

Sources for studying publishing in Brazil: contracts and receipts of the
publisher B. L. Garnier

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The past makes itself present in a variety of ways, ranging from investigating documents, telling narratives, to conducting circumstantial research. In the realm of Brazilian books, it is especially necessary to make use of several methods, since the history of publishers and publications is fragmentary, showing up in the remains of contracts, catalogues, receipts, bills, invoices, among other documents exchanged between publishers, vendors, authors and readers (or others dealing in bulk).

Regarding the publishing activities of Baptiste-Louis Garnier, research in primary sources performed by Alexandra Pinheiro recovered "42 contracts and 33 transaction receipts implemented by Garnier" (2008, p. 175), which now are available on this site. Publishers do not disappear by going out of business, since their *fonds*, in most cases, are transferred to new publishers. This is true for a part of the documents belonging to the French bookseller and publisher established in Brazil between 1844 and 1893. After his death, the business of B. L. Garnier's bookstore and publishing house was transferred via inheritance to his brother, the French bookseller-publisher Hipollyte Garnier, who extended the business in Rio de Janeiro and continued with the carioca bookstore and publishing house until his own death in 1911. Some time later, the great-nephew of the Garniers, Auguste Pierre, continued the business until the Great Depression, in 1934, when the bookstore was sold to Ferdinand Briguie (Hallewell, 2005). This marked the beginning of the dispersal of Editora Garnier's *fonds*, the publishing house, commensurate with Briguie selling them to the Martins publishers in São Paulo and to the Jackson publishing house. Ultimately, Pedro Paulo Moreira, the owner and editor of Vila Rica Editoras Reunidas, formerly known as Editora Itatiaia, saved Garnier's documents, which had come into his possession through the acquisition of *fonds* from the publishing house, Editora Martins.

Therefore, given the ownership of these and other documents surveyed in the past several years, research into the publishing and commercial activities of B. L. Garnier continued to be developed (Leão, 2007;

Pinheiro, 2008; Queiróz, 2008; Dutra, 2010 and Granja 2013a and 2013b). Now, with the availability of such contracts and receipts online, studies into this family will be broadened, a family that so fundamentally dedicated itself to the publishing of texts produced by the Brazilian literary circles of the nineteenth century, revealing in its course some of our most important writers, some of whom would even become canonical.

Testimonies from the nineteenth century reveal an anecdote: Baptiste-Louis Garnier's initials, B.L., helped to spread the nickname "*Bom Ladrão*," or "good thief" given to the publisher and bookseller. Although we have advanced our knowledge of publishers' methods (Granja, 2013a), details about the relationships between Garnier and his employees, translators, vendors and authors, let alone with the Garnier siblings in Paris, are not completely clear, yet. We already know, however, that Garnier kept an employee in Paris for editing and translation services between 1864 and 1873 (Granja, 2013a) and that his contracts reveal themselves as documents carefully drawn up by the publisher with the intention of avoiding lawsuits brought by authors (Pinheiro, 2008, p. 175).

Concerning this last issue, when we acquaint ourselves with these documents, we get the impression that the contracts are austere in relation to authors/translators and benefit the publisher, which is not far from the truth and which earned B. L. Garnier some infamy in Brazil. Nevertheless, we must observe that discussions surrounding literary property had not yet established conventions in Europe and were practically nonexistent in Brazil. Keeping this in mind, regarding publishing contracts, the publisher often acquired the life-long rights of the work, extending that obligation to the writer's descendants, as we read in several of B. L. Garnier's contracts, including those signed by Machado de Assis for *Tales from Rio* (*Contos Fluminenses*) and *Phalaenae* (*Phalenas*). Also in relation to translation, Garnier would come to possess the translator's work.

Additionally, there was a regulation of the market which determined practices in place at the time and governed the relationships between European publishers and authors. Garnier adhered to those standards in Brazil, too. Flaubert, for instance, yielded the rights to *Madame Bovary* for 400 francs to the publisher Michel Lévy, who sold twenty thousand copies of the

work just in the first year, 1857, at 1 franc per copy (Mollier, 1994). In order to have an idea of the value of 400 francs at that time, the annual subscription to the newspaper *La Presse* cost 54 francs, whereas each issue of the paper sold separately for 13 cents of a franc – that is, for *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert received enough to subscribe to little more 7 newspapers, whereas his publisher, received fifty times what he paid for ownership of the book in 1857, alone. On the other hand, in Brazil, one of the contracts, the one from July 10, 1877, informs us that Garnier paid 300,000 reis for the collection of popular songs, melodramas, lundus, hymns, among others, of *A cantora brasileira* by Joaquim Norberto de Sousa Silva, forcing him "not to organize nor to send to print another work on the same subject." By way of comparison, in 1875, the annual subscription to *Gazeta de Notícias* cost 12,000 reis and a single copy cost, 40 cents of a reis, thus enabling Joaquim Norberto to have 25 subscriptions. That is, the Brazilian writer made three-and-a-half times more than his French colleague.

Also in Rio de Janeiro, in the case of "company authors," (autores da casa), the investment could be of a different kind. Machado de Assis had become increasingly prestigious after joining Casa Garnier, the Brazilian arm of Garnier's book publishing and selling business. Through the first contract signed (1864, for the book *Chrysalids (Crisálidas)*), the author yielded the full and whole property of the first and every subsequent edition of the book to the publisher for 150 reis per volume. This book of poems in a volume with a foreword by Caetano Filgueiras, sold for 2,000 reis in paperback and 3,000 reis in hardback. Therefore, on average, Machado de Assis received 6% on the sale of each copy of his first book. On the other hand, in relation to the books immediately following, *Tales from Rio* (1870) and *Phalenas* (1870), in a contract signed on May 15, 1869, the same writer received 200 reis per copy of the book of short stories which each sold for 3,000 reis. In this case, Machado de Assis – even if he was, at that point, more prestigious as a writer, seeing that the contract provided for payment on a per-copy basis even for subsequent editions - still earned, as in 1864, 6% on each copy sold. Finally, at a circulation of 1000 copies, the overall value of the contract was of 300,000 reis, the same as the document that established the publication and sale of *A cantora brasileira*, but Machado de Assis earned by copy - and could

dream of reprints, or, at least, had guaranteed payment for these potential publications – whereas the other received the same amount for the total and general sale of the work.

In this context, one way of understanding the prehistory of the literary and publishing fields in Brazil is by looking at what is left of the contracts and receipts of the most important Brazilian publisher in the nineteenth century and of the authors that his business activities helped to affirm (Bourdieu, 1992). At the same time, this aim provides us with the proportion of the importance of material relationships (Chartier, 2002) between editors, writers, technicians, workers, in their agreements and disagreements, as regards the formation of the audience, of the taste, and in our Brazilian case, especially, of the building up of an identity in which a "National Literature" participates.

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