Maria Antónia Lima

Universidade de Évora

Gothic short circuits in Paul Bowles’ s short fiction

Bowles based his sense of the world on the unreasonable conviction that certain parts of the earth were more magic than others, and by “magic” he meant a secret place able to establish a bridge between the natural world and the human conscience, a direct but hidden passage, that caused a short circuit in the brain. His short fiction allows us to penetrate into this obscure but enlightening realm, where his delicate spare style and a dark exotic mood produce a haunting symmetry between beauty and terror. Preserving the Gothic obsession with the dark underside of the middle-class psyche, Bowles’s universe is a realm of shocking cruelty and cold detachment which led the Gothic genre to new directions. Impenetrable jungle forests and the blinding emptiness of the desert lead us into the meanderings of his protagonists' minds haunted by a sense of dark fatefulness, which preserves the connection to a life energy full of beauty and cruelty, where tragic emotions produce a dark but potent magic.

BIO

**Maria Antónia Lima** teaches American Gothic Literature at the University of Évora in Portugal; coordinates a MA in Contemporary Literary Creations; is President of the Portuguese Association for Anglo-American Studies (APEAA); is a member of the International Gothic Association and of the American Studies group at the University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies (ULICES); writes literary criticism and gothic fiction.