
The distinguished American author and composer Paul Bowles suffers from the not unusual detriment of being admired by the few and ignored by the masses. Even the well-informed reader who is familiar with Bellow, Grass, Calvino, or Margaret Lawrence may never have heard of Bowles. And this is a shame, because Bowles has written some stunning fiction, for which he deserves wider recognition and admiration. Those who read *The Sheltering Sky* or his powerful stories will come away unnerved but enlightened, forever changed by the visionary perceptions of this unfairly neglected writer.

Jeffrey Miller’s new descriptive bibliography should help, for here one will find a comprehensive listing of Bowles’s works. This is such a substantial volume that one naturally assumes that it contains the secondary critical literature as well, but this is a false assumption. Bowles is extremely prolific and one must turn elsewhere for a listing of critical commentaries. Using Donald Gallup’s general bibliographic method, Miller cites and frequently fully describes the multitude of books, pamphlets, 800 plus periodical contributions, translations, music, and phonodiscs that Bowles has written, translated, or composed. First, subsequent, foreign, paperback, and forthcoming editions are meticulously enumerated. There is an excellent illustration of the jacket or cover for the major self-contained works – twenty-seven in all. The text is followed by an extensive and useful index, in which, for example, the heading *New York Herald Tribune* leads to more than 400 listings. (Bowles wrote music criticism for this newspaper.)

A typical entry for a book includes a full description of the first edition: title-page transcription, pagination, size, and price on publication. Then comes an extensive description of the binding, design, colour, paper, jacket, number of copies, and contents, as well as note on any specially bound copy. There follow similar entries for other editions: piracies, first English editions, first American paperback editions, etc. The format might not satisfy Fredson Bowers, but it will certainly suffice for virtually all scholars and readers interested in bibliographical information concerning Bowles’s creations. A careful comparison of a limited number of volumes with their appropriate entries turned up only three insignificant problems. First, the copy of *The Hours after Noon* this reviewer examined did not have a ‘device blind stamped on rear cover.’ Second, in two distinct cases Miller inexplicably describes the first numbered leaf (unnumbered recto, numbered ‘4’ verso) thus ‘[4]’ rather than [3]. And third, Miller seems to have intercalated a few extra leaves into *Without Stopping*. But this is ungrateful caviling of the worst kind.

Finally, it is necessary to comment on the outstanding physical quality of this volume. Like all Black Sparrow books, *Paul Bowles: A Descriptive Bibliography* is handsomely bound, sewn in signatures, beautifully printed on fine paper, and usefully illustrated. Black Sparrow is unique: virtually no commercial publisher (except perhaps Knopf) and few small presses (except those that emphasize the physical aspect of the book rather than the content) publish such outstandingly lovely books
at reasonable prices. Obviously no other bibliographical series approaches this fine quality, and some are actually rather shoddy. G.K. Hall's and Garland's are not even typeset. The University of Pittsburgh's is illustrated, but the paper and binding are of mediocre quality. Scarecrow's is merely functional as is the Soho series from Oxford University Press. The Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia is perhaps the best of the lot, but Black Sparrow is in a class of its own. In sum then, *Paul Bowles: A Descriptive Bibliography* is an excellent contribution to American literary bibliography and deserves a place in all research collections.

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When a bibliography of a major author, compiled by a well-known scholar-collector is announced, to be published by an established university press that has embarked on a series of bibliographies of major American authors, it is the occasion for the joyful anticipation of yet another much-needed tool in the arsenal of scholars, collectors, and dealers. Thus *Nelson Algren: A Descriptive Bibliography,* compiled by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Judith Baughman and published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in their ongoing 'Series in Bibliography,' fills in one more lacuna in the field of reference works for American authors.

The physical format of the volume issued just recently is to be commended. It is printed on paper substantial enough that there is no bleed-through even from the pages bearing illustrations, a fault apparently endemic with the decrease in the quality of paper available at a viable cost to publishers of anything but deluxe limited editions. The binding is sturdy, in the standard dark blue-grey cloth used throughout the entire series. And – hallelujah – it is printed and bound in sewn signatures, complete with headbands, a rarity in this age of 'fast-food' techniques filtering down into book production, even from major publishers, most of whom now use the ironically termed 'perfect binding' – glued sheets that are guaranteed to self-destruct on first opening the book. It is comforting to know that this volume will withstand constant use without falling apart.

The number of illustrations is faultless: every title page has been reproduced, along with its copyright notice page, and there is a photograph of every dust jacket. But this last aspect is a major disappointment. The quality of the individual jackets used for illustration is in many cases inexcusably poor. With books of the vintage covered by Algren's publications, there is no excuse for using tattered, torn, and worn jackets with portions missing. There are sufficient copies abounding in many collections, both private and institutional, in perfect condition that could and should have been employed. But what is worse, the photography itself is woefully poor. In several instances, the camera seems to be out of focus, rendering it impossi