

Guide to the Irina Odoevtseva Papers

GEN MSS 101



by Nancy K. Anderson

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
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CALL NUMBER: GEN MSS 101

CREATOR: Odoevt's`eva, Irina, 1895-1990

TITLE: Irina Odoevt's`eva papers

DATES: 1931-1965

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 0.25 linear feet (1 box)

LANGUAGE: Russian

SUMMARY: The papers consist of correspondence and drafts of writings of several Russian exiles.

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

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.odoevts>.

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 Papers were acquired by the Yale University Library in 1966 using Slavic funds.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Irina Odoevtseva 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

The Irina Odoevtseva Papers. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

Slavic names, titles, and quotations in their original languages have been transliterated in accordance with Library of Congress guidelines.

IRINA ODOEVTSEVA (1895-1990)

Irina Vladimirovna Odoevtseva (real name Iraida Gustavovna Heinecke) was born in Riga, the daughter of a prosperous lawyer and landlord. Although the year of her birth is variously given as 1895 and 1901, the time and circumstances of her literary debut are more consistent with the earlier date. Odoevtseva was extremely reticent in discussing her background and early life, responding to a questionnaire for the anthology of émigré poetry *Sodruzhestvo* (Washington: Victor Kamkin, 1966) with the words, "Ni bibliografii, ni biografii--ia, kak pravilo, izbegaiu ikh" (Neither a bibliography nor a biography--as a rule I avoid them).

Odoevtseva entered literature as a member of the second Poets' Guild, which was reestablished in late 1920 under the leadership of Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev. Other members of the Guild included Georgii Vladimirovich Ivanov, whom Odoevtseva married in September 1921, and Georgii Adamovich, who became a lifelong friend. Odoevtseva's first volume of poems, *Dvor chudes*, was published in 1922.

Ivanov and Odoevtseva emigrated in 1922. After brief stays in Riga and Berlin, they settled in Paris, where both were active in émigré literary circles such as the *Zelenaia lampa* (Green Lamp) of Dmitrii Sergeevich Merezhkovskii and Z. N. Gippius. By the 1930s, Ivanov had become one of the most prominent émigré poets. During this period Odoevtseva largely abandoned poetry for prose, publishing the novels *Angel smerti* (1927), *Izol'da* (1931), and *Zerkalo* (1939).

Prior to World War II, the financial assistance of Odoevtseva's father, who died in 1932 and named her as his sole heir, enabled the couple to live in comfort and even some degree of luxury. During the Nazi occupation of France, however, their house was bombed and they were forced to sell many of their personal possessions to survive. As a result, after the war the couple found themselves with no income other than that from their literary works, which was irregular and inadequate. The hardships affected the health of both husband and wife and the money Odoevtseva received for her novel *Ostav' nadezhdu navsegda* (1954) was used to enable them to move to a retirement home in the south of France. There Ivanov died in August 1958.

During these difficult years, Odoevtseva resumed writing poetry, resulting in the collections *Kontrapunkt* (1951), *Stikhi, napisannye vo vremia bolezni* (1952), *Stikhi* (1960), *Desiat' let* (1961), and *Odinochestvo* (1965). After Ivanov's death Odoevtseva moved to Gagny (near Paris) and joined the staff of the journal *Russkaia mysl'*. In 1967 she published a volume of literary memoirs, *Na beregakh Nevy*. In March 1978 she married a second time, to the novelist Iakov Nikolaevich Gorbov. Their life together was short; in September 1982, Gorbov died. In 1983 Odoevtseva published a second volume of literary memoirs, *Na beregakh Seny*.

When changes within the Soviet Union led to a new interest and appreciation of the cultural achievements of Russian émigrés, Odoevtseva returned to Leningrad in April 1987. In 1988, the Soviet publication of *Na*

beregakh Nevy and a selection of Odoevtseva's poems finally made her work accessible to students of Russian literature in whatever country they may live. Irina Odoevtseva died in October 1990.

Sources used: *Handbook of Russian Literature* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1985); L. A. Foster, *Bibliografiia russkoi zarubezhnoi literatury, 1918-1968* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1970); I. V. Odoevtseva, *Na beregakh Seny* (Paris: La Presse Libre, 1983); A. Sabova, "Snova na beregakh Nevy," afterword to I. V. Odoevtseva, *Na beregakh Nevy* (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988); Gleb Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1984).

Scope and Contents

The Irina Odoevtseva Papers consist of one box of correspondence and miscellaneous papers which span the dates 1931-65. The correspondence is divided into letters addressed to Odoevtseva (Incoming) and to other persons (Third Party). Within each section, the letters are arranged alphabetically by author and then chronologically for a given author. The miscellaneous papers consist of two notebooks of drafts by Georgii Vladimirovich Ivanov and a Russian translation of Dante by Boris Zaitsev.

The incoming letters were written by four correspondents in the period from 1955 to 1965. The Georgii Adamovich correspondence consists of 39 letters, notes, and postcards. The letters contain numerous references to literary contemporaries, among them Mark Aldanov, Roman Gul', George Ivask, Sergei Makovskii, Vladimir Nabokov (apropos of the publication of *Lolita*), Nikolai Otsup, and V. Veidle, as well as to such Silver Age figures as Innokentii Annenskii, Aleksandr Blok, and Mikhail Kuzmin. Odoevtseva's own writings, including the manuscript of *Na beregakh Nevy*, are the subject of generally favorable comments. The letters testify to the closeness of Adamovich's friendship for Odoevtseva, as he repeatedly expresses his concern over her personal situation and offers advice and assistance.

Aldanov (real name Mark Aleksandrovich Landau) and Lanskoï are each represented by one letter. Aldanov's letter, written in 1955, describes his efforts to find a place for Georgii Vladimirovich Ivanov in either one of two rest homes favored by émigrés. Lanskoï's letter, postmarked 1965, thanks Odoevtseva for the gift of a book.

The last three incoming letters were written by Zaitsev in 1963-64. They convey holiday greetings and praise both Odoevtseva's just-published poems and her memoirs.

The third party correspondence contains five letters from Z. N. Gippius to Georgii Adamovich and one letter from Zaitsev to Ivanov. Gippius's letters, written in 1931-32, cover a broad range of topics; in the letter of January 4, 1932, she herself justly characterizes her correspondence as "i delovoi, i literaturnii, i metafizicheskii, i chelovecheskii" (practical, and literary, and metaphysical, and human). Zaitsev's letter to Ivanov, dated 1955, addresses the same problem as Aldanov's to Odoevtseva--finding a place for Ivanov to live--as well as current literary matters.

The miscellaneous papers include two notebooks of Ivanov. The notebook in folder 9 contains six draft poems written on attached pages and seventeen loose sheets representing both draft poems and prose fragments. A note in an unidentified hand gives the dates 1955-58 for the poems. The notebook in folder 10 contains the draft of an article on poetry. Throughout it the reader is referred to as "ty" (you), and a note in Odoevtseva's handwriting identifies the addressee as Adamovich. Also included in the miscellaneous papers is a manuscript of Zaitsev's Russian translation of Canto 5 of the *Inferno*. This manuscript is not dated, but it seems reasonable to associate it with the 1955 letter from Zaitsev to Ivanov in folder 8, in which Zaitsev writes, "Spasibo za dobroe slovo o Dante" (Thank you for your kind words about Dante).

The Irina Odoevtseva Papers contain correspondence and drafts by major Russian émigré writers. The papers provide information about the personal and literary activities of these writers and about the history of Russian literature in exile.

Collection Contents

Incoming Correspondence

b. 1, f. 1-3	Adamovich, Georgii	1956-65, n.d.
b. 1, f. 4	Aldanov, Mark Aleksandrovich	1955 Apr 27
b. 1, f. 5	Lanskoi	1965 Apr
b. 1, f. 6	Zaitsev, Boris	1963-64

Third Party Correspondence

b. 1, f. 7	Gippius, Z. N. (Zinaida Nikolaevna)	1931-32
b. 1, f. 8	Zaitsev, Boris	1955 Jul 21

Miscellaneous Papers

Ivanov, Georgii Vladimirovich

b. 1, f. 9	Notebook of draft poems	[1955-58?]
b. 1, f. 10	Draft article on poetry	n.d.
	Zaitsev, Boris	
b. 1, f. 11	Manuscript translation of Dante	[1955?]

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, Exiled
Authors, Russian -- 20th Century
Poets, Russian -- 20th Century

Occupations

Authors

Names

Adamovich, Georgii, 1892-1972
Aldanov, Mark Aleksandrovich, 1886-1957
Gippius, Z. N. (Zinaida Nikolaevna), 1869-1945
Odoevt's`eva, Irina, 1895-1990
Zait's`ev, Boris, 1881-1972