

Let it come down
The Life of
PAUL BOWLES

A FILM BY JENNIFER BAICHWAL



“Paul Bowles opened the world of Hip. He let in the murder, the drugs, the incest, the death of the Square... the call of the orgy, the end of civilization; he invited all of us to these themes...”

– Norman Mailer

A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE

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The Life of
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A FILM BY
Jennifer Baichwal

PRODUCED BY
Nick de Pencier
Jennifer Baichwal

WITH
in order of appearance
Paul Bowles
William Burroughs
Phillip Ramey
Jonathan Sheffer
Ned Rorem
Gustavo Romero
Marguerite McBey
Joe McPhillips
David Herbert
Mohammed Mrabet
Mohammed Choukri
Allen Ginsberg
Amina Bakalia (Cherifa)

MUSIC BY
Paul Bowles
performed by **The Eos Orchestra**
with **Moroccan music**
by **various artists**

READINGS BY
Tom McCamus

CANADA • 1998 • 16MM • COLOR • 73 MINS

A ZEITGEIST FILMS RELEASE

Let it come down **THE LIFE OF PAUL BOWLES**

Against a backdrop of the exotic landscape of North Africa, the enigma of iconoclastic writer Paul Bowles (author of *The Sheltering Sky*) begins to unravel. Interviews with the reclusive Bowles, who speaks with unprecedented candor about his work and his controversial private life, are intercut with the conflicting views of his detractors and supporters. Highlights include exclusive footage of the last meeting of Bowles, William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg in New York; footage of Bowles translating Moroccan storyteller Mohammed Mrabet; the first and only film appearance of Cherifa, Jane Bowles' lover, who is rumoured to have poisoned Jane to death; detailed treatment of Bowles' work as a composer and coverage of the 1995 Eos festival of his music at Lincoln Center, for which Bowles made his first trip to New York in 35 years; Bowles giving, for the record, his final opinion of Bertolucci's 1990 film version of *The Sheltering Sky*; and readings of Bowles' work by celebrated Canadian actor Tom McCamus.

Intimate, unorthodox and poetic, LET IT COME DOWN lifts the veil from a literary legend who has always been shrouded in mystery.

**"It's terrific...like a Francis Bacon painting.
It's the conversation with Paul Bowles
you always wanted to have."**

— David Cronenberg

Introduction

Paul Bowles, who has lived in Tangier, Morocco for over fifty years, is the quintessential iconoclast. He left the United States for good in the 1940s after building an illustrious career as a composer, rejected the heroic identity requisite to expatriate American writers and buried himself in the culture of North Africa. A writer's writer, his associations span the elite cultural circles of this century. At twenty, he was an intimate of Gertrude Stein and Aaron Copeland; at thirty the peer of Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote and Gore Vidal; at forty, literary godfather to Beat writers William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg. His unorthodox marriage to writer Jane Bowles—both were gay and had significant relationships with others throughout their marriage—is legendary. Together they formed the magnet which drew an extraordinary group of writers and artists to the exotic freedoms of Morocco before independence.

In this definitive film biography, the notoriously laconic and reclusive Bowles finally speaks out on the subjects he has remained silent about over the years. Lying in bed at his home in Tangier and smoking kif with an elegant black cigarette holder, he reflects on his life, his work, Jane, love and his friends with unprecedented candour. Now 87 years old, his tone is almost omniscient, as though he is surveying both life and death from some lofty interim vantage point. The film is built around this self-revealing monologue, with various voices breaking in to comment, dispute and clarify. Chief among these is William Burroughs, who acts as a sort of commentator on Bowles' version of his life.

Director Jennifer Baichwal's association with Bowles dates back to her early twenties when she ran away to Morocco, drawn by his dark, sinister prose. Subsequent visits have deepened their friendship, culminating in the interview which is the basis of the film. Breathtaking footage of Morocco, from the twisted medinas of Tangier and Fez to the hypnotic beauty of the desert, becomes a metaphor for Bowles' interior world. Diverse archival material evokes the atmosphere of North Africa in the '30s and '40s. The film includes interviews with Bowles' late friends William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg and David Herbert, as well as analysis—some of it harsh—from Moroccan writer Mohammed Choukri. There are compelling scenes of Bowles translating storyteller Mohammed Mrabet from Dharisian into English and unprecedented footage of Jane Bowles' lover Cherifa, who is rumoured to have poisoned Jane to death, on film. Filling this out are readings from celebrated Canadian actor Tom McCamus and detailed treatment of Bowles' work as a composer.

Cast of Characters

Jane Bowles was born Jane Sidney Auer in New York City in 1917. She has been called “one of the finest writers of modern fiction in any language” by John Ashbery. An habituée of Lesbian and Bohemian circles in New York in the late 1930s, she met Paul Bowles in 1937. They were married the following year. Her first novel, *Two Serious Ladies*, was written in 1941 and was described as “a landmark in twentieth century American literature.” It was not, however, a commercial success and Jane, who once said that “it was simply not enough to write for 500 of one’s goony friends,” found it increasingly difficult to work.

When the Bowles moved to Tangier permanently, Jane fell in love with Cherifa, a Moroccan peasant woman. Over the years, Cherifa became an increasingly powerful and destructive presence in Jane’s life. Suffering from alcoholism and manic depression, she had a severe and debilitating stroke in 1957, and spent the next sixteen years in and out of hospital. She died in 1973, in Malaga, Spain.

Bibliography: *Two Serious Ladies* (novel, 1943); *In the Summer House* (play, 1954); *Plain Pleasures* (stories, 1966); *Feminine Wiles* (stories, 1976); *My Sister’s Hand in Mine: The Collected Works of Jane Bowles*, 1978

William Burroughs’ friendship with Paul Bowles dates back over forty years. They met when Burroughs lived in Tangier in the 1950s. He died in August, 1997.

Allen Ginsberg met Bowles when he travelled to Tangier to see William Burroughs and help transform *Naked Lunch* from a pile of pages, which were strewn all over the floor of Burroughs’s filthy hotel room, into a manuscript. He died in April, 1997.

The Hon. David Herbert is second son of the fifteenth Earl and Countess of Pembroke. He first came to Tangier in 1932 with Cecil Beaton and remained there until his death in 1995. The quintessential expatriate, he was Tangier’s pre-eminent host and unofficial social arbiter for over 50 years. He was very close to Jane Bowles, and always claimed that if Paul died, he would marry her.

Mohammed Choukri is a Moroccan writer who was illiterate until the age of twenty. His most famous book, *For Bread Alone*, which was translated by Paul Bowles, won him instant notoriety as it described in graphic detail a childhood on the streets of Tangier: the International Days, so celebrated by foreigners, from the indigent Moroccan point of view. He now claims that Bowles is an exploiter of Moroccan culture and knows very little about it, despite his years there.

Paul Bowles discovered the prodigious storytelling talents of **Mohammed Mrabet** in Tangier in 1965. Since then they have collaborated on over ten books. Mrabet tells Bowles the story in Dharisian (the local Moroccan dialect), which is also recorded into a tape recorder. Bowles then transcribes and translates. Although they have not worked together in twelve years, they had a rare visit during our 1994 shoot in which Mrabet made up a story on the spot that Bowles simultaneously translated; the result is unprecedented and compelling footage of them working together.

Phillip Ramey is an American composer and friend of Paul Bowles; from 1977 to 1993 he was the annotator and program editor of the New York Philharmonic. He has been greatly instrumental in reviving interest in Paul Bowles' work as a composer. He lives in New York City, but spends half of each year in Tangier.

Ned Rorem is a composer and music critic who has known Bowles since 1940. He was a frequent and notorious visitor to Tangier during its wild International Days. He lives in New York City.

Jane Bowles met and fell in love with **Amina Bakalia (Cherifa)**, an illiterate peasant girl selling grain in the Tangier market, in 1948. She spent the next 20 years with her, trying to win her affections. Cherifa's reputation is as a forbidding and sinister figure who practiced black magic on Jane and Paul and eventually poisoned Jane to death. Here, in her first and only appearance on film, she tries to set the record straight.

Jonathan Sheffer is the conductor and Artistic Director of the Eos Orchestra, which held the festival of Paul Bowles' music at Lincoln Center in September, 1995.

Joseph McPhillips III is headmaster of the American School of Tangier. He travelled to Morocco in the early 1960s and has lived there ever since. A long-time friend of Paul and Jane Bowles, he has also commissioned theatre scores from Paul Bowles for performances at the American School, including productions of "Oedipus the King" and "Caligula."

Marguerite McBey is a wealthy expatriate painter who has lived in Tangier since the 1930's. Considered Tangier "royalty", she became a lesbian after her husband died. She has painted portraits of both Paul and Jane Bowles.

Tom McCamus is a celebrated stage and screen actor. He won a Genie Award for Best Actor for David Wellington's *I Love a Man in Uniform* and a Best Actor nomination for his role—reprised from the Stratford Festival—in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. He also won a Best Supporting Actor nomination for his role in Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*. He has spent many seasons at the Shaw Festival and the Stratford Festival, in numerous notable roles.

The Filmmakers

Jennifer Baichwal

(Director, Producer)

Jennifer Baichwal was born in Montréal and grew up in Victoria, British Columbia. In 1990, she received a fellowship and an FCAR scholarship to study at McGill University, where she obtained a First Class Master of Arts in Religious Studies. Her first documentary **Looking You In The Back of the Head** asked thirteen women to try to describe themselves and was first broadcast, to critical acclaim, on TVOntario's *From the Heart*. She is currently in post production for **Unlikely Pilgrimage**, which was shot on location in India in October, 1998 for TVOntario's *The View From Here*. She also has films on renowned American poet John Ashbery (**Saying It to Keep it From Happening**) and artist Christiane Pflug (**Black Pflug**) in development. She has been a regular contributing critic to CBC Newsworld's *On the Arts* for visual art and literature since 1994. **Let it Come Down** is her first feature.

Nick de Pencier

(Producer, Director of Photography)

Nick de Pencier began making short films while at McGill University in the late 1980's. He then moved to New York City and worked as a researcher for PBS in their documentary film division. Gravitating back to his native Toronto, he began working in production on feature films including **White Room**, **South of Wawa**, and **On My Own**. He was an assistant director to Adrienne Clarkson on **Artemesia**, production manager on John May's feature **Rubber Carpet**, and producer of Jim Allodi's short film **Link-Up**. He also produced and directed the video segments and interviews for the CD ROM *Understanding McLuhan*, published by Southam/Voyager. He was a producer resident in the Canadian Film Centre's 1997 Producers' Lab, and was selected to produce **Cold Feet**, one of their four Short Dramatic Films. He also is producer and cinematographer for **Unlikely Pilgrimage** which was shot on location in India in October 1998, and has a feature narrative film in development with writer/director Jim Allodi.

As a Director of Photography, de Pencier has shot music videos, industrials, documentaries, segments for The National, and contributed regularly to CBC Newsworld's *On The Arts* and Ph@t TV. He has also directed and photographed seven modern dance performance films which have received national and international broadcasts and won awards at international festivals.

Music in the film

Compositions by Paul Bowles

Suite for Small Orchestra

The Wind Remains: A Zarzuela based on Federico Garcia Lorca

“April Fool Baby” from Secret Words: A Suite of Six Songs

Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra

Pastorela: First Suite

All the above are performed by **The Eos Orchestra** which was formed in 1995 to reinvigorate concert music as a living art form, and to attract, engage and reflect a diverse and evolving audience. It is dedicated to the creation of new compositions, the rediscovery of neglected works, and to the performance of a repertoire not bound by labels. The Ensemble is comprised of a stable yet flexible group of artists drawn from the ranks of the finest experienced and emerging New York musicians. The Eos Ensemble is part of Eos Music, Inc., a not-for-profit organization established in September 1994 and dedicated to music-related interdisciplinary artistic collaborations and educational programs. Under the direction of its Artistic Director and Conductor, Jonathan Sheffer, the Eos Ensemble made its debut in two sold-out concerts featuring the music of Paul Bowles at Lincoln Center in September 1995. The works used in this film were all part of those programs, which included several premieres and, in some cases, the first performance of some of Bowles' compositions in fifty years. **They are all available on “The Music of Paul Bowles” from BMG Classics 09026-68409-2**

Excerpts from the **Sonatina for piano**
and from **“Tierra Mojada” of the Six Latin American Pieces**
played by Gustavo Romero

Moroccan Music

Aqlal Moqaddem Mohammed ben Salem and ensemble
Reh dial Beni Bouhiya Chikh Hamed ben Hadj Hamadi ben Allal and ensemble
Mouwal Chikha Fatoma ben Kaddour
Rhaitas and Tbola Sadiq ben Mohammed Laghzaoui Morsan and ensemble
Mellaliya Embarek ben Mohammed
Ya Souki Hakim Hazan Isaac Ouanounou and members of the Hevrat Gezekel
Qsida Midh Maallem el Hocein and ensemble

**All Moroccan selections taken from “The Music of Morocco”
recorded and edited by Paul Bowles for the Library of Congress, 1972**

Welcome Home, Paul Bowles
used courtesy of the Master Musicians of Jajouka

Recitation of The Holy Quran
by Surats Yasin & Al-Rhman
courtesy of MECAH Quran Recording © 1994 (tel. 1-800-590-1585)

Credits

DIRECTOR Jennifer Baichwal
PRODUCED BY Nick de Pencier & Jennifer Baichwal
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY Nick de Pencier
ADDITIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY Jim Allodi
EDITOR David Wharnsby
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Roland Schlimme
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER Daniel Iron
READINGS Tom McCamus
PRODUCER/SOUND RECORDIST (1994 SHOOT) Denise Holloway
RESEARCH/BOOM (1994 SHOOT) Evan Solomon
MUSIC RESEARCH Rodney Sharman
ARCHIVAL RESEARCH Benjamin Wilchfort
TITLE DESIGN Malcolm Brown

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Rehearsal footage of "April Fool Baby" used with kind permission of the Eos Orchestra.

Selected footage of Paul Bowles and Ahmed Yacoubi in Hans Richter's *8 X 8: A Chess Sonata In 8 Movements* courtesy of Arthouse, Inc. and Ursula Lawder.

Footage of Gertrude Stein from the film *Paris Was a Woman*, used courtesy of Jezebel Productions.

Footage from *The Sheltering Sky* used with kind permission of Recorded Picture Company Limited.

Photographs of Paul Bowles listening to phonograph, Paul Bowles smoking, Jane Bowles and Cherifa on the street, Jane Bowles and Cherifa with others and Paul and Jane Bowles with woman at piano by Terence Spencer. Used with permission.

"Music, His Music, Lures Bowles Back" & "A writer and composer returns to his hometown"
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Photographs by Paul Bowles reprinted from the book Paul Bowles:
Photographs, Scalo Verlag AG, Zurich, 1994.



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Paul Bowles—Author

by Gore Vidal

“Carson McCullers, Paul Bowles, Tennessee Williams are, at this moment at least, the three most interesting writers in the United States.” A quarter century has passed since I wrote that sentence in a piece on contemporary American writing. Six years ago when I reprinted those words in *Homage to Daniel Says*, I felt obliged to add: “This was written in 1952. McCullers was a good and fashionable novelist of the day (I cannot say that I have any great desire to read her again). Paul Bowles was as little known then as he is now. His short stories are among the best ever written by an American...”

All in all, I still see no reason not to support my youthful judgement of Paul Bowles. As a short story writer, he has had few equals in the second half of the twentieth century. Obvious question: If he is so good, why is he so little known?

Great American writers are supposed not only to live in the greatest country in the world (the United States, for those who came in late), but to write about that greatest of all human themes: The American Experience. From the beginning of the Republic, this crude America First-ism has flourished. As a result, there is a strong tendency to misrepresent or under-value our three finest novelists: Henry James (who lived in England), Edith Wharton (who lived in France), and Vladimir Nabokov (who lived in Switzerland, and who wasn't much of an American anyway despite an unnatural passion for our motels, so lyrically rendered in *Lolita*).

Paul Bowles has lived most of his life in Morocco. He seldom writes about the United States. On the other hand, he has shrewd things to say about Americans confronted with strange cultures and...But first, let us try to place Paul Bowles.

Born in 1910, he was brought up in New York City and New England. He attended the University of Virginia. When he was seventeen, the Paris-based avant-garde magazine *transition* published some of his poems. Bowles went to Paris, met Gertrude Stein, was influenced by the Surrealists. He quit school to become a writer. Except for Poe, his writing derives not from the usual Anglo-American tradition but from such “exotics” as ValÉry, Roussel, Gide and, of course, the expatriate Miss Stein. Later, he was to put to his own uses oral Mexican and Moroccan folk-lore; he listened as much as he read.

I suspect that Bowles' apparent foreignness has limited the number of doctoral theses that ought by now to have been devoted to one whose art far exceeds that of...well, name the great American writers of our day (a list that was as different yesterday as it will be tomorrow). For the American Academic, Bowles is still odd man out; he writes as if *Moby Dick* had never been written. Odder still, he is also a distinguished composer of music. In fact, he supported himself for many years by writing incidental music for such Broadway plays as *The Glass Menagerie*. It is curious that at a time when a number of serious critics

have expressed the hope that literature might one day take on the attributes of the “highest” of all the arts, music, Bowles has been composing music as well as writing prose. I am certain that the first critic able to deal both with his music and his writing will find that Bowles’ life work has been marvellous in a way not accessible to those of us who know only one or the other of the two art forms...

Between 1929 and 1945 he made his name as a composer. He married the odd, brilliant Jane Bowles. She was a writer. He was a composer. Together and separately, they were much admired. During the late thirties and forties they became central figures in the transatlantic (and Pan-American) world of the arts. Although unknown to the general public, the Bowleses were famous among those who were famous; and in some mysterious way the art-grandeemes wanted, if not the admiration of the Bowleses (seldom bestowed), their tolerance...

During the next thirty years Paul Bowles wrote thirty-nine short stories. They were published originally in three volumes: *The Delicate Prey*, 1950; *The Time of Friendship*, 1967; *Things Gone and Things Still Here*, 1977. Even before the first collection was published, three of the stories caused a great stir in the literary world. “Pages From Cold Point,” “The Delicate Prey,” and “A Distant Episode” were immediately recognized as being unlike anything else in our literature. I have just re-read the three stories, with some nervousness. After all these years, I wondered if they would still “work.” In my youth I had admired D.H. Lawrence’s novels. Now, I deeply dislike them. I was relieved to find that Bowles’s art is still as disturbing as ever. I was surprised to note how the actual stories differ from my memory of them. I recalled a graphic description of a sixteen-year old boy’s seduction of his father on a hot summer night in Jamaica. Over the years, carnal details had built up in my memory like a coral reef. Yet on re-reading “Pages From Cold Point,” nothing (and everything) happens. In his memoirs, Bowles refers, rather casually, to this story as something he wrote aboard ship from New York to Casablanca: “a long story about a hedonist...” It is a good deal more than that. Both “The Delicate Prey” and “A Distant Episode” create the same sense of strangeness and terror that they did the first time I read them. “The Delicate Prey” turns on a Gidean *acte gratuit*: the slicing off of the boy’s penis is not only like the incident on the train in *Les Caves du Vatican* but also presages the driving of a nail through a skull in Bowles’s novel *Let It Come Down*. “A Distant Episode” seems to me to be more than ever emblematic of the helplessness of an over-civilized sensibility (the Professor’s) when confronted with an alien culture. Captured by North African nomads, his tongue cut out, he is made into a clown, a toy. He is used to make his captors laugh. He appears to accept his fate. Something harsh is glimpsed in the lines of a story that is now plainer in its reverberations than it was when written. But then it is no longer news to anyone that the floor to this ramshackle civilization that we have built cannot bear much longer our weight. It was Bowles’s genius to suggest the horrors which lie beneath that floor, as fragile, in its way, as the sky that shelters us from a devouring vastness...As Webster saw the skull beneath the skin, so Bowles has glimpsed what lies back of our sheltering sky...an endless flux of stars so like those atoms which make us up that in our apprehension of this terrible infinity, we experience not only horror but likeness.

—Gore Vidal

(taken from an introduction to *The Collected Stories*, Black Sparrow Press, Santa Barbara, 1979, reprinted 1997)

Paul Bowles Bibliography

NOVELS

The Sheltering Sky (1949)
Let It Come Down (1952)
The Spider's House (1955)
Up Above The World (1966)
Too Far From Home (1991)

SHORT STORY COLLECTIONS

The Delicate Prey (1950)
A Hundred Camels in the Courtyard (1962)
The Time of Friendship (1967)
Pages From Cold Point and other stories (1968)
Things Gone & Things Still Here (1977)
Midnight Mass and Other Stories (1985)
Call at Corazon and Other Stories (1988)
Collected Stories 1939-1976
Unwelcome Words (1988)
A Thousand Days for Mokhtar (1989)

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WORKS

Without Stopping (1972)
Two Years beside the Strait: Tangier Journal 1987-9 (1989)
[The US version of this is titled Days—Tangier Journal: 1987-1989]

LETTERS

In Touch: The Letters of Paul Bowles - edited by Jeffrey Miller (1994)

NON-FICTION, POETRY, TRAVEL ESSAYS & OTHER BOOKS

Their Heads Are Green And Their Hands Are Blue (1963)
Points in Time (1982)
Paul Bowles:Photographs Edited by Simon Bischoff (1994)

On Bowles' writing

“Paul Bowles is a truly masterly writer, capable of evoking mood, character and the fullness of emotions with mere strokes of words.”

—The New York Post

“Paul Bowles undoubtedly has one of the finest gifts of all men writing in English.”

—The Saint-Louis Post-Dispatch

“Now and then, perhaps once in five or six years, a novel appears which does not repeat the pattern of commonplace existence that readers of novels know so well, but makes us realise that our life is extraordinary.

***The Sheltering Sky* is such a novel.”**

—Edwin Muir, Sunday Observer

“[The Sheltering Sky] stands head and shoulders above most other novels published in English since World War II.”

—O.B. Hardison Jr., New Republic

“As a short story writer, he has had few equals in the second half of the twentieth century.”

—Gore Vidal

“Paul Bowles opened the world of Hip. He let in the murder, the drugs, the incest, the death of the Square... the call of the orgy, the end of civilization; he invited all of us to these themes...”

— Norman Mailer

Paul Bowles—Composer

From The Biographical Dictionary Of American Composers

Bowles, Paul Frederic, b. Jamaica, N.Y., December 30, 1910.

Though Bowles has become even more famous as a novelist and short-story writer than as a composer, his music, most of it written in his earlier years, has elegance of style and a personalized profile. Both in literature and music he has often been influenced by his many visits to and research into the primitive folklore of Morocco and other exotic lands.

His childhood was lonely and unhappy, dominated by a dictatorial and often hostile father, a physician. Until Paul was five he never associated with children. "My idea of the world," he has written, "was a place inhabited exclusively by adults." His childhood and boyhood years were spent in such solitary occupations as drawing, writing, and reading; he made his first attempt at writing when he was four. "Very early I understood that I would always be kept from doing what I enjoyed and forced to that which I did not. The Bowles family took it for granted that pleasure was destructive whereas engaging in an unappealing activity aided in character formation."

His early academic schooling took place at the Jamaica Model School in New York (1917-24). At this time he heard his first music, a recording of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony his father had acquired. When Paul was seven, music study began at the Dunning School of Music, with a Miss Chase, who taught him piano, theory, solfeggio and ear training. At nine he tried to write an opera.

He says the "music" that most interested him when he was very young were the sounds produced by spinning a musical top, or sliding a metal object up and down the German zither his grandfather had given him, or the creaking of a rusty door hinge. He reacted to them hypnotically. "They seemed to me the culmination of beauty, and always put me into a nonthinking state which lasted as long as I repeated the sounds."

Graduating from Jamaica Model School in January 1924, Bowles passed on first to Flushing High School (1924-25) and in September 1925 to Jamaica High School. By now he had become a voracious reader and a devotee to literature. He was made president of the school literary society and poetry editor of the school magazine. His musical interests were developed at the Saturday concerts of the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall where a performance of Stravinsky's *The Fire-Bird* proved such an exciting experience that on his way home he stopped off to buy a phonographic recording which he played endlessly on his own portable phonograph.

Upon graduating from Jamaica High School in January 1928 he enrolled in the School of Design and Liberal Arts in New York with some vague idea of trying to become an artist. That spring some of his poems were published in transition a Paris avant garde literary journal, which went a long way in convincing him that literature and not art was his forte. That fall he entered the University of Virginia, but after a single semester, and without informing his parents, he fled to Europe. In Paris, supporting himself by being employed as a telephone switchboard operator at the office of the Paris Herald Tribune, he attended performances of Russian operas at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées and of the Diaghilev Ballet. Back in New York in 1930 he rented a room in Greenwich Village and for a while worked as a clerk in a Fifth Avenue bookshop. Before long, however, on the urging of his father, he returned to the University of Virginia for his second freshman semester. That summer, through a letter of introduction from Henry Cowell, he met Aaron Copland, showed him his Sonata for Oboe and Clarinet (1930), which he had then just written, and was accepted by Copland for daily lessons in composition at Yaddo, in Saratoga N.Y.

By the fall of 1930, Bowles had had his fill of the stultifying routines of academic life and left college for good. He returned to Europe in Copland's company, with whom he continued to study composition in Berlin. Bowles paid a visit to Morocco, a place that had fascinated him from the time he had heard some Arabic music on recordings. During this visit he fell in love with the place. In ensuing years he returned to it frequently and eventually ended up by establishing his residence there; this first visit to Morocco was also the beginning of his lifelong fascination for Moroccan folk music and barbaric and primitive cultures.

In 1931 he was in Paris attending the École Normale de Musique, studying counterpoint with Nadia Boulanger. During 1932-33 he studied composition intermittently with Virgil Thomson. His music during this period had French refinement and grace, revealing traits reminiscent sometimes of Satie, sometimes of Poulenc, while many of his songs were in a quasi-impressionistic idiom. These compositions included his Piano Sonata no.1 (1932); Sonata for Flute and Piano (1932); Scènes d'Anabase, five songs for tenor, oboe, and piano (1932); Six Songs (1932); and a cantata, Par le détroit, for soprano, male quartet and harmonium (1933). The Six Songs was introduced on April 30, 1932, by Ada MacLeish at the First Festival Contemporary Music at Yaddo in Saratoga, N.Y. John Kirkpatrick played the Sonata no.1 at a concert of the League of Composers in New York in autumn 1933. Bowles's Flute Sonata was given its initial hearing by the Cincinnati Music Society in 1933. And the Scènes d'Anabase was featured at the Hartford Music Festival in 1936.

Back in the United States, and settled in New York, Bowles attended a class in harmony given by Roger Sessions. Commissioned by Lincoln Kirstein, director of the American Ballet Caravan, to provide the score of one of his productions, Bowles wrote Yankee Clipper (1936), given its initial performance in Philadelphia, with Alexander Smallens conducting, on July 19, 1937.

The year of 1936 also marked his beginnings as a composer of incidental music for the theater, a field in which he proved successful. That year he wrote music for two productions of the WPA Federal Theater, directed by Orson Welles; Dr. Faustus and Horse Eats Hat. In 1939, the Group Theater assigned him to write music for William Saroyan's play My Heart's in the Highlands. From this point on, he showed exceptional skill and imagination in

capturing the mood, emotion, and ambience of each play to which he was assigned. "Here," as Bowles has explained, "one can with immunity write climaxless music, hypnotic music in one of the exact senses of the word, in that it makes its effect without the spectator being made aware of it." For the next few years, Bowles devoted a good deal of his time to the writing of functional scores for the stage. Among the famous plays in which his incidental music was heard were: Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* starring Maurice Evans and Helen Hayes (1940); Lilian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine* (1941); Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* (1944); Franz Werfel's *Jacobowky and the Colonel* (1944); and Tennessee Williams's *Summer and Smoke* (1946).

He did not neglect concert music. During these years he composed, among other works, *Melodia*, for nine instruments (1937); *Music for a Farce*, for clarinet, trumpet, piano, and percussion (1938); an opera, *Denmark Vesey* (1938), to a libretto by Charles Henri Ford; a ballet, *Pastorale* (1941), which toured South America; and a ballet written for the Ballet International, *Colloque sentimental* (1944), seen in New York in 1944. Together with these he produced a considerable number of songs, song cycles, and pieces for the piano. In much of this music, and in the music he would later write, Bowles's style assimilated some of the melodic, rhythmic, and other stylistic elements of African, Mexican, and Central American music. In 1949, on a Rockefeller Foundation grant, he made recordings of Moroccan folk songs, the tapes of which now repose in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C.

On February 21, 1938, Bowles married Jane Sydney Auer. Since travel had by now become a passion with Bowles, they spent their honeymoon visiting Panama, Central America, ending up in Paris and the French Riviera. A Guggenheim Fellowship in 1941 enabled them to travel to Mexico. There Bowles worked on an opera, *The Wind Remains*, with a surrealistic libretto by Federico Garcia Lorca. It was produced in New York in March 1943 with Leonard Bernstein conducting and Merce Cunningham doing the choreography.

Having for some time contributed articles on music to *Modern Music* and other journals, Bowles, in 1942, was appointed music critic of the *New York Herald Tribune*. He held this job for three years. In 1949, Bowles published his first novel, *The Sheltering Sky*, set in Morocco. It enjoyed considerable critical acclaim. This was the real beginning of an eminent literary career, which has included the writing of other novels, books of short stories, travel books and books in translations. One of his books is an autobiography, *Without Stopping* (1972). By the mid-1950s, by which time Morocco had become his permanent home, Bowles's deep involvement with literature took precedence over his career as a composer. Several of his letters were used by Peggy Glanville-Hicks as the text for her composition *Letters from Morocco*, for tenor and orchestra (1952). In 1981 Bowles was elected to membership in the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

– From *The Biographical Dictionary Of American Composers*