

Guide to the Olga Scherer-Virski Papers

GEN MSS 526



by Beinecke Staff

March 2005

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
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<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 526

CREATOR: Scherer-Virski, Olga

TITLE: Olga Scherer-Virski papers

DATES: 1954-1988

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 3.5 linear feet (7 boxes)

LANGUAGE: Chiefly in Polish; some materials in French.

SUMMARY: The collection consists of correspondence, writings, and personal papers documenting the life and work of Olga Scherer-Virski. There is personal and professional correspondence with Polish literary and cultural figures, other Polish emigres, publishers, and scholars. Correspondents include Jozef Czapski, Witold Gombrowicz, Julia Hartwig, Zbigniew Herbert, Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski, Zofia Hertz, Aleksander Janta, Konstanty Jelenski, Andrej Kijowski, Jan Lebenstein, Artur Miedzyrzecki, Czeslaw Milosz, Slawomir Mrozek, Zofia Romanowiczowa, Alexander Schenker, Jerzy Stempowski, Adam Wazyk, and Jozef Wittlin. Writings include several translations of poems from Polish to French, and subject files include clippings on Gombrowicz, Jelenski, Milosz, and Aleksander Wat.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.scherer>

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 <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.scherer>.

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

The Olga Scherer-Virski Papers were acquired by purchase in 1990 on the Edwin J. Beinecke Book Fund.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Box 6-7: Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

Conditions Governing Use

The Olga Scherer-Virski Papers are 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

Olga Scherer-Virski Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Processing Information

This material was formerly classed as Uncat MS Vault 592.

OLGA SCHERER-VIRSKI (1927-2001)

Olga Scherer-Virski was a Polish writer, literary scholar, and translator. She was born in Cracow, Poland, educated in the United States, where she completed her Ph.D. at Columbia University in 1952, and then held research affiliations and teaching positions at various institutions in the U.S. and France, including Bard College (1946-48,) Yale University (1953-57), Indiana University (1959-60), the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (1961-65), and the Université de Paris (1969-). She is the author of *The Modern Polish Short Story* (1955), a novella for children (*Spot Luck*, 1957), and two novels, *Wesolych Swiat* (1962) and *W Czas Morowy* (1967). She also translated Manfred Kridl's *A Survey of Polish Literature and Culture* (1956).

Biographical information taken from *Who's Who in the World* (8th ed.) and the online Gale Biography Resource Center.

Scope and Contents

The Olga Scherer-Virski Papers consist of letters, manuscripts, and personal papers documenting the life and work of Olga Scherer-Virski. The collection spans the years 1954-1988.

The collection is housed in 7 boxes and organized into two series: *Correspondence* and *Other Papers*. Boxes 5-7 contain *Oversize*, *Restricted Fragile Papers*, and *Restricted Fragile Oversize* material respectively.

[Series I, Correspondence](#), is organized into two subseries: General Correspondence and Third Party Correspondence.

The collection consists chiefly of incoming letters from well over 50 correspondents, including Polish literary figures of the second half of the 20th century. The collection provides information on the lives of Scherer and other Polish authors of the period, many of whom lived in exile in Europe and the Americas. The principal correspondents include Witold Gombrowicz, Zbigniew Herbert, Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski, Konstanty Jelenski, and Czeslaw Milosz.

Letters from Gombrowicz (1954-68) revolve around Scherer's attempts to translate and publish some of Gombrowicz's writings in English and French. Gombrowicz writes in a light tone, suggesting possible arrangements for the translation of his works, as well as repeatedly pointing to his extremely difficult financial situation as a Polish emigré author living in Argentina. The folder includes several outgoing letters.

Correspondence with Zbigniew and Katarzyna Herbert (1964-86) is friendly in nature and deals with visits of major Polish emigré figures, the literary work of several members of the circle, and relevant cultural events. There is a letter to Scherer from the Swedish Academy asking for her nomination for the Nobel Prize for Literature for the year 1984. Scherer nominates Zbigniew Herbert, pointing to the significance of his poetic series *Mr. Cogito*.

Letters from Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski (1964-81) are brief but friendly. Posted mainly from Naples, Italy, they focus on personal issues, as well as on the literary work of numerous Polish writers, including Mrozek, Gombrowicz, and Scherer.

Konstanty Jelenski (1962-87) was probably Scherer's closest friend among the correspondents represented in the collection. Jelenski advises Scherer on such subjects as health and emotional well-being, Scherer's relationship with Jan Lebenstein, writing, and translation. The folders include letters from Rena Jelenska, as well as a letter from Scherer summarizing her biographical information.

The three folders of letters from Czeslaw and Janka Milosz (1958-85) sketch a fascinating portrayal of the professional and personal concerns of the Polish Nobel Prize winner. Czeslaw Milosz writes in a rather somber tone, and ponders his role as a father, a husband, and also as a writer, teacher, and promoter of Polish literature in the U.S.

Other noteworthy correspondents in the collection include the painters Jan Lebenstein and Jozef Czapski; the journalist Aleksander Janta; Joseph Sadzik, a priest, publisher, and philosopher; Zofia Hertz, a key figure of the Polish Literary Institute in Paris; and various literary critics, scholars, and writers: Andrzej Kijowski, Zofia Kozarynowa, Artur Miedzyrzecki and Julia Hartwig, Slawomir Mrozek, Zofia Romanowicz, Alexander Schenker, Jerzy Stempowski, Adam Wazyk, and Jozef Wittlin.

There are also several outgoing letters whose style justifies Scherer's reputation as a "grande dame" of Polish letters. Czeslaw Milosz identified Scherer as the link between Poland and the Polish Parisian circle revolving around the journal *Kultura*. As the poet pointed out, Scherer was not only a literary scholar, but also a writer, one whose novels might be described as "campus" fiction in the vein of the works of Mary McCarthy or David Lodge. Outgoing letters are indicated in folder notes in the box list.

Third Party Correspondence, housed in box 4, contains four pieces of correspondence, and includes letters to Jelenski from Gombrowicz and Kijowski.

[Series II, Other Papers](#), also housed in box 4, is organized into three small subseries: Writings, Subject Files, and Other Papers.

Of note in the Writings are Scherer's manuscript notes and fragments concerning translations of several Polish poems into French, including "Jaka spadnie kara" by Mickiewicz and "Bog mi odmowil..." by Krasinski. The Subject Files consist chiefly of clippings on Gombrowicz, Jelenski, Milosz, and Wat.

[Oversize](#) material, housed in box 5, contains items from Series I. [Restricted Fragile Papers](#) and [Restricted Fragile Oversize](#) are housed in boxes 6 and 7 respectively.

Collection Contents

Series I: Correspondence, 1954-1988

1.34 linear feet (3.5 boxes)

Series I, *Correspondence*, is organized into two subseries, General Correspondence and Third Party Correspondence.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

b. 1, f. 1	"A" General	1974 May 21
b. 1, f. 2	"B" General	1955-87
b. 1, f. 3	Bednaryk, Czeslaw; Bednaryk, Krystyna Also stored in: Oversize, Box 5, folder 115	1966-67
b. 1, f. 4	Bicznycki, Jan	1962-77
b. 1, f. 5-7	Brandys, Kazimierz; Brandys, Marysia	1971-87, n.d.
b. 1, f. 8	Brzozowski, Tadeusz	1961, n.d.
b. 1, f. 9	"C" General	1964, 1987
	Carroll-Najder, Halina See: Najder, Zdzislaw, Box 2, folder 56	
	Chmielowiec, Michal See: Wiadomosci, Box 3, folder 87	
b. 1, f. 10	Czapski, Jozef Includes letter from Maria Czapski	1971-87, n.d.
b. 1, f. 11	<i>Dziennik Polski</i>	1961
b. 1, f. 12	"E" General	1964 Nov 11
b. 1, f. 13	Erlich, Victor	1965 Dec 23
b. 1, f. 14	"F" General	1965 Dec
b. 1, f. 15	Gombrowicz, Witold Includes letters from Scherer to Gombrowicz See also: Simon and Schuster, Box 3, folder 77	1954-68, n.d.
b. 1, f. 16	Gren, Zygmunt	1969-76, n.d.
b. 1, f. 17	Guze, Joanna	1972 Dec 29
b. 1, f. 18	"H" General Includes art exhibition catalog	1967, n.d.
	Hartwig, Julia See: Miedzyrzecki, Artur, Box 2, folder 51	

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE (continued)

b. 1, f. 19-21	Herbert, Zbigniew; Herbert, Katarzyna	1964-86, n.d.
b. 1, f. 22-23	Herling-Grudzinski, Gustaw	1964-81, n.d.
b. 1, f. 24	Hertz, Zygmunt; Hertz, Zofia	1962-72, n.d.
b. 1, f. 25	Hordynski, Jerzy	1964-66
b. 1, f. 26	Iwaniuk, Wacław Includes enclosure	1960-83, n.d.
b. 1, f. 27	Janta, Aleksander Includes letters from Scherer to Janta	1957-71
b. 1, f. 28-34	Jelenski, Konstanty A. (Konstanty Aleksander); Jelenska, Rena Includes letters from Scherer and [Jerzy?] Stempowski to Jelenski and enclosures	1962-87, n.d.
b. 2, f. 35	[Jovanovich, William?] Includes letter in Milosz's hand	n.d.
b. 2, f. 36	"K" General	1965-77
b. 2, f. 37	Karpinski, Wojciech	1972 Aug 16
b. 2, f. 38-39	Kijowski, Andrzej; Kijowska, Kazimiera	1961-86, n.d.
b. 2, f. 40	Kisielewski, Stefan	1972-76
b. 2, f. 41	Korzeniewski, Tadeusz	1985 Apr 26
b. 2, f. 42	Kosko, Allan	1966
b. 2, f. 43	[Kowalewski, J.]	1964-65
b. 2, f. 44-45	Kozarynowa, Zofia Includes clippings	1963-77
b. 2, f. 46	Kridl, Manfred	1954-55
	Krzyzanowski, Ludwik See: Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, Box 2, folder 63	1956-57
b. 2, f. 47	<i>Kultura</i>	1967-82
b. 2, f. 48	"L" General	1964 Nov
b. 2, f. 49	Lebenstein, Jan; Lebenstein, Maria Includes letters from Scherer to Jan Lebenstein	1964-71, n.d.
b. 2, f. 50	"M" General	1962, 1964
b. 2, f. 51	Miedzyrzecki, Artur; Hartwig, Julia	1974-87, n.d.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE (continued)

b. 2, f. 52-54	Milosz, Czeslaw; Milosz, Janka Includes letter to Milosz from "The Wilson Center" and clipping See also: Jovanovich, William, Box 2, folder 35	1958-85, n.d.
b. 2, f. 55	Mrozek, Slawomir Muzeum Literatury im. Adama Mickiewicza w Warszawie See: Odrowaz-Pieniazek, Janusz, Box 2, folder 58	1970-73
b. 2, f. 56	Najder, Zdzislaw; Carroll-Najder, Halina Includes photograph	1967-83, n.d.
b. 2, f. 57	Nowakowski, Tadeusz	1963-77
b. 2, f. 58	Odrowaz-Pieniazek, Janusz	1964-80
b. 2, f. 59	Osiecka, Agnieszka	1978 Jan 6
b. 2, f. 60	"P" General	1955-86
b. 2, f. 61	Paczkowska, Irena	1961-62, n.d.
b. 2, f. 62	Piotrowski, [Jacek?]	1961 Jan 15
b. 2, f. 63	Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America Includes carbon of letter from Scherer to Polish Institute	1956-57
b. 2, f. 64	Romanowicz, Zofia	1961-82, n.d.
b. 2, f. 65	Rostworowski, Jan	1967 Jun 7
b. 3, f. 66	"S" General	1977, 1988
b. 3, f. 67-71	Sadzik, Jozef	1965-80, n.d.
b. 3, f. 72	Schaff, Adam	1964-67
b. 3, f. 73-75	Schenker, Aleksander; Schenker, Elaine; Schenker, Krystyna Includes third-party letter to Scherer and photograph	1963-86, n.d.
b. 3, f. 76	Sédir, Georges	1967, n.d.
b. 3, f. 77	Simon and Schuster, Inc. Includes carbons of letters from Scherer to Simon and Schuster and Witold Gombrowicz	1957-58
b. 3, f. 78	Solski, Wacław	1948-79
b. 3, f. 79	Stempowski, Jerzy	1961-67, n.d.
b. 3, f. 80	Svenska Akademien Includes carbon of letter from Scherer to Svenska Akademien	1983-84
b. 3, f. 81	"T" General	1977, n.d.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE (continued)

b. 3, f. 82	Tatarkiewicz, [Wladyslaw?] Carbon of letter from Scherer to Tatarkiewicz	1973 Oct 7
b. 3, f. 83	Urbanski, Edmund [Stefan?]	1947 Oct 22
b. 3, f. 84	Wazyk, Adam	1967-80, n.d.
b. 3, f. 85	Watowa, Ola Includes clipping	1966-1967, n.d.
b. 3, f. 86	Weintraub, Wiktor	1962, 1967
b. 3, f. 87	<i>Wiadomosci</i> Includes carbons of letters from Scherer to <i>Wiadomosci</i> and enclosure	1955-71
b. 3, f. 88	Wierzynski, Kazimierz; Wierzynska, Halina	1955-74, n.d.
b. 3, f. 89	Winczakiewicz, J[an?]	1963-66, n.d.
b. 4, f. 90	Winnicka, Wanda	1966-67, n.d.
b. 4, f. 91	Wittlin, Jozef; Wittlin, Halina	1958-71
b. 4, f. 92	Wlodek, Jozef	1964 Mar 17
	Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars See: Milosz, Czeslaw, Box 2, folders, 52-54	
b. 4, f. 93	<i>World Literature Today</i>	1978
b. 4, f. 94	Woroszycki, Wiktor Includes carbon of letter from Scherer to Woroszycki	1967
b. 4, f. 95	Wozniakowska, Roza	1979-81
b. 4, f. 96	Zelenski, Wladyslaw	n.d.
b. 4, f. 97	Unidentified	1962-87, n.d.
THIRD PARTY CORRESPONDENCE		
b. 4, f. 98	Gombrowicz, Witold to Konstanty Jelenski	1968 Aug 24
b. 4, f. 99	Kijowski, Andrzej to Konstanty Jelenski	n.d.
b. 4, f. 100	Kozarynowa, Zofia to Zofia Romanowicz	1977 May 5
b. 4, f. 101	Miedzyrzecki, Artur to Barbara Majewska Includes note from Julia Hartwig	1978 Feb 8

Series II: Other Papers, 1960-1987

0.11 linear feet (.5 box)

Series II, *Other Papers*, is organized into three subseries: Writings, Subject Files, and Other Papers

WRITINGS

Writings of Olga Scherer-Virski

b. 4, f. 102	Manuscript notes and fragments, holograph and typescript, corrected Includes translations of work by Antoni Malczewski, Adam Mickiewicz, Krasinski, and Witwicki	n.d.
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b. 4, f. 103	"Trente-six Poetes Polonais," preface for <i>Preuves</i> , typescript carbon, corrected	n.d.
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Writings of Others

Iwaniuk, Waclaw

Iwaniuk, Waclaw

b. 4, f. 104	Untitled poem, typescript	n.d.
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Jelenski, Konstanty

b. 4, f. 105	"Reponse a des critiques partisans," article, photocopy	1966 Apr
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Kijowski, Andrzej

b. 4, f. 106	[Urodzilem sie 29 listopada...], autobiographical statement, typescript, corrected	n.d.
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McCarthy, Mary

"Constantin Jelenski, l'ami Kot," article, printed version, *Liberation*[See: Subject Files, Jelenski, Box 6, folder 109](#)

Milosz, Czeslaw

"L'hommage de Milosz à Jelenski," article, printed version, *Le Monde*[See: Subject Files, Jelenski, Box 6, folder 109](#)

Sandzig, Jozef

b. 4, f. 107	"Heidegger: le chemin de campagne," notes, holograph	n.d.
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SUBJECT FILES

b. 4, f. 108	Gombrowicz, Witold	1978, n.d.
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b. 4, f. 109	Jelenski, Konstanty A. (Konstanty Aleksander) Includes obituaries on Jelenski by Czeslaw Milosz and Mary McCarthy	1987
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b. 4, f. 110	Milosz, Czeslaw	1978-79
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b. 4, f. 111	Wat, Aleksander	1967 Aug 23
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OTHER PAPERS

OTHER PAPERS (continued)

b. 4, f. 112	Address for [Wencslas?] Godlewski	[1961?]
b. 4, f. 113	Printed ephemera for conference on Maria Konopnicka	1960 Sep
b. 4, f. 114	Stamps	n.d.

Oversize

0.92 linear feet (1 box)

b. 5, f. 115

Letters from Czeslaw and Krystyna Bednaryk to Scherer (In Series I)

1966-67

Restricted Fragile Papers*0.21 linear feet (1 box)*

Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

b. 6, f. 116	Box 2, folder 44
b. 6, f. 117	Box 3, folder 67
b. 6, f. 118	Box 3, folder 75
b. 6, f. 119	Box 3, folder 79
b. 6, f. 120	Box 4, folder 92
b. 6, f. 121	Box 4, folder 109
b. 6, f. 122	Box 4, folder 110

Restricted Fragile Oversize

0.92 linear feet (1 box)

Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

b. 7, f. 123	Box 2, folder 45
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b. 7, f. 124	Box 4, folder 109
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b. 7, f. 125	Box 4, folder 111
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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, Polish -- 20th Century -- Archives
European literature -- 20th Century
Polish literature -- 20th Century

Geographic Names

Poland

Occupations

Authors

Names

Czapski, Józef, 1896-1993
Gombrowicz, Witold, 1904-1969
Hartwig, Julia, 1921-
Herbert, Zbigniew, 1924-1998
Herling-Grudziński, Gustaw, 1919-2000
Hertz, Zofia
Janta, Aleksander, 1908-1974
Jeleński, Konstanty A. (Konstanty Aleksander),
1922-1987
Kijowski, Andrzej, 1928-1985
Lebenstein, Jan, 1930-1999
Międzyrzecki, Artur, 1922-1996
Miłosz, Czesław, 1911-2004
Mrozek, Sławomir, 1930-2013
Romanowiczowa, Zofia, 1922-2010
Schenker, Alexander M., 1924-
Scherer-Virski, Olga
Stempowski, Jerzy, 1894-1969
Wat, Aleksander, 1900-1967
Ważyk, Adam, 1905-1982
Wittlin, Józef, 1896-1976