

Paul Bowles: the Sheltering Sky/ Let It Come Down/ the Spider's House (Library of America)

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Paul Bowles had already established himself as an important composer when at age 39 he published *The Sheltering Sky* and became recognized as one of the most powerful writers of the postwar period. From his base in Tangier he produced globally ranging novels, stories, and travel writings that set exquisite surfaces over violent undercurrents. His elegantly spare novels chart the unpredictable collisions between "civilized" exiles and a Morocco they never grasp, achieving effects of extreme horror and dislocation.

This Library of America Bowles set, the first annotated edition, offers the full range of his achievement: the portrait of an outsider who was one of the essential American writers of the last century. In addition to his novels-*The Sheltering Sky* (1949), *Let It Come Down* (1952), *The Spider's House* (1955), *Up Above the World* (1966)-and his collected stories-including such classics as "A Distant Episode" and "Pages from Cold Point"-they contain his masterpiece of travel writing, *Their Heads Are Green and Their Hands Are Blue* (1963). Throughout, Bowles shows himself a master of gothic terror and a diabolically funny observer of manners as well as a prescient guide to everything from the roots of Islamist politics to the world of Moghrebi music. With a hallucinatory clarity as dry and unforgiving as the desert air, Bowles sends his characters toward encounters with unknown and terrifying forces both outside them and within them.

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