



Special Collections Department

Paul Bowles Letters to John Martin

1975 - 1990

Manuscript Collection Number: 324
Accessioned: Purchase, 1991.
Extent: 89 items (.3 linear ft.)
Content: Letters, plays, novella, and fiction.
Access: The collection is open for research.
Processed: April 1996 by Anita Wellner.

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Biographical Notes

Paul Bowles

Paul Frederic Bowles was born in New York City on December 30, 1910. Since the 1940s, Bowles has written numerous works of fiction, essays, translations, travel writing, poems, and other works. Among Bowles's best-known fictional works are the novels *The Sheltering Sky* (1949), *Let It Come Down* (1952), *The Spider's House* (1955); and his initial short story collection, *The Delicate Prey and Other Stories* (1950).

Paul Bowles has also had a prominent career as a composer. He studied with both Aaron Copland and Virgil Thomson, and during the 1930s and 1940s became one of the pre-eminent composers of American theater music.

In 1938, Paul Bowles married the former Jane Auer, who, under her married name, became an accomplished author. Paul and Jane Bowles spent much of their married life traveling throughout the world and in the late 1940s made Tangier, Morocco, their permanent home. Jane Bowles died in 1973, but Bowles has continued to reside in Tangier.

John Martin

John Martin is the publisher of Black Sparrow Press, which is noted for its publication of the works of contemporary poets and writers. Black Sparrow Press began publishing in 1966 with a broadside of Charles Bukowski's poem "True Story."

In addition to publishing most of the poetry written by Charles Bukowski, over the years John Martin has published the work of such writers as Diane Wakoski, Tom Clark, John Ashbery, Denise Levertov, Robert Duncan, Gertrude Stein, D. H. Lawrence, James Purdy, Joyce Carol Oates, Wyndham Lewis, Robert Creeley, William Everson, and numerous others.

John Martin has published the work of both Jane and Paul Bowles, as well as Bowles' translations of the work of Mohammed Mrabet. The works of Bowles which bear Black Sparrow Press's imprint include *Scenes* (1968), *The Thicket of Spring: poems, 1926-1969* (1972), *The Boy Who Set the Fire and Other Stories* (1974), *Thing Gone and Things Still Here* (1977), *Collected Stories, 1939-1976* (1979), *Five Eyes* (1979), *Next to Nothing: collected poems, 1926-1977* (1981), *Midnight Mass* (1981), and a reprint in 1982 of the *Spider's House*.

Black Sparrow Press also published Bowles' translation to English of Mohammed Mrabet's *Look and Move On* (1976), *Harmless Poisons* (1976), and *The Big Mirror* (1977).

Sources:

Miller, Jeffrey. *Paul Bowles: A Descriptive Bibliography*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Black Sparrow Press, 1986.

Morrow, Bradford and Seamus Cooney. *A Bibliography of the Black Sparrow Press, 1966-1978*. Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981.

Scope and Content Note

Paul Bowles Letters to John Martin consist of a substantial group of eighty-four letters written by Paul Bowles to John Martin, plus a copy of Bowles' manuscript for *Points in Time*. Eight letters from Mohammed Mrabet to Martin (as translated and typed by Bowles), as well as copies of Bowles' English translations of Mrabet's play, *Earth*, and novella, *Marriage With Papers* are also available in this collection.

Dating between 1975 and 1990, Bowles' and Mrabet's letters communicate their questions and concerns about John Martin's publication of their works, as well as conveying their appreciation and enthusiasm for Martin's work. In Paul Bowles' letters are found references to his books, *Points in Time*, *The Spider's House*, *Midnight Mass*, *Five Eyes*, *Collected Stories*, 1939-1976, and *The Boy Who Set the Fire and Other Stories*. Martin's publication of Jane Bowles' letters (*Out in the World: Selected Letters of Jane Bowles, 1935-1970*) and her *Feminine Wiles* are also mentioned.

The letters of Bowles, as well as the eight letters translated and typed by Bowles for Mohammed Mrabet, also discuss several of Mrabet's books, including *Marriage with Papers*, *Look and Move On*, *The Big Mirror*, and *Harmless Poison*, all published by Black Sparrow Press. Among the letters are photocopies of Mrabet's works *Earth* and *Married With Papers* which were sent to John Martin for his consideration.

In addition to discussing Martin's editing and publication of his books, Bowles requests copies of his books, inquires about royalty statements and payments, conveys his concerns about multiple literary agents and international publication rights, and mentions the publication in the United Kingdom of his works by Peter Owen, Limited.

Bowles' letters also contain references to his health, displeasure with Sawyer-Lauçanno's *An Invisible Spectator*, his problems with Larbi Layachi, Jeffrey Miller's bibliography of his work, his thoughts of Arab-American relations and the difficulties they create for him, and a variety of allusions to his daily life.

As a whole the letters serve to document the professional relationship of writer to editor, as well as the friendship shared by Paul Bowles and John Martin.

Related collections:

Ms 110 [Pagany Archive](#)

Ms 163 [Paul Bowles Papers](#)

Ms 164 [Paul Bowles Collection](#)

Ms 165 [Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno Papers Related to Paul Bowles](#)

Ms 323 [Paul Bowles Letters to William Saroyan](#)

Unprocessed Peter Owen Limited Archive

Contents List

Folder -- Contents

Series I. Paul Bowles Letters to John Martin, 1976-1990

F1	1976 Apr 9	TLS	1p
	1977 Jul 26	TLS	1p
F2	1979 Jun 12	TL	1p
	Note: Missing bottom of page which had corrections for <i>Five Eyes</i> .		
	Jun 22	TLS	1p
	Jul 6	TLS	1p
	Aug 29	TLS	1p
	Sep 4	TLS	1p
	Sep 6	TLS	1p
	Sep 18	TLS	1p
	Sep 25	TLS	1p
	Sep 29	TLS	1p
F3	1979 Oct 17	TLS	1p
	Oct 17	TLS	1p
	Oct 19	TLS	1p
	Oct 22	TLS	1p
	Oct 27	TLS	1p
	Dec 28	TLS	1p
F4	1980 Feb 12	TLS	1p
	Feb 23	TLS	1p
	Mar 11	TLS	1p
	Mar 21	TLS	1p
	Apr 2	TLS	1p
	Apr 17	TLS	1p
	Apr 25	TLS	2p
F5	1980 May 5	TLS	1p
	Note: Includes a photocopied typescript of Mrabet's "Married with Papers," which was published as <i>Marriage With Papers</i> .		
	May 26	TLS	1p

F6	1980	Jun 28	TNS	1p
			Note: Includes a photocopied typescript of Mrabet's play, <i>Earth</i> .	
F7	1980	Oct 28	TLS	1p
		Nov 27	TLS	1p
F8	1981	Jan 7	TLS	1p
		May 7	TLS	1p
		Jul 2	TLS	1p
		July 8	TLS	1p
		Oct 13	TLS	1p
		Nov 22	TLS	1p

Series I. Bowles Letters to Martin (cont'd)

F9	1982	Jan 15	TLS	1p
		Feb 4	TLS	1p
		May 18	TLS	1p
		Jun 8	TLS	1p
		Jun 29	TLS	1p
		Jul 31	TLS	1p
F10	1983	Jan 3	TLS	1p
		Feb 4	TLS	1p
		Mar 2	TLS	1p
F11	1984	Jan 11	TLS	1p
		Jan 24	TLS	1p
		Jan 30	TLS	1p
		Feb 18	TLS	2p
		Feb 23	TLS	1p
F12	1984	Mar 9	TLS	1p
		Mar 13	TLS	1p
		Mar 20	TLS	1p
			Note: With copy of Bowles' revisions for a book by Larbi Layachi (17p).	
		Mar 29	TLS	1p
			Note: With copy of Millicent Dillon's letter to Bowles regarding Layachi.	
F13	1984	May 18	TLS	1p
		May 31	TLS	1p
		Jun 14	TLS	1p
		Jul 9	TLS	1p
		Aug 5	TLS	1p
		Aug 22	TLS	1p
		Oct 18	TLS	1p
F14	1985	Apr 27	TLS	1p
		Jun 26	TLS	1p
		Jul 8	TLS	1p
		Sep 5	TLS	1p
		Oct 7	TLS	1p
			Note: Includes a seven-line autograph note by Bowles.	
F15	1986	Apr 13	TLS	1p
		Jun 19	TLS	1p
		Jul 13	TLS	1p
		Nov 13	ALS	1p
	1987	Jul 7	TLS	1p
	[1987	Dec 14]	AN	1p
			Note: Written on a letter from Leavitt to Bowles.	
F16	1989	Jun 3	TLS	1p
		Dec 13	TLS	1p
	1990	Jan 9	TLS	1p
	[1990]	Feb 25	ALS	1p

Series II. Paul Bowles' *Points in Time*, [1981]

F17 Photocopy typescript of Bowles' *Points in Time*, [1981]
Includes a letter from Ned Leavitt to John Martin (1981 Aug 12), which discusses the manuscript.

Series III. Mohammed Mrabet Letters to John Martin, 1975-1980

These letters were typed by Paul Bowles as he translated Mrabet's words into English.

F18	1975	Aug 8	TLS	1p
		Sep 20	TLS	2p
	1976	Jun 14	TLS	1p
		Aug 14	TLS	1p
	1977	Jul 18	TLS	1p
	1978	Oct 8	TLS	1p

1980 Mar 4
Apr 11

TLS
TLS

1p
1p