

THE HUMAN COMEDY & CHÂTEAU DE SACHÉ



I am living under the most severe tyranny: that which one makes oneself. I work night and day. I have come here to seek refuge in the depths of a château, as if in a monastery.

Balzac to Zulma Carraud, Saché, 21 November 1831.

1830s : Saché, a place to write

In August 1831, Balzac offered for sale his first edition of *La Peau de chagrin* (*The Magic skin*). From Tours, Jean Margonne wrote to Balzac about how difficult it was to obtain the novel whose success he had read about in the newspapers. The same year, Balzac stayed for an extended period of time at Château de Saché. Letters exchanged with his publishers and friends testify to his working on *Maître Cornélius* (*Master Cornélius*) and *Les Contes drolatiques* (*Droll Stories*).

On 8 June 1832, Balzac returned to Saché and stayed there for over a month. From his small bedroom on the second floor, he sent his mother instructions to supervise his business affairs in Paris, especially the settlement of his financial problems... At the same time, Balzac was working at a breakneck pace on *Louis Lambert*. However, he also took advantage of his stay at Saché to organise his potential marriage to a local rich widow, Baroness Deurbroucq. Balzac left Saché on 16 July 1832 and had to make the journey to Tours on foot, in the fierce heat.

In September 1834, after the publication of *La Recherche de l'Absolu* (*The Alkahest*), Doctor Nacquart found Balzac to be so worn out that he ordered him to take the native air. Balzac thus spent several weeks at Saché, where he began *Le Père Goriot* (*Father Goriot*), hoped to finish *Séraphita* and edited the proofs of *César Birotteau*. At the end of 1835, Balzac published the beginning of *Le Lys dans la vallée* (*The Lily of the Valley*) in the journal *Revue de Paris*, and offered the edited proofs of this work to Doctor Nacquart. In this novel, Balzac celebrates the Indre valley and the countryside around Saché, taking inspiration from real locations and people.

In June 1836, Balzac fled to the Indre valley, shortly after winning his case against Buloz regarding *Le Lys dans la vallée* (*The Lily of the Valley*). Although Balzac rested during his stay at Saché, he also started drafting the first part of *Illusions perdues* (*Lost Illusions*), working on it for up to 15 hours a day. After spending several months in Italy, Balzac took a break at Saché for around ten days at the end of August 1837 to treat a chest inflammation. With a view to escaping once and for all his obligation of service in the French National Guard, for a short time Balzac contemplated retiring to Touraine, in a small house on the banks of the Cher or the Loire.

1840s: Saché, a holiday location

During the summer of 1845, Balzac introduced Madame Hanska and her daughter Anna to Touraine. At the beginning of June 1846, Balzac used the railway to travel quickly to Touraine with the aim of buying a residence there for himself and Madame Hanska. He stayed for a few days at Saché as the guest of Jean Margonne who, between two games of backgammon, advise him to buy Château de Moncontour in Vouvray, a plan Balzac would abandon two months later.

Balzac stayed at Saché for the whole of June 1848, far from the political unrest of Paris. However, he did not find his inspiration for writing *Les Petits Bourgeois* (*The Middle classes*). He spent much of his time walking and playing whist. At the end of his stay, Balzac began to suffer the first symptoms of serious heart disease. In September, he joined Madame Hanska in Ukraine, where he remained for a year and a half. In May 1850, Balzac, by now seriously ill, returned to Paris with Madame Hanska, who was now his wife, and died on 18 August in his private townhouse on Rue Fortunée [now Rue Balzac].

In spite of the pleasure I promised myself I would have in spending the evening and dining with you tomorrow, I am forced to abstain - I found in Saché the proofs for my article in Revue de Paris for the last two Sundays of the month, and I am obliged to correct and finish them, which will defer my pleasure to Monday next [...] believe in the strong allegiance of your friend, very clumsily entangled in his intellectual labours.

Balzac to Louis Marteau, Saché, 8 December 1831

My darling mother, I have arrived safe and sound, but terribly tired. [...] But, in the end, I am here and now well-rested; barely two days sufficed to see to that. My papers are in order; tomorrow I will get down to work.

Balzac to his mother, Saché, 10 June 1832

You will receive, in a box leaving around Thursday (2 October, I believe) the manuscript for Father Goriot. Consider that it is precious and unique and ask Mme Everat to stow it away in her chest of drawers rather than losing it, because the Ricourt agreement was already lost to me that way.

Balzac to his mother, Saché, 28 September 1834

Touraine refreshed me so well that on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, I plotted 'Lost Illusions', and wrote the first forty pages.

Balzac to Émile Regnault, Saché, 27 June 1836.



1819 Law given up for literature.
Balzac moves to an attic room on Rue Lesdiguières in Paris.
Philosophical, romantic and dramatic essays, namely the tragedy *Cromwell*.

1820 Balzac left his attic to return to his family home in Villeparisis.

1821 Agreement with Auguste Lepoitevin to publish novels for reading rooms.

1822 Acquisition by the Margonnes of a private manor in Paris, on Rue Verte (Rue de Penthièvre).
Beginning of his affair with Mme de Berny, *La Dilecta*.
First novels published under the pseudonyms Lord R'Hoone and Horace de Saint-Aubin.

1823 *Balzac in Touraine* (summer).

1825 Balzac publisher.
Beginning of his affair with the Duchess of Abrantès.
Stay in Saché (autumn).

1826 Balzac partners with André Barbier to establish himself as a printer at 5 Rue des Marais (now Rue Visconti) in Paris.

1828 Liquidation of the printing shop.
Relocation to 1 Rue Cassini in Paris.

1829 *Le Dernier Chouan* (*The Chouans*), first text signed "Honoré Balzac"
Physiologie du mariage (*The Physiology of Marriage*) by a "young bachelor"

1830 Trip to Touraine (La Grenadière and St-Cyr-sur-Loire) and Brittany (Le Croisic) with Mme de Berny.
Balzac in Saché during the July Revolution.
The Mame-Delaunay publishing house releases two volumes of stories under the title *Scènes de la vie privée* (*Scenes of Private Life*)

1831 *Stays in Saché* (autumn and winter): correction of *Maître Cornelius* and *Scène de village* (*Village Scene*) and writing of *Contes drolatiques* (*Droll Stories*).

1832 Balzac receives his first letter from Mme Hanska, signed "L'Étrangère".
Stay in Saché (summer): correction of *Les Chouans* (*The Chouans*) and writing of *Contes Bruns* and *Louis Lambert*.

1833 First meeting with Mme Hanska in Neuchâtel.

1834 *Balzac in Saché*: writes the beginning of *Le Père Goriot* (*Old Goriot*), where he uses the process of reappearing characters for the first time. Writing of *Séraphita* and correction of *César Birotteau*.
In a letter to Mme Hanska (26 October), Balzac plans for his work, *Études sociales* (*Social Studies*), to comprise three parts: *Études de mœurs*, *Études philosophiques* and *Études analytiques* (*Studies of Manners*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Analytical Studies*).

1835 Balzac acquires *La Chronique de Paris*.
Moves to 13 Rue des Batailles in Chaillot.
Writing of the manuscript for *Le Lys dans la vallée* (*The Lily of the Valley*) and correction of the first proofs, including two volumes gifted to Dr. Nacquart.

1836 Lawsuit between Honoré de Balzac and François Buloz about *Le Lys dans la vallée* (*The Lily of the Valley*).
Bankruptcy of *La Chronique de Paris*.
Balzac detained at the National Guard prison, Hôtel des Haricots (April-May)
Balzac in Saché: writes the beginning of *Illusions perdues* (*Lost Illusions*).
Death of Mme de Berny.

1837 *Stay in Saché* to recover from a chest inflammation.
Balzac considers retiring to Touraine to escape the obligations of the National Guard.
Purchase of "Jardies" in Sèvres.

1838 Membership in the newly founded Society of Authors.

1839 Elected president of the Society of Authors.
In a letter to Armand Dutacq, Balzac outlines a detailed program of his complete works which he calls for the first time *La Comédie humaine* (*The Human Comedy*).

1840 Balzac moves to Rue Basse in Passy (Rue Raynouard in Paris), to the home of Louise Brugnol.

1841 Jardies put up for sale.
Death of Mme Margonne.
Resignation from the Society of Authors.
Agreement with Furne, Hetzel, Dubochet and Paulin to publish his complete works entitled *La Comédie humaine* (*The Human Comedy*).



1842 Balzac learns of the death of Wenceslas Hanski, passed away in November 1841.

Publication of the 1st volume of *La Comédie humaine* (*The Human Comedy*) in 10 instalments.

1843 Trip to Saint Petersburg to meet up with Mme Hanska.

1845 Travels in Europe with Mme Hanska and her daughter.
Visit to Touraine (summer).

1846 Brief stay in Touraine and Saché to consider buying the Château de Moncontour in Vouvray.
Purchase of the house on Rue Fortunée (now Rue Balzac) in Paris.
Fatherhood hopes for Balzac.
Miscarriage by Mme Hanska.

1847 Mme Hanska in Paris, incognito (February-May).
Balzac spends a great deal of time arranging the house on Rue Fortunée.
Long stay in Wierzcownia with Mme Hanska beginning in September.

1848 *Balzac in Saché* during the June Days uprising. Unable to write *Les Petits Bourgeois* (*The Middle Classes*), experiencing the first symptoms of a serious heart disease.

1849 In Ukraine with Mme Hanska. Poor health.

1850 Wedding of Balzac and Mme Hanska in Berdychiv.
Balzac and Mme Hanska return to the house on Rue Fortunée.
Death of Balzac (18 August).



Bon à tirer
de Balzac
LE
LYS DANS LA VALLÉE.
PRÉFACE.
Il est des anges solitaires.
(Sénarclaz.)

