

Novel advertisement in the daily newspaper *La Presse* (1836-1849)

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Abstract

This work, developed inside the international project “The transatlantic circulation of printed matter: the globalization of the culture in the 19th Century”, wants to identify and analyze the advertisements of novels in the Parisian newspaper *La Presse* between 1836 and 1849. So it will be possible to recognize the most advertised novels and authors of the period and also the editor’s choices based in their public’s supposed tastes and interests.

Key words: *La Presse*, Novels, History of Reading

Introduction

The French newspaper *La Presse* was founded in 1836 by Émile de Girardin. It was a symbol of the popularization of the media in the XIXth Century and the birthplace of the *roman-feuilleton*, serial novels that deeply transformed the literary world. It cost half of the ordinary price, attracting a more diversified public. However, to keep the low prices, it was necessary to increase the number of advertisements in the last page of the newspaper to pay the costs and give some profit.¹

So, it’s a good source to observe the evolution of the book industry activity, especially the production and promotion of novels in Paris, the cultural and literary capital of the XIXth Century.²

Results and Discussion

Thirteen years of the newspaper available on *Gallica*, the digital website of the National Library of France, were examined in order to find the novel’s advertisements. There were 1,829 ads, a medium of 140 per year, indicating the popularity of this form of promotion of books.

The information about novels and advertisers was inserted in CITRIM, the database of the thematic project. It helped to identify the novels and authors that were the most advertised.

Work	Number of ads
<i>L’Amant de la Lune</i> by Paul de Kock	45
<i>Complete Works</i> of Honoré de Balzac	44
<i>L’Hôtel Pimodan</i> by Roger Beauvoir	37
<i>Robinson Crusoé</i> by Daniel Defoe	36
<i>Works</i> of James Fenimore Cooper	34
<i>Vingt Ans Après</i> by Alexandre Dumas	32

Chart 1. The most advertised novels.



Image 1. An example of a novel’s advertisement.

As expected, the French novels were the most advertised (84% of the titles announced), but there were also some space for the English ones (11.6%). German, Spanish and Italian novels appeared in even lesser quantities.

The editors apparently balanced ads of established successes such as *Robinson Crusoé* and new works of the great authors of serial novels’, such as Eugène Sue and Alexandre Dumas (the champions of editions in the 1840³). It may indicate a correspondence between number of ads and editions.

The ads of Complete Works of Honoré de Balzac and James Fenimore Cooper indicate the appreciation of those authors and the bet of editors that even expensive editions like those would sell well.

Conclusions

Even though the French editors preferred to promote books of successful French names, such as Eugène Sue, Alexandre Dumas, Honoré de Balzac, they also highlighted translations of foreign authors, especially of English language. This demonstrates that even the French literary market, one of the largest producers and exporter of novels of that moment, did not survive with their own productions alone and sought successful titles in other countries.

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¹ LYON-CAEN, J. “Lecteurs et lectures: les usages de la presse au XIXe siècle.” In: *La civilisation du journal. Histoire culturelle et littéraire de la presse française au XIXe siècle*. Dominique Kalifa, Philippe Régnier, Marie-Ève Thérenty et Alain Vaillant [Dir.]. Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2011.

² CASANOVA, P. *A república mundial das letras*. São Paulo: Estação Liberdade, 2002.

³ LYONS, M. *Le Triomphe du Livre*. Paris: Promodis, 1987.