Guide to the Silvia Dobson Papers

GEN MSS 409

by Beinecke staff

2014

P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
beinecke.library@yale.edu
http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/
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Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
P. O. Box 208330  
New Haven, CT 06520-8330  
beinecke.library@yale.edu  
http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/

**CALL NUMBER:** GEN MSS 409

**CREATOR:** Dobson, Silvia, 1908-

**TITLE:** Silvia Dobson papers

**DATES:** 1945-1992

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 2.12 linear feet (6 boxes)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** Collection contains letters from American poet H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) to Silvia Dobson, letters from the British author Bryher to Silvia Dobson and her siblings Mervyn and Norah Dobson, as well as copies of several letters from Silvia to Bryher and letters from Kenneth Macpherson. Letters from H.D. document her life in Switzerland and London for nearly thirty years and include information about H.D.’s analysis with Sigmund Freud. Letters from Bryher document Bryher’s life in Switzerland in the 1960’s and 1970’s, the Dobsons’ lives in America, and Dobson’s efforts to publish her work. Included among the correspondence are letters to H.D. from Norah, Mollie, and Mervyn Dobson, and Frances Gregg; and notes by Silvia H. Dobson. Included in the collection are typescripts of seven novels by Dobson: Feathers of Lead, Guests of Existence, Honor Bound or Shattering Mirror Images, The Hut of Laurel, The Kindhart Trap, Somebody and Nobody, and Spring Begins in Autumn. Also included is an untitled autobiography which describes her life as part of H. D.’s literary circle, her relief work during World War II, her relationship with H.D., her identity as a lesbian, and her later life living in America; and her untitled manuscript “Mirror for a Star, Star for a Mirror. H. D.’s letters to Silvia Dobson.”

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.dobsons

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.dobsons.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

- **b.** box
- **f.** folder
Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Conditions Governing Access
The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use
The Silvia Dobson Papers is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation
The Silvia Dobson Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information
Collections are processed to a variety of levels, depending on the work necessary to make them usable, their perceived research value, the availability of staff, competing priorities, and whether or not further accruals are expected. The library attempts to provide a basic level of preservation and access for all collections, and does more extensive processing of higher priority collections as time and resources permit.

Series IV. "Mirror for a Star, Star for a Mirror: H. D.’s Letters to Silvia Dobson” material was formerly Uncat ZA MS 112. In April 2014, Series IV was merged with the Silvia Dobson Papers and a finding aid was created.

Silvia Dobson (1908-)
Silvia Dobson, English-born author and friend of the poet H.D.

Scope and Contents
The papers contain letters from American poet H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) to Silvia Dobson, letters from the British author Bryher to Silvia Dobson and her siblings Mervyn and Norah Dobson, as well as copies of several letters from Silvia to Bryher and letters from Kenneth Macpherson. Letters from H.D. document her life in Switzerland and London for nearly thirty years and include information about H.D.’s analysis with Sigmund Freud. Letters from Bryher document Bryher’s life in Switzerland in the 1960’s and 1970’s, the Dobsons’ lives in America, and Dobson’s efforts to publish her work. Included among the correspondence are letters to H.D. from Norah, Mollie, and Mervyn Dobson, and Frances Gregg; and notes by Silvia H. Dobson. Included in the collection are typescripts of seven novels by Dobson: Feathers of Lead, Guests of Existence, Honor Bound or Shattering Mirror Images, The Hut of Laurel, The Kindhart Trap, Somebody and Nobody, and Spring Begins in Autumn. Also included is an untitled autobiography which describes her life as part of H. D.’s literary circle, her relief work during World War II, her relationship with H.D., her
identity as a lesbian, and her later life living in America; and her unpublished manuscript "Mirror for a Star, Star for a Mirror. H.D.’s letters to Silvia Dobson.”

Arrangement

## Collection Contents

### Series I. Correspondence

**0.21 linear feet  (1 box)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letters from Bryher</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 1</td>
<td>To Mervyn Dobson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 2-5</td>
<td>To Norah Dobson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 6-9</td>
<td>To Silvia Dobson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letters from Silvia Dobson</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 1, f. 10</td>
<td>Copies of letters to Bryher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Container</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2, f. 11-20</td>
<td>Autobiography, typescript, corrected (pp. 290-291 are missing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 2, f. 21-27</td>
<td><em>Feathers of Lead</em>, typescript, corrected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 3, f. 42-50</td>
<td><em>Honor Bound or Shattering Mirror Images</em>, typescript, corrected, undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4, f. 51-58</td>
<td><em>The Hut of Laurel</em>, typescript, corrected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4, f. 59-67</td>
<td><em>The Kindhart Trap</em>, typescript, corrected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 4, f. 68-72</td>
<td><em>Somebody and Nobody</em>, typescript, corrected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 73-80</td>
<td><em>Spring Begins in April</em>, typescript, corrected (pp. 72-80 are missing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 5, f. 81</td>
<td>Empty folder inscribed with holograph notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Series IV. "Mirror for a Star, Star for a Mirror: H. D.'s Letters to Silvia Dobson"**

0.42 linear feet  (1 box)

This series contains original and copies of letters from H.D. to Silvia Dobson. Also included in the correspondence are letters to H.D. from Norah, Mollie, and Mervyn Dobson, and Frances Gregg; letters from Kenneth Macpherson to Dobson; and notes by Silvia H. Dobson. The material was compiled by Dobson and entitled “Mirror for a Star, Star for a Mirror: H.D.'s Letters to Silvia Dobson.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. 6, f. 82</td>
<td>Copies of letters from HD to Dobson, letters 1-42, File I, pages 1-125, 1934-May 1935</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 6, f. 83</td>
<td>Original letters from HD to SHD, letters 43-77, File II, pages 125-259</td>
<td>Spring 1935–Winter 1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 6, f. 84</td>
<td>Original letters from HD to SHD, letters 78-120, File III, pages 259-388</td>
<td>1939-September 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 6, f. 85</td>
<td>Copies of letters from HD to SHD, letters 121-152, File IV, pages 289-490; and letters from Bryher, Autumn 1944-1947</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 6, f. 86</td>
<td>Copies of letters from HD to SHD, letters 154-201, File V, pages 491-598, including letters from Bryher, pages 491-598, Spring 1947-Winter 1951</td>
<td>undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 6, f. 87</td>
<td>Original letters from HD to SHD, letters 203-255, File VI, “the last nine magic years,” pages 599-700 (some from Bryher)</td>
<td>1952-1961</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selected Search Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library’s online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects
Authors
Authors, English -- 20th Century
LGBTQ resource
Lesbian authors
Lesbians
Lesbians’ writings

Names
Bryher, 1894-1983
Dobson, Mervyn
Dobson, Norah
Dobson, Silvia, 1908-
H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), 1886-1961
Macpherson, Kenneth