It can be assumed that Paul Bowles’s shift from composing music to writing literature was influenced by several independent factors all rooted in different aspects of the artist’s personality and life. An important point is the fact, that a major driving force behind the artist’s creative output was the irrational and intuitive, which he wanted to integrate in his artistic work. In the course of analysing Bowles’s various working techniques it becomes clear, that the shift from one art form to the other seems, more than anything else, to be the result of Bowles’s search for the specific art form, that gave him the best means of expression in line with his specific interests and also technical skills. Hence the transition from music to literature outlines an “outer” process of an overall personal and artistic development.

History has seen a great many people with two gifts or vocations, but Paul Bowles stands out among them. For in reviewing Bowles’s career, it becomes clear that he was not only professionally active in two fields of art, but also that he rarely worked as a composer and a writer at the same time. The periods in which he mainly composed or mainly wrote come one after the other and they only overlap for a few years. The years in which Bowles worked both as a composer and a writer can be narrowed down to roughly between 1946 and 1950, yet we can also recognize in these years an increasing shift away from composition towards literature. Thus, in 1946 Bowles composed five pieces of incidental music, seven songs and two instrumental pieces and wrote five stories. In 1947 he composed one piece of incidental music and three instrumental pieces, but began writing his novel *The Sheltering Sky* and wrote four stories. In 1948 he wrote only one piece of incidental music and wrote three stories. In 1949 he composed one song and four instrumental pieces, but wrote three stories, finished his
novel *The Sheltering Sky* and began writing his second novel *Let It Come Down*.

Gena Dagel Caponi considers this change from composition to literature a “myth” (*A Nomad* 281). In her opinion Bowles devoted himself to both disciplines all his life, but this point of view is easily contestable. It is correct that Paul Bowles still composed after switching to literature, but only sporadically. Especially in the field of so-called non-dramatic art music, his compositional work after 1950 is limited to less than ten pieces of music. Additionally, we must consider that these few pieces of music Bowles composed after 1950 were hardly accessible to a wider public (even the stage music he composed after this period was performed at the American School in Tangier, not on Broadway). Thus all things considering, it is difficult to claim that Paul Bowles’s productivity did not clearly shift from the field of music to literature after 1950. We must also add that the number of pieces of music he composed after 1950 is just as low as the number of literary texts he wrote before 1946. Hence the focus of Paul Bowles’s artistic work was always on one discipline, with the exception of the years 1946 to 1950. This shift from one art form to the other is evident in Bowles’s work and it is of special interest in view of his two gifts. First and foremost, the question arises why the shift took place at all. Because if a person is blessed with more than one gift, one would assume that s/he could and would be active in all of the disciplines s/he is talented in, focusing on one in particular and allocating the others a less prominent role. In Bowles’s case however, not only does the main focus shift from one occupation to the other, but at the same time the other occupation – music – all but runs dry.

We can assume that Bowles’s shift from composing music to writing literature was influenced by several independent factors all rooted in different aspects of his personality and life. Nevertheless, the art forms in question – music and literature – constitute the center of the question concerning the reasons for the shift. In this respect, it is justified to start the search for answers with the artistic processes underlying Paul Bowles’s work. It is obvious that (not only in Bowles’s case), the acts of composing and of writing required particular skills, supported specific working methods and only permitted certain means of expression. I propose that in regard to his creative work, Bowles was not so much concerned with the particular art form *per se*. Rather, we can assume that in Bowles’s artistic work and the changes it was subject to over the years, we can detect the