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Brazilian Short Stories (1889-2002)

Tradução de alunos de Versão IV do
Curso de Bacharelado do Instituto de Letras

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Rosalia Neumann Garcia

Angelika

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Revisão

Ian Alexander

Instituto de Letras - UFRGS

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The translations presented here are the result of a long process that started in my *Versão IV* classes, or, to clarify, classes directed towards the task of translating Brazilian literature into English. It became evident with each semester that there were basically two important factors for the successful outcome of our work: students needed to show a special interest in literature and, evidently, they needed to enjoy translation. It seems almost a bit naive when it is said in this way, but, of course, the work involved went a great deal further. One must love words, both their sound and effect; understand how they were chosen for that particular story or paragraph; one must enjoy their subtleness and evasiveness at times, the way words can tease and escape any attempt of being pinned down to a specific meaning. There must also be a special feeling for literature that goes beyond that of a mere spectator: it should touch you like very few things do.

All in all, I believe that the students who worked in those classes contributed to creating a final product (evidently never *absolutely* final) that went through some fine-tuning with the special attention of Ian Alexander, a graduate student in our doctoral program at the Instituto de Letras, and writer. I am grateful for having had such a wonderful group of students all these years and for Ian's readings.

The stories chosen are some of the best in Brazilian literature. They certainly offer us moments of enjoyment, laughter and reflection. *Midnight Mass*, by Machado de Assis, is a study of the impressions a young man has of the object of his desire; *The Man Who Knew Javanese*, by Lima Barreto, joins irony and compassion; *Turtle Dove*, by Lygia Fagundes Teles, is an example of fine storytelling, at times comical, at others, touching; *The Other*, by Rubem Fonseca, builds up to a surprising ending; *Those Two*, by Caio Fernando Abreu, portrays the delicate relationship of the main characters; while *Pale eyes big White horse*, by Jane Tutikian,

makes us wonder about how we relate to others and, in the process, are affected by this relationship.

I would have liked to have included other works in this collection (there are so many that deserve to be here!), but I am sure this is just the beginning of a task that can take students and teachers alike to many new projects of translation.

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Midnight mass

Machado de Assis

I never fully understood the conversation I had with a lady many years ago, when I was seventeen and she, thirty. It was Christmas Eve. Having decided with a neighbor that we would go to Midnight Mass, I preferred not to sleep; I said I would wake him at midnight.

The house where I was lodging belonged to Meneses, a public clerk, whose first marriage had been with one of my cousins. His second wife, Conceição, and her mother received me very well when I came from Mangaratiba to Rio de Janeiro, months earlier, for prep school. I lived peacefully in that two-story house on Senado Street, with my books, a few acquaintances, some outings. The family was small: the clerk, his wife, his mother-in-law and two female slaves. Old habits. At ten o'clock in the evening, we were all in our bedrooms; at ten-thirty the household was asleep. I had never been to the theater and, having often heard Meneses say that he was going, I would ask him to take me along. On these occasions, his mother-in-law would grimace and the slaves tried to muffle their giggles. He would not answer, got dressed, left the house and came back only the next morning. Later on, I found out that the theater was a euphemism in action. Meneses was carrying on an affair with a woman who lived separated from her husband, and would stay with her once a week. At first, Conceição had suffered with the knowledge of the concubine, but she forbore it all, became used to it, and eventually came to find it quite proper.

Kind, dear, Conceição! They called her "the saint" and she deserved the title, she bore her husband's neglect so well. In fact, she had a moderate temper, with no extreme emotions, no great sorrows, no great joy. In regards to the situation

* De Contos Consagrados de Machado de Assis, Edições de Ouro