Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 099, F947
Title: Paul Bowles letters to John B. L. Goodwin
Inclusive Dates: 1956-1991
Extent: 19 items (22 p.)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 099, F947, Paul Bowles letters to John B. L. Goodwin, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.
Shelving Summary: Box 66, F947: Shelved in SPEC MSS 099 manuscript boxes
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Biographical Notes

Paul Bowles

American composer and author Paul Frederic Bowles (1910-1999) produced numerous works of fiction, essays, travel writing, poems, autobiographical pieces, and other works.

In 1938, Paul Bowles married the aspiring writer Jane Auer. Inspired by his wife's success and her dedication to writing, Bowles began his own career as an author, eventually surpassing his already successful reputation as a composer.

John B. L. Goodwin

American writer and poet John Blair Linn Goodwin (1912-1994) was a world traveler, whose work was influenced by the locales he had visited.

His writings include *The Idols and the Prey* (1952), a novel about Haiti; *A View From Fuji* (1963), a novella about Japan; and a children’s book, *The Pleasant Pirate*.

Goodwin's short story "The Cocoon" was included in a 1947 anthology of best American short stories.

Sources:


Scope and Content Note


For over thirty years, Bowles revealed his thoughts to Goodwin on his professional literary endeavors and personal aspects of his life. His letters are addressed from many far-reaching locales, including Mombasa, India; the Canary Islands; Ceylon (Sri Lanka); Bangkok, Thailand; Lisbon, Spain; Northridge, California; New York City; and Tangier in Morocco.

Until Jane Bowles's death in 1973, Bowles often mentioned his wife, in his letters to Goodwin, noting, over time, the deterioration in her health, his relationship to her family, and quirks in her personality. In a letter dated May 13, 1958, Bowles admitted that at the request of Jane's father, he had written and signed letters in Jane’s name to Jane's mother. Bowles remarked of this practice, "I loathe the idea of perpetrating such a hoax." In another letter, Bowles wrote of Jane: "some day I shall have to accept the fact that she is an exceedingly social creature" (May 17, 1965). And later, in a poignant letter written ten days after his wife's death, Bowles would lament, "I am sad, but only for the first stroke and the years of suffering it brought her. If only the last one had come several years ago when she wanted it so badly" (May 13, 1973).

Bowles also referred to many of his and Goodwin’s notable acquaintances, including Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal, Lillian Hellman, Francis Bacon, Howard Griffin, Gavin Lambert, and William Burroughs. Of Bernado Bertolucci’s film adaptation of his book, *The Sheltering Sky*, Bowles expressed his disappointment; articulating in a letter dated June 12, 1991: "I’m not sure what single fact I objected to most. Probably Malkovitch [sic]. But there were so many faults that it’s hard to choose."

Bowles also wrote of everyday life: leaking roofs, health issues, what he was reading (or about to read, as in the case with Burroughs’s *The Naked Lunch*), the Gulf War’s effect on mail, and the vagaries of travel. Particularly, Bowles acknowledged his current literary work, from teaching in the English Department at San Fernando Valley State College in Northridge, California, to traveling to Thailand to gather information for a book he was writing, to correcting the page proofs for the Gallimard edition of *A Life Full of Holes*. Bowles also wrote philosophically of his novels, saying: "And novels, of course are also dreams, the stretch nylon sort that can be extended and extended in time without breaking, (I think the longer they stretch the stronger they get) but still dreams, where one has the freedom one can never have in actuality, and for that reason infinitely preferable to live in" (May 13, 1958).

Bowles and Goodwin shared a friendship which allowed Bowles to write in an unguarded and frank manner. These letters not only chronicle the travels, life, and literary work of Bowles, but occasionally reveal his thought processes and feelings, which are not often expressed in his letters.
Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Bowles, Paul, 1910-1999--Correspondence.
Goodwin, John B. L., 1912--Correspondence.
Williams, Tennessee, 1911-1983.
Vidal, Gore, 1925-2012.
Lambert, Gavin.
Bertolucci, Bernardo.

Corporate Names

San Fernando Valley State College.
Gallimard (Firm)

Topical Terms

Authors, American--20th century--Correspondence.
International travel--History--20th century.

Geographic Names

Bangkok (Thailand)--Description and travel.
Tangier (Morocco)--Description and travel.

Form/Genre Terms

Correspondence.
Postcards.
Personal Contributors

Goodwin, John B. L., 1912-, correspondent.

Related Materials in this Repository

This item forms part of MSS 099 Miscellaneous Literary and Historical Manuscripts.
MSS 164 Paul Bowles collection
MSS 163 Paul Bowles papers
Arrangement

Arranged in chronological order.
Detailed Description of the Collection

Fragment of typed letter, 1956 September 18 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)
Only one quarter of the letter survived mailing.

Typed letter signed with envelope, 1957 June 30 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (2 p.)
Bowles enclosed the previous letter fragment with this letter.

Autograph letter signed with envelope, 1958 April 10 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Typed letter signed, 1958 May 13 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (2 p.)

Typed letter signed, 1959 December 28 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Autograph letter signed with envelope, 1960 January 28 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Typed letter signed, 1960 May 2 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Typed letter signed, 1965 May 17 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Typed letter signed, 1965 June 6 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Typed letter (aerogramme) signed, 1966 November 23 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (2 p.)
Autograph letter (aerogramme) signed, 1968 October 10 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Typed letter signed, 1973 May 13 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Typed letter signed, 1977 February 9 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Typed letter signed with envelope, 1984 May 16 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Typed letter signed, 1984 August 7 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Typed letter signed, 1985 August 28 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Autograph letter signed with envelope, 1991 June 12 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Autograph letter signed with envelope, 1991 October 12 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)

Autograph card signed, [circa 1970] December 11 [Box 66 F947]
1 item (1 p.)