

gold tooling and mosaic design. On occasion, she would embellish her designs with tooling alone.

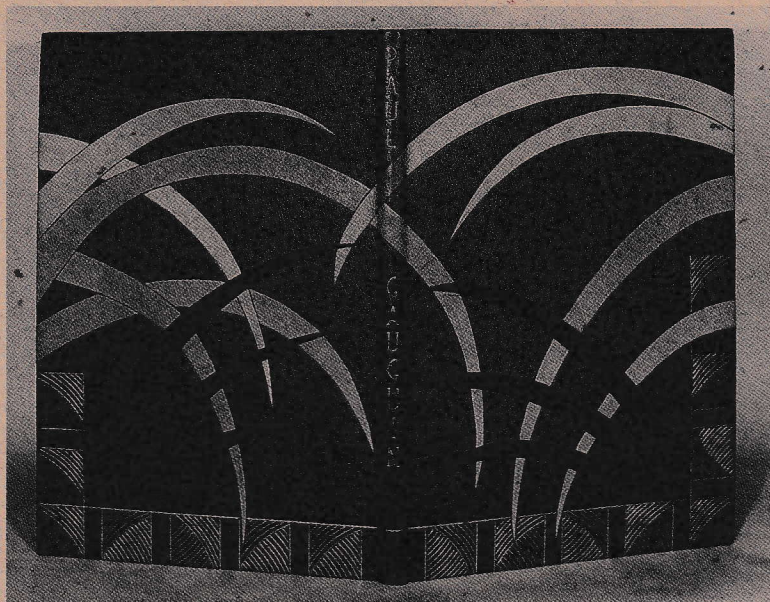
Walter's bindings were shown widely in exhibitions including the Golden Gate International Exposition, San Francisco (1939-40); The San Francisco Museum of Art's 29th Annual Exhibition of San Francisco Women Artists, where she received an Award of Merit for *Lysistrata* and *La Seine à Paris*; a one-woman show at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor (1953), where 34 books were exhibited; The Grolier Club, New York; Princeton University; The Brooklyn Museum; Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York; and the Brussels Universal and International Exhibition (the World's Fair of 1958), where she was one of only three American bookbinders invited to exhibit, and the only West Coast representative.

Walter was an accomplished and honored woman outside bookbinding circles as well. She joined The Book Club of California in 1913, one year after its founding; besides holding other offices, she served as the Club's first woman president from 1952 to 1955. She was a lifelong music enthusiast and served on the Board of Governors for the San Francisco Symphony.

Among her clients were notable Bay Area book collectors and institutions, including the Lilienthals, Norman Strouse, Lewis and Dorothy Allen, David Magee, James D. Hart, Mills College, The Bancroft Library, and Stanford University. These clients were fortunate to have acquired her select commissions, as Florence Walter produced four bindings a year at

most. Her fee ranged from \$50 to \$400, a modest amount considering the labor and meticulous handwork involved.

Upon Mrs. Walter's death in 1972, her three daughters donated to Mills College a library of forty-two of her books, in addition to more than five hundred hand finishing tools, and a selection of presses, polishers, nippers and knives which had been part of her well-



PAUL GAUGUIN: LETTERS (binding by Florence Walter)

equipped studio on Larkin Street in San Francisco. The books became a part of the special collections in the library's rare book room, and form the nucleus of a collection which currently numbers over three hundred items on the history of binding. In addition, the Walter Collection was established, which today includes some two hundred examples of beautifully executed bindings, many in the French style—a tribute to Florence Walter's first love.

The equipment and funds associated with the Walter gift to Mills were first used in February, 1973, for *Art Technique 81*, a course in hand bookbinding taught by Betty Lou (Beck) Chaika, a young San Francisco binder. Ms Chaika's English-style training (one of her mentors was San Francisco binder Stella Patri) led her naturally to emphasize the structure of the book; this focus on form rather than finishing was to become a hallmark of the Mills curriculum in bookbinding.

The location of the first Florence Walter Bindery, behind the periodical stacks on the second floor of the Carnegie Library, made it almost a secret club for those students who managed to find their way there.