generations.

In the same review of American poetry, Deutsch acknowledges that these contemporary poets “are still seen as akin to one or another of the Ancestors [Dickinson, Poe, Whitman] mentioned above” (BR5), highlighting their connection to the foundational figures of American literature as a form of consecration. This connection is crucial to Deutsch, in other words, as it signifies a lineage of literary innovation and cultural exchange that transcends geographic and linguistic boundaries. She values poets who, like Whitman, embody a deep awareness of the multifaceted identity of the US. Yet Deutsch sometimes over-pursues her own interests in the poetry of others, reading into her own interpretation of a work, thereby reducing it. Deutsch’s review of Sandburg’s works, for instance, strains to not only put Sandburg in conversation with Whitman:

Sandburg’s filiation from Whitman was clear from the beginning. It is written plainly in his long slow rhythms; in his easy, comfortable speech; in his loving survey of the American scene, the length and breadth of it, the coasts and the peaks and the great plains, and in his celebration of all sorts and conditions of men and women, irrespective of race, creed, color, actual and imagined servitude (266),

but to frame Sandburg as a polyglot: “His language is even plainer than Whitman’s, his later verse being written largely in the lingo of the man in the street, of the farm hand gathering in the crop, of the soda-jerker, the bartender, and the hobo heating his mulligan over a twilight fire” (266). Deutsch’s forced reading of Sandburg, specifically her tunnel vision regarding his accessibility and universality, overlooks the specific cultural and historical contexts that inform Sandburg’s work – context that could be argued to be inherently American. By exaggerating his ability to resonate with a broad audience,

Deutsch downplays the nuances and complexities of Sandburg, which are deeply rooted in the American experience. In particular, Deutsch depoliticizes Sandburg's work, missing the ways in which Sandburg intertwines his poetry with the socioeconomic struggles and regional identities of the US, aspects that are crucial to understanding his poetry's true impact. Although she acknowledges his voice as different laborers (soda-jerker, bartender, farm hand), Deutsch's interpretation entirely neglects Sandburg's engagement with labor movements and fails to explore his portrayal of industrial America, which is the very thing that makes his poetry uniquely American. This oversimplification risks homogenizing Sandburg's poetry and overlooking its unique contributions to American literature – the very phenomenon that Deutsch is warring against.

Even Deutsch's choice of Whitman as the champion of her polyglot visions may seem like a peculiar decision to some critics, because despite Whitman's inclusive view of American poetry, his own experiences were predominantly American-centric. He spoke only English and never resided abroad, and apart from periodic travel in New England and his war-related stay in Washington D.C., Whitman made only three significant journeys during his lifetime: to New Orleans in 1848, to Denver in 1879, and to Canada in 1880 (Field 1). His entire literary career was deeply rooted in the American experience, with his understanding of other cultures largely mediated through literature and secondhand accounts. This could certainly raise questions about Deutsch's emphasis on Whitman as a figure who embodies a polyglot vision of American literature.

Despite Whitman's limited direct exposure to other cultures, however, he actively engaged with the global dimensions of the English language. In his essay "Inheritance," Whitman explores the historical connections between English and other European and

Asian languages, praising those who emphasize English's composite nature. He also incorporated foreign terms such as "ensemble" and "élève" from French, and "camerado" from Spanish into his poetry (Dressman 4). These choices illustrate his recognition of and appreciation for linguistic diversity. Consequently, Deutsch's selection of Whitman as a champion of her polyglot vision reflects her acknowledgment of his innovative integration of global influences into American literature. While Whitman's personal experiences were primarily American-centric, his openness to incorporating foreign elements into his work supports Deutsch's goal of advancing a multicultural and globally resonant American literary tradition. Thus, Deutsch's choice highlights her appreciation for Whitman's revolutionary approach to poetry and his contribution to a more inclusive literary landscape, regardless of his lived experiences.

In her book of criticism, *This Modern Poetry* (1935), Deutsch gives further insights into her definition of Whitman as a cultural broker, as she contrasts Whitman's robust and inclusive engagement with American life against Poe's melancholic subjectivity and aristocratic inclinations. She condemns Poe's work, marked by its technical nuances and a sense of observational detachment, as "melodic fantasies" rooted in "melancholy subjectivity," attributing this to Poe's continuation of English tradition and his use of rhymed verse. In contrast, Whitman's free verse and his efforts to "identify himself as comprehensively as possible with his place, his time, and his people" (27) represent a significant departure from traditional poetic forms, which Deutsch celebrates. While Deutsch associates Whitman with the English tradition through his contact with Shakespeare, she emphasizes his deviation from this tradition, noting his embrace of American life and democratic ideals. This sharp contrast between Whitman's innovative

approach and Poe's more conservative one highlights Deutsch's preference for modernist aesthetics, which she believes Whitman embodies.

However, Deutsch's critique of Poe as merely a continuation of English traditions overlooks Poe's own roles as a cultural broker. Poe engaged with German traditions of short fiction, English literary publications (Blackwell's), and classical allusions, and he was a polyglot with a good command of French and Latin. Deutsch's neglect of Poe's contributions as a broker stems not from his inability to be one, but from the fact that his poetic tastes did not align with her modernist preferences. By juxtaposing Poe and Whitman, Deutsch illustrates her broader agenda of promoting a modern, inclusive American poetry that breaks away from traditional European influences, specifically in terms of form. While she critiques Poe for his adherence to older forms, she elevates Whitman for his innovative free style, which she sees as essential to the evolution of American literature. This distinction emphasizes Deutsch's commitment to a poetic vision that reflects the diversity and vigor of American life, aligning once again with her modernist ideals.

Deutsch continues this notion by conflating their approaches to science with their approaches to literature, positioning Poe as conventional and Whitman as pioneering. Unlike Poe, who saw science as a "vulture, whose wings are dull realities" (as quoted in Deutsch 29), Whitman proclaimed, "Hurrah for positive science! Long live exact demonstration!" (as quoted in Deutsch 29). According to Deutsch, Poe's conservative stance on science mirrors his traditional view of poetry as means of "communicating pleasure" and focusing on "technical nuances." In contrast, Whitman's innovative embrace of science parallels his revolutionary view of poetry as a force to "give ultimate vivification

to facts, to science, and to common lives” (Deutsch 29). Whitman’s poetry, therefore, exalts the democratic value and seeks to animate everyday experiences through a modern, imaginative lens that embodies foreignisms. Deutsch furthers her belief by highlighting Whitman’s “strong feeling for America,” and his ability to “celebrate life with such ardour and inclusiveness,” (Deutsch 29). Poe, then, represents the constraints of outdated European literary traditions and aristocratic sensibilities, which Deutsch finds antithetical to the authentic American voice. Whitman’s focus on common living mixed with his departure from traditional poetic structure (despite having gained prestige through his contact with those very traditions), on the other hand, aligns with Deutsch’s poetic tastes, and cements Whitman’s role as a cultural broker in Deutsch’s eyes. His work represents a shift toward a new poetic standard that celebrates the vitality and complexity of American life, embodying the principles of modernism that Deutsch deeply admires, and that she believes encapsulates the polyglot American culture.

Therefore, by positioning other poets in relation to Whitman, Deutsch emphasizes their role in continuing his legacy of cultural brokerage and advocates for their poetry, which is representative of modernist aesthetics, as integral to the transnational literary dialogue, despite their predominantly monolingual forms. Deutsch’s selection of poets, then, reflects her belief not only in the enduring influence of Whitman’s cosmopolitan vision, which she sees as fundamental to the evolution of American literature and its place in the world literary system, but her belief in modernism as a poetic movement. However, despite Deutsch’s commitment to modernism and literary border-crossing, her role as a critic had become controversial, because she refused to partake in the divisive and polarized political climate during the interwar period. Her celebration of Whitman’s vision

and the modernist movement needed to balance an appreciation for diverse, international perspectives with the prevailing nationalistic sentiments of the time. This delicate balancing act is evident in her selective emphasis on poets whose works could be seen as enhancing American literature's global prestige without overtly challenging American political orthodoxy. Deutsch's strategic positioning allowed her to promote a more inclusive and expansive literary dialogue while mitigating the risks associated with the heightened political scrutiny of her era.

Reception as Critic

Despite Deutsch's efforts to position Whitman and his successors as integral to a transnational literary dialogue, and to promote a cultural wellspring, her reception as a critic reveals the complexities and controversies surrounding her approach, along with the political atmosphere of her time. Deutsch's commitment to a cosmopolitan and polyglot literary world that focuses on aesthetic and cultural mediation placed her at odds with critics who saw literature primarily as a means of political expression and activism. These critics, such as Kenneth Rexroth, accuse Deutsch of political bias and the exclusion of left-leaning and avant-garde poets from her critical works. Rexroth's claims of political bias in letters sent directly to Deutsch – particularly the omission of communist and modernist poets such as Henry Potamkin, Sol Funaroff, Joy Davidman, Lola Ridge, Louis Zukofsky, Parker Tyler, Eugen Jolas, and Norman Macleod from Deutsch's critical anthology *Poetry in Our Time* (1954) – reveal not only Rexroth's own politicized approach to evaluating contemporary poetry but highlight the role of politics in Deutsch's literary criticism. Deutsch's critics argue that her exclusions represent a conservative attempt to suppress certain poetic voices and movements, thereby shaping the American literary canon

according to her own cultural and ideological preferences that they believe are right-leaning, even though Deutsch had ties to the political left and was labeled “an official facility of the Communist conspiracy” by the American government (“Counterattack” 43).

However, Deutsch’s political stance is more complex than these criticisms (and labels by the American government) suggest. While she may have exhibited both pro-communist and anti-communist tendencies at times, her primary focus was on fostering cultural exchange. And other than her publication in *Banners* (1919), there are few times when Deutsch actively praises the communist party. Even during Deutsch and Avrahm Yarmolinsky’s two-year trip abroad to the Soviet Union in 1923, only two years after the publication of their anthology of Russian translations, Deutsch was hardly inspired by the effects of the October Revolution on the arts. She did acknowledge in a letter to her mother the presence of a “Stimmung, a sense of new life, a vigor” (Deutsch 1923) amongst the people living in Moscow, and even considered relocating her family there; however, it took her less than a year of traveling throughout the Soviet Union to conclude that “The Revolution has not profoundly affected art, though it has hurt a good many artists” after spending many nights discussing “the evils” that had befallen poetry with the Russian poets that had accompanied her (many of whom she had translated a few years prior) (Deutsch 1923). According to Deutsch, those “evils” were the Soviet Union’s detrimental impact on a poet’s ability to source inspiration globally, as the government attempted to free the people “from literature and from the regisseur” (Deutsch 1923). Communism, in her view, led to an environment of conformity and insularity that stifled artistic innovation and expression. Her trip abroad was mostly anti-climactic, failing to consecrate her original optimism for the socialist experiment, but forever impacting her role as a critic. And upon

her return to the United States, she continuously refused to participate in sociopolitical causes that related to communism.³⁷

Her disillusionment with communism after her trip and her refusal to participate in communist-related sociopolitical movements indicate a nuanced perspective that prioritized a less overt approach to cultural and political change well before many modernists abandoned the communist agenda in 1936. She elaborated on her cultural and political position in a 1926 critical piece titled “Skepticism,” in which she admits that she “lost, among other things, my belief in economic determinism” and her “cocksureness” regarding revolutionary Russian politics (154). She proposes instead that,

specific remedies may be more efficacious than panaceas in a world which contains such various phenomena as the mind of Einstein, the Scopes trial, the canvases of Picasso, dinosaurs’ eggs, the British general strike, and the religionists who idolize such different saviors as Krishnamurti, Lenin, and Freud” (154).

Deutsch’s priorities are revealed through her writing, as she immediately broadens a national topic (American politics) to a global scale (“efficacious than panaceas in a world”). And just as she believed appropriating foreign traditions was the solution to the

³⁷ The Proletarian Artists and Writers League – a group proposing to “tackle jobs such as the organization of newspapermen, the translation of foreign radical literature, the co-ordination of workers’ colleges and cultural groups, and perhaps the publication of a small monthly magazine” (Freeman) – wrote in 1926 to enlist Deutsch “to serve as a member of the NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE” among contemporaries such as John Dos Passos, John Howard Lawson, Mary Heaton Vorse, Michael Gold, and others. Deutsch curtly rejected the offer. Deutsch’s disillusionment remained throughout her career and her later life, including in 1962, when she received an invitation to join the “World Congress for General Disarmament and Peace, to be held in Moscow” in order to “remove the threat of nuclear disaster,” (Bernal) but declined as well, citing her disappointment “to find that your [Bernal and the Congress] criticism of those governments which continue atomic tests does not extend to the U.S.S.R, which prepared for ~~the~~ extensive and inhuman tests that it loosed on the world even while it was ostensibly negotiating for the cessation of all tests” (Deutsch).

American artistic identity (“American in the Arts”), she selects cultural and historical artifacts (“mind of Einstein,” “canvases of Picasso”) from a variety of international sources to represent the “remedies” to the American political state. She believes once the remedies are applied, it will lead to political advantages: “freedom in relaxation between the sexes, freedom in their educational progress, for oppressed nations, for enslaved workers” (154). And although it seems from her skepticism (and hesitancy) that Deutsch was entirely anti-communist, that’s not the case. Rather, Deutsch is once again arguing for a cosmopolitan approach that utilizes cultural and political aspects from a variety of cultures. In this instance, she even openly welcomes,

the Russian experiment, because it is fundamentally built on the principles of justice and reason. On the same score, I welcome the growth of industrial unionism, farmers’ cooperatives, regional planning, birth control, and other movements begotten by a communal and rational ethic. (154)

Communism, in Deutsch’s view, could benefit American politics but harm American arts. This critical approach represents her belief in the power of cultural and intellectual diversity to address complex global issues, rather than adhering to a singular sociopolitical, economic, or philosophical ideology. Simultaneously, her reluctance to engage with communist movements, despite her earlier affiliations, reflects a shift towards a broader vision of cultural brokerage and literary cosmopolitanism.

These tensions between artistic innovation and political engagement in her criticism have led to inaccurate assessments that unfairly place Deutsch within a conservative agenda, thereby tarnishing her legacy. Rexroth’s accusations, for instance, are not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of criticism that Deutsch faced throughout her career and even afterward. Scholars such as Barbara Foley and Al Filreis have examined

Deutsch's critical tendencies, arguing that her critical perspective was shaped by a conservative agenda that sought to marginalize radical and experimental poetry. In 1993, Barbara Foley labels Deutsch's "approving assessment of Max Eastman's attack on Soviet cultural policy" as "openly anti-Communist" (12) despite Deutsch's declaration to "welcome the Russian experiment," and Al Filreis provides an even further analysis of Deutsch's anti-communist tendencies in his 2008 book, *Counter-Revolution of the Word: The Conservative Attack on Modern Poetry (1945-1960)*.

Filreis situates Deutsch amongst some of her other contemporaries (like David Daiches) detailing an attempt by conservative critics between 1945 and 1960 to suppress poetic experimentalism and leftist politics in American literary history. One of the few critics to discuss Deutsch at length, Filreis conflates poetic experimentalism and leftist politics, as he echoes Rexroth's "private correspondences" to argue that Deutsch failed to give "credence to the mixture of radicalism and unconventional language in some communist poetry of the Auden group" and this "Represented a crucial antiexperimental and antiradical turn for Babette Deutsch, who had briefly, years earlier, been aligned with American communist poets" (105). He continues his assertion, noting Deutsch's conservative "turn" "at the time of the third League of American Writers Congress in 1939" because before that "She joined communist poets in protesting the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti and contributed to *America Arraigned!*" (357). More importantly, Filreis's critique unjustly represents Deutsch as opposing poetic experimentalism and leftist politics due to her life-long hesitation to fully embrace communism and her more subtle approach to the inclusion of politics in poetry, despite her continued support for both leftist ideals and modernist poetry.

Deutsch, for example, did protest the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti through her poetry in 1927 (“Of Sacco and Vanzetti,”) which appeared both in *The New Republic* and *America Arraigned!*, and she was even a regular contributor in the early years of *New Masses* (1926-1930), but neither of these are enough to satisfy Filreis’s claims regarding an early dedication to American communism. *New Masses* has been referred to as “the principal organ of the American cultural left from 1926 onwards” (Foley 65), but in its early years, the years in which Deutsch contributed, it adopted a loosely left position with a politically heterogeneous contributing pool that only accounted for two members of the communist party (Hofmann 151). As for Sacco and Vanzetti, a case that had garnered international attention in 1927, Deutsch’s opposition to the execution of two Italian immigrants more likely stemmed not from loyalties to communism, but from her opposition to the growing anti-immigrant sentiment and the restrictive immigration laws at play, laws that “like a beast fondling what it devours / slobbers justice – cold upon a plate” (“Of Sacco and Vanzetti” 7-8), laws that threatened the status of her émigré husband, laws that would undoubtedly produce the same stifling literary atmosphere that she witnessed in her trip to the Soviet Union.

What Filreis fails to see (or does not acknowledge) is that Deutsch’s political positions, whether pro- or anti-communist, were secondary to her primary goal of fostering a polyglot and culturally diverse literary environment. Deutsch’s main focus was on cultivating a literary culture that embraced multiple languages and cultural perspectives, which sometimes led her to downplay or set aside her political commitments. While her work does engage with cultural and political themes, her criticism should be understood as primarily concerned with advancing literary diversity and inclusion rather than with any

specific political ideology. In other words, Deutsch's nuanced stance on communism was part of a broader commitment to a multicultural literary culture rather than a political agenda. Critics often over-emphasize the political aspects of Deutsch's work, missing that her main concern was the transformative power of literature to bridge cultural divides and promote a more interconnected literary world. Despite these misconceptions, Deutsch's contributions highlight her belief in the importance of cultural and literary diversity over strict political alignments.

In conclusion, Babette Deutsch's career as a critic exemplifies the complexities of cultural brokerage within a global literary system marked by hierarchical structures and transnational exchanges. Her critical work underscores the importance of global literary dialogue and the role of literary mediators in connecting dominant and emerging traditions. While Deutsch's reception was mixed, her influence on literary criticism and her contributions to understanding transnational literary flows are significant and enduring. Deutsch's efforts to promote a more inclusive and interconnected literary world were fundamentally about advancing literary diversity and cultural exchange. Although these efforts inherently intersect with political themes—such as global connection and acceptance of diverse voices—Deutsch's primary focus was on enriching the literary landscape rather than advancing a specific political agenda. Examining her work through Casanova's theory reveals a deeper appreciation of Deutsch's commitment to fostering a literary culture that values diverse voices and traditions, reflecting her belief in the transformative power of literature to bridge cultural divides.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: LET'S NOT FORGET

If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks.

Socrates

As shown in her criticism, Babette Deutsch did not always find it easy to manage the tensions and conflicts generated by the push and pull of her creative life, her domestic life, and her commitment to sociopolitical justice. She struggled to prioritize her transnationalist ideals over her personal literary tastes. In 1941, for instance, when asked to name “the world’s worst book,” Deutsch used the opportunity to express her disdain for Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Deutsch wrote:

There is no one book that I would select for such a list, but there is one famous author whose works I find it almost impossible to read: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. For months I struggled valiantly with *Wilhelm Meister*, but boredom conquered patience and I never finished it. Even *Faust* interests me less than it irritates me. Its structure is awkward, its style often either offensively didactic or rhetorical, and the whole wants the significance that attaches to the major works to which it is generally equated. While I sometimes read Goethe's lyrics with pleasure, the sensibility they exhibit never strikes as responsive a chord as such of his compatriots as Heine or Rilke. If you were listing authors instead of books, Goethe would be my candidate. (54)

It’s an interesting answer from Deutsch, not only because she insisted throughout her career on prioritizing the brokerage of German authors and texts into American literature (and Goethe was considered a canonical German author at the time), but because Goethe was aligned with Deutsch’s perceptions regarding literature. He was someone who tirelessly advocated for the importance of translation and the brokerage of literary texts transnationally. Even so, Deutsch couldn’t stand the canonical German poet, and such a

contradiction between Deutsch's tastes and agenda speaks to the complexities and contradictions in her personal nature.

Her life and work were marked by such complexities and contradictions, mostly arising from persistent confrontations with cultural, political, and gender discrimination. As a multifaceted literary figure, she championed cultural brokerage, feminist ideals, an amalgamative political stance, and global literary dialogue for over six decades. Perhaps even more importantly, however, Deutsch lived what she preached. Throughout her lifetime, she continuously volunteered at the Young Men's Hebrew Association, the World Center for Women's Archives, and as a Kindertransport caretaker with Trude Frankl. She contributed money to those whose misfortunes aroused her compassion, orchestrated charitable assistance from PEN for less fortunate writers (e.g., Kay Boyle), and maintained correspondence with local politicians, including Congresswoman Bella Abzug, to fight for better infrastructure. In her old age, despite undergoing electroshock therapy, suffering multiple strokes, and having surgery to remove two blood clots from her brain, Deutsch maintained her personal friendships even with those whose radical poetry she did not favor (such as Ginsberg and Czeslaw Milosz).¹ She remained a pillar in the poetic community, her doors open to anyone willing to discuss literature.

¹For the last decade or so of her life, Deutsch had become frustrated with the overt political messaging in poetry, believing it to be more propaganda than art. In 1968, for instance, in response to the "Poet Power" letter to the editors of the *New York Review*, Deutsch wrote personal letters to the poets who signed Robert Duncan's manifesto. In the letters, she would ask the following questions: "Do you consider Black Power 'an ideal vision of African Divinity resurrected to save the white rational races for suffocating the entire planet in dung colored gas'?" and "Do you favor the 'attempted state utopias in China and Cuba'?" (Deutsch). And although she makes her distaste known for their political and poetic views – "I am further puzzled to find you [Czeslaw Milosz] associated with Allen Ginsberg and Anselm Hollo in the demands that you make on society, not to say those that

Despite her significant contributions, Deutsch's literary output has often been underestimated. Deutsch's absence from the literary canon is a complex issue that reflects broader patterns of marginalization. Her identity as a German-Jewish woman might have led to an early suppression of her work, as the biases of her time likely played a role. However, the persistence of her marginalization, even as the canon has expanded to include more diverse voices, suggests that her anti-communist stance and perceived conservatism (by both her peers and current scholars) have also played a part. The academic environment, which often leans left, may have found it easier to embrace writers whose political views aligned more closely with their own. Furthermore, Deutsch's role as a translator and cultural broker – positions that do not fit neatly within the conventional classifications of author or poet – are certainly undervalued. This marginalization – by her identity, her perceived political affiliations, and her unconventional role – illustrates the intricate and multifaceted nature of her literary exclusion. By reevaluating Deutsch and her literary output, this project has sought to address this failure.

As such, more than anything, this dissertation is a study of character, as Deutsch's literary works reflect her unwillingness to conform to the hegemonic ideologies of her time. Deutsch never relaxed her resistance to the fears and discouragement that threaten to silence all creative women. Her legacy lies in her efforts to promote the cosmopolitan and inclusive version of literature that she actively embodied, navigating the intricacies of cultural mediation and contributing to global discourse. As a translator, Deutsch's decision-making underscored her commitment to foreignizing you make on poetry" (Deutsch) – she ends each letter with an invitation into her home: "Both of us would be most happy to see you here whenever" (Deutsch).

source texts and in her translation strategies. Her work with German Expressionists and Russian anthologies during politically tumultuous periods showcased her ability to challenge dominant literary norms and cultural hegemonies. She uniquely defied pressure from her peers as evidenced by her skepticism of communism. And her poetry reveals her engagement with her Jewish heritage and her role as a mediator within modernism, while her fiction contributes to American female experiences and perspectives. Overall, Deutsch was an advocate for marginalized voices, whose literary contributions challenged the status quo and highlighted the complex cultural landscapes of her time.

Yet understanding the prevalence of systemic biases such as gender discrimination, political silencing, and cultural marginalization within American history, contemporary culture, and even academia, it is not surprising that Deutsch has been relegated to the sidelines of literary scholarship. She was haunted toward the end of her life by the conviction that she had been undervalued as a poet, critic, translator, and novelist. Ironically, the very authors she honored and strove to consecrate as part of the American canon refused to take her seriously due to these prejudices, whether it was anti-Semitism, sexism, political disagreements, or blatant xenophobia. While the struggle for recognition of a Joyce (a misogynist) or a Pound (an anti-Semite) has been sentimentally suffused with a notion of heroism, the more urgent and compelling struggle of a marginalized Jewish woman writer like Deutsch has gone completely unacknowledged despite her significant contributions.

Studying Babette Deutsch is crucial because her work directly challenges the instrumentalist and nationalist paradigms that dominate American English departments. As a translator, poet, critic, and novelist, Deutsch defied the prevailing ethnocentric and

insular trends by embracing cultural brokerage and cross-cultural dialogues. By demonstrating the applicability of cultural brokerage as a literary theory, which can be applied to a broader range of authors and literatures, this study emphasizes the importance of diverse modes of expression emerging from literary border-crossing and the experiences of multiethnic and polyglot individuals. Reassessing Deutsch's contributions provides a richer understanding of twentieth-century literary history and advocates for a global, diverse perspective that challenges conventional and narrow paradigms often found in academic discourse.² Recognizing Babette Deutsch as an important figure within the American canon means embracing transnational and multiethnic approaches to literature and fostering a more comprehensive and enlightened view of cultural and literary expression.

² Although I discuss instrumentalism at length throughout this dissertation (a narrow and conventional paradigm), for more information, see Venuti, Lawrence. "Hijacking Translation." *Contra Instrumentalism: A Translation Polemic*. University of Nebraska Press, 2019.

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