



Maria Teresa Kopschitz de Barros and Maria Thereza Peixoto Kopschitz (eds.). *Passos de Maria Helena Kopschitz*. Niteroi: ZIT Gráfica, 2014. 180 pp.

Passos is a bilingual edition containing prose, drama, fiction and poetry by eight writers in English (four from Ireland, two from the United Kingdom, one from the United States and one from Guiana) in excellent translation by our sadly missed and much loved colleague Maria Helena Peixoto Kopschitz, who in some cases had the collaboration of the equally sadly missed Haroldo de Campos, a notable writer, poet and translator. Half of the book consists of works (mostly dramatic texts and some poems) by Samuel Beckett, one of four Irishmen to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The book opens with testimonials by a friend, a colleague and a niece, three people who were very close to Maria Helena. The selected texts, all of them short, are like a collection of finely crafted jewels.

The posthumous organisation of the volume is the result of dedicated research conducted by a sister (Maria Thereza), and a niece (Maria Teresa), of Professor Maria Helena. The book is more than a homage, since it is a literary testament to its subject: “an unequalled legacy to the Kopschitz family; a living portrait of Maria Helena – an aesthetic, literary, mystical and religious treasure in the field of poetic translation and literary translation”, in the words of Terezinha Fonseca, author of the “Preamble”, which also expresses the impression of all those who, like myself, even if for a brief period, came to know her: “Maria Helena was an affable, affectionate, attentive woman, with a highly spiritual character; but she was also independent, with a strong will and personality”. In other words, she was an enchanting woman.

As Terezinha Fonseca also states, “with her studies of Samuel Beckett, Maria Helena made a great contribution to Irish literature, introducing one of its greatest exponents to the Brazilian reader.” And in this endeavour she spared no effort. I heard from Maria Helena herself about her appointment with Beckett in a Paris bookshop.

In the second testimonial, entitled “Academic Trajectory”, Nélia Bastos shows how Maria Helena, despite her intense teaching and research activity, never failed to participate in curriculum reform commissions and similar activities, sometimes considered to be secondary, but which occupy an important position in academic life. Nélia Bastos also states that Maria Helena referred to her own career, constructed over four decades of intense work, as “boats of our voyages”, conducted with correctness and courage, which included the quest for transcendence to reveal that “each art form is in its own way a means of accessing the most profound reality of man and the world”.

Maria Teresa, Maria Helena’s niece and author of “Some Words”, also gives her testimony about her aunt’s legacy: “Up until the end, always lucid, in half-articulated

words, she transmitted her unshakeable will, weaving out of silk and sisal the legacy of other cultures, particularly that of Ireland”.

It is a pity that such an important and carefully produced book should have been published only in a non-commercial limited edition, when it could have reached, in addition to a few of the author’s relations, friends and students, many other interested readers.

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Note

1 Translated from the Portuguese by Peter James Harris.