

“THE STRANGE CASE OF MACHADO DE ASSIS AND THE NOONDAY PRESS: RIGHTS AND PUBLICITY IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION”¹

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Abstract: The present article adds to the growing literature on the publication of Machado de Assis in English translation. Along with the classic problems inherent in translation, such as word choice and meaning, there are issues regarding copyright and publicity: the right to print and the means of promoting and selling books, both crucial to the story of Machado in English. The question of book sales was never one of large numbers or best-seller lists. Nevertheless, this article uses archival material to show that the publisher, Cecil Hemley, and his translators, including Helen Caldwell in particular, tried their best in improvised and opportunistic ways during the 1950s to generate interest and foment sales. Before they could do this, they also had to contend with the thorny question of copyright. Finally, the article follows the fate of these translations after the Noonday Press was acquired by Farrar Straus in 1960.

Keywords: Machado de Assis; translation; Noonday Press; Farrar Straus; copyright; Latin American Literature; Brazil.

“O ESTRANHO CASO DE MACHADO DE ASSIS E A EDITORA NOONDAY PRESS: DIREITOS E PUBLICIDADE NA TRADUÇÃO PARA O INGLÊS”

Resumo: O presente artigo se soma à crescente literatura sobre a publicação de Machado de Assis em tradução para o inglês. Ao lado dos problemas clássicos inerentes à tradução, como a escolha e o significado das palavras, há questões relativas a direitos autorais e publicidade: o direito de imprimir e os meios de

¹ The author gratefully acknowledges the research assistance of Aya Alryyes who obtained copies of documents in the archives of Farrar Straus & Giroux, New York Public Library, New York City.

promoção e venda de livros, ambos cruciais para a história de Machado em inglês. A questão das vendas desses livros nunca foi uma questão de grandes números ou listas de best-sellers no caso de Machado em tradução. No entanto, este artigo usa material de arquivo para mostrar que o editor, Cecil Hemley, e seus tradutores, incluindo Helen Caldwell em particular, deram o seu melhor de maneiras improvisadas e oportunistas durante a década de 1950 para gerar interesse e fomentar vendas. Antes que pudessem fazer isso, eles também tiveram que lidar com a espinhosa questão dos direitos autorais. Por fim, o artigo segue o destino dessas traduções depois que a Noonday Press foi adquirida pela Farrar Straus em 1960.

Palavras-chave: Machado de Assis; tradução; Noonday Press; Farrar Straus; direitos autorais; literatura latino-americana; Brasil.

There are two important articles in *Machado de Assis em Linha* that delve into the rich correspondence between Cecil Hemley and the translators Helen Caldwell and Clotilde Wilson. These studies, the first by Hélio de Seixas Guimarães, the second by the same author together with Vinicius Fernandes de Oliveira, examine the correspondence with close attention to the literary dimension of translation and are each able to uncover valuable facts about the choices made at the surface—such as choice of titles—and in the depths, with discussions of specific line edits and word choices that can be shown to have affected the meaning of the works in question.² The present article will build upon this work by adding a discussion of the issues surrounding copyright and publicity: the right to print and the means of promoting and selling books. As Guimarães and Oliveira make clear through their research in the Noonday/Farrar Straus archives, the question of book sales was never one of large numbers or best-seller lists.³ Nevertheless, as we shall see, the publisher and his translators tried their best, in what appears mostly improvised and

² For a discussion of Helen Caldwell and Cecil Hemley, see Hélio de Seixas Guimarães, “Helen Caldwell, Cecil Hemley e os julgamentos de Dom Casmurro,” *Machado de Assis em Linha*, São Paulo, v. 12, n. 27, p. 113-141, maio-ago. 2019. For Clotilde Wilson and Hemley, see Hélio de Seixas Guimarães and Vinicius Fernandes de Oliveira, “Clotilde Wilson, Cecil Hemley e a gênese de *Philosopher or Dog?* (Quincas Borba),” *Machado de Assis em Linha*, v. 14, p. 1-19, 2021.

³ Sales were modest for all three books in the Noonday lineup, with *Epitaph* accounting for approximately twenty four thousand copies sold, *Dom Casmurro* another eleven thousand, and *Philosopher or Dog* around five thousand as of 1964. Guimarães and Oliveira, “Clotilde Wilson,” *Machado de Assis em Linha*, v. 14, p. 12, 2021.

opportunistic ways, to stir up interest and foment sales. Before they could do this, they also had to contend with the thorny question of copyright.

The translator and the publisher

Perhaps most important among Machado de Assis's English language translators and biographers was the UCLA Classics lecturer Helen Caldwell. She was responsible for the second of the three Noonday translations—none of which, it should be emphasized, was coordinated with the others.⁴ In this case, Caldwell rendered a fine translation of *Dom Casmurro*, a novel generally considered as Machado's second masterpiece, after *Memórias póstumas*. Given that Noonday had achieved some degree of critical and commercial success with the publication of *Epitaph of a Small Winner* in 1952, it is reasonable to assume that equally high expectations, at least in terms of critical reception if not sales, attended the publication of *Dom Casmurro* in May, 1953.

Who was Helen Caldwell and why was she engaged in this translation and publication project in the early 1950s? Answers may be found in her UCLA Classics obituary, which is available online via the UC Library Archive.⁵ There we learn of her birth on July 9, 1904 in Omaha, Nebraska, as well as her university training at Berkeley for a time before concluding with a BA degree (1925) and an MA (1939) at UCLA. Caldwell's interests were wide ranging, and included dance study with Michio Ito, work in the movie business at RKO, and most importantly, the study of Classics, which led to an appointment as Lecturer in 1942 and then Senior Lecturer in 1965. She was of a generation of pioneering women in American academia. Like many of her generation, her contributions may have been appreciated by students and scholars but did not lead to a professorial appointment. Instead, she taught in UCLA's Department of Classics, burdened by a heavy teaching load as she pursued an interest in Portuguese-language literature on the side. This interest first bore fruit in 1953 with the publication of *Dom Casmurro*. This translation project must have been imagined as early as 1950, as Caldwell shared a sample of 106 pages with her literary agent

⁴ Guimarães and Oliveira come to the same conclusion, "Clotilde Wilson", p. 3.

⁵ Online Archive of California:

<http://texts.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb6z09p0jh;NAAN=13030&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00008&toc.depth=1&toc.id=&brand=oac4> (accessed 8 August, 2022).

McIntosh in May 1950 and “shortly thereafter” began to correspond with W.H. Jackson, the putative rights holder.⁶ This correspondence, which runs to dozens of letters, picked up new steam in 1952, as the book neared publication. In the ensuing years, Caldwell published several more notable translations and academic studies of Machado de Assis. Noteworthy among these were *The Brazilian Othello of Machado de Assis: A Study of Dom Casmurro* (1960) and *Machado de Assis: The Brazilian Master and His Novels* (1970).

Cecil Hemley was well suited to the task of bringing Machado de Assis to readers in English translation. Together with his financial partner Arthur Cohen, Hemley ran the small publishing house Noonday, founded in 1951 while both men were students at the Jewish Theological Union in New York City, with a focus on quality literary translations.⁷ Hemley, born in 1914 and a graduate of Amherst College, was a poet and translator in his own right. His literary sensibilities attracted him to the works of the Brazilian master, and with his emphasis on seeking quality books for translation, it was a short step to undertaking the publication of Machado's three most famous novels. In the case of *Dom Casmurro*, the sequence of events leading to its publication were serendipitous. Helen Caldwell had already begun her work on the translation in 1950. Her literary agent, Mavis McIntosh, pitched the project to Noonday. Cecil Hemley responded with enthusiasm and, having already started a project to bring *Memórias póstumas* to the English reading public, worked with Caldwell to bring the project to fruition, offering her a contract with a \$500 advance and royalties on future sales, with a first edition print run of 5,000 copies.

Concerning the publication of *Dom Casmurro* in 1953, two critical issues appear in the ample documentation provided by the FSG/Noonday papers that have yet to be examined thoroughly in light of the broader theme of Machado's introduction to English language readers. The first centers on the question of copyright; the second involves the issues surrounding reviews of the work and publicity.

Copyright mystery

⁶ Caldwell to Hemley, December 9, 1952, FSG/Noonday papers, NYPL. This letter finds Caldwell still referring to “Mr. Hemley,” the first-name friendship comes soon after her meeting with the publisher in New York in early January, 1953. Here, she recounts her initiation into Machado and *Dom Casmurro* in 1943 while studying Portuguese in order to read *Os Lusíadas*.

⁷ Kochka, *Hothouse*, 134.

One of the first questions I asked myself upon undertaking this project was whether the novels of Machado de Assis were, in fact, covered by copyright protection—either in the United States or Brazil. This is not an easy question to answer. In fact, it baffled Helen Caldwell, her publisher Cecil Hemley, her agents at Mavis McIntosh & Elizabeth McKee, her lawyers at Lillick, Geary & McHose, the Brazilian Consulate, and a diverse cast of fixers and local contacts in Rio de Janeiro. Caldwell did, eventually, come to a kind of resolution, based less on established facts and more on the expedience of placating a “fishy” Brazil-focused publisher by the name of W. Montgomery Jackson. But this is jumping to the end of the story.

An early mention in the archive of this matter, though doubtless there are many more documents that have not been preserved as they predate Caldwell's association with Noonday, comes on March 23, 1953, in the form of a letter from Caldwell's lawyers to Mr. Jackson. It begins:

Dear Mr. Jackson:

As you possibly know, Miss Caldwell's English translation of *Dom Casmurro* by Machado de Assis is scheduled to be published on May 12. I am sure you will be as pleased with the publication of this translation as we are.

It occurred to us that in light of the forthcoming publication of the work, it would be well to reduce to a somewhat more definitive form your agreement with Miss Caldwell regarding her translation rights.

“As you possibly know.” “It occurred to us.” This is hardly a confident beginning; it is certainly lawyerly. Indeed, from all appearances, Caldwell had managed to concoct an ad hoc contract with Jackson before ever entering into the formal process with Hemley at Noonday. In doing so, she will prove to have been admirably scrupulous, as most of her US-based contacts were of the opinion that *Dom Casmurro* was solidly in the public domain, in North America *and* in Brazil. Nevertheless, Jackson was the most recent publisher of Machado's work in Brazil and had purchased the rights in 1935 to the material (in Portuguese and French) from the

house of Garnier, to whom the author had sold all of his extant works in 1899.⁸ On this shaky basis, Jackson laid claim to the book and Caldwell was eager to oblige him – within reason – in order to avoid conflict. It is still shocking to see that Noonday was ready to print some thousand copies of the book for a May 12 launch but had, as late as March, not finalized a real contract with the putative rights holder. Even more interesting, however, were the ongoing negotiations that persisted after the fact, when *Dom Casmurro* was already on display in bookstores and being reviewed in *Time*, the *New York Times*, and the *New Republic*, among other venues.

There is even more about the novel, before its publication in May, to be found in the archive. A gem of a letter appears on April 28, 1953, from Caldwell to her literary agent in New York, Mavis McIntosh. In this missive, Caldwell offers an extensive description of the convoluted negotiations with Montgomery Jackson. She begins by noting that Jackson had rejected the proposed contract drawn up by her lawyers at Lillick, Geary & McHose. Things begin mysteriously and become only more convoluted:

Dear Mavis:

Friday morning I received a letter from Rio on the stationary of W.M. Jackson, signed by one Brenda Grant (no title) and stating that Jackson had transferred their rights to Editora Merito, S.A.

She notes that Merito found that the “agreement was not agreeable,” and then goes on to recount how she “took the vile instruments over to Hollywood in the afternoon to show the consul and Mr. Myers.” Caldwell goes on to mention that the consul had “never heard of Ed. Merito” and that he was asking the Ministry to look into it. Both the consul and Myers, her lawyer, thought Merito “looked a bit fishy.”

The rest of this letter goes into some detail as to Caldwell's and Myers' research into Brazilian copyright law, as well as in the French case. Nothing is ultimately decided, however, and she concludes that Jackson may have gotten copyright by

⁸ Caldwell went so far as to check with Garnier in Paris, receiving a reply dated 31 August, 1953, to the effect that Garnier had, around February 1935, sold the rights to W.M. Jackson. René Buge to Caldwell, FSG/Noonday papers, NYPL.

“some legal trick, as on the basis of the correction of misprints in the Garnier edition.”⁹

Later in the year, indeed as late as December, Caldwell was still trying to firm up her deal with Jackson/Merito. The final contract appears to have been agreed upon by December 4, and it included provisions for Jackson to retain film and radio rights, as well as a promise by Caldwell to pay a certain portion of her royalties to the grantor.¹⁰ It is evident that US publishers such as Noonday were willing to play fast and loose when it came to copyright and translations of older books. It is equally clear that there was something “fishy” about Montgomery Jackson/Merito in the business. The ownership of rights, if any rights existed, was disputable. Caldwell elected to choose discretion over valor.

Publicity by the bootstraps

A week after sending off her long discussion of the copyright imbroglio to her agent, Caldwell mailed a series of letters to friends and colleagues about the publicity aspect of the operation. On May 6, she writes to a certain Sidney (Furst), with news of the distribution of review copies (when he learned that the *LA Times* had not received a copy, she gave it one of hers), as well as a trip to Robinson's Beverly Hills store, where she met with a Miss Strang and learned that they had yet to get any copies. Miss Strang suggested that Caldwell go downtown to see Miss Davis at that branch, where, indeed, the translator found one copy on the shelves. Then she goes on with ideas about publicity, including notice by the “Cavalcade of Books,” a well-known TV program, and also by a certain John Murray, who hosted a “morning radio program for housewives.”¹¹

I was not able to determine whether any of these media publicity angles paid off—and I rather doubt that they did. In short, it appears that Caldwell had to perform

⁹ Caldwell to McIntosh, April 28, 1953, FSG/Noonday papers, NYPL. Readers will be interested to learn, according to Caldwell, that she gleaned from contacts in Brazil that Jackson's ownership of the rights to Machado's works was a contentious matter that was ultimately resolved through Congressional action in 1958, placing all the work in the public domain. Of course, this would not mean that translated version were not, themselves, subject to copyright. Reported in Caldwell to Diamond, February 25, 1964, FSG/Noonday Papers, NYPL.

¹⁰ Caldwell writes elsewhere in her correspondence that Dom Casmurro “could easily make a good movie—it’s cut to order for the camera man.” Caldwell to Hemley, June 21, 1953, FSG/Noonday papers, NYPL. Hemley, apparently, did not share her optimism.

¹¹ Caldwell to Furst, May 6, FSG/Noonday papers, NYPL.

a great deal of legwork of her own in the immediate days after the appearance of the book. This included ginning up demand (notionally) with wealthy people in Pasadena, where she quips that “even archaeologists in Pasadena are rich.”¹² Then in June, writing again to Sidney Furst, she reports seeing to the placement of a copy of the book in a prominent place in a reading room in Royce Hall at UCLA, where she observes, “now with Summer Session coming up we'll catch a new public.”¹³ Meanwhile, her reports to her agents and publisher make occasional reference to other informal means of building interest in the book among her social and academic connections. She mentions passing the book around the departments of History and Classics at UCLA, and elsewhere in Los Angeles.¹⁴ In short, it appears that Caldwell had to perform a great deal of legwork of her own in the immediate days after the appearance of the book.¹⁵

From spring through the end of the year, Caldwell was also in frequent correspondence with her publisher. The earlier correspondence between her and Hemley, which focused more on the substance of the translation, has already been analyzed effectively by Guimarães in his 2019 article in this venue.¹⁶ The later letters, when the publication was imminent or accomplished, betray a degree of genuine friendship, humor, and loyalty. Cecil Hemley sweetens his letters to Caldwell with warm praise and even promises to send her a photograph of his family.¹⁷ Caldwell is unguarded and prone to cracking jokes. A good deal of their correspondence focuses on the topic of reviews and the placement of *Dom Casmurro* with various influential

¹² Caldwell to Arthur (Cohen), May 7, 1953, FSG/Noonday papers, NYPL. “Everyone in Pasadena is wealthy, even the archaeologists...You have no idea what a dreadful publicity hound I have become.”

¹³ Caldwell to Sidney (Furst), June 23, 1953, FSG/Noonday papers, NYPL. The details are prosaic: “In the library, on the first table and right in front of a tray containing Hershey kisses and wrapped hard candies, the librarian is displaying a copy of Dom C. and beside him marked reviews. Such were the hopes and efforts on behalf of the book at UCLA.

¹⁴ Caldwell to Hemley, June 21, 1953, FSG/Noonday papers, NYPL. In this long letter, Caldwell touches on the copyright situation and then provides a detailed description of her efforts to get the word out about the book among the faculty at UCLA: “Meanwhile, in a quiet way and with the enthusiasm of some other faculty members, I have been bringing the book to the attention of people on campus, with an eye to future inclusion in humanities courses, history lists, etc.” It is likely that the academic market, indeed, accounted for many of the sales of *Dom Casmurro* in this and later periods.

¹⁵ Caldwell to Sidney (Furst), May 6, 1953, FSG/Noonday papers, NYPL.

¹⁶ Guimarães, “Helen Caldwell, Cecil Hemley e os julgamentos de Dom Casmurro,” *Machado de Assis em Linha*, v. 12, n. 27, May-Aug 2019.

¹⁷ Hemley to Caldwell, “Thank you for the pictures. I shall send along some snapshots of Jonathan (probably his son) as soon as we take some,” August 19, 1953, FSG/Noonday papers, NYPL.

literary venues and arbiters of taste. Hemley clearly sees great merit in the book itself and is impressed by Caldwell's expertise. They share the triumph of seeing the book reviewed positively in nearly every possible venue, including *Partisan Review*, which, as Hemley notes, "stands high with the coterie." All the same, he jokes: "I am not sure that I understand all the complexities of thought of the reviewer, Lionel Abel—but at any rate he is enthusiastic." He then adds his hope that "perhaps Machado will be for them the next 'Kafka.'"¹⁸

Bracketing Machado with Kafka is certainly plausible from the perspective of literary merit. Alas, in terms of sales, as of July 31, Hemley had to report that "the Dom is selling, although not very speedily. We have to date sold twenty-seven copies, but cannot be certain that some copies will not be returned."¹⁹ Over time, the letters in the NYPL archive do suggest a gradual quickening of sales and decent orders by bookstores.²⁰ The book ultimately did well enough to go to a second edition and remained in print into the 1960s. By stirring up interest by every means available, Caldwell and Hemley ensured that *Dom Casmurro* would find a small but passionate readership in English translation. I argue that this work was critical to the longer-term status of Machado's works in the United States once Noonday was absorbed into Farrar Straus.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the three translations of Machado's major novels were published by W.H. Allen around the same time and under a subsidiary contract with Noonday. No discussion of the early publication history of Machado de Assis in English is complete without a consideration of the British market. In this case, as in everything having to do with Machado in this period, there is considerable confusion and not a little disappointment. Although the books were well reviewed (how could it be otherwise), sales were middling at best. From the one-sided material available in the FSG archive, we learn that W.H. Allen was likely disappointed in the volume of sales and that the English publishing house certainly allowed the titles to

¹⁸ Hemley to Caldwell, August 19, 1953, FSG/Noonday papers, NYPL.

¹⁹ Hemley to Caldwell, July 31, 1953, FSG/Noonday papers, NYPL.

²⁰ Figures for U.S. sales are reported in Hélio de Seixas Guimarães and Vinicius Fernandes de Oliveira, "Clotilde Wilson, Cecil Hemley e a gênese de *Philosopher or Dog?* (*Quincas Borba*)," *Machado de Assis em Linha*, v. 14, 2021, using the FSG/Noonday papers. *Epitaph of a Small Winner* was the big seller, moving an estimated 24,040 copies through 1964, followed by *Dom Casmurro* with 11,000, and *Philosopher or Dog?* with about 5,000 copies sold.

go out of print within a few years of their appearance.²¹ In 1961, during FSG's negotiations pertaining to a possible reissue with the publishing house of Martin Secker & Warburg, correspondence reveals the numbers for print runs and sales. W.H. Allen printed approximately 4,000 copies of *Epitaph of a Small Winner* and sold 3,157 copies, leaving approximately 600 in the remainder bin. *The Heritage of Quincas Borba*, the title for *Philosopher or Dog?* in Britain, saw a print run of 3,294 and sales of just 2,057 copies, with over 1,000 remaindered.²²

The “failure” of the W.H. Allen titles was significant for the history of the books in the British market because they were allowed to go out of print and remained in limbo, in spite of Roger Straus's own efforts, for decades to come. As early as 1960, when FSG was in the process of acquiring Noonday, Straus and his team were working to place the books with an alternative publishing house for the British realm. Straus's first idea was to place the Noonday translations with Martin Secker & Warburg, a firm with which he had close personal relations.²³ Ultimately, this went nowhere, as Warburg balked upon learning that W.H. Allen had recently published the titles, had not sold many books, and that the books were in the public domain in Portuguese.²⁴ For the purpose of this essay, what is most significant is Roger Straus's evident regard for Machado as “important literary property” and the persistent efforts made by FSG to place the novels with a British publisher.²⁵ There is a pecuniary motive here, to be sure, but the indefatigable work on behalf of the books belies a deeper commitment. It took decades, but FSG finally managed to transfer the rights to the old Noonday translations to the publisher Bloomsbury and the master's works reappeared in the British market.²⁶ Meanwhile, around the same time, Roger Straus decided that rather

²¹ Jeffrey Simmons to Gerald Pollinger, November 29, 1960, FSG/Noonday Papers, NYPL. *Epitaph* was reported out of print as of December 1956, *Dom Casmurro* as out of print December 1956, and *Quincas Borba* as out of print in June 1960.

²² Gerald Pollinger to Frederic J. Warburg, November 22, 1961, FSG/Noonday Papers, NYPL.

²³ The correspondence between Straus and Warburg is filled with affection and mutual regard. They were publishers *and* friends.

²⁴ Gerald Pollinger to Roger Straus, October 18, 1962, FSG/Noonday Papers, NYPL. Pollinger reports here that Warburg had desisted in his interest in the Machado books, having returned all of the material.

²⁵ Roger Straus to Fred Warburg, January 11, 1961, FSG/Noonday Papers, NYPL. Straus writes: “I am sending you herewith *Philosopher or Dog* and do want you to know that I feel that Machado de Assis constitutes important literary property—as important as Singer, whom we also acquired from Noonday.” Warburg responds, writing about the ongoing issues with W.H. Allen and then concludes, “With the rest of your letter I entirely agree, wonderful author, wonderful books and so on.” Fred Warburg to Roger Straus, January 18, 1961, FSG/Noonday Papers, NYPL.

²⁶ The first edition of the Bloomsbury version appeared in 2008 with a blurb by Salman Rushdie.

than pursue further deals with cheap paperback publishers for the North American versions of the novels, that FSG would take up the charge and keep the books circulating under its own imprint.²⁷ By 1990, then, the great novels of Machado de Assis were in print and underwritten with a sustainable commitment on the part of what had by then become the most prestigious publishing house in the United States, some time later they were again available in the British market.

Appreciation

There is something miraculous in the character and background of Machado's early translators into English. William Grossman was a lawyer by training, became an economist and urban planner, taught at NYU in that capacity, and even helped found the Aeronautics Technical Center in São José dos Campos, São Paulo.²⁸ This same individual fell in love with Brazilian literature and found time to translate what Noonday published as *Epitaph of a Small Winner*, the first of Machado's masterworks to appear in English. Helen Caldwell was next up, translating *Dom Casmurro*, the second great novel in the oeuvre. Caldwell earned her living as a lecturer in the Department of Classics at UCLA, yet she too found inspiration in the work of a long dead and largely forgotten (among English-speakers) Brazilian author. She went on to translate three more of Machado's novels, all the while teaching her classes on Terence, Horace, and Virgil. Last, but not least, and drawing the short straw aesthetically speaking, is Clotilde Wilson, translator of *Philosopher or Dog? (Quincas Borba)*. Wilson was an accomplished literary scholar, starting with a study of Proust and Stendhal as her MA thesis at the University of Washington in 1931, and extending to an additional translation of a Brazilian novelist, though in this case not published by Noonday.

Equally miraculous is the loving care that Cecil Hemley and his team at Noonday Press lavished on these books. In an era of massive corporate publishing conglomerates, of academic specialization, of cynical post-Boom marketing, it is hard to believe that such a motley and intrepid band of people ever existed—mostly oblivious to the perils of copyright, largely willing to pound the streets and pass

²⁷ KK to Dee Nelson., July 7, 1987, FSG/Noonday Papers, NYPL. In an internal FSG memo regarding rights to the books, KK writes to Nelson, rights manager, “We've pretty much decided to publish these titles ourselves,” rather than renew contract with Avon Books.

²⁸ NYT Obit, 1980.

around books by hand when necessary. Fortunately, they did. Art for Art's sake: there can be no doubt this was of considerable motive force behind the Noonday translations between 1952 and 1954; even if on the terms of \$500 advances, low sales numbers, and ad hoc publicity efforts.

Postscriptum

The independent life of the Noonday Press was short. Founded in 1951 by Hemley and his partner Arthur Cohen, it was going under by 1960. Labors of love rarely equate to large profits, and the publishing landscape is challenging in the best of times. In this case, however, it is likely true that the failure of Noonday paved the way for the solidification of Machado de Assis's reputation in English translation. When the press was subsumed into Farrar Straus, it not only bequeathed its colophon—the interlocking fish motif—it also passed Machado into the hands of what would become the most prestigious literary publisher in the United States.²⁹ Would become are the operative words here. Farrar Straus was, at the time of the acquisition in 1960, far from reaching the commanding heights of publishing and being synonymous with quality and Nobel Prizes.³⁰ Thus far, the houses biggest seller was a lifestyle and diet book *Look Younger, Live Longer*, by the California health guru Gayelord Hauser.³¹ But the stars were aligned. Straus was already making inroads in the field of quality literary translations, especially with the Italian author Alberto Moravia. Farrar Straus was primed to take advantage of Noonday's existing list, including Isaac Bashevis Singer's novels and stories translated from the Yiddish (often by Hemley himself along with his wife Elaine Gottlieb), as well as, of course, the backlist of Machado's three novels.³²

It is worth exploring a counterfactual outcome in order to highlight the degree of good fortune Machado's translated works enjoyed with Farrar Straus (later Farrar Straus & Giroux). If Noonday had dissolved into a less propitious publishing house, it

²⁹ The origins and decline of Noonday, as well as its purchase by Farrar Straus, are recounted in Boris Kochka, *Hothouse: The Art of Survival and the Survival of Art at America's Most Celebrated Publishing House*, Simon & Schuster (New York, 2013), p. 115-116, 134-137.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 51-52.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53-55. *Look Younger, Live Longer* was the best-selling book in the United States in 1950. Profits from this title helped Farrar Straus remain solvent for years and gave scope to Roger Straus's early forays into translations of literary works.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 138.

is possible that Machado's work would have gone out of print in the 1960s, as indeed was the case in the British market. Eventually, the quality of the work would have led to other translations (in fact, it did), but there would have been decades of neglect in the intervening years. Worse, Noonday could have collapsed, and the list could have been broken up or sold piecemeal, with many titles becoming tied up in lawyerly rights disputes or simply neglected for lack of immediate expectations of profitability. Farrar Straus, unlike most other publishers, was willing to play the longer game. It is too much to say that Roger Straus was devoted to Art for Art's Sake, but he was willing to spend money and sustain quality titles in the long quest for artistic prestige.³³ In conclusion, through a series of fortuitous events, beginning with enthusiastic amateur translators and a sympathetic publisher, and ending with placement in the firmament of stars associated with FSG, Machado's place among English language readers was solidified. Remaining in print, published by one of the best houses in the United States, the books could go on to work their magic on generations of readers and to influence generations of writers. Knowing this, we can safely say that the story of Machado de Assis's reception in English depended not only on the opinions of literary critics and academics, but also on the commitment of amateur translators and visionary publishers.³⁴

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³³ Ibid., p. 137, also 153, where Straus is quoted at length regarding his vision for FSG, as a "medium-sized independent, which is as we both know a rather attractive breeding ground and home for the truly creative artist." The same can be said for deceased artists in translation.

³⁴ For a good overview of the initial reception of Machado's novels in the Noonday translations, see Earl Fitz, "The Reception of Machado de Assis in the United States During the 1950s and 1960s," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Madison, v. 46, n. 1, p. 16-35.

_____. Helen Caldwell, Cecil Hemley e os julgamentos de Dom Casmurro. *Machado de Assis em Linha*, São Paulo, v. 12, n. 27, p. 113-141, maio-ago. 2019.

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