

INFORMATION TO USERS

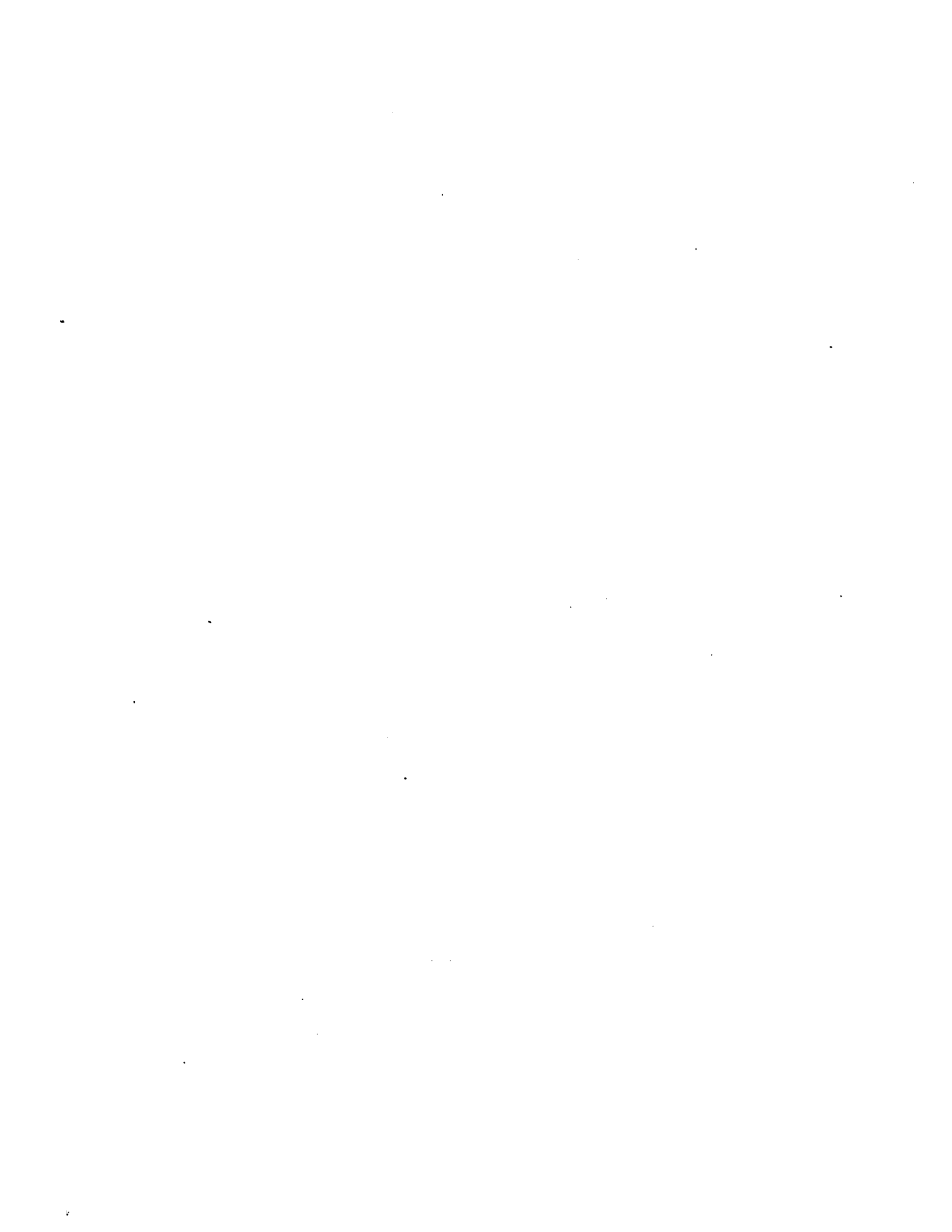
This reproduction was made from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this document, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure complete continuity.
2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark, it is an indication of either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, duplicate copy, or copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed. For blurred pages, a good image of the page can be found in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted, a target note will appear listing the pages in the adjacent frame.
3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed, a definite method of "sectioning" the material has been followed. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.
4. For illustrations that cannot be satisfactorily reproduced by xerographic means, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and inserted into your xerographic copy. These prints are available upon request from the Dissertations Customer Services Department.
5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases the best available copy has been filmed.

**University
Microfilms
International**

300 N. Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48106



8515676

Winter, Marsha Terry

VALETUDINARIANS AND MONOMANIACS: ILLNESS IN SELECTED WORKS
OF "LA COMEDIE HUMAINE"

City University of New York

PH.D. 1985

University
Microfilms
International 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Copyright 1985

by

Winter, Marsha Terry

All Rights Reserved

VALETUDINARIANS AND MONOMANIACS
ILLNESS IN SELECTED WORKS OF LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

by

MARSHA TERRY WINTER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in French in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.

1985

© COPYRIGHT BY
MARSHA TERRY WINTER
1985

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in French in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 16, 1985
date

John W. Tueller
Chairman of Examining Committee

April 18, 1985
date

[Signature]
Executive Officer

Professor Bettina Knapp

Professor Diana Festa-McCormick

Professor J. Robert Loy

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with a sense of unreserved gratitude that I wish to thank the following faculty members for their gracious assistance in the preparation of this dissertation:

Professor John W. Kneller, acting in the capacity of adviser, proved to be a wise and gifted mentor. He was instrumental in providing exceptionally valuable guidance, constructive suggestions concerning chapter content and format, and creative solutions to difficult literary problems. His effective and eloquent writing style served as a peerless example to follow. Perceptive and thoughtful, his encouragement paved the way throughout this endeavor.

Professor Diana Festa-McCormick, a respected Balzacian scholar, afforded me the benefit of her insightful knowledge of La Comédie humaine. Her astute interpretation of the written word, discerning wisdom, and enthusiasm stood me in good stead.

The late Professor J. Robert Loy, whose untimely demise is sincerely regretted, made his expertise in literature available to me and was a great aid in offering useful comments and providing kind inspiration. His keen judgment and acute store of literary knowledge helped me throughout the writing of these pages. His scholarship always will be remembered.

Professor Bettina Knapp graciously accepted to read this dissertation, on very short notice, and to help preside at its defense in Professor Loy's place. I am very grateful for the erudition and insight she so courteously brought to this task.

Professor Mary Ann Caws, by virtue of her acclaimed scholarship and her very presence as Executive Officer of the Ph.D. Program in French, created an encouraging atmosphere in which the pursuit of knowledge could flourish.

These acknowledgements would not be complete without thanking Professors Emeriti Henri Peyre and Sidney Braun for conveying to me their appreciation of nineteenth-century French literature.

This dissertation is dedicated, with affection, to my dear mother, father, and sister who are always present in my heart of hearts--in a place called "Family."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION ILLNESS AS A LITERARY DEVICE.....	1
II.	CHAPTER I MEDICAL AND PSEUDO-MEDICAL INFLUENCES IN THE BALZACIAN LITERARY PROCESS.....	11
III.	CHAPTER II BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS: LA PEAU DE CHAGRIN.....	58
IV.	CHAPTER III THE MARTYR SYNDROME: LE PÈRE GORIOT.....	108
V.	CHAPTER IV SPECTER OF ILLNESS: PIERRETTE.....	148
VI.	CHAPTER V MOMOMANIA AMID THE CLOISTERED LIFE: LE CURÉ DE TOURS.....	190
VII.	CONCLUSION TAINTED FLESH AND FRENZIED MINDS: A PERSPECTIVE.....	228
VIII.	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	257

LIST OF TABLES

I. TABLE 1
FACULTIES AND CORRESPONDING ANATOMICAL
LOCATIONS..... 42

INTRODUCTION

ILLNESS AS A LITERARY DEVICE

La nature entoure toujours les roses d'épines, et
les plaisirs d'une foule de chagrins.

Honoré de Balzac¹

Throughout the ages, illness in its various forms has visited mankind leaving its imprint upon his history and literature and, thereby, changing man's perception of his social and physical environment. Illness may, therefore, be defined not only by its specific etiology, whether viral, bacterial or psychological, but by its moral and cultural aspects inscribed upon an historical and literary era.

Illness is endemic to the process of life and inasmuch as life emulates literature, acting as its mirror image, the ubiquitous drama of pathology, symptoms, causes and cures is evident.

Over the millions of years of evolution, in order to ward off disease, the body's immune system has assumed the responsibility of defending the body against foreign invaders or antigens e.g., a bacterium recognized by the body as an alien entity. In a sound body defense mechanisms, or antibodies, are called up to ward off the invader and, in so doing, trigger the body's immune response which is programmed to fight the specific microbe. At the beginning of time, in the primordial chemical blueprint of life, the first disease may have evolved as a mutation of recombinant DNA--the stuff of life--and, thus, malady evolved. Or, perhaps, Illness was set free from a Pandora's Box of sorts, accompanied by torment and suffering, with only Hope to remain to unlock the enigma of the body against itself. Illness is, nevertheless, the process through which evolution progresses and not so much nature's stepchild as it is nature itself, only transposed and inverted in a process by which the host, or afflicted personage, loses mastery of his universe. The host becomes engulfed in the realm of his illness, having left his health in a distant and inaccessible reality.

A protagonist's reaction to illness may be shock,

followed by depression, denial, anger, low self-esteem, sometimes the feeling that he is personally responsible. This pattern can repeat itself often, and at different points of the cycle. Alienation is often a factor in a protagonist's illness which encompasses not only creating distance between himself and other personages, but also distance between his former healthy or "whole" self and what he has become through the illness process. It is a metamorphosis in reverse, whereby the personage goes from butterfly to caterpillar on the road toward self-abnegation. An afflicted protagonist often is engaged in an escape attempt from the "self" which he has become in an effort to recapture the "self" that he once was; such is the plight, for example, of Raphaël de Valentin in La Peau de chagrin.

Briefly glancing backward at the centuries preceding Balzac's era, one sees that literature has embraced the theme of illness, often reflecting contemporary medical practices as well as prevalent superstitions. Literature of the Middle Ages, in which leprosy represents a focal point of literary nosography, is also replete with references to elixirs promising to sustain a hero's strength

throughout an ordeal that will merit the hand of his dame, as seen in Les Deux amants of Marie de France; a similar alchemical remedy is used as a literary device in Bérroul's Roman de Tristan. In these cases, the potion is a panacea possessing medico-magical properties which underscore the mystical aspect of medieval pharmacopoeia whose antidotes and ointments originated in the alchemist's craft.

The bubonic plague is the pivotal motif around which some Renaissance literature is woven; once more reflecting the medical panorama of the era. L'Heptaméron of Marguerite de Navarre, drawing its inspiration from Boccaccio's Decamerone, has its personages recount tales of love, sacred and profane, as well as accounts of religious life, while they are sojourning at the hot springs at Caunterets, whose curative powers are such that " . . . les malades habondonnez des medecins s'en retournent tout guariz. . . ."2

In the seventeenth century, Molière did not attack medicine as a scientific body of knowledge but, rather, medicine ineptly practiced. In spite of its pedantic doctors and hypochondriacal personages, the playwright,

in Le Malade imaginaire, through Argan's brother, Béralde, suggests that contemporary man cannot foresee the full scope of medical achievements. His statement " . . . les ressorts de notre machine sont des mystères, jusques ici, où les hommes ne voient goutte . . . " ³ suggests that Molière realized that there would be a time when Guy Patin would not be the leading medical authority and when Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood, formulated in 1619, would be accepted by French physicians.

During the Age of the Enlightenment, Voltaire's Lettres philosophiques encouraged inoculation in the "Onzième lettre"--"Sur l'insertion de la petite vérole." Edward Jenner's vaccinations, made from the sore of milkmaids' cowpox, provided an effective immunity against smallpox; Voltaire even asserts that " . . . si on avait pratiqué l'inoculation en France, on aurait sauvé la vie à des milliers d'hommes." ⁴

Before the nineteenth century, disease, as portrayed in much of literature, was thought of as a lack of concord between man and his milieu and not as a specific anatomical anomaly. ⁵ It seems that loss of health more easily

was ascribed to spiritual or superstitious events, a type of falling from grace, totally out of the realm of man's control, and yet this seems logical because viral and microbial pathways--causes of infection--were not yet discovered. During the time in which Balzac wrote, tuberculosis was the disease that claimed the most lives.⁶ It took the life of his cousin, Édouard Malus, in his twenty-second year, while Édouard was being cared for by Mme Bernard-François Balzac, Honoré's mother, at Villeparisis.⁷ Balzac very well may have made a mental note of Cousin Édouard's malady in order to put it to good use later on in his writing, as seen in incidental descriptions of Raphaël's symptoms in La Peau de chagrin. The pallid, anemic affectations of literary illness in the first half of nineteenth-century French literature are replaced in the second half of the nineteenth century by Zola's evocations of hereditary taints and defects, where an echo of Claude Bernard's experimental medicine can be heard.

These contradicting factors call for a search for the answer to the meaning of illness in the context of the Balzacian literary process. Balzac uses illness as an

obstacle to be overcome, a punishment for wrongs committed, or as an ironical ending to the hero's quest; just as he is to reach his goal, he is overcome by malady; either physical or mental, sometimes both.

La Comédie humaine is replete with heroes whose ruinous passions drown them in the mire of misfortune, heroines who contract morganatic marriages in which the children do not succeed to paternal titles or property, and young provincials enticed by the debauchery of Parisian life. However, neither Balzac's hellions involved in Machiavellian schemes nor his angelic personages, eyes lifted heavenward, are immune to the maladies to which they fall prey under his pen. Woven into the tapestry of his work is an image of illness which weighs heavily not only on the anatomy, but also on the mind, spirit and sensibilities of the one afflicted and those around him. Balzac, secrétaire de la Société,⁸ reporter of his personages' trials and tribulations, was no less a chronicler of his protagonists' health and diseases.

In his Nosographie de l'humanité balzacienne, Moïse Le Yaouanc has compiled a veritable abecedarian of anatomical illnesses, phobias, mental aberrations and

remedies found in La Comédie humaine. His work is necessarily a technical one which draws upon the writings of prominent doctors as well as popular medical folklore of the late eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century. While Le Yaouanc's work is a most valuable compendium of clinical knowledge, my study will concentrate on the theme of illness as it relates to the literary process in selected volumes of Balzac's writing, encompassing La Peau de chagrin, Le Père Goriot, Pierrette, and Le Curé de Tours.

Balzac often emphasizes that his works are dramas rather than novels. In them, illness intensifies and brings to the surface human emotions such as love, hate, jealousy, and fear. For example, Le Père Goriot brings to the reader's attention Goriot's serious apoplexy, but the real disease here is paternal love pushed to its extreme amid the machinations of Parisian life in 1819. La Peau de chagrin offers a study of an idée fixe, that of the pensée qui tue, transposed into true illness. In Pierrette, not only is anemia the anatomical disease in question, but also a sociological one, that of the "Pathologie des merciers retirés," as Balzac has so

appropriately called the fourth chapter of this work.

Le Curé de Tours is the study of monomania amid the virulence of provincial life within a clerical setting.

The characters in the four works in question are valetudinarians as well as monomaniacs; there is a fine line of distinction, for psychological illness necessarily entails physical illness; the reverse is also true.

My study will not, of course, be clinical. It will examine the close relationship between illness, as depicted by Balzac, and the literary process, as well as the varied meanings of literature and illness. Life--the sequence of physical and mental experiences that constitute one's existence--copies literature, when literature is true and universal.

Literary illness, especially when chronic, is not only the absence of health, but, also, a different sphere of existence in which a protagonist's relationship to his world becomes other than what it was.

Notes

¹ Honoré de Balzac, Correspondance, ed. Roger Pierrot, 5 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1960), 1:108.

² Noël du Fail, Marguerite de Navarre, and Bonaventure des Périers, Three Sixteenth-Century Conteurs (Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 28.

³ Molière, Le Malade imaginaire in Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962), act 3, sc. 3, lines 14-16.

⁴ Voltaire, Lettres philosophiques (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1964), p. 74.

⁵ René Dubos, Mirage of Health, Utopias, Progress and Biological Change (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 117.

⁶ Ibid., p. 248.

⁷ Balzac, Correspondance, 1:59.

⁸ Honoré de Balzac, "Avant-Propos" in La Comédie humaine, éd. Pierre-Georges Castex, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976), p. 11.

CHAPTER I

MEDICAL AND PSEUDO-MEDICAL INFLUENCES

IN THE BALZACIAN LITERARY PROCESS

Cette Touraine serait-elle devenue ingrate, elle
qui hésiterait à payer en santé ce qu'elle doit
de célébrité à son peintre, à son historien?

Le docteur Jean-Baptiste Nacquart¹

It is impractical, and perhaps not at all desirable, to oppose and separate medical and pseudo-medical influences in Balzac's writing. Enlightenment and knowledge are usually opposed by superstition and nescience; there is often a crossroad where the two meet, their beliefs intermingling. Evenutally one reigns supreme as accepted fact. Balzac's concept of illness is such a mixture of fact and fiction. His system of unifying and comparing l'Humanité et l'Animalité² is explained by Madeleine Fargeaud, in her annotations of the "Avant-Propos" by the

fact that " . . . Balzac . . . se sentait une vocation de philosophe et prétendait résoudre à l'aide de la science les problèmes métaphysiques. . . ."3 He often accomplished this by drawing from sources that were pseudo-scientific as well as scientific; he usually tailored the latter to his own literary needs, rendering a unique form of Balzacian medical science.

Balzac was initially influenced by his family, especially his father, Bernard-François " . . . auto-didacte, curieux de sciences et d'histoire . . . "4, in matters of medical and scientific scope. It was he who first helped form Honoré's ideas of a puissance or force vitale in direct proportion to the destructiveness of la pensée qui tue. Like the mythological hero Achilles, both Raphaël in La Peau de chagrin and his creator, Balzac, chose--in the degree that one may determine the number of one's days--a splendid life of short duration over a long but obscure existence. Contrary to his own advice, Balzac's father hoped to live almost as long as the protagonist in Melmoth réconcilié:

Bernard-François ne doutait pas de vivre jusqu'à cent ans. Il se sentait fait de si bon métal! . . . Disciple de Rousseau, il s'imposait une saine sobriété; il aimait le lait, la sève

des arbres, il avait la passion des promenades à pied. Il se levait et se couchait tôt. Il se flattait de n'avoir jamais consulté un médecin, ni fait gagner dix sous à un pharmacien.⁵

In spite of his father's wish for an almost immortal life, however, the Fates had decided upon his destiny and Balzac was to write to General de Pommereul on March 11, 1829, "Mon père s'est mis, par sa manie de se droguer lui-même, dans un état pitoyable de santé."⁶ More than a month later, on April 30, 1829, Balzac wrote to his cousin, Charles Sedillot:

Mon père est décidément entre la vie et la mort. Les chirurgiens et médecins ont reconnu qu'il y avait au-dessus du foie un abcès si considérable que la quantité d'humeur est incalculable. Il faut nécessairement et sous peine de mort, lui ouvrir le côté. La crise commence. C'est depuis jeudi jusqu'à dimanche que l'opération aura lieu. Je quitte tout pour ne pas laisser ma mère et ma sœur seules en cette fatale circonstance. . . .⁷

His father, descendant of a long line of tillers of the soil, having changed the family name from Balssa to Balzac, died in Paris on June 19, 1829.⁸ There is an echo of Bernard-François' ambition in Jean-Joachim Goriot (who had amassed a fortune during the Revolution as a pasta tradesman); in the antique dealer in La Peau de chagrin, who knew that a long life depends on knowledge and not on desire which only serves to use up one's force

vitale; as well as in Benassis who, as a country doctor, believed in the benefits of nature and its salubrious effect on the human system and mind.

In addition to the various volumes Honoré had access to in the family library, his father, himself a great reader, had written and published several brochures, among them, Mémoire sur les moyens de prévenir les vols et les assassinats (July 1807); Mémoire sur le scandaleux désordre causé par les filles trompées et abandonnées (April 1808); and Histoire de la Rage et moyen d'en préserver comme autrefois les hommes (during 1810). In such an atmosphere, where his father had a proclivity for writing, Honoré was ensconced in a familial milieu presided over by the literary Muse.

Honoré's mother, Anne-Charlotte-Laure, née Sallambier, was an avid reader of Mesmer and practiced magnetism.⁹ Like his mother, Honoré's grandmother, Mme Balzac believed in the supernatural, mysticism, animal magnetism and other arcana of sorcery.¹⁰ From this mosaic of family influences, Honoré's inclination for mystics such as Swedenborg and Saint-Martin and the magnetism of Mesmer can be traced to maternal influence,

whereas his father contributed to his ideas of human existence dependent upon mental force and his belief in a concept of health and living reminiscent of Rousseau.

Balzac's first mentor of sorts in medical lore and mythology, occasionally giving the writer advice about symptoms, medicine and treatment of diseases, thereby, giving to his novels a mark of medical authenticity, was Dr. Jean-Baptiste Nacquart (1780-1854). In November or December of 1830, Nacquart wrote to Balzac:

Vous me demandez des renseignements sur les agents auxquels on accorde la propriété de conserver la peau, lorsqu'elle n'a point encore subi d'atteintes, ou de corriger ces mêmes impressions quand l'âge, des circonstances accidentelles ou morbides l'ont altérée. Question grave et en présence de laquelle la science hippocratique et l'art du parfumeur émettent des doctrines opposées. . . .¹¹

Shortly thereafter, on January 17, 1831, Balzac sold La Peau de chagrin to Charles Gosselin and Urbain Canel.¹² Balzac thus wanted advice that was as medically sound as possible. Nacquart refers to Balzac's courage, in approaching this problem, as " . . . moitié médical, moitié littéraire. . . ." ¹³ In response to Balzac's question concerning the conservation of organic matter, such as the skin, Nacquart recommended pure water as the best choice, several drops of perfumed alcohol, or a bit

of oil in water mixed with the aid of a dash of potash.¹⁴ Other alternatives included almond-milk or paste and, as a last resort, a trip to the spas of Barèges, in the Hautes-Pyrénées, or Tivoly, in Italy, being sure to apply the waters of the spa to the skin in the evening.¹⁵

Balzac later transposed these locations to Mont-Dore in Clermont-Ferrand, but the treatment, it will be recalled, did not save the life of the hero Raphaël de Valentin.

According to Balzac, Dr. Nacquart, ". . . maître absolu de ma santé . . ." ¹⁶, was not only his personal physician and that of his family, treating him throughout his lifetime and tending to him on his deathbed, but also a friend. The doctor resided at 39, rue Sainte-Avoye at the time the Balzac family lived at 40, rue du Temple, forming one and the same street. Nacquart was present at Laurence de Montzaigle's wedding, the writer's sister, and was the godfather of Balzac's niece, Valentine Surville. Curiously enough, Nacquart was the writer's creditor as well and often loaned him moderate to large sums of money when Balzac was in precarious financial predicaments.

In 1808 Nacquart published a scientific work entitled,

Traité de la nouvelle physiologie du cerveau, ou Exposition de la doctrine de Gall sur la structure et les fonctions de cet organe. In this work, Nacquart disagreed with Gall and asserted that the emphasis placed upon the prominence of bumps on the skull had clouded the primary hypothesis of the work, which was the division of intellectual functions into two groups; the first being the fundamental qualities¹⁷, such as linguistic aptitude, mathematical or mechanical ability, and the second group being the general qualities¹⁸, such as memory, judgment, and imagination. This is perhaps one of Nacquart's most important influences in Balzac's writing; they may have both discussed Gall's theory which Balzac admired so much; not only did the latter lend Gall's theory to his literary personages, but also applied it to edifices, furniture, clothes, dishes--in short-- to every inanimate object which he endowed with a life of its own by virtue of meticulous description. Thus, because of Nacquart's influence as medical mentor, Balzac applies the phrenology of Gall as a literary science in his writings.

Scattered here and there among these writings are the

medical innovators of the era from whom he borrowed different attributes, contributions and discoveries, molding them to fit his literary universe. One such doctor was Baron Guillaume Dupuytren (1777-1835), an eminent surgeon and pathologist, whose background included the study of chemistry, physiology and anatomy under the tutelage of Dr. Michel-Augustin Thouret, the first Director of Paris' École de Santé.¹⁹ Having written his doctor's thesis on Propositions sur quelques points d'anatomie, de physiologie et d'anatomie pathologique in 1803, Dupuytren was the formulator of principles of pathological physiology and demonstrated that the same laws govern the evolution of morbid tissues as those of normal tissues.²⁰ With Bayle and Laënnec, the latter being the inventor of the stethoscope, Dupuytren founded La Société anatomique, where members presented theses based on both normal and pathological anatomy. As the head surgeon of l'Hôtel-Dieu in Paris, Dupuytren had many occasions to exercise his medical art, either by training future doctors, in his capacity as clinical professor of medicine, or, in his consultations with the hospital's patients. In a description of his omniscient medical skill, his clinical

proress in a patient's diagnosis could have very well been written by Balzac's pen:

Ce qui a le plus frappé ses contemporains, c'est cette sorte de divination dont il faisait preuve lorsqu'il se trouvait en face de cas difficiles, et où il ne faut voir que l'explosion d'un génie sublime, mais acquis au cours de longues études et de patientes méditations.

Un homme se plaint d'un engorgement de la cuisse: on examine, on discute, on conjecture, on hésite. Dupuytren touche, prend sans mot dire un bistouri, le plonge jusqu'à l'os, et fait jaillir un ruisseau de pus, tant le foyer était profond; mais caché pour les autres, il est visible pour Dupuytren.²¹

Dupuytren, it would seem, possessed the clairvoyance of a medical oracle, the wizardry and skill of his craft that the gods see fit to bestow upon very few mortals, and the will and determination to assimilate scientific data necessary in the practice of his profession. "Cette admirable maîtrise de soi devant la difficulté"²² enabled him to see cryptic symptoms that escaped the gaze of his colleagues.

Starting from approximately 1817, the disastrous outbreak of cholera left a trail of cataclysmic devastation around the world, striking Paris on February 22, 1832, the date it officially was recognized as a health emergency by one of Dupuytren's students, Dr. Lebreton, in his report to l'Académie de Médecine.²³ In its odious

danse macabre of doom: "L'évolution du mal était si rapide et si brutale qu'en quelques jours, quelques heures, tels malades, gras et frais le matin, mouraient le soir décharnés comme des squelettes. . . ."24 In the month of April alone, some 12,824 Parisians fell victim to le choléra-morbus; Dupuytren consequently was nominated by l'Académie de Médecine to form a delegation whose purpose would be to study the disease and find a remedy.25

Dupuytren's name is apparent in science today in the field of rheumatology, that branch of medicine dealing with the one hundred types of auto-immune, rheumatic illnesses. In 1831 he defined and observed " . . . a progressive contracture which gradually draws the fingers into flexion deformity . . . "26, which has been designated as "Dupuytren's Contracture." Thus, even as he influenced Balzac's writing, Dupuytren's name has found a place in the annals of medical science.

In addition to his medical contributions, the legend surrounding Dupuytren's name inspired Balzac, "novelist-clinician," and gave a sense of reality to his characters. Tradition recounts that Dupuytren, in a state of penury

during the period of time he spent as a medical student, accepted several months' savings from an Auvergnat named Bourgeat, a poor water carrier.²⁷ One can see the direct parallel between Dupuytren and Desplein in La Messe de l'athée, in which the latter relates to Horace Bianchon, his favorite student, how he found a protector and friend in the person of a poor water carrier, who regarded him in a paternal light for several years. Thus Desplein, a staunch believer in science and not in theology, has a Mass said four times a year for his defunct benefactor in the Church of Saint-Suplice. Herein lies the reciprocity of life imitating literature and literature imitating life in order that both spheres of existence, personages dwelling within the pages of a novel and the reader partaking of and absorbing the novel's very essence, act as a mirror held up to one another.

Marie-François-Xavier Bichat (1771-1802), son of a doctor, was learning the scientific art of medicine by dissecting dogs and cats at the age of seven.²⁸ Author of Traité des membranes, Anatomie générale and Recherches sur la vie et la mort, he affirmed that " . . . la vie est la somme totale des fonctions qui résistent à la

mort. . . ."29 In less than thirty-one years, which was to be the span of his life, Bichat did a monumental amount of work; besides voluminous writings, he formulated his notion de tissu³⁰ in which he states that organs are not homogeneous and that each one has its own elements or tissues, which he called muscular, epithelial or connective tissue. One must understand their physiological limitations and their pathological reactions in order to understand the phenomena that are life, illness, and death. "La maladie n'est qu'une modification des fonctions normales et . . . elle détermine, dans les tissus et les organes qu'elle envahit, des altérations spécifiques. . . ."31 This suggests the idea of specific morbidity--an individual identity for each disease according to its symptoms and manifestations and its relation to the part of the anatomy it afflicts--as opposed to a generalized or systemic view of illness as good or bad humors.

Bichat was an anatomist who lived his profession as if he were an artist in his atelier, surrounded by watercolor drawings, paintbrushes, oil paints, easels and charcoal. Bichat, the man, was guided by and formed by

Bichat the physiologist, so that the two are fashioned into a unique archetype:

Sa petite chambre était encombrée de livres, d'ossements, de pièces anatomiques dont plusieurs lui servaient à ses études journalières. L'atmosphère était viciée par cet étrange assemblage, les reliefs du repas de la veille fraternisaient sur la même table avec les préparations myologiques. Une fois, à l'Hôtel-Dieu, il avait passé la nuit dans la salle où il disséquait tant de cadavres; il vivait aussi dans sa chambre en contact presque constant avec des débris humains.³²

Bichat is considered " . . . l'étincelle qui a définitivement allumé le flambeau de la science biologique . . . "³³ because he repudiated the caprices and opinions of a school of medicine which attributed disease to a nefarious life force, a metaphysical concept, or a mysterious substance. Bichat asserted that each organ is a separate entity, having its own function and structure, and forms a link in the mechanism that is the human body.

During his short lifespan, Bichat wrote many treatises and formulated various opinions concerning the science of biology, just as Raphaël de Valentin feverishly composed his philosophical Théorie de la volonté in a race against the inexorable passage of time.

François-Joseph-Victor Broussais (1772-1838) was a proponent of physiological medicine who stated that in order to know the nature of an illness, one must first discover which organs are involved, the etiology of their infirmity, and how to treat them.³⁴ He maintained that the abdomen was the part of the anatomy from which all disease emanated; because of his assertion, gastroenteritis was the most common diagnosis made by doctors during his time.³⁵ Broussais' theories could be defined as a return to ancient medical practices such as a carefully prescribed diet, blood lettings, and the application of leeches. Camouflaged under the name of Brisset in La Peau de chagrin, Broussais' contribution was that of a physiological doctrine of medicine in keeping with Bichat, whom he held in high esteem. In addition to the abdomen being the seat of disease, Broussais placed emphasis on the process of chronic inflammation, which should be counteracted, he believed, by sedatives and calmative measures, such as blood lettings instead of stimulants, as was the practice up until his time.³⁶ Believing that there was no discernible difference between diseases, Broussais ascribed all maladies to one cause--inflammation--with one remedy--anti-inflammatory measures:

Pour Broussais les seules armes thérapeutiques seront donc la saignée, les sangsues et la diète. On vit ainsi renaître, au grand dam des malades, pendant le premier tiers du XIX^e siècle, la Médecine de Guy Patin et de Diafoirus, que le XVIII^e siècle avait un peu abandonnée; et l'on a pu dire--avec quelque exagération il est vrai--que Broussais avait saigné la France à blanc.³⁷

While still a student in the Collège des Cordeliers in Dinan, located in the vicinity of the meandering river, Rance, one of Broussais' classmates was René de Chateaubriand; their amity did not, however, go beyond mere acquaintanceship as the future physiologist and the future man of letters had different interests and directions in life.³⁸

Enthusiastic and enterprising, Broussais left Saint-Malo in 1798 to go to Paris and finish his medical studies. In the capital, he lived in an unpretentious, if not threadbare, room in the Hôtel de la Providence. Reminiscent of Dupuytren's benefactor, Bourgeat, M. Delaunay, proprietor of the hotel, agreed to free of charge furnish Broussais with room and board until such time when he completed his studies and he established a medical practice in Paris.³⁹ While enrolled in the Faculté de Médecine, Broussais took courses given by Bichat, whom

he idolized, and became a friend of Dr. Cabanis, the proponent of psycho-physiology.⁴⁰

Broussais was not, at first, successful in starting and maintaining a flourishing medical practice; he, therefore, turned to a military medical career. Fée, a pharmacist from Strasbourg, was under his command in the 2^e Corps de l'Armée in Andalusia and recorded his experiences during the war in Souvenirs de la Guerre d'Espagne. Speaking of Broussais in terms that would be worthy of Horace Bianchon, Fée wrote:

. . . il autopsiait tous les malades qu'il perdait. Il faisait ces nécropsies avec exactitude et empressement, car il cherchait à lire dans ces débris humains la confirmation de son diagnostic et sa figure prenait une expression indéfinissable, simulant la cruauté, mais qui n'était autre que le génie de l'observation éclairant une belle physionomie.⁴¹

In Fée's personal narrative it is evident that Broussais was endowed with the ineffable quality of Balzacian genius--the ability to see beyond what is immediate and apparent and to foretell and fathom, all at once, that which is substance and that which is incorporeal and unearthly.

That there is a direct and reciprocal effect of the psyche on the body and the body on the psyche was the

doctrine of Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis (1757-1808). It was his belief that one's age, temperament, diet and milieu, as well as all the other incidental aspects of one's life affect the body and are responsible for one's likes and dislikes, changing moods and could enhance or be deleterious to the delicate nervous system.

Cabanis felt that the phenomena comprising human life could be divided into two distinct categories. In the first one would be physiological processes not associated with an idea and which happen without the individual being aware of them; digestion, respiration, and blood circulation would be in this cluster. In the second classification would be processes which are associated with a conscious idea or effect and, therefore, accessible to one's conscience, such as claspng one's hands together, taking a step forward, or any other premeditated physical action dependent upon the thought process. Cabanis designated that which had physiological cause as vie organique or de nutrition, basically known as le physique, and that which had a psychological cause as vie animale or de relation, basically known as le moral.⁴² His assertion gave medical science of the time the principle of the relationship

between the psyche and anatomy, endowing each with its separate, but reciprocal, identity and function suggesting the premise for psychosomatic illness, for he emphasized the interrelationship between mind and body. Some of Balzac's convictions can be traced to Cabanis' precept that such emotions as fear can diminish strength, whereas sentiments such as joy, hope, and courage can enhance it. According to one's state of mind, bodily functions can be transformed, slowed down, or totally stopped by emotion.⁴³ This is reflected in the Balzacian pensée qui tue. Cabanis felt that both pain and its absence, or health, were innate parts of the human biological process of life, "La mort est le terme inévitable de la vie; la douleur est, aussi bien que le plaisir, l'apanage de tous les êtres sensibles. Il est dans la nature de souffrir et de mourir, comme de vivre et d'avoir des sensations agréables: il est dans la nature d'être malade, comme d'être sain."⁴⁴ Illness, according to the doctor-philosopher, is not a type of biological heresy of the human mechanism but, rather, an inherent component of a Janus-faced Nature acting out her rôle of malefactor and culprit. Cabanis determined man's moral state, and conse-

quently his state of health, by two factors: le régime and le climat.⁴⁵ He classified le régime as the group of physical and routine habits and customs, voluntary or arbitrary, such as the automatic inhalation of oxygen to sustain life, food consumed, drink imbibed and absorbed by the body's cells, a person's waking and sleeping hours, as well as the profession he exercises. Le climat, on the other hand, pertains to the social and familial circumstances and environmental objects, such as houses and churches, that one encounters in a given milieu. There is a certain reciprocity between the two because le régime influences and determines, to a degree, le climat; both exert a substantial mastery over man's moral state so that he mirrors, if not becomes, his surroundings--they, likewise, reflect him in an anthropomorphic exchange of identities.⁴⁶ In this respect Cabanis is the predecessor of Hippolyte Taine and his theory of race, milieu, moment, which tried to explain what he believed was a fundamental truth for all human beings. This may be extended to explain the origin and significance of literary works by social and environmental circumstances influencing a given writer. In each of his characters, Balzac shows the

relationship between locale and personality; in Melmoth réconcilié, for instance, Castanier exemplifies not just an ordinary office worker but, rather, the prototypical functionary whose health is undermined by performing a monotonous, undiversified job in the poor lighting, dubious ventilation, and bureaucratic atmosphere of the office. Balzac means to display Castanier as an anthropological find, and the "museum" in which he is exhibited is the functionary's bureaucratic milieu. Balzac's personages are not only influenced by their surroundings--they also exude and reflect them by their very actions.

Frédéric-Georges Cuvier (1773-1838) and Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1772-1844), once friends and colleagues, became scientific adversaries by taking different stands on their view of zoology. Balzac glanced through Cuvier's Discours sur les révolutions de la surface du globe and attended his lectures on zoology. His allusions, however, to Cuvier seem to denote only a nodding acquaintance with his theories, even though Balzac's encyclopedic pretensions would have the reader of his works believe otherwise.⁴⁷ Cuvier was the Secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie des Sciences and originally an ally of Geoffroy, the two holding similar theories on zoology.

Their theories took different paths and in 1830, their debate at the Académie des Sciences was to put them henceforth on diametrically opposed sides concerning evolution and zoology. Cuvier speaks about the zoological variation of one and the same species due to the time it took it to evolve as well as to the climate in which it took place. According to him, all species formed one archetypal mold and, subsequently, with the passage of time and the effects of climate, diversified to become separate zoological entities. Geoffroy represents the school of zoological synthesis; in the dissimilarity of species, he attempted to find a fundamental pattern existing in the diversity of nature in order to dogmatize the zoological theory of unity.⁴⁸ Balzac had developed this very hypothesis, on his own, and used it as an underlying principle in La Comédie humaine. Having mentioned the genius of Cuvier in La Peau de chagrin and in Louis Lambert, Balzac took a decisive turn and dedicated Le Père Goriot: "AU GRAND ET ILLUSTRE GEOFFROY SAINT-HILAIRE. Comme un témoignage d'admiration de ses travaux et de son génie. . . ."

A key notion in Geoffroy's work was the comparison of fossils with actual living specimens in which he saw a

possible relationship and even parentage. To explain the differences that separate these life forms from their fossilized brethren of millennia past, the zoologist stated that it was the environment that was responsible for these changes or variations.⁴⁹ Balzac, who originated a similar theory and applied it to literature, extended Geoffroy's premise by showing the influences that a personage's milieu exerts on him and the societal evolution of sorts that it causes. Balzac compared the human animal to its zoological counterpart in his own brand of social Darwinism:

L'animal est un principe qui prend sa forme extérieure, ou pour parler plus exactement, les différences de sa forme, dans les milieux où il est appelé à se développer. Les Espèces Zoologiques résultent de ces différences. La proclamation et le soutien de ce système . . . sera l'éternel honneur de Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, le vainqueur de Cuvier sur ce point de la haute science. . . .⁵⁰

Balzac's work is a sociological narrative of social groups which has as its basis the "unité de composition,"⁵¹ not actually borrowed from Geoffroy but, rather, developed simultaneously and independently of the zoologist's premise. Through the latter's findings, however, Balzac was able to enhance his own societal and evolutionary opinions regarding the denizens inhabiting his particular

universe by transforming zoological theory into a literary experience.

Geoffroy, wanting to diffuse the contents of his work among the general population, did not anticipate finding a disciple of his theories in Balzac. In 1836 he wrote to George Sand and enclosed several volumes of his work in the hope that she would write about zoology and render it interesting and not too technical and, thereby, make it accessible to the lay public. Although she was sympathetic to his request, she declined feeling that she would disfigure his ideas and his opinions.⁵² It was Balzac who would espouse his ideas, complementing them with his own in order to compare the human and animal species.

Balzac combined the medical and scientific thought of his time with the pseudo-medical deception and pretense which was equally prevalent. These two polarities-- science and superstition, are interwoven in his writing with credence given to both schools of thought.

In La Comédie humaine, a person's soul or true inner being is imprinted upon his face, thereby permitting all who are initiated to Balzac's use of the theory of physiognomy to read the person's true character. Physiognomy,

consequently, figures as an important pseudo-medical influence in Balzac's works. Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801) tried to show the interrelation between a person's character and appearance. Through him, Balzac found a mainstay of his theory of the influence of environment on personality and physical characteristics along with the comparison of human and animal types. In fact, Lavater devoted an entire volume to the relationship of humans and animals.⁵³

Lavater's vocation evolved quite fortuitously while he was at the house of a friend. He happened to glance out a window in order to watch the pageantry and precision of a military procession and his attention was attracted to a person in the parade; without knowing him, Lavater described the workings of his soul and his true personality. When his friend questioned him and asked how he came to this conclusion and on what it was based, Lavater affirmed it was due to the "conformation du cou"⁵⁴ of the man in question. From this point forward, tradition recounts that Lavater developed physiognomy to the point of a scientific theory, its prime supposition being that, "L'invisible nous est connu par le visible; ce qui se passe dans l'âme a son reflet sur le visage et sur

toute la personne."⁵⁵ One's physiognomy is not always a natural or inborn aspect, it may be determined by circumstantial, acquired or occupational conditions.⁵⁶ There are certain countenances which naturally may be gentle and sympathetic while others may be loathsome and odious, however, most physiognomies are molded by intervening forces, both interior and exterior. Facial features may wax and wane under the influence of fleeting emotions, nimble-footed and mercurial, under whose spell a person's face may express mirth, annoyance, gratitude or contempt. These are circumstantial conditions whereby the physiognomy's characteristics return to a natural state after the emotion affecting it has dissipated. Some countenances are acquired by repetitious and incessant movement, e.g., pursing of the lips, squinting, twitching, wrinkling the forehead, etc., with the accompaniment of thoughts or emotions which serve to establish these facial agitations as permanent features of one's physiognomy. One's occupational choice affects outward appearance to such an extent that the proverb, "L'habit ne fait pas le moine," is not true according to Lavater or Balzac. A personage is transformed into the profession he exercises so that the

two are indistinguishable, "Les différences entre un soldat, un ouvrier, un administrateur, un avocat, un oisif, un savant, un homme d'État, un commerçant, un marin, un poète, un pauvre, un prêtre, sont . . . aussi considérables que celles qui distinguent le loup, le lion, l'âne, le corbeau, le requin, le veau marin, la brebis, etc."⁵⁷ Lastly, there are moral predilections, assuming one is inherently good or evil, which may bestow a saintly visage to one and that of a libertine or felon to another.⁵⁸

Lavater defines his theory of physiognomy as " . . . le talent de connaître l'intérieur de l'Homme par son extérieur. . . ."⁵⁹ Lavater's "physiognomy" pierces, with a discerning eye, a subject's façade to learn the interior manifestations of his soul:

L'œil, le regard, la bouche, les joues, la surface du front, considérés soit dans le point du repos absolu, soit dans les innombrables variations de leurs mouvemens, en un mot tout ce qu'on appelle "Physionomie" est l'expression la plus parlante & la plus vive du sentiment intérieur, des désirs, des passions, de la volonté, enfin de tout ce qui constitue la "vie morale" si supérieure à la "vie animale."⁶⁰

Inherent in Lavater's definition of his theory is the clef de voute which may serve to explain the actions of Balzac's characters, e.g., sentiment intérieur, désirs,

passions and volonté; it is certainly the concept of désirs and passions which may cause the monomaniacal turpitude and emotional squalor into which personages fall when they are engulfed by their monomanie.

Lavater defines le triple vie de l'homme⁶¹ as three distinct categories encompassing and interpreting a person's character by means of his physical characteristics. The first group is la force physique or la vie animale⁶², the most impure and debased of the three which is centered in the abdomen and extends to the organs of reproduction. The second category is la vie intellectuelle⁶³, the most eminent one, located in the head and the eyes; it is here that the soul can be seen through the exterior features of the face and complexion. The third category, la vie morale, also known as la vie moyenne⁶⁴, is located in the torso and derives its strength from the heart which determines a person's propensity toward either good or evil. The face is that part of the anatomy which acts as a barometer for the three groups mentioned above. The area starting from the forehead and extending to the eyebrows is the seat of the intellect, while the nose and cheeks reflect la vie morale. The mouth and chin represent

la vie animale with the eyes, most importantly, standing as the focal point of every category.⁶⁵

Balzac's interest in Lavater is evidenced by a letter he wrote to his sister, Laure Surville, on August 20, 1822, in which he enthusiastically told her, "J'ai acheté un superbe Lavater que l'on me relie."⁶⁶ According to Roger Pierrot, this edition of Lavater was very likely l'Art de connaître les hommes par la physiologie.⁶⁷

As an eager disciple of Lavater's work, Balzac did much to bring the physiognomist's theories to the attention of the reading public by extolling physiognomy as a veritable "science," which allowed him, and his readers, to discover a personage's true character by studying the contours of the face. In addition to one's countenance, physiognomy could be applied to the hands, the feet, one's gait while walking--to all outward manifestation of human endeavor. Both Lavater and Balzac were attentive observers of their fellow man, and a keen sense of perception, an innate ability to conjecture or guess from outward clues, are essential to the physiognomist's craft. In Facino Cane, the author-narrator recounts the only leisure activity

he permitted himself while leading a monastic life of study in a frugal dwelling situated in la rue de

Lesdiquières:

Une seule passion m'entraînait en dehors de mes habitudes studieuses; mais n'était-ce pas encore de l'étude? j'allais observer les mœurs du faubourg, ses habitants et leurs caractères. . . . Chez moi l'observation était déjà devenue intuitive, elle pénétrait l'âme sans négliger le corps; ou plutôt elle saisissait si bien les détails extérieurs, qu'elle allait sur-le-champ au delà; elle me donnait la faculté de vivre de la vie de l'individu sur laquelle elle s'exerçait, en me permettant de me substituer à lui comme le derviche des Mille et une Nuits prenait le corps et l'âme des personnes sur lesquelles il prononçait certaines paroles.⁶⁸

Balzac not only weaves the art of physiognomy into his works, but also carefully sets out to make the reading public aware of this. His brand of "literary physiognomy" surpasses that of Lavater's by adding the element of an almost mystical insight and clairvoyance.

Influenced by Lavater, Balzac's personages transform their milieu just as they, in turn, are transformed by it; furniture, wardrobe, possessions, and daily routine may remodel a personage just as he may exert a reciprocal effect on his surroundings, "Il est vrai que tout ce qui entoure l'Homme agit sur lui, mais d'un autre côté il agit aussi sur ces objets extérieurs, & s'il en reçoit des

modifications, lui-même modifie ses entours."⁶⁹

Franz-Josef Gall (1758-1828) was primarily schooled in medicine and had presented his thesis entitled, Introduction au cours de physiologie du cerveau, at the Institut de France, in 1808. Usually associated with the theory of phrenology, Gall was among the first to recommend that the brain be scrutinized anatomically along with the spinal cord, for he believed the workings of the brain could be fully understood only in light of the spinal cord's functions.⁷⁰ His aspiration in studying the brain was to formulate a psychological profile based upon the correlation between the skull's contours and ethical and mental abilities or strenghts.⁷¹ In this respect his philosophy is similar to that of Lavater's physiognomy, except that Gall was concerned almost exclusively with cranial formation which, he believed, could unlock the enigma of a person's inner self. When still a child, Gall noticed that his classmates whose eyes were protuberant and prominent had prodigious memories enabling them to excell in languages. It was this observation that prompted Gall to set in place the keystone of phrenology:

De réflexion en réflexion, et d'observation en observation, j'imaginai que si la mémoire se re-

connaissait par des signes extérieurs, il en pouvait bien être de même des autres talents ou facultés intellectuelles. Des-lors tous les individus qui se distinguaient par une qualité ou une faculté quelconque, devinrent l'objet de mon attention et d'une étude détaillée de la forme de leur tête. Peu à peu je crus pouvoir me flatter d'avoir trouvé d'autres caractères extérieurs qui se rencontraient constamment dans les grands peintres, les grands musiciens, les grands mécaniciens, et qui par conséquent dénotaient une disposition prononcée pour la peinture, la musique, les arts mécaniques, etc.⁷²

Gall consequently inferred that the part of the brain housing the optic nerve and exerting pressure on it, e.g., the frontal lobes, was linked to the ability of verbal retention and memory.⁷³

In phrenology, the conformation of the head indicates the aptitudes, sensibilities and talents that differentiate one person from another. A person may possess a particular quality, such as self-esteem, without evidence of a cranial "bump," for it is only when one characteristic supersedes other traits that the head becomes asymmetrical with cranial lumps. If one can claim a long inventory of abilities or the gift of genius, a surfeit of cranial fullness is prevalent.⁷⁴ The "faculties" or particular characteristics, are classified as follows:

TABLE 1

FACULTIES AND CORRESPONDING ANATOMICAL LOCATIONS

Phrenological Faculty	Anatomical Indication
Observing faculties	Lower part of the forehead
Scientific faculties	Middle of the forehead
Reflecting faculties	Upper part of the forehead
Moral sentiments	Head above the forehead
Imaginative faculties	Side of head above temples
Regulating powers	Crown of the head
Prudential sentiments	Side of head above ears
Domestic affections	Back of the head
Language and memory	Ocular prominence

Source: The Phrenological Gem. A Concise View of the Science, with its Moral Influence, (1836) p. iii.

Someone, therefore, with a "bump" or general fullness on the crown of the head would possess superior "regulating powers," such as self-esteem, conscientiousness and firmness of disposition. Prominence on the side of the head above the temples would indicate imaginative faculties or tendencies, such as hopefulness, faith, and a belief in the extraordinary or supernatural.⁷⁵

Charles Rouvin, author of La Tête humaine, defines four precepts which serve to initiate the tyro and enhance the knowledge of the practicing phrenologist. Firstly, the brain is considered to be the nucleus of all aptitudes, whether they be intellectual, intuitive, ethical or emotional; secondly, these aptitudes or proclivities are innate but are, nevertheless, capable of intensification or diminution depending upon the education a person receives or does not receive; thirdly, the greater the number of talents one possesses, the more the cranial conformation is analogous to the cerebral shape or form; and lastly, each dominant talent determines an individual's physical comportment, gestures, and facial expression which directly, and mutually reflect and mirror the aptitude in question.⁷⁶ Aptitudes may further be defined and divided into two separate groups: the first category would be

primitive instincts in which intelligence plays no part, or perhaps only a subordinate one as evidenced by hunger, pain or fear. The second group included intellectual aptitudes which necessitate knowledge and thought, such as friendship, benevolence or hatred. Sentiments, for the phrenologist, are feelings on a loftier and more sophisticated plane than instincts, but they are just as primitive and innate.

Rouvin dissects and analyzes Balzac from a physiological and phrenological point of view as follows:

. . . Sa tête, large et carrée, est bien le récipient où, ainsi qu'en une fournaise énorme bouillonne l'œuvre compliquée de l'alchimie moderne, mélange d'idées et de passions qu'il s'agit de transmuier en or. . . . Le front fait saillie vers le milieu, siège des organes superposés dont l'ensemble constitue la qualité principale de son génie: aptitude extraordinaire à discerner, à se rappeler et à analyser. . . . Le développement des parties temporale et pariétale de la tête de BALZAC décèle, en effet, chez lui, des instincts de convoitise et de sensualité confirmés par l'épaisseur de la face et de l'encolure, par la petitesse des yeux rutilants, par la forme du nez, qui tient d'une trompe, dont le bout flaire, se relève et s'épanouit. Il y avait dans l'homme physique tout à la fois de l'éléphant et du sanglier. Tous les signes phrénologiques et physiologiques s'accordent ici pour marquer l'être intellectuel du triple sceau d'une grande force de pénétration et de travail, d'une vivacité d'intuition sans égale, et d'une faible valeur morale.⁷⁷

As he had done with physiognomy, Balzac applied

phrenology to the study of his characters, seeking thereby to penetrate beneath their façade and reveal their real self.

Mesmerism or animal magnetism, as it was called by Friedrich-Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) was based on the premise that a charismatic individual could wield power over another through a piercing, hypnotic glance. This discerning stare was heralded as the medium through which sickness could be cured by banishing the causative agent from the patient's body. The placebo effect was the premise of Mesmer's prospering pseudo-medical practice; certainly auto-suggestion may play a part in curing psychosomatic illnesses, however, in the case of mesmerism and chronic disease, spontaneous remissions of physical illness deserve the credit that wrongly was attributed to magnetism.

The main tenet of mesmerism purported that an imperceptible vapor infiltrates the world, thus endowing animate and inanimate objects with its presence.⁷⁸ By using magnets, which were placed on the afflicted part of the body or passed over it, the elusive vapor could bring about health if the planets propitiously were placed in the heavens at the time a patient was being

"magnetized." The mesmerist fluid, and its even distribution in the body, was thought to be the organizing force of the universe and that intangible factor on which a person's health depends. Disease, therefore, resulted if the free circulation of this fluid was impeded and could not be circulated throughout the system. In order for the patient to recover his health, the circulation of the fluid had to be re-established. The presence of epileptic-like seizures and symptoms marked the patients' passageway to health--a violent purging of sorts, and expulsion, of the malady. Mesmer's theory discounted the specificity of disease espoused by Bichat and Cabanis and wrongly attributed all illness to one cause with one cure.

The force vitale, that mythical, ethereal and sometimes all too ephemeral element of Balzacian existence, whose modern scientific counterpart might be DNA, is akin to the mysterious mesmerist fluid which supposedly controlled the etiology, symptomatology--in short, the mens sana in corpore sano. Balzac incorporated the pseudo-science of mesmerism not only in his writing but also practiced it in his own life. In a letter to Madame Hanska on March 24, 1836, he suggests a method by which she may assuage pains without recourse to the remedies or antidotes

of an apothecary, "Faites-vous faire deux 'fers' que vous puissiez empoigner au moment où vos crampes vous prennent. . . . Aussitôt que vous les aurez dans la main, vos crampes s'arrêteront. Si cela ne vous les arrêtaît pas, écrivez-le-moi. Mais, faites que ce soit très aimanté, et gardez-les près de vous, au chevet de votre lit."⁷⁹

Mesmer, who had studied medicine, arrived in the French capital in 1778 in order to indoctrinate doctors and scientists with his mesmerist theory; the scientific and medical community, however, showed hostility and disbelief toward his teachings. He naturally realized his defeat and, in 1779, sought to exonerate and absolve himself in the eyes of the medical profession, "Mon objet alors n'étoit que de fixer l'attention des Médecins; mais loin d'avoir réussi, je m'aperçus bientôt qu'on me taxoit de singularité, qu'on me traitoit d'homme à système, & qu'on me faisoit un crime de ma propension à quitter la route ordinaire de la Médecine."⁸⁰ Mesmer's fantastic doctrine, although irrefutably unorthodox, does not seem as precarious as the practices espoused by the established medical community of the time: the application of leeches,

bloodletting, insalubrious conditions in the hospitals, and the like. The most that animal magnetism seemed to do for those who were "magnetized" was to permit them the luxury or opportunity for an emotional and physical catharsis, which was supposed to dispel real or imagined ills. Ironically enough, Mesmer earned his doctor's degree in medicine from the Medical Faculty in Vienna in 1766, having written his thesis on a topic of dubious medical substance, De l'influence des planètes sur le corps humain.⁸¹ The stars, constellations, and planets exerted, according to Mesmer, an influence on the human body, which he compared to the ebb and flow action of the oceans' tides. This, in turn, corresponds to the tension and remission phases of the body, which determine the amount of vaporous fluid, that universal panacea, present at any one time.⁸² During a mesmerist session a baquet, or large wooden vessel, was placed in the middle of the floor, its cover having been pierced with holes through which iron rods protruded. Soothing background music was supplied by a piano and, at times, singers' voices mingled with the sounds of the keyboard. The windows and doors of the room were closed but for a velvety light which illuminated the room while those seeking a cure

would form several rows around the baquet, and each one would grasp an iron rod, with hope of a swift return of health. Each person would press his thumb between the thumb and index finger of his neighbor in order to be "magnetized" by the iron rod, the contact of thumbs or the melodious sound of the piano and the singers' voices. The "magnetizer" would then fix his hypnotic stare on the patients while he passed a wand over their bodies, without actually touching them.⁸³ The results of this grotesque ceremony were swooning, fainting, frenetic hysteria and frenzied convulsions which could last up to several hours. The rooms in which these rituals took place were baptized enfers à convulsions.⁸⁴

Mesmer's twenty-seventh proposition on animal magnetism purported to represent his doctrine as the sovereign remedy and cure-all for mankind, "Cette doctrine, enfin, mettra le Médecin en état de bien juger du degré de santé de chaque individu, & de le préserver des maladies auxquelles il pourroit être exposé. L'art de guérir, parviendra ainsi à sa dernière perfection."⁸⁵

Investigating the mosaic of medical and pseudo-medical philosophies of those who influenced Balzac, we

cannot hope to find the exact measure of the novelist's knowledge of the stylish superstitions, the physiology, the biology, or the zoology of his time, because the alembic of his imagination--an intoxicating, Gargantuan compulsion--has assimilated this eclectic mass of information in order to embody it in his writing. It is, as well, a reverie, an unimaginable plan that is embraced and that is let go; a caprice that smiles⁸⁶ that enabled him to show the reciprocal workings of the body, the soul, and thought which, collectively, fashion Balzacian medical science.

During the time Balzac was at work putting ink to paper and producing manuscripts which were to become La Comédie humaine, medical theory acquired and handed down from the eighteenth century was still on the boundary between scientific knowledge and quackery. What may be seen as charlatanism--the "physiognomy" of Lavater, the "phrenology" of Gall and the "magnetism" of Mesmer-- may also be viewed as pseudo-scientific folklore woven into the fibers of Balzac's novels. These beliefs are at cross purposes with the unsophisticated "medicine" of Nacquart and Dupuytren, the naïve "physiology" of Bichat and Broussais and the elementary "psycho-physiology" of

Cabanis. Medicine, as science, was still to evolve, later in the nineteenth century, under the influence of Claude Bernard and Louis Pasteur. Balzac incorporated contemporary scientific as well as pseudo-scientific concepts to create "literary illnesses" which, certainly, do not always have sound scientific fact as their medical foundation.

Notes

¹ Honoré de Balzac and le Docteur Nacquart, Correspondance inédite de Honoré de Balzac avec le Docteur Nacquart (1823-1850) (Paris: Marcel Bouteron and Les Cahiers balzaciens. Éditions Lapina, 1928), 1:37.

² Madeleine Fargeaud, Intro., "Avant-Propos" in La Comédie humaine, by Honoré de Balzac (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976), p. 7.

³ Ibid., p. 1112.

⁴ André Maurois, Prométhée ou la vie de Balzac (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1965), p. 8.

⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

⁶ Honoré de Balzac, Correspondance, éd. Roger Pierrot, 5 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1960), 1:387.

⁷ Ibid., p. 394.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 744-745.

⁹ Maurois, Prométhée, 31.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

¹¹ Balzac, Correspondance, 1:479.

¹² Ibid., p: 489.

¹³ Ibid., p. 480.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 479.

- 15 Ibid., p. 480.
- 16 Balzac and Nacquart, Correspondance de Balzac avec le Docteur Nacquart, p. 37.
- 17 Ibid., pp. vii-ix.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Dr. Léon Delhoume, "Dupuytren," Société archéologique et historique du Limousin, 76 (1935):34.
- 20 Ibid., p. 51.
- 21 Ibid., p. 116.
- 22 Ibid., p. 117.
- 23 Ibid., p. 295.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid., p. 296.
- 26 Gerald P. Rodnan, M.D., ed., Primer on the Rheumatic Diseases (Atlanta: Arthritis Foundation, 1973), p. 89.
- 27 Delhoume, "Dupuytren," 34.
- 28 Raphaël Blanchard, Centenaire de la mort de Xavier Bichat 3 thermidor an X - 22 juillet 1902 (Paris: Librairie Scientifique et Littéraire, 1903), p. 29.
- 29 Dr. Étienne May, La Médecine. Son Passé--son présent--son avenir (Paris: Payot, 1957), p. 103.
- 30 Ibid., p. 102.
- 31 Blanchard, Centenaire de la mort de Xavier Bichat, p. 17.
- 32 Ibid., p. 18.
- 33 Ibid., p. 15.

34 Dr. P. Bonnette, Broussais. Sa Vie--son œuvre--son centenaire. 1772-1838 (Paris: Imprimerie Jouve, 1939), p. 22.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., p. 53.

37 May, La Médecine. Son Passé--son présent--son avenir, p. 108.

38 Bonnette, Broussais, p. 11.

39 Ibid., p. 14.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., p. 32.

42 Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis, Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme (Paris: Fortin, Masson et Cie, 1843), p. xi.

43 Ibid., p. 507.

44 Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis, Œuvres philosophiques (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956), p. 38.

45 Georges Poyer, "Les Origines de la psychophysiologie. Cabanis," Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique, (1910): 130.

46 Ibid., p. 130.

47 Hélène D'Alsò, "Balzac, Cuvier et Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. 1831-1843," Revue d'histoire de la philosophie et d'histoire générale de la civilisation, (15 octobre 1934): 340.

48 Ibid., p. 341.

49 Théophile Cahn, La Vie et l'œuvre d'Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p. 247.

50 Honoré de Balzac, "Avant-Propos," La Comédie humaine, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976), p. 8.

51 Ibid.

52 Cahn, La Vie et l'œuvre d'Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 244.

53 F. Baldensperger, "Les Théories de Lavater dans la littérature française," Études d'histoire littéraire, (1910): 82.

54 Lucien Roure, "De la physiognomonie et de Lavater," Études. Revue catholique d'intérêt général, 182 (5 janvier 1925): 57.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid., p. 67.

57 Balzac, "Avant-Propos," p. 8.

58 Roure, "De la physiognomie et de Lavater," p. 67.

59 Jean-Gaspard Lavater, Essai sur la physiognomonie, destiné à faire connaître l'homme & à le faire aimer, 3 vols. (La Haye: Jacques Van Karnebeek, 1781), 1:22.

60 Ibid., 1:18.

61 Ibid., 1:19.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., 1:20.

66 Balzac, Correspondance, 1:204.

67 Ibid.

- 68 Honoré de Balzac, "Facino Cane," La Comédie humaine, vol. 6 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1977), p. 1019.
- 69 Ibid., 1:27.
- 70 G. Elliot Smith, "The Old and New Phrenology," The William Ramsay Henderson Trust Lectures, No. 1, (University of Edinburgh, 26 January 1928):6.
- 71 Ibid., p. 7.
- 72 F. J. Gall, Sur les fonctions du cerveau et sur celles de chacune de ses parties, 6 vols. (Paris: J.-B. Baillière, Libraire, 1825), 1:9.
- 73 Smith, Phrenology, 11.
- 74 The Phrenological Gem. A Concise View of the Science, with its Moral Influence (New York: Charles S. Francis, 1836), p. iii.
- 75 Ibid., p. iv.
- 76 Charles Rouvin, La Tête humaine. Études de phrénologie et de physiognomonie (Paris: Imprimerie Jules Boyer et Cie., n.d.), p. 13.
- 77 Ibid., pp. 218-219.
- 78 Maria M. Tatar, Spellbound. Studies on Mesmerism and Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 5.
- 79 Honoré de Balzac, Lettres à Madame Hanska. 1832-1840 (Paris: Éditions du Delta, 1967), 1:401.
- 80 M. Mesmer, Mémoire sur la découverte du magnétisme animal (Paris: Didot le jeune, Libraire, 1779), p. 8.
- 81 Ernest Bersot, Mesmer et le magnétisme animal. Les tables tournantes et les esprits (Paris: L. Hachette et Cie.), p. 1.

82 Ibid., p. 2.

83 Ibid., pp. 6-7.

84 Ibid., p. 9.

85 Mesmer, Mémoire sur la découverte du magnétisme animal, p. 83.

86 Balzac, "Avant-Propos," p. 7.

CHAPTER II

BETWEEN SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS: LA PEAU DE CHAGRIN

Toi seul admiras ma Théorie de la volonté . . .
Cette œuvre . . . complétera les travaux de
Mesmer, de Lavater, de Gall, de Bichat, en
ouvrant une nouvelle route à la science humaine.

Raphaël dans La Peau de chagrin
Honoré de Balzac¹

The preceding pages encompassed the medical heresy, scientific doctrine and fashionable superstitious conventions of Balzac's time, which were a part of his encyclopedic auto-didacticism. Acting as a framework and foundation for the rest of this study as well as evidence of Balzac's childhood meandering through variegated volumes on the parental bookshelf and, later on, in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, the prior chapter heralds those which follow while demonstrating the reciprocity, pertinent to this study of La Peau de chagrin, between an idée fixe and the pensée qui tue, transposed into true illness. It is Balzac

who proclaims that of all known weapons it is neither the dagger nor arrow which should be feared, but rather human emotions and thoughts; the latter are capable of menacing and terrorizing: "Une pensée peut tuer un homme."² This is the case of Raphaël de Valentin who carries his own executioner within his mind.

Raphaël's malady is not specifically the absence of health, but rather an ongoing psychosomatic process, turned physiological and having its own separate existence. His illness becomes an independent entity, apart from its host, Raphaël, through the progressive shrinking of the magical shagreen skin. Many of Raphaël's symptoms prove that he has lost control of his internal environment, the physiologic self. Thus begins a vicious cycle of the interplay of psychologic and physiologic elements in which Raphaël loses control of his external environment, which may be defined as the literary existence Balzac has created for him. Raphaël's malady is a heuristic pathway into terror which entails the gradual destruction and the finite nature of the human biological mechanism. While his illness, in a subjective scope, is a psychosomatic condition which has as its etiology a

"lucky" talisman, a charm-like curse; his underlying disease, in an objective and clinical scope, may be defined as progressive pulmonary tuberculosis.³

Raphaël's lamentable predicament is triform: representing the focal point, he himself is caught between two dangers--psychosomatic illness (his mind is convinced of the power of the talisman) and physiologic illness (his body interprets the belief in the talisman by manifestation of physical symptoms)--either of which is difficult to avoid without encountering the other. Raphaël inexorably is trapped between Scylla and Charybdis.

La Peau de chagrin comprises three interwoven dramas; "Le Talisman" is the first part of the triptych. This study will examine this work from a trifocal viewpoint, cognizant that each third forms a part of the novel in its entirety.

Félix Davin, Balzac's friend who penned, possibly from the latter's dictation, the "Introduction" of the "Études philosophiques," states that ". . . La Peau de chagrin est un arrêt physiologique, définitif, porté par la science humaine, sur la vie humaine. . . ."4 Given this hypothesis, Balzac gives his prescription for living

life, which diminishes in direct relationship to one's desires and thoughts, in the epigraphic depiction traced by Corporal Trim's walking stick. For most, life must be lived by lending oneself to its sinuous pattern, to the labyrinthine turns of fate.⁵ Life is a monstrous force, hideous and fiendish in its power for destruction. It may be harnessed by the elimination or suppression of ruinous emotions and the careful use of thought, which may kill or nurture; herein lies Raphaël's downfall. Before Raphaël's crusade against the magical shagreen skin's nefarious effects begins, illness is subtly introduced in "Le Talisman," evolving into an omnipresent undercurrent which eventually infiltrates the novel's first part: the possibility of suicide imprints a sickly pallor to Raphaël's forehead while his physiognomy testifies to his renunciation of life (Pc,61);⁶ his eyelids are encircled with a yellowish hue (Pc,62); he is given to optical illusions (Pc,68) and to faulty blood circulation (Pc,68); and he is febrile due to lack of proper nutrition (Pc,70). Illness also is alluded to figuratively: egoism is referred to as social leprosy (Pc,103); gout is the chastisement society has inflicted upon man after first bestowing him with down

pillows, whereas the common cold is the penalty for the comfort and warmth afforded by cashmere shawls (Pc,104). In this universe of checks and balances, where Prometheus is punished for stealing fire from heaven and giving it to man and where an object created for man's benefit is counteracted by malady, Raphaël becomes a pathetic marionette whose fate is sabotaged by his own thoughts and wishes. His destiny would have been different had he wished for the talisman to expand--an alternative Philarète Chasles claimed sceptical readers might have suggested to Balzac.⁷ However, Raphaël is doomed to watch the deterioration of the physiologic self, just as Prometheus was condemned to have a vulture daily consume his reviviscent liver.

"Le Talisman" may be viewed as the focal point from which emanate quadrivial footpaths down which Raphaël hazards, i. e., the gambling casino, the lure of suicide, the curiosity shop and the bacchanal. At the outset of "Le Talisman" Balzac declares that Raphaël has merely a nodding acquaintance with illness (Pc,62); however, the gambling house sets the stage for its progressive ubiquity. The very nature of the gambling house as evidenced

by the statement Balzac attributes to Rousseau, " . . . je conçois qu'un homme aille au Jeu, mais c'est lorsque entre lui et la mort il ne voit plus que son dernier écu . . . " (Pc,59), affirms the disillusionment inherent in such a locale. The first allusion to the gambling house's intrinsic turpitude is related to Gall's theory of phrenology: Raphaël is requested not to check but, rather, to surrender his hat to the Cerberean gatekeeper in order allegedly to permit the assessment of the wearer's cerebral capacity (Pc,57-58). This watchman of the entrance to Hades offers a tacit warning to those who pass through his gates; however, his lifeless glance would have meaning only for a philosopher, who would have seen in this sentry's gaze: " . . . les misères de l'hôpital, les vagabondages des gens ruinés, les procès-verbaux d'une foule d'asphyxiés, les travaux forcés à perpétuité, les expatriations au Guazacoalco" (Pc,58). This unheeded warning foretells the curiosity shop dealer's unambiguous advice, given to Raphaël, concerning the secret of longevity.

Raphaël's entrance into the gambling house may be viewed as a transitory way station--a mechanism that postpones and prefaces his thoughts of suicide: present

are those whose debaucheries started in wine and will end in the Seine (Pc,59). Balzac confirms the hopelessness of the locality by stating that there is no way to escape life's misfortunes and adversities, therefore, the gamblers are "condemned" to life. "Il ne s'y trouve même pas un clou pour faciliter le suicide" (Pc,59). The gambling house's atmosphere not only "sentences" its occupants to a wretched existence but, also, casts them in a "drame sanguinolent" (Pc,59) in which they become the tragedians. It is in this vein that Balzac affirms Raphaël's torment by a passion more fatal than illness (Pc,62), which may be interpreted as the latter's suicidal obsession. A regular customer of the roulette wheel also anticipates Raphaël's obsession: "C'est un cerveau brûlé qui va se jeter à l'eau . . ." (Pc,63). Raphaël's passage through the gambling house represents a sojourn in a nether world that seals his fate with its signet of destiny. Raphaël, an angel without a halo who has lost his way, a tyro unschooled in the ways of gambling, has fallen into the company of those familiar with vice and infamy (Pc,62). Rather than being hated by his executioners--" . . . les bourreaux n'ont-ils pas quelquefois

pleuré sur les vierges dont les blondes têtes devaient être coupées à un signal de la Révolution?" (Pc,61)--he is treated with deference and veneration: ". . . lorsqu'un célèbre criminel arrive au bagne, les condamnés l'accueillent avec respect, ainsi tous ces démons humains, experts en torture, saluèrent une douleur inouïe, une blessure profonde que sondait leur regard, et reconnurent un de leurs princes . . ." (Pc,62). Balzac reinforces the importance of Raphaël's induction into the gambling house by having him cross its threshold three times, each time portending anticipatory signs of the hero's lapse into depravity and desperation.

Suicide is a leitmotif whose possibility, and even advisability, is more than subtly implied in the gambling house episode. While crossing le Jardin des Tuileries, Raphaël gravitates toward suicide just as, in legend, mariners were allured to a rocky coast and subsequent shipwreck by the Sirens' song. Raphaël almost succumbs to its intoxicating temptation: he hears only the voice of death among the multitudinous sea of humanity (Pc,64). So momentous is its lure that not having finished L'Auberge rouge in time for publication in the "Revue de Paris" of

May 29, 1831, Balzac submitted in its place a chapter from La Peau de chagrin aptly entitled "Le Suicide d'un poète."⁸

The lure of suicide may, consequently, be viewed as the second of four paths issuing forth from "Le Talisman." Raphaël's thoughts of self-destruction not only exemplify his despair and universal disgust of life, his personal brand of sentimental despondency, but also illustrate his resoluteness and boldness of spirit for he is able to conjure up a vision of self-annihilation. The very nature of his suicidal obsession is, therefore, twofold; it may be viewed as a cataclysmic road to ruin as well as the ultimate act of heroism. While contemplating his death, Raphaël is far from resigned and passive. According to Ari Kiev, suicide requires planning and direction toward an unquestionable end which infers that the potential suicide victim, far from eschewing all options, has really made a decision, even though it is a deleterious one.⁹ Referring to the possible motives of one who commits suicide, Balzac avows: "Implacables doivent être les ouragans qui le forcent à demander la paix de l'âme à la bouche d'un pistolet" (Pc, 64). Raphaël, who has not yet been introduced

by name and is still called "l'inconnu" gravitates toward suicide for the following reasons: "Mort, il valait cinquante francs, mais vivant il n'était qu'un homme de talent sans protecteurs, sans amis, sans paillasse, sans tambour, un véritable zéro social, inutile à l'État, qui n'en avait aucun souci" (Pc,66). Raphaël's seemingly inexorable path toward suicide is reinforced by societal definitions of accomplishment and success. The lack of recognition for his ambitious treatise, Théorie de la volonté, the absence of a "Dilecta," a role that will be played later on by Pauline Gaudin and a prevailing feeling of worthlessness and lack of self-esteem all abrogate his will to live. Similarly, in describing Balzac's literary apprenticeship his sister, Laure Surville, makes an analogy between Honoré-Raphaël, thereby affirming the chaotic turbulence of the author-hero's life: "Mon frère passa les premières années de sa vie littéraire au milieu d'angoisses. . . . Il m'avoua que, dans ce temps, il avait été saisi plusieurs fois de vertiges et de tentations semblables à celles qu'il a données au héros de cette œuvre si remplie de jeunesse et de talent qu'il appela la Peau de chagrin."10

In addition to the societal components that conspire to hasten Raphaël's suicide, the forces of nature, the capricious influence of Parisian monuments, protean and mercurial, and the hero's propensity toward optical illusions collusively advocate his unholy plan for an early self-annihilation. Le Yaouanc interprets these factors as the exterior milieu exerting an influence on Raphaël's mental equilibrium.¹¹ This is akin to Lavater's theory of physiognomy which Balzac adapted to demonstrate the effect and consequence of environment on a given protagonist's personality, hence defining his individuality. Raphaël indeed undergoes, if not ingests by the power of suggestion, the effects of his surroundings by dint of the phenomenon of fluidity (Pc,68). It is this circumstance which, in turn, engenders the intoxicating feeling of lightheadedness and causes Raphaël to see his surroundings as if viewed through a mist or fog. In Louis Lambert, Balzac names scientific enigmas which Lambert has set himself the task of solving, implying the correlation between the phenomenon of fluidity and la Pensée: "Si, laissant au système cutané de notre enveloppe une destination toute défensive, absorbante, exsudante et tactile, la circulation

sanguine et son appareil ne répondaient pas à la transsubstantiation de notre Volonté, comme la circulation du fluide nerveux répondait à celle de la Pensée?" (LL, 627).

It is, consequently, Raphaël's pondering and contemplation of suicide, his own thought processes which are responsible for the Balzacian state of "fluidity." This state, in turn, reverses an otherwise harmonious universe into a phantasmagoric one.

The curiosity shop episode is the point around which not only "Le Talisman" but also the entire novel pivots. In his letter of March 7, 1831 to Charles Gosselin, Balzac identifies "Le Talisman" as the cornerstone of his work: ". . . je travaille sans relâche et sans distraction à vous achever la Peau de chagrin. Je termine ce soir la première partie, celle qui me donne le plus de soucis, et d'où dépend tout le livre. Cette rude tâche accomplie, le reste ira tout seul. . . ."¹² Raphaël's entrance into the curiosity shop is, as was his entry into the gambling casino, a rite de passage wherein the patriarchal shopkeeper may be seen as his savior as well as executioner; he temporarily does prevent the former's suicide only to defer it to a future point in time.

The anomalous and extraordinary objects viewed by Raphaël in the shop, " . . . une espèce de fumier philosophique auquel rien ne manquait . . . " (Pc,69), bear witness to the vicissitudes of diverse civilizations just as Cuvier's reconstruction of extinct species from fossilized remains exemplifies their former existence (Pc,75). Each item in the macrocosm that is the curiosity shop is indicative of the microcosm--be it a certain historical era or particular culture--it epitomizes. True to Cuvier's inductive concept of evolution, assuming the erstwhile life of a reptile or crustacean from a fragmented part of these creatures unearthed as a later date, so, too, Raphaël grasps the importance of the myriad worlds contained in the shop: "L'inconnu compara d'abord ces trois salles gorgées de civilisation, de cultes, de divinités, de chefs-d'œuvre, de royautés, de débauches, de raison et de folie, à un miroir plein de facettes dont chacune représentait un monde" (Pc,70). Raphaël's meditative state, in addition to the fact that the shop's curiosities come into his view, thoughts and reveries, induces a pyrexial torpor which is heightened by hunger (Pc,70). In this instance, as on countless other occasions in La Comédie

humaine, the mind wields control over and prevails upon the body to react as it has so dictated. Balzac's premise mirrors Brillat-Savarin's theory of the consumption of the life force in relation to the rôle of appetite: "Le mouvement et la vie occasionnent, dans le corps vivant, une déperdition continuelle de substance; et le corps humain, cette machine si compliquée, serait bientôt hors de service, si la Providence n'y avait placé un ressort qui l'avertit du moment où ses forces ne sont plus en équilibre avec ses besoins. Ce moniteur est l'appétit."¹³

It is, moreover, the curiosity shop incident that serves to proclaim the very essence of that which comprises Balzacian philosophy--the esoteric prescription for longevity pronounced by the centenarian shopkeeper. The basis of the centenarian's convictions may be traced to Honoré's father, Bernard-François, as recounted by Laure Surville:

Il s'arrangeait si bien de l'existence qu'il voulait vivre le plus longtemps possible. Il avait calculé, d'après les années ce qu'il faut à l'homme pour arriver à l'état parfait; que sa vie devait aller à cent ans et plus; pour atteindre le plus, il prenait des soins extraordinaires et veillait sans cesse à établir ce qu'il appelait l'équilibre des forces vitales.¹⁴

Bernard-François died fortuitously, in 1829, at the age of eighty-three, not quite the centennial mark he had wished to reach and even go beyond.¹⁵

In La Physiologie du mariage Balzac mentions a tale, Art de mettre la mort dans la vie!, written by the English poet, Crabbe, in which an allegorical being called la Vie dans la Mort pursues an ambulatory skeleton called la Mort dans la Vie--signifying the generations of humankind so caught up in the maelstrom of life that they exist without fully participating in and living life (Pm, 744). Such being the case, Raphaël symbolizes la Mort dans la Vie, a moribund personage tenaciously clinging to that which is left of his life; the centenarian represents la Vie dans la Mort, a counterfeit imitation of life, existing without yearnings, aspirations or emotions which are capable of killing.¹⁶ Eventually Raphaël and the centenarian will trade identities; once realizing the nefarious power of the talisman, Raphaël will try to deny the spontaneity of his emotions by exercising restraint over his wishes whereas the shopkeeper will ensnare himself in a cobweb of zealous ardor announcing: "Il y a toute une vie dans une heure d'amour" (Pc, 224).

The lethal power of thought is the cornerstone of the centnarian's philosophy. Thought generates desire, avarice, rapacity--all emotions capable of extinguishing the life force, and the shopkeeper has learned how to gain supremacy over the inexorable passage of time by negating the entity of vouloir and of pouvoir, thereby, resulting in a homeostatic equilibrium of the life impulse. The end effect is the rational attempt, through the entity of savoir, to preserve the integrity of the physiologic and emotive self. The shopkeeper has been, therefore, able to maintain a relatively stable "life state" by means of his own regulatory mechanism of suppression of emotion:

J'ai tout vu, mais tranquillement, sans fatigue;
 je n'ai jamais rien désiré, j'ai tout attendu. . . .
 Ce que les hommes appellent chagrins, amours,
 ambitions, revers, tristesse, est, pour moi, des
 idées que je change en rêveries; au lieu de les
 sentir, je les exprime, je les traduis; au lieu
 de leur laisser dévorer ma vie, je les dramatise,
 je les développe; je m'en amuse comme de romans
 que je lirais par une vision intérieure. N'ayant
 jamais lassé mes organes, je jouis encore d'une
 santé robuste (Pc, 86).

The talisman and what it represents is diametrically opposed to the shopkeeper's conservation of the life force:

" . . . la Peau de chagrin est le pouvoir et le vouloir réunis. Là sont vos idées sociales, vos désirs excessifs,

vos intempérances, vos joies qui tuent, vos douleurs qui font trop vivre . . ." (Pc,87). The talisman is, therefore, the antipodal side of the life force's homeostatic equilibrium and symbolizes the extravagantly excessive whirlpool of renegade emotion which subdues, and then destroys, the life impulse. It is in this context that the talisman is not only a real and tangible object comprised of substance and matter but, as well, an entity which, according to Maurice Bardèche " . . . a pour mission d'illustrer une idée."¹⁷ The concept in question is "le pouvoir et le vouloir réunis" (Pc,87) in addition to the ephemeral span of life; both become the essence of Raphaël's being, a gage deposited as security against his existence. Once Raphaël becomes the owner of the talisman, he signs his own death warrant by upsetting the homeostasis of the life force and welcoming the onslaught of unbridled emotions:

" . . . je veux vivre avec excès, dit l'inconnu en saisissant la Peau de chagrin. . . . Oui, j'ai besoin d'embrasser les plaisirs du ciel et de la terre dans une dernière étreinte pour en mourir" (Pc,87). Once this oath is pronounced a metamorphosis takes place whereby Raphaël "becomes" the talisman and his existence depends upon its

conservation just as the talisman's being is contingent upon Raphaël's life.

The talisman's inscription, purporting to be written in Sanskrit, was translated for Balzac, in Arabic, by Hammer-Purgstall, President of L'Académie impériale de Vienne.¹⁸ The implicit meaning therein contained is that death is the ransom demanded for unalloyed happiness, thus imputing to the talisman the Balzacian theory that each person is endowed with a certain amount of vital force which is diminished by each effort and endeavor. The talisman may, therefore, be viewed as directly pertinent to Balzac's life, as suggested by Marcel Reboussin: "La Peau de chagrin n'est-elle pas aussi le symbole de l'œuvre qui a dévoré la vie de Balzac, de la Comédie humaine elle-même?"¹⁹ The inherent curse of the talisman is not only death itself but, also, the anticipatory knowledge of one's mortality: "La malédiction du talisman n'est pas la mort, c'est la lucidité devant la mort . . . la fin de la vie est comprise comme l'épuisement inéluctable des possibilités dans la vie."²⁰ This limpid state of insight, measured by the shrinking dimensions of the talisman, excludes pouvoir and vouloir, while implying savoir. This is, indeed, antithetical to

Balzac's theory that " . . . SAVOIR laisse notre faible organisation dans un perpétuel état de calme" (Pc,85). Raphaël's knowledge of the talisman's progressive diminution in direct correlation to his own life span may, consequently, be held partially responsible for his demise.

The fourth and final component of "Le Talisman" is the bacchanal, proof of the magical power of the onager's skin in granting a wish made by Raphaël while still in the curiosity shop: "Je veux un dîner royalement splendide, quelque bacchanale digne du siècle . . ." (Pc,87). Raphaël is no longer besieged by thoughts of suicide since his demise has been postponed and, although it is contrary to reason for him to believe in a magical power, nevertheless, he is amazed by the seemingly spontaneous granting of the aforesaid wish (Pc,92). His companions invite him to a Rabelaisian banquet hosted by the banker, Taillefer, who is " . . . assez riche pour mettre de la grandeur dans les petites, de l'élégance et de la grâce dans le vice" (Pc,92). Taillefer's banquet may be viewed as if through a kaleidoscope, whereby plane mirrors exhibit loose fragments of colored glass representing the lure of suicide, the gambling casino, and the curiosity shop. Each element parallels the banquet

and has a noxious influence on Raphaël, foretelling his downward descent into the obliteration of the life force. Each element is permeated by evil and crowned by the disclosure, in L'Auberge rouge, that Taillefer is an assassin and owes his fortune to this fact. It is coincidentally, a malady induced by the remembrance of the murders which is responsible for Taillefer's death in L'Auberge rouge, whereas Raphaël's malady and ultimate demise in La Peau de chagrin are induced by his eventual belief in the powers of the talisman.

Once having pronounced a fateful oath in the curiosity shop and overwhelmed by the majestic and sumptuous surroundings in which he now finds himself, Raphaël reaffirms his own death wish, thereby determining his fate and life span: "Ah! je veux vivre au sein de ce luxe un an, six mois, n'importe! Et puis après mourir. J'aurai du moins épuisé, connu, dévoré mille existences" (Pc, 96). His impulsive declaration is opposed by Émile who claims that wealth brings about boredom and will deny Raphaël the opportunity to be a superior being, one whose trials and tribulations are necessary for artistic and literary accomplishment.

Amid the feverish palaver centered on the July

Revolution and contemporary France of 1830, the ominous power of thought is underscored as a means of killing one's uncle (Pc,102), thus foreshadowing Raphaël's future death by la pensée qui tue. That a corpulent, septuagenary uncle may succumb, while digesting a pâté de foie gras, to the news that his banker is insolvent or to the charms of a comely young lady is satirically implied. Analogous theories are stated in Les Martyrs ignorés wherein death may be induced by the use of caustic remarks expressing contempt which, according to Balzac, may induce the dissolution of the victim's life force equilibrium.

The courtesans Aquilina, l'âme du vice, and Euphrasie, le vice sans âme are, as well, on a downward descent toward the destruction of the life force. Present in Melmoth réconcilié, where Castanier is beneficiary of a malevolent and overwhelming power just as is Raphaël in La Peau de chagrin, neither Aquilina nor Euphrasie espouse a regimen which regulates and conserves the life force. Carpe diem is their life's motto, to which they adhere, thereby representing the counterpart of the Balzacian theory of longevity. When asked by Émile if she sometimes thinks of the future, Euphrasie retorts that she is concerned only with the present moment; the past and the

future do not exist in the here and now and, therefore, are irrelevant (Pc,114). What is important is to live life in a frenetic, sybaritic manner, disclaiming the deleteriousness of pouvoir and vouloir. Euphrasie's definitive declaration is the catchword, the cue by which she and Aquilina live: "J'aime mieux mourir de plaisir que de maladie" (Pc,115). Both courtesans possess the prophetic ability of second sight.²¹ Their clairvoyant talent and phlegmatic acceptance of their destiny-- Aquilina foresees the dissolution and certain death which await her in a charity hospital and Euphrasie shows complete disregard for the approach of time--allow them to view the diminishing of their own peau de chagrin without manifest dread.

The bacchanal, which leaves the revelers exhausted by their dialectic reasoning and overcome by drink, sets the stage for a corollary episode, the second triptych of La Peau de chagrin. "La Femme sans cœur" may be seen as a type of confession, in the fashion of Rousseau, an unmasking and avowal by Raphaël-Honoré in which the author backtracks in order to recount circumstances and events antecedent to "Le Talisman." In addition, this segment serves as a respite from the novel's extravagantly

chimerical first and third parts. Raphaël's cheerless life before "Le Talisman"--his austere childhood, the self-imposed scholarly exile in a modest room rented from Madame Gaudin, his introduction into society by Rastignac, and his subsequently doomed affection for Fœdora--has had its very nucleus eliminated by the passage of time and is, now, acknowledged by the absence of harmful emotions and the presence of thought: "Cette longue et lente douleur qui a duré dix ans peut aujourd'hui se reproduire par quelques phrases dans lesquelles la douleur ne sera plus qu'une pensée, et le plaisir une réflexion philosophique. Je juge, au lieu de sentir . . ." (Pc, 120). It is in the revelatory disclosure of his past that Raphaël unwittingly embraces the centenarian shopkeeper's advice: he is intent upon judging rather than feeling, thus dispensing with the imbroglia of discordant emotions and their nefarious effect upon the biological mechanism that is the human body and the ensuing life span.

In his hermeneutical reassessment of an almost ascetic childhood and adolescence, endured under his father's despotic authority, Raphaël evokes physiologic reactions just prior to gambling with the former's money, one of

several dramas where betting and chance have a part in the novel: he experiences tinnitus, a tintinnabulary noise present in his ears, as well as a mild cardiac arrhythmia, a change in rhythm of his heart beat (Pc,123). These states, which have their foundation in the fervor of emotions, are ignored by Raphaël. This gambling digression has as its consequence Raphaël's first physiologic observation, the discovery of humankind's double nature (Pc,123-124): l'homme extérieur, subject to the laws of nature, and l'homme intérieur, embodying a life force which Balzac is unable to define but which he nonetheless considers to be real. Certain privileged beings are able to sever one from the other, thereby, accounting for such arcane phenomena as clairvoyance and second sight. Due to this, Raphaël has " . . . le pouvoir d'anéantir l'espace et le temps . . . " (Pc,124) in order to overhear and see two gamblers' words and strategy even though he is separated from the gamblers by several rows of people, busily engaged in conversation, whose thunderous voices are so loud as to intercept and obstruct the sound of gold near the gaming tables and the notes of the orchestra. The concept of a person's double nature is one of the components of Balzacian illness since

ideas and desires emanate from l'homme intérieur, emitting vibrations which are either weak or strong, depending upon the person in question. An idea or desire may, consequently, dissipate and consume the body, as is the case with Raphaël.²²

The eventual deterioration of the vitality of Raphaël's life force may be traced, in retrospect, to a transmissible predisposition: "Dix mois après avoir payé ses créanciers, mon père mourut de chagrin, il m'adorait et m'avait ruiné; cette idée le tua" (Pc, 127). (Italics mine.) While Raphaël's father succumbed to a thought, an idea, whose causal element originated from outside influences, i. e., the financial ruin of his son after the creditors' accounts had been settled, the deadly thought germinated, flourished and sprang from the esoteric recesses of l'homme intérieur. In the realm of Balzacian or literary "science," the atavistic, hereditary characteristic of la pensée qui tue has been inherited by Raphaël from his father. As their constitutions and temperaments are unresistant and frail, they have a propensity to the influence of iniquitous thoughts which invade the body, as would bacteria, after having enslaved the mind. The affiliation between anatomical and mental weaknesses and capabilities clearly are established:

Le corps reflète et traduit les penchants de l'âme. Il y a entre la forme physique et le caractère un lien indissoluble. Pour pénétrer jusqu'au caractère, il faut interpréter la forme extérieure. Inversement pour mettre en scène un individu, il faut que sa configuration et son caractère s'accordent et se répondent. Toute description physique d'un personnage a pour raison d'être son individualité morale.²³

Balzac now has set the stage to show Raphaël's cachectic nature, a condition of general ill health, and, subsequently, proceeds with an interior dialogue which acts as an intermediary stage between the aforementioned austere childhood and the first association with Madame Gaudin and her daughter, Pauline. It is in this "confession autobiographique"²⁴ that Raphaël elucidates his personal philosophy by weighing and examining the forces present in a gifted man's precipitous ascent to success. To bring this struggle to light, Balzac's recommendation is as follows: "Pour juger un homme, au moins faut-il être dans le secret de sa pensée, de ses malheurs, de ses émotions . . ." (Pc,130). Following this point of argument, talent is referred to as "une fièvre intermittente" (Pc,132) whose discomfort and burning pain, when experienced by a writer, poet or artist, is not willingly shared by woman-kind. True to his calling, Raphaël sequesters himself to pursue a self-imposed scholarly apprenticeship among books

and ideas, subsisting on the bare necessities of life, while eschewing all that is superfluous. Eventually hoping to rise phoenixlike from the ashes, Raphaël proclaims: ". . . je me bâtissais une tombe pour renaître brillant et glorieux. J'allais risquer de mourir pour vivre" (Pc,133). This temporary ebb of life is approached by Raphaël with a false confidence born of unrecognized talent and enthusiasm for success. At this point the peril of illness is far removed from his concerns: "Je n'avais pas voulu prévoir la maladie. . . . Je n'ai pas douté un moment de ma bonne santé" (Pc,134).

This autobiographical background, Raphaël's awakened conscience, portends the disharmony and discord between the scholarly and societal, moral and economic aspects of his life, paving the way for his failure in these areas.²⁵ Illness will become the pivotal point around which his vanquished hopes and broken dreams languish and expire.

Raphaël's literary banishment to the Gaudin's lodging is prophetic: "Rien n'était plus horrible que cette mansarde aux murs jaunes et sales, qui sentait la misère et appelait son savant" (Pc,137). (Italics mine.) It was there that he worked on a comedy and put the finishing

touches on his Théorie de la volonté. There, too, he found the complete antithesis of Fœdora--the angelic Pauline: "Comme dans un récit d'apprentissage, le héros cherche l'amour loin de lui, pour reconnaître à la fin qu'il était tout près: la femme désirable, c'était l'amie d'enfance."²⁶ Raphaël is Pygmalion to Pauline's Galatea, having formed her in the image he desired by dint of lessons; however, he is unable to love her in the midst of their mutual destitution--a prevalent Balzacian theme whereby love cannot flourish in the context of a hand-to-mouth existence. Raphaël recognizes this failure of moral strength and, consequently, designates it as " . . . cette maladie humaine que nous nommons la civilisation . . ." (Pc,142). This initially unadorned and unsophisticated Pauline, not yet the elegant and affluent person of recent fortune with whom Raphaël falls in love at a later date, is the opposite of Fœdora whose opulence underscores the synthetic and artificial nature of stylish society. Fœdora, " . . . un sujet précieux pour l'observation médicale . . ." (Pc,158), is the curious anatomical and psychological prototype who refrains from romantic entanglements and, step by step, infiltrates the fundamental

substance that is l'homme intérieur, eventually to become a destructive component of Raphaël's life force. She typifies " . . . l'opulence de la peste . . . " (Pc,203) whose dread and revulsion are such that the boundary between horror and odious beauty coalesce whereby one cannot be distinguished from the other. In a moment of insight, Raphaël recognizes the virulent influence she wields: " . . . Fœdora, c'est ma maladie, je meurs de Fœdora!" (P,203).

Raphaël does perceive the toxic effect Fœdora has on him; like a bacterium that leaves its mark at a site of infection so, too, Fœdora has left her imprint on Raphaël. His adoration of her is one which is systematic in approach for their romance, such as it is, must be planned according to Raphaël's meager finances. For lack of the requisite amount to pay a coachman or to purchase new gloves, a Balzacian romance may be doomed from the very start. His ill-advised affection for and fascination with Fœdora is of a clinical nature and occupied with the investigation of the living subject by observation, as evidenced by the scrutiny to which the unknowing Fœdora is subject while Raphaël hides behind her bedroom drapes, unable to discern any symptom or secret suffering which would force her to

shun a romantic attachment (Pc,183). Raphaël analyzes and dissects her, with the scientific eye of Cuvier²⁷, to discover her true inner nature. Raphaël's study of Fœdora brings to light the teratogenic or monstrous essence of her stolid being. His courtship of Fœdora is not only a physiognomical study in which Raphaël endeavors to discover her temperament and character from her outward appearance and actions but, also, an ineluctable flirtation with illness and moral baseness, wherein he concludes: ". . . Fœdora m'avait communiqué la lèpre de sa vanité. En sondant mon âme, je la trouvai gangrenée, pourrie" (Pc,202). (Italics mine.) Fœdora, consequently, is perceived by Raphaël as an infectious agent whose contagious influence has been communicated to his mind and heart. This faltering moral decay, of which Fœdora is the carrier, insidiously infiltrates Raphaël's moral fiber and is epitomized by its representation of the contemporary society reluctant to recognize a man of talent. Marcel Reboussin discerns in La Peau de chagrin: ". . . une conception de la société qui va dominer toute La Comédie humaine; elle éclaire d'ailleurs la psychologie de Balzac plus que la société; je l'appelle le mythe de Fœdora."²⁸

The conclusion of Raphaël's autobiographical narrative,

finding him heir to an immense fortune, also finds him giving credence to the omnipotent power of the magical skin, especially the connection between its size and his life span. Balzac heralds Raphaël's destiny by underscoring his underlying hereditary weaknesses and his fateful belief in the talisman: "Il voyait ce que chaque désir devait lui coûter de jours. Puis il croyait à la Peau de chagrin, il s'écoutait respirer, il se sentait déjà malade, il se demandait: Ne suis-je pas pulmonique? Ma mère n'est-elle pas morte de la poitrine?" (Pc,209).

(Italics mine.) This augury, filled with amazed terror and fear, delineates the foreordained path of destruction he is to follow.

By virtue of the title "L'Agonie," Balzac accentuates the physiological, as well as subjective, aspects of Raphaël's gradual descent to doom and dissolution of the life force in the novel's third part. The latter's inner demons, once determined by his suicidal tendency, now belong to a literary Balzacian reality independent of Raphaël's mind; now they are perceived and acknowledged, through the medium of the shagreen skin, by the scientific and medical community summoned by the protagonist turned patient. Raphaël's sickness is at once foreshadowed and

confirmed by the question M. Porriquet asks Jonathas:

" . . . monsieur le marquis serait-il malade?" (Pc, 213).

This inquiry affirms the validity of Raphaël's literary ailment; his symptoms are no longer exclusively self-limiting since they affect those around him by dint of the regimented life style he now is required to observe. In "L'Agonie" his subjective "illness"--nebulous in form except for the link between the shrinking of the talisman and Raphaël's ebbing life span--becomes an objective "disease" with a prescribed set of symptoms, diagnoses and prognoses according to the doctors consulted. It is their opinions, albeit erroneous, which elevate Raphaël's disorder to a condition in which bodily health is impaired and not just a mystical malediction induced by the talisman. The etiology of this literary malady remains, nevertheless, threefold: physiologic, supernatural and monomaniacal; his inescapable preoccupation with the talisman causes him to fall ill. This melancholic obsession, in turn, has a direct influence on his health and, more specifically, his physiognomy: "L'extrême mélancolie à laquelle il paraissait être en proie était exprimée par l'attitude maladive de son corps affaîssé; elle était peinte sur son front, sur son visage pâle comme une fleur

"étiolée" (Pc,216). The talisman, which renewed Raphaël's lease on life prior to "L'Agonie," now hastens to shorten and destroy it. It is, consequently, in this third triptych of the novel that Balzac has instituted a downward trend in Raphaël's health; this trend is manifested by the myriad innuendoes in the form of depreciatory allusions and derogatory references concerning the symptoms and signs of the latter's failing health and literary disease. Raphaël's attempted conservation of the life force echoes in the unusual behavior of Balzac's father, Bernard-François. Accustomed to awakening before dawn, the latter decided one morning not to step foot out of bed. This practice continued over a period of time, even though he was not ill, and was interpreted by the physician, Moreau de Tours, as hypochondriacal melancholia with an accompanying effort to preserve physical and intellectual strength and energy.²⁹ So, too, does Raphaël try to conserve his own life force by submission of his will and resignation of all actions and motions which constitute life. In surrendering the Balzacian concept of volonté, he hopes to exist as a simple biological entity, merely going through the motions of living and, thereby, reserving his life's resources. The prototype for this

mode of existence is not entirely formulated by Raphaël on his own, but rather suggested to him while dining with his notary public:

Là, un médecin assez en vogue avait raconté sérieusement, au dessert, la manière dont un Suisse attaqué de pulmonie s'en était guéri. Cet homme n'avait pas dit un mot pendant dix ans, et s'était soumis à ne respirer que six fois par minute dans l'air épais d'une vacherie, en suivant un régime alimentaire extrêmement doux. Je serai cet homme! se dit en lui-même Raphaël, qui voulait vivre à tout prix (Pc, 217). (Italics mine.)

It is, henceforth, in the midst of luxurious material surroundings that Raphaël embarks upon an ascetic life involving a parsimonious economy of the Balzacian life force. In reality it is, in this manner, that he actually kills himself by attempting to live.

"L'Agonie" cements and reinforces the themes of the novel's first two parts by reuniting the allegorical personages which are its lifeblood: Pauline, Fœdora, the centenary shopkeeper, and Euphrasie. Raphaël's wish made in "Le Talisman"--that the antiquated shopkeeper fall in love with a dancer--is realized as the centenarian is viewed offering his decrepit arm to the decadent Euphrasie. Here, too, Fœdora, epitomizing the cruelty of society, tyrannizes a new victim while Raphaël recaptures his formerly dormant love for Pauline. Pauline's presentiment of

catastrophe: " . . . j'ai compris que je ne te survivrais pas: ta vie est ma vie" (Pc,236-237) mirrors Raphaël's literal and figurative premonition: " . . . nous paierons sans doute, un jour, ce bonheur par quelque effroyable chagrin" (Pc,230). These forebodings harmonize with the avowed illness of Pauline's father: " . . . mon père est bien malade. Il est revenu des Indes, bien souffrant. Il a manqué mourir au Havre, où nous sommes allées le chercher" (Pc,232).

Up until this point, Raphaël's literary malady has been speculative and nebulous in scope, defined only by the reduction in size of the talisman, a totally subjective occurrence based upon his wishes. Fully realizing the supremacy of systematized knowledge over superstition, the quest for his cure is to become an objective one: " . . . dans un siècle de lumières ou nous avons appris que les diamants sont les cristaux du carbone, à une époque où tout s'explique, . . . je croirais, moi! à une espèce de Mané, Thekel, Pharès? . . . Allons voir les savants" (Pc,237). These prefatory remarks usher in the participation of science and the scientific community in the expectation of finding a panacean answer to explain the talisman's continued diminution. Balzac calls upon

contemporary figures to give credence to the various fields of knowledge: Lavrille, the zoologist, is reminiscent of Latreille, the naturalist who was one of the founders of entomology; Planchette, the physics professor, represents the mathematician Hoëne Wronski; and Japhet, the chemist, symbolizes Baron Thénard who, in collaboration with Gay-Lussac, invented hydrogen peroxide.³⁰

Balzac has, thus, delineated the three major branches of science prevalent during his era--natural history, physics and chemistry, offering a romanticized rendition of each, characterized by picturesque strangeness, and showing but minimal scientific bases for validity. In the realm of Balzacian literary science, zoology names and classifies creatures of the animal kingdom, resulting in an orderly taxonomy of beasts and plants according to their natural relationships; physics involves the practical application of the laws of motion, the effect of forces upon properties of bodies and the working of machines; and chemistry deals with the composition of substances and the transformations they undergo.³¹ These realms of science mirror reality inasmuch as their inherent presuppositions are concerned, however, despite the scientific claims and assertions of the savants, their

efforts to impede the talisman's shrinking are incongruous exercises in futility. Appurtenant to the savants' attempts to arrest the talisman's inexorable diminution are their caricatural depictions, grotesque and ludicrous exaggerations that tend to obfuscate any logic and rationalization inherent in the branches of science represented. Lavrille's "scientific" assessment was that the shagreen skin had been used in Persia as a remedy for renal dysfunction and gout (Pc,240), however, beyond this sparse information, he only informed Raphaël of useless palmipede terminology, descriptive of web-footed birds. Lavrille's scientific orientation is monolithic in nature, never venturing from its original path: "La science est vaste, la vie humaine est bien courte. Aussi n'avons-nous pas la prétention de connaître tous les phénomènes de la nature" (Pc,241). Lavrille's lineal solution, as those of the other savants, results in referring Raphaël to Planchette, the physics professor.

Planchette is defined as a " . . . véritable poète perdu dans une perpétuelle contemplation, occupé à regarder toujours un abîme sans fond, LE MOUVEMENT" (Pc,242).

Like Lavrille, he confines his knowledge within the bounds of the scientific specialty he represents. His contemplations,

moliéresque in scope, also reflect those proposed by Horace Bianchon concerning the omnipotence and value of nature: "L'homme n'invente pas une force, il la dirige, et la science consiste à imiter la nature" (Pc,242). So distinctive and abstruse is the basis on which science rests that Planchette is unable to define it: "La Mécanique a pour but d'appliquer les lois du mouvement ou de les neutraliser. Quant au mouvement en lui-même, je vous le déclare avec humilité, nous sommes impuissants à le définir" (Pc,243). (Italics mine.) Raphaël's visit to Spieghalter, ". . . dans la rue de la Santé, nom de favorable augure" (Pc,248), is a venture into a laboratory whose forges contain a Rabelaisian assortment of mechanisms: "C'était une pluie de feu, un déluge de clous, un océan de pistons, de vis, de leviers, de traverses, de limes, d'écrous, une mer de fontes, de bois, de soupapes et d'aciers en barres" (Pc,248). Mechanical engineering is, however, unsuccessful in extending the dimensions of the talisman in spite of the ". . . sécurité que donnent les convictions scientifiques" (Pc,249). Raphaël's affirmation of the talisman's supernatural nature reinforces, at this point, the failure of science: "Il y a décidément quelque chose de diabolique là-dedans. . . . Aucune

puissance humaine ne saurait donc me donner un jour de plus!" (Pc,250). The chemist, Japhet, remains Raphaël's last hope in the realm of science: "Le savant cassa un rasoir en voulant entamer la Peau, il tenta de la briser par une forte décharge d'électricité, puis il la soumit à l'action de la pile voltaïque, enfin les foudres de la science échouèrent sur le terrible talisman" (Pc,251).

In this scientific excursus of the novel, Planchette, who has accompanied the ailing hero to the chemist's laboratory, agrees with Japhet to keep their failures with the talisman from the Academy of Science; the futility of their efforts are summarized by their actions: "Ils se prirent à rire, et dînèrent en gens qui ne voyaient plus qu'un phénomène dans un miracle" (Pc,252).

Raphaël's decision to involve the medical profession in his dilemma is laced with several Balzacian components which form the very substance of existence--volonté, vitalité, santé, and maladie: "Pour mourir . . . il faut que mon organisation, ce mécanisme de chair et d'os animé par ma volonté, et qui fait de moi un individu homme, présente une lésion sensible. Les médecins doivent connaître les symptômes de la vitalité attaquée, et pouvoir me dire si je suis en santé ou malade" (Pc,253-254). The medical

consultation to which Raphaël is subjected is marked by its duplicity: the doctors examining the patient secretly are examined by him (Pc,259): "A force d'examiner les trois docteurs, Valentin ne découvrit en eux aucune sympathie pour ses maux" (Pc,258). These unfeeling practitioners, with the exception of Bianchon, are viewed by Raphaël not as saviors, but as executioners, the impossible burden of survival, therefore, is transferred from the patient to them; the centenarian shopkeeper, as well, served the same purpose. Hoping to gain control over an inexorable death is Raphaël's last bright prospect and ultimate folly.

Having conferred the savants' identity with a note of authenticity, Balzac also has ascribed contemporary identification to the doctors: Caméristus designates Récamier, the head of the vitaliste school of medical thought, who purports that life is an ineffable phenomenon; Brisset represents Broussais, head of the mécano-chimiste school of medical thought, who believes that a disease's etiology may be explained by evident causes; and Maugredie depicts Magendie, holding eclectic medical doctrines.³²

Their disparate approaches to Raphaël's ailment are expressed by the manner in which they seek a diagnosis:

"Caméristus sent, Brisset examine, Maugredie doute" (Pc,263).

Bianchon alone displays compassion and a sense of humanity:

La figure d'Horace trahissait une peine profonde, un attendrissement plein de tristesse. Il était médecin depuis trop peu de temps pour être insensible devant la douleur et impassible près d'un lit funèbre; il ne savait pas éteindre dans ses yeux les larmes amies qui empêchent un homme de voir clair et de saisir, comme un général d'armée, le moment propice à la victoire, sans écouter les cris des moribonds (Pc, 259).

Raphaël's brain, lucid and rational, persists in surviving the slow death of his body. His disease, as perceived by the doctors and experienced by the patient, is no longer an entity foreign and exterior which has invaded the body in order to attack its "vital force" but an aberration within the life force itself. Foucault aptly defines this concept: ". . . the idea of a disease attacking life must be replaced by the much denser notion of pathological life. Morbid phenomena are to be understood on the basis of the same text of life, and not as a nosological essence. . . ."33 Raphaël's fantastic literary disease may, therefore, be viewed as having a dual purpose: firstly, as a living substance, albeit noxious, striving to survive. In order to do so it must vie with the hero for supremacy of his anatomical life force in an antagonistic symbiotic struggle. In the realm of the

supernatural, Raphaël "becomes" his disease and is indistinguishable from it inasmuch as the talisman shrinks with each wish he makes. His dilemma is, thus, also two-fold: the cadaverous Raphaël may be likened to a vampire feeding on his own mortality and experiencing, at the same time, inexplicable medical symptoms. Even before the doctors' consultation, Pauline is able to recognize, if not diagnose Raphaël's medical symptoms:

Lorsque tu dors, ta respiration n'est pas franche, il y a dans ta poitrine quelque chose qui résonne. . . . Tu as pendant ton sommeil une petite toux sèche, absolument semblable à celle de mon père qui meurt d'une phtisie. J'ai reconnu dans le bruit de tes poumons quelques-uns des effets bizarres de cette maladie. Puis tu avais la fièvre . . . ta main était moite et brûlante (Pc, 255).

Pulmonary tuberculosis, in addition to slowly dissipating the health and life of Pauline's father, was responsible for the death of Raphaël's mother. Raphaël, therefore, is predisposed both anatomically and circumstantially to this disease whose deleterious effects are hastened by the malevolent talisman. Dr. Bonnet-Roy sees an integration of multiple factors in Raphaël's fall from health:

La tuberculose pulmonaire de Raphaël est évidente, même aux yeux des profanes. Et encore, l'évolution de cette tuberculose pulmonaire se complique-t-elle de troubles nerveux, sans parler de l'action maléfique de la peau de chagrin elle-même. On est fondé à se demander si Raphaël succombe à la phtisie ou à la

multiplicité des souhaits qui ameunissent progressive-
ment le fameux talisman.³⁴ (Italics mine.)

Raphaël's literary illness is characterized both by the onset of physiologic symptoms and the effect of preternatural causes. Balzac, thus, has given fair ground to the dual historic view of illness' beginnings--both scientific and supernatural: "On the one hand, illness is endogenous in man, and the individual carries it in embryo; the ideas of resistance to disease, heredity and predisposition are here the key concepts. On the other hand, illness is thought of as exogenous; man is naturally healthy and illness is due to the action of an evil will, a demon or sorcerer. . . ."35

The last fragment of Raphaël's tormented existence may be seen as a representative recapitulation of a succession of unfortunate events responsible for bringing him to a catastrophic end. At Aix, Raphaël's identity has been completely subordinated to his illness; he is no longer the ailing man of genius, but a vitiated "leper" shunned by the spa's social group and granted the status of a persona non grata: "L'assemblée se mit à chuchoter, en regardant le malade d'un air plus ou moins expressif, comme s'il eût commis quelque grave impertinence" (Pc,264).

(Italics mine.) Balzac interprets this peculiarity of human nature as a naturalist would explain the ecosystem of a jungle habitat, delving into the mutual relationships between organisms and their environment; however, in this case the "ecosystem of disease" is the one to be elucidated: "Le beau monde bannit de son sein les malheureux, comme un homme de santé vigoureuse expulse de son corps un principe morbifique. Le monde abhorre les douleurs et les infortunes, il les redoute à l'égal des contagions. . . ."

(Pc,266). The consultation with the insincere doctor at Aix counterbalances the diagnoses made in Paris. The former, claiming that " . . . l'air vital d'un homme dévoré par le génie . . . " (Pc,268) is to be found elsewhere, tries to curtail Raphaël's sojourn, thereby, banishing him from the spa just as the Parisian specialists exiled him from the city. The pattern of Raphaël's earlier life is repeated once more at Mont-Dor; there he comes upon a centenarian living in the salubrious protection of nature, counterweighing the centenarian shopkeeper existing within the midst of the perfidious metropolis. This haven in Auvergne which exudes a " . . . laisser-aller primordial, une routine de bonheur . . . " (Pc,279) is the very realization of how life should be lived in order to safeguard

its vital force or energy. During the bacchanal in "La Femme sans cœur," in a moment of lucidity, Raphaël foresaw this pristine paradise: ". . . il pensa vaguement à l'existence mécanique et sans désirs d'un paysan de Bretagne, chargé d'enfants, labourant son champ, mangeant du sarrazin . . . dansant le dimanche sur une pelouse verte. . . ." (Pc, 209-210). (Italics mine.) As was the case in Aix, Raphaël is categorized as le malade and his disease is defined by those around him: ". . . il entendit . . . le bulletin de sa santé donné par son hôtesse à Jonathas. . . . Il a encore toussé pendant toute cette nuit à rendre l'âme. . . . Quelle damnée maladie qu'il a!" (Pc, 283).

Leaving Auvergne for Paris, Raphaël's status diminishes from le malade to le moribond (Pc, 284). Despite this drastic change and even upon the threshold of his life force's inexorable extinction, Raphaël prefers a tenebrous somnolence sustained by an opium-laced draught to death, reasoning that to sleep is still to be alive (Pc, 289). Before the patient's final frenzied moment of life, Balzac aptly describes a physiologic phenomenon representing the body's final attempt to recapture the escaping life force in a semblance of counterfeit health: ". . . Raphaël, par un de ses caprices physiologiques, l'étonnement et le

désespoir des sciences médicales resplendissait de beauté pendant son sommeil. Un rose vif colorait ses joues blanches. . . . La vie était en fleurs sur ce visage tranquille et reposé" (Pc,290).

Raphaël's suicide was preordained, for his death was, on one hand, a voluntary act of self-annihilation dependent upon the nefarious transgression of vouloir and pouvoir and, as well, Pauline's prediction that the woman who loves him will cause his death. "Il est à moi, je l'ai tué, ne l'avais-je pas prédit?" (Pc,292), is the affirmation of this augury Pauline knowingly professes to Jonathas. This omen also is emphasized in the epilogue; whereas *Fœdora* depicts la Société whose constancy is a steadfast part of the social order, Pauline is portrayed as a fleeting reverie or vision, a sylphidine creature and, ultimately, as the phantom of la Dame des Belles Cousines (Pc,294)--a poor protectress who, in Le Petit Jehan de Saintré, betrayed her lover.

Raphaël's brief life may be classified under the phenomenon of ephemera; just as his existence began and ended within a short-lived span of time so, too, did his health deteriorate by dint of progressively worsening physical and supernatural causes. This novel, as suggested by

Bardèche, is Balzac's literary prescription for monomania and valetudinarianism: "La Peau de chagrin est une formule médicale de la vie humaine. Elle condamne les passions, les idées trop capiteuses qui agissent comme un alcool, elle signale l'usure par la vie sociale. . . . Elle montre que la vie brillante, le luxe, les plaisirs, sont comme un poison pour notre organisme. . . ."36

Notes

¹ Honoré de Balzac, "La Peau de chagrin," in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 10 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1979), p. 138.

² Idem, "Physiologie du mariage ou méditations de philosophie éclectique sur le bonheur et le malheur conjugal," in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 11 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1980), p. 1160.

³ Moïse Le Yaouanc, Nosographie de l'humanité balzacienne (Paris: Librairie Maloine, 1959), p. 189.

⁴ Honoré de Balzac and Félix Davin, "Introduction, par Félix Davin, aux 'Études philosophiques'" in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 10 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1979), p. 1213.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Henceforth, references to the specific work of La Comédie humaine, on which each chapter is based, will be indicated in parentheses immediately after the quotation or reference by an abbreviated title and page number, i. e., (Pc,129). All quotations and references are taken from the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade series, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 1976-1981. Titles abbreviated in this way are: Le Curé de Tours (CT), La Peau de chagrin (Pc), Le Père Goriot (PG), and Pierrette (P). References or quotations to other works of La Comédie humaine not treated in the major chapters will be indicated in a similar fashion when the name of the work, in its entirety, introduces a quotation or reference.

⁷ Balzac and Davin, "Études philosophiques," p. 181.

⁸ Honoré de Balzac, Correspondance, éd. Roger Pierrot, 5 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1960), 1:536.

- 9 Ari Kiev, N. D., The Courage to Live (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1979), p. 2.
- 10 L. Surville, Balzac. Sa vie et ses œuvres d'après sa correspondance (Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1858), p. 92.
- 11 Le Yaouanc, Nosographie, 317.
- 12 Idem, Correspondance, 1:501.
- 13 Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, Physiologie du goût ou Méditations de gastronomie transcendante dédiée aux gastronomes parisiens (Paris: H. Fournier et Cie., 1838), p. 113.
- 14 Surville, Balzac, 7.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Maurice Bardèche, Balzac romancier. La Formation de l'art du roman chez Balzac: 1820-1835 (Paris: Plon, 1940), p. 335.
- 17 Bardeche, Balzac romancier, 329.
- 18 Fernand Baldensperger, L'Appel de la fiction orientale chez Honoré de Balzac (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 14.
- 19 Marcel Reboussin, Balzac et le mythe de Fœdora (Paris: Éditions A.-G. Nizet, 1966), p. 17.
- 20 Per Nykrog, La Pensée de Balzac dans La Comédie humaine (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1965), p. 265.
- 21 W. H. Van Der Gun, La Courtisane romantique et son rôle dans la Comédie humaine de Balzac (Assen, Pays-Bas: Van Gorcum & Comp. S. A., 1963), p. 82.
- 22 André Maurois, Prométhée ou la vie de Balzac (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1965), p. 204.
- 23 Pierre Abraham, Recherches sur la création intellectuelle. Créatures chez Balzac (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1931), p. 118.

- 24 Ruth Amossy, "La 'Confession' de Raphaël: Contradictions et Interférences," in Balzac et La Peau de chagrin, éd. Claude Duchet (Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1979), p. 44.
- 25 Amossy, "La 'Confession' de Raphaël," 50.
- 26 Jeannine Jallat, "Fœdora ou le corps de l'autre," in Balzac et La Peau de chagrin, éd. Claude Duchet (Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1979), p. 143.
- 27 Jallat, "Fœdora," 146.
- 28 Reboussin, Balzac et le mythe de Fœdora, 9-10.
- 29 G. Raviart, "Le Génie de Balzac du point de vue psychiatrique," Annales Médico-Psychologiques, 2, No. 4 (Novembre 1954), 494.
- 30 Jacques Neefs, "La Localisation des sciences," in Balzac et La Peau de chagrin, éd. Claude Duchet (Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1979), p. 137.
- 31 Neefs, "La Localisation," 135.
- 32 Neefs, "La Localisation," 137.
- 33 Michel Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic. An Archaeology of Medical Perception, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith, ed. R. D. Laing (New York: Random House, Inc., 1973), p. 153.
- 34 Dr. F. Bonnet-Roy, Balzac, les médecins, la médecine et la science (Paris: Éditions des Horizons de France, 1944), p. 41.
- 35 Claudine Herzlich, Health and Illness. A Social Psychological Analysis, trans. Douglas Graham, ed. Henri Tajfel (London: Academic Press, 1973), p. 19.
- 36 Maurice Bardèche, Une Lecture de Balzac (Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1964), p. 16.

CHAPTER III

THE MARTYR SYNDROME: LE PÈRE GORIOT

Les médecins qui ont exercé ne voient que la
maladie, moi, je vois encore le malade. . . .
Bianchon dans Le Père Goriot
Honoré de Balzac¹

On November 22, 1834, Balzac penned a revelatory letter to Madame Hanska in which he alluded to the moral scope and societal underpinnings of his latest novel: "Le Père Goriot est une belle œuvre, mais monstrueusement triste. Il fallait bien pour être complet montrer un égout moral de Paris et cela fait l'effet d'une plaie dégoûtante."² This "loathsome wound" and the source from which it emanates--the decrepit boardinghouse along with the machinations and duplicity of its inhabitants, the filial disavowal of a father treated as a pariah, and a neophyte's struggle on the battlefield of high society--serve as the background of Goriot's disease and embody the

salient characteristics of his environment. A monomaniac, Goriot's malady is biosocial and biopsychological in nature, encompassing his physical condition, psychological state and social status; these multifaceted components determine the potential for his progressive illness.

Le Père Goriot may be viewed as theater containing as many intricacies inherent in a Dickensian intrigue, as in Great Expectations or Nicholas Nickleby. However, this obscure and frightful tragédie parisienne (PG, 126) with its cascading plots and subplots is Balzacian in scope, going beyond mere caricature to incite pity and disquiet through a succession of events and, eventually, leading Goriot to catastrophe due to his paternal fanaticism. This "tragedy" of paternal ardor is incorporated in four major parts which may be defined as: Act 1--the noxious influence of Madame Vauquer's boardinghouse on Goriot; Act 2--Rastignac's social aspirations paralleled by Goriot's paternal fervor; Act 3--the revelation of the mysterious nature of Vautrin and the foreshadowing of Goriot's morbid condition; and Act 4--Goriot's deathbed scene and demise. Each "act" contains varied "scenes" which elucidate and reinforce the tragedy's kaleidoscopic nature. This study will examine the course Goriot's monomania and valetudinar-

ianism take in each of the four distinct segments of the work.

As indicated by Roger Pierrot, Balzac's dedication of Le Père Goriot to the great and illustrious Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (PG,49) is worthy of remark since this work is the one in which Balzac, influenced by the noted zoologist, initiated the system of reappearing protagonists, thereby forming the foundation for a veritable network of personages whose lives entwine like the manifold threads in a many-hued tapestry. In 1830, several years before the introduction of Balzac's literary device, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire developed his theory of unity of composition pertinent to the animal kingdom, which he applied to invertebrates, a premise Cuvier emphatically opposed.³ It is, consequently, Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's view of evolution that inspired the many species and extended family of Balzac's literary universe. It is, moreover, Balzac-Davin who pridefully affirms that the seemingly chaotic theory of reappearing protagonists actually is a way of vivifying a network of literary personages:

A travers toutes les fondations qui se croisent çà et là dans un désordre apparent, les yeux intelligens sauront comme nous reconnaître cette grande histoire de l'homme et de la société que nous prépare M. de Balzac. Un grand pas a été fait dernièrement. En

voyant reparaître dans le Père Goriot quelques-uns des personnages déjà créés, le public a compris l'une des plus hardies intentions de l'auteur, celle de donner la vie et le mouvement à tout un monde fictif dont les personnages subsisteront peut-être encore, alors que la plus grande partie des modèles seront morts et oubliés.⁴

True to his intention, Balzac imparts an existence of its own to Madame Vauquer's boardinghouse which, in turn, is to have a noxious influence on Goriot and serve as the work's focal point. Balzac's detailed account of the boardinghouse, its owner and inhabitants is an expository narration which elucidates the peculiarities of constitution and temperament of this cast of players. On the very first page, Balzac informs the reader that the personages possessing these idiosyncrasies are historically situated " . . . en 1819, époque à laquelle ce drame commence . . ." (PG,49); several pages later the author concludes: "Telle était la situation générale de la pension bourgeoise à la fin du mois de novembre 1819" (PG,76). It is within these pages, before any action takes place, that Balzac establishes a static equilibrium which temporarily forestalls the series of approaching events up until the moment when Rastignac returns home from the festive evening hosted by his cousin, Madame de Beauséant (PG,76).

This counterpoise not only establishes a state of balance which introduces the personages and determines their rôles, but also momentarily delays the sequence of episodes comprising this work. This lull and cessation in the Balzacian universe is a literary seduction of the reader who, holding the book in a pale hand and ensconced in a velvety armchair, expects to be entertained and amused by the unfolding tale (PG,50). However, true to the theatrical metaphor in this work classifying it as dramaturgy rather than a novel, Balzac warns the reader: ". . . ce drame n'est ni une fiction, ni un roman. All is true, il est si véritable, que chacun peut en reconnaître les éléments chez soi; dans son cœur peut-être" (PG,50). Moreover, this "morality play" of sorts, wherein Goriot personifies Fatherhood, is demographically precise in that it covers a specific vicinity and, therefore, may be esoteric in its appeal: "Sera-t-elle comprise au-delà de Paris? le doute est permis. Les particularités de cette scène . . . ne peuvent être appréciées qu'entre les buttes de Montmartre et les hauteurs de Montrouge . . . vallée remplie de souffrances réelles . . ." (PG,49-50). Balzac, having set the stage, proceeds to heighten reality for the peruser of this volume by illuminating the landscape

of Goriot's existence, suffering and subsequent martyrdom.

The account of the quarter in which the Vauquer boardinghouse is located is replete with straightforward as well as circuitous references to malady, attesting to its intrinsic moral and physical decrepitude. Goriot, Rastignac and the City of Paris may be viewed, individually or even collectively, as the main protagonists of this drama. Paris, itself, conspires to create the dismal ambiance of the boardinghouse which is located in a quarter of tomblike silence. Situated in the back of the rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève between the domes of the Val-de-Grâce and the Panthéon, the boardinghouse is subject to the changing atmospheric conditions caused by the two monuments' cupolas which cast off yellowish, harsh colors, thereby enveloping everything in gloom (PG, 50). The quarter's aridity is seen in the paved streets which are dry and in its brooks which contain neither mud nor water (PG, 50). Balzac's ominous warning asserts that to lose one's way in this street is to embark upon a descent to a subterranean place of burial:

Un Parisien égaré ne verrait là que des pensions bourgeoises ou des institutions, de la misère . . . de la vieillesse qui meurt . . . Nul quartier de

Paris n'est plus horrible. . . . La rue Neuve-Sainte-Geneviève surtout est comme un cadre de bronze, le seul qui convienne à ce récit, auquel on ne saurait trop préparer l'intelligence par des couleurs brunes, par des idées graves; ainsi que, de marche en marche, le jour diminue et le chant du conducteur se creuse, alors que le voyageur descend aux Catacombes. Comparaison vraie! Qui décidera de ce qui est plus horrible à voir, ou des cœurs desséchés ou des crânes vides? (PG, 50-51). (Italics mine.)

Madame Vauquer's boardinghouse faithfully reflects the character of the quarter in which it is located, embodying its outward manifestations as well as the core of its innate nature. Balzac's assertion that his drama may be readily valued and understood only within a specific area, between Montmartre and Montrouge (PG, 49), and, therefore, by a certain stratum of the population would seemingly render it quite limited in its appeal. It is, however, in its given abstruseness that universal themes are apparent and may be acted out in other geographical settings. The drama's imputed recondite nature is, nevertheless, suggested by the boardinghouse's architectural features. According to Nicole Mozet, the Vauquer boardinghouse is endowed with neither architectural beauty nor harmony. Paradoxically, its only coherent feature is found in its lack of uniformity, its heteroclitite nature. It is an indecipherable puzzle, thereby, rendering its description an

acrobatic exercise in interpretation.⁵ Indeed, the aesthetical appearance of the boardinghouse is a perspective which leaps out at the passerby, imprinting upon his mind's eye vulgarity and inelegance:

La façade, élevée de trois étages et surmontée de mansardes, est bâtie en moellons et badigeonnée avec cette couleur jaune qui donne un caractère ignoble à presque toutes les maisons de Paris. Les cinq croisées percées à chaque étage ont de petits carreaux et sont garnies de jalousies dont aucune n'est relevée de la même manière, en sorte que toutes leurs lignes jurent entre elles (PG,52).
(Italics mine.)

Not only is the boardinghouse's façade offensive to the wayfarer's estimation of symmetry and grace but, in an implied sense, also to his state of health, for it is through a narrow door that the pension's trash is expelled in order to prevent pestilence (PG,52). The pestilential suggestion of epidemic disease carries with it a plaguy notion of that which is harmful to the boardinghouse's inhabitants, such as the untidy and seemingly infectious state of affairs to be found within its portals.

The view of the interior of the pension attests to the misery which condemns its boarders (PG,53). Distinctly manifest are olfactory perceptions of the drawing room and ocular observations of the dining room: "Cette première pièce exhale une odeur sans nom dans la langue,

et qu'il faudrait appeler l'odeur de pension. Elle sent le renfermé, le moisi, le rance . . . elle pue le service, l'office, l'hospice" (PG,53). The drawing room is elegant in comparison to the dining room whose squalor reveals dust-laden cupboards, table linen discolored by wine, framed prints which take away one's appetite and furniture which is one-armed, one-eyed and disabled, in fact, furnishings anthropomorphized to show effects of malady. Balzac reiterates the condition of the boarding-house's interior by defining its misery in progressive stages from mire and spots to tatters and decay: "Enfin, là règne la misère sans poésie; une misère économe, concentrée, râpée. Si elle n'a pas de fange encore, elle a des taches; si elle n'a ni trous ni haillons, elle va tomber en pourriture" (PG,54).

From the neighborhood or quarter to the boarding-house's exterior and interior Balzac, through a deductive descriptive process which starts from the general and advances to the particular, focuses on Madame Vauquer whose characteristics unmistakably epitomize those of the pension: ". . . toute sa personne explique la pension, comme la pension implique sa personne" (PG,54). Her physiognomy, evidence of an oldish, rotund face, is in harmony

with the dining room which bespeaks adversity and in which Madame Vauquer can breathe the polluted air without being sickened by it (PG,54). She embodies a sense of immunity to the noxiousness of the pension since she and the boardinghouse manifest reciprocity in their very essence and being: "Le bain ne va pas sans l'argousin, vous n'imaginerez pas l'un sans l'autre. L'embonpoint blafard de cette petite femme est le produit de cette vie, comme le typhus est la conséquence des exhalaisons d'un hôpital" (PG,54-55). (Italics mine.)

The sum total of Madame Vauquer's lodgers comprises, in microcosm, the epitome of the exterior universe and the components out of which a complete society might be composed (PG,62). Represented in an almost allegorical fashion are personages whose actions bespeak their identities and determine the moral and corporeal "species" by which they would be classified by a Balzac-Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. Indeed, the lodgers are described, on a moral scale, as forlorn beings, convicts condemned to lifelong penal servitude in the charity hospital that is the Vauquer boardinghouse (PG,62). Inhabiting floors which reflect, in ascending order, their economic worth, Balzac introduces the lodgers who denote the theme of malady inherent in their

depiction. Malady, in this case, is defined in its broadest sense; not only as physical affliction but as societal attitudes, a "social leprosy" of sorts. In the preamble to the Traité des excitants modernes, a component of the aptly titled Pathologie de la vie sociale, Balzac purports that society along with the power of thought, acting upon our excesses and requirements, may be responsible for malady: "L'état de société fait de nos besoins, de nos nécessités, de nos goûts, autant de plaies, autant de maladies, par les excès auxquels nous nous portons, poussés par le développement que leur imprime la pensée: il n'y a rien en nous par où elle ne se trahisse. Là où il n'y a pas maladie physique, il y a maladie moral."⁶

(Italics mine.) In this respect, Madame Vauquer's lodgers show symptoms of malady "sacred" and "profane," either moral or corporeal; some boarders show signs of both, as evidenced by Rastignac's aspirations, Mademoiselle Michonneau's avarice, Poiret's lack of will and Vautrin's craving for domination. Although not to be literally inferred as actual manifestations of true illness, malady is suggested by metaphorical allusions with which Balzac seasons his prose, whether it be the prevention of pestilence (PG, 52) or the squalid condition of the boarding-

house's interior (PG, 54), among other references.

Residing on the boardinghouse's first floor, Madame Couture, who watches over Victorine as a sentinel, is introduced as an almost entirely benevolent guardian. Madame Couture had welcomed Victorine's brokenhearted mother into her home and after the latter's death, took charge of the orphan, treating her as a daughter and instilling in her the tenets of religion. The widow's only moral flaw, albeit a justifiable one, was conspiring with Madame Vauquer to conjure up epithets for Victorine's father, his iniquitous conduct toward his tenderhearted daughter warranting harsh denunciation.

Like the orphaned Pierrette in the novel of the same name, Victorine Taillefer's physiognomy betrays her life of enforced asceticism and suffering. The sickly paleness of her skin is not unlike that of the complexion of girls sickened by chlorosis, an anemic disease, and her prematurely hollowed cheeks, meager waist and her general manner are in keeping with the wretchedness of the boardinghouse (PG, 59). Chlorosis, a malady that was common in the nineteenth century, is, as well, a diseased condition in plants, shown by the blanching of the chlorophyll. In this respect, Balzac compares Victorine to an enfeebled,

jaundiced shrub: "Ce jeune malheur ressemblait à un arbuste aux feuilles jaunies, fraîchement planté dans un terrain contraire" (PG,59).

Lodged on the boardinghouse's second floor is Monsieur Poiret, an antediluvian relic, an automaton, unintelligently following his routine of existence in which he had been wizened by his life's occupation--possibly as a health inspector--and had fallen prey to an unknown passion (always a danger sign as measured on the Balzacian yardstick of health and longevity) which had darkened his bulbous physiognomy (PG,58). Even his garments bear testimony to the theme of malady and the boardinghouse's unwholesome influence. Balzac asserts that Poiret's head was covered by an old, spineless cap (PG,58), which underscores the latter's lack of will. Poiret gently held his cane whose ivory pommel had turned a jaundiced, yellowish hue through use (one is, thereby, conversely reminded of Balzac's elegant, jeweled cane bequeathed, after his death, by his wife to Dr. Nacquart). Poiret's faded frock coat did little to hide his scrawny form, which one may infer was the result of the frugal fare served at Madame Vauquer's table.

Poiret's neighbor, the enigmatic Vautrin, also resides

on the boardinghouse's second floor. Vautrin's inscrutable nature is deliberately masked by his transformed physiognomy, for he wears a black wig and dyes his whiskers. E. J. Oliver has stated that ". . . Goriot is the genius of fatherhood . . . as Vautrin is the genius of crime . . ."7 thus succinctly summarizing the latter's identity. This stalwart individual, able to set a faulty lock right and knowledgeable about diverse subjects such as foreign countries, business, and prisons, is endowed with a type of second sight not unlike that possessed by the author-narrator in Facino Cane: "Comme un juge sévère, son œil semblait aller au fond de toutes les questions, de toutes les consciences, de tous les sentiments. . . . Il savait ou devinait les affaires de ceux qui l'entouraient, tandis que nul ne pouvait pénétrer ni ses pensées ni ses occupations" (PG,61). By his outward aspect and demeanor, however, Vautrin stands diametrically opposed to the theme of malady: "Il avait les épaules larges, le buste bien développé, les muscles apparents, des mains épaisses, carrées et fortement marquées aux phalanges par des bouquets de poils touffus et d'un roux ardent" (PG,60). Moreover, Vautrin, as we know, is not an entirely fanciful character, a vision conjured up by Balzac but, rather, a protagonist based

on the identity of an actual criminal-turned-police officer, whom Balzac met, a certain Vidocq.⁸ Balzac's one encounter with Vidocq would prove sufficient as the basis for the literary Vautrin's essential character. Referring to this meeting, Jules Bertaut mentions the mode of a personage's literary creation by Balzac: "Ne prétendait-il pas pouvoir reconstituer une vie entière d'après un nom comme Cuvier dessinait un animal entier d'après un os ou un crâne?"⁹

Victorine Taillefer, without being fully aware of it, was drawn to Vautrin's strength and Rastignac's comely looks, dividing her stolen glances and secret thoughts between the two (PG,62). The latter inhabited the boardinghouse's third floor. This floor, reserved for transient boarders, society's lepers and impecunious students, is not favored by Madame Vauquer, for these lodgers pay a paltry amount of rent and consume too much bread at the dinner table (PG,56). It is due to Rastignac's observations and skill in gaining admission to the parlors of high society that this Parisian drama is rendered in all its unvarnished and unflattering truth:

Sans ses observations curieuses et l'adresse avec laquelle il sut se produire dans les salons de Paris, ce récit n'eût pas été coloré des tons

vrais qu'il devra sans doute à son esprit sagace et à son désir de pénétrer les mystères d'une situation épouvantable, aussi soigneusement cachée par ceux qui l'avaient créée que par celui qui la subissait (PG,56).

Rastignac is molded to hard work by dint of misfortune (PG,56); his task consists of gaining acceptance into the upper stratum of society, having for this cause shunned his law studies, like Balzac who decided on a literary career after the study of law and an apprenticeship in the law office of Guyonnet de Merville. With his handsome appearance and his mannerisms singling him out as a member of small, country nobility (PG,60), Rastignac's credo might very well be a maxim stated in the Traité de la vie élégante: "L'homme impoli est le lépreux du monde fashionable,"¹⁰ for he is educated not in the intricacies of the law but, rather, in the rules to be followed in polite society.

Jules Bertaut has equated Rastignac's gradually attained status as a parvenu, his unbridled desire to rise above the social station in which he was born, to the toxic effects of a poison by stating that the law student is the: ". . . synthèse vivante de cet arrivisme sans frein; le poison est dans les veines, il fait son chemin dans le sang; il afflue au cerveau, il fait battre plus fort le

cœur de vingt ans, il apporte dans l'organisme frêle un trouble profond et une sorte de fièvre intermittente dont il ne guérira jamais."¹¹ This toxic agent embodied in social climbing is that which taints and destroys Rastignac's moral purity and character. Diana Festa-McCormick states that he might have selected other pathways to success available to him: "The roads open to him are essentially three: hard work and fidelity to his upbringing, rebellion and assertiveness outside law and society, compromise and cunning within the heart of society. . . . Only the third road promises the ease Rastignac seeks, without the turmoils and dangers he fears."¹²

Mademoiselle Michonneau, also an inhabitant of the boardinghouse's third floor, may be viewed as Poiret's counterpart, his eventual partner in intrigue, given the allusions to malady underscored by her appearance and garments. Glancing at her physiognomy, one would judge her eyes to be tired and weary while her clothes consist of a shawl whose meager fringe seems to cover a skeleton's framework (PG, 57). Wondering what could have caused her decrepit state, Balzac poses the following rhetorical question: "Quel acide avait dépouillé cette créature de ses formes féminines? . . . était-ce le vice, le chagrin, la

cupidité? . . ." (PG, 57); thereby imputing some ruinous passion or monomania as the cause of her physical decline and decay. Through the plot she engages in along with Poiret and the police to unmask Vautrin's true identity, she participates in underhanded machinations, reflecting the behavior of the other lodgers whereas Vautrin is a fugitive from justice and the evil force which pervades the boardinghouse.

Having presented the "cast of players" whose histrionic performances will serve to comprise the essence of Le Père Goriot, Balzac leaves for last a monomaniac, the personage whose life touches those of all around him and who, even though he shares the spotlight with others who may be considered the center of this drama, is in his own right its fundamental force, setting in motion several of the intricate plots and subplots that meet at the crossroads of his own physical and mental metamorphoses. He is, indeed, the nucleus of this tragedy and this is poetically affirmed by Balzac: "Ce Patiras était l'ancien vermicellier, le père Goriot, sur la tête duquel un peintre aurait, comme l'historien, fait tomber toute la lumière du tableau" (PG, 63). This depiction of radiant light shedding a nimbus or halo on his head, as if around the head of a divinity

or saint, is the first indication of Goriot's extraordinarily charitable and self-denying nature. It is, as well, a prelude to the coarse treatment and social injustice to which he is subjected, as evidenced by his deprecatory appellation--"le père Goriot." It is an arbitrary choice, arrived at through caprice by the other lodgers and Madame Vauquer, that the boardinghouse's buffoon and jester upon whom ridicule falls should be Goriot; this choice, Balzac tells us, may be found in all walks of life and not necessarily restricted to the confines of the pension's perimeters: "Parmi les dix-huit convives il se rencontrait, comme dans les collèges, comme dans le monde, une pauvre créature rebutée, un souffre-douleur sur qui pleuvaient les plaisanteries" (PG,62-63). (Italics mine.)

Currently residing on the boardinghouse's undesirable third floor, as do Rastignac and Mademoiselle Michonneau, Goriot originally occupied the rooms now inhabited by Madame Couture on the first floor. It was at that time, in 1813, when he had retired from the occupation of noodle merchant, that Madame Vauquer had set her sights on him and that he was respectfully referred to as "Monsieur Goriot" (PG,63). Among Goriot's phrenological and phys-

ognomical characteristics, the following salient ones served to reinforce his distinctive appearance: the tear ducts of his eyes were turned downward and swollen which necessitated frequent drying with a handkerchief, the calves of his legs were plump and prominent, and his lunar-shaped, simple countenance sported a long, square nose. It was in spite of all these features that Madame Vauquer considered Goriot a possible marriage partner until the fraudulent Comtesse de l'Ambermesnil tried to win over the retired merchant for herself (PG,66). Vautrin assured Madame Vauquer that he would have been able to unmask the countess' insincerity, if he had been a lodger at the time, with his knowledge of physiognomy: " . . . je vous aurais joliment dévisagé cette farceuse-là. Je connais leurs frimousses" (PG,67-68).

Not unlike the way in which Sophie Gamard increasingly made life difficult for her boarder, the abbé Birotteau, in Le Curé de Tours by sarcastic innuendoes and lack of creature comforts such as the absence of a fire burning in his fireplace on cold nights so, too, did Madame Vauquer limit the delicacies to be found on the dinner table and instituted a "regime of terror" against Goriot by bringing him into disrepute and fostering this ill will so that

it was shared by the other lodgers who, Balzac has stated, needed a court jester on whom they could vent their contempt. Unlike the abbé Birotteau, whose sensitive nature rendered him a likely target for Mademoiselle Gamard's barbs, Goriot, at the end of his one year's residence in the boardinghouse, was above such maliciousness and proved himself to be " . . . un homme inattaquable . . ." (PG, 68). By the end of his third year of residence Goriot, through a gradual diminution of his financial resources depleted by his daughters and the disdainful characteristics Madame Vauquer and the others attributed to him, had been transformed from a distinguished and honorable retired merchant to a scoundrel and rogue. Through the strains of these tribulations his appearance and spirits and, by inference, his health have deteriorated. The assessment of this metamorphosis is mainly objective, for Goriot does not define himself, but is interpreted and deciphered by others.

No longer requiring the services of his hairdresser, in order to cut expenses, Goriot astonished Madame Vauquer with his changed appearance, for his hair was a dingy olive grey, and secret worries had rendered his physiognomy increasingly sad as the days went on. This phantasm, that was once the robust merchant, confirmed Madame Vauquer's

calumny that:

Le père Goriot était un vieux libertin dont les yeux n'avaient été préservés de la maligne influence des remèdes nécessités par ses maladies que par l'habileté d'un médecin. La couleur dégoûtante de ses cheveux provenait de ses excès et des drogues qu'il avait prises pour les continuer. L'état physique et moral du bonhomme donnait raison à ces radotages (PG,72).

Having sold his jewelry and donned less costly clothing, Goriot became increasingly thinner, his legs weakened, his face took on a shrunken and hollow air, his forehead was lined with wrinkles and his jawbone became more prominent due to weight loss (PG,72). His fourth year's residence in the boardinghouse is witness to another change, for now the retired sixty-two year old merchant, who never looked more than forty, seemed to be a bewildered septuagenarian: "Ses yeux bleus si vivaces prirent des teintes ternes et gris-de-fer, ils avaient pâli, ne larmoyaient plus, et leur bordure rouge semblait pleurer du sang. . . . De jeunes étudiants en Médecine, ayant remarqué l'abaissement de sa lèvre inférieure et mesuré le sommet de son angle facial, le déclarèrent atteint de crétinisme . . ." (PG,72). Having made the transition from the respectable Monsieur Goriot to the disdainful nickname of le père Goriot, Balzac now describes him as le vieillard (PG,73), serving

to underscore his physical and emotional deterioration.

Madame Vauquer and the majority of the lodgers, however, were unaware of the causative elements behind Goriot's crumbling constitution and decline, responsible for his monomania or idée fixe. It is Rastignac, alone, who gleaned information concerning Goriot's past from a certain Monsieur Muret who had purchased the former's business (PG,126), and whose account of the retired merchant confirmed the Duchesse de Langeais' theory. The origin of Goriot's monomania starts as early as his marriage; he worshipped his wife and upon her demise, after seven years of unalloyed happiness, he transferred this inexhaustible devotion to his daughters until it became a persistent and inescapable preoccupation. Balzac defines this obsession, bordering on Goriot's folly and weakness of mind, with a vivid clarity: ". . . le sentiment de la paternité se développa chez Goriot jusqu'à la déraison" (PG,124). His extravagant and overwrought paternalistic fervor extended to such extremes as to cause Goriot to be ill, as when one of his competitors, a grain merchant, falsely claimed that young Delphine had been knocked down by a cabriolet. Here, as in La Peau de chagrin, Balzac underscores the effect the emotions have on the human body: "Il fut malade pendant

plusieurs jours par suite de la réaction des sentiments contraires auxquels le livra cette fausse alarme" (PG,125). Goriot is exiled by his sons-in-law, Restaud and Nucingen, and equally shunned by his daughters; the latter are the veritable roots of his illness and act as the trigger which eventually exacerbates his symptoms. Madame de Langeais aptly summarizes the pestilential effect of daughters' marriages, manifestly alluding to Delphine and Anastasie: "Un gendre est un homme pour qui nous élèverons . . . une chère petite créature à laquelle nous tiendrons par mille liens, qui sera pendant dix-sept ans la joie de la famille . . . et qui en deviendra la peste" (PG,113). (Italics mine.)

In the midst of the hubbub and turmoil of life in the boardinghouse, there is an emphatic similarity between Goriot's situation and that of Victorine Taillefer. The former is excluded from the life of his daughters and sons-in-law, except for the occasions on which he bestows money on his ungrateful children; Victorine, on the other hand, is not recognized by her father or brother. Here, too, money plays a part, for it is her brother who is sole heir to the family fortune; Victorine is allotted a pittance on which to live. There is a tacit understanding

between Victorine and Goriot since they both experience what it is to be a leper to one's family, albeit from different perspectives--that of a scorned father and an ostracized daughter. This unsung empathy, as many of the turning points and undercurrents in the novel, is visible at the Vauquer dinner table, divulged by a personage's physiognomy or phrenology: "Le vieillard oubliait de manger pour contempler la pauvre jeune fille dans les traits de laquelle éclatait une douleur vraie, la douleur de l'enfant méconnu qui aime son père" (PG, 94). (Italics mine.)

It is, consequently, Goriot's gradual physical decline and his monomaniacal behavior, during his four years at the boardinghouse, that cause him to be considered a fait médical (PG, 94) by the medical student, Bianchon. To this end, Balzac superimposes in the text pseudo-medical references which form a component of the theme of malady: Rastignac wants Bianchon to uncover Goriot's hidden nature by studying his phrenological characteristics as prescribed by Gall, while the medical student jests that the former's stupidity may be contagious; Rastignac asserts that Goriot's face betrays extraordinary sentiments and feelings (PG, 94); and using his knowledge of phrenology, Bianchon states that the bump of paternity is

the only one to be found on Goriot's head, which underscores his most prominent feature (PG,119).

It is at this point that Balzac has set the stage, having introduced the denizens of the boardinghouse, and established a base within which and from which the action of this drama emanates. The state of "suspended animation" in which the personages were detained behind the wings of the Balzacian stage is terminated and, now, the performance centers upon the theatrics of their daily struggles.

The second "act" of this Parisian drama centers around Goriot's paternal fervor which is paralleled by Rastignac's social aspirations. The antipathy toward their father that Delphine and Anastasie exhibit is, in point of fact, Goriot's own inadvertent doing. It was he who contaminated their budding natures, while still children, by providing for their most extravagant material wishes and elevating them to the status of celestial beings, while Goriot remained a mere mortal, a noodle merchant:

"Goriot mettait ses filles au rang des anges, et nécessairement au-dessus de lui . . . il aimait jusqu'au mal qu'elles lui faisaient" (PG,125). Consequently, from his paternal fanaticism, Goriot has created his own demons.

Rastignac's inner demons, though not of the same nature

as those that plague Goriot, are just as ruinous for they bespeak the forfeiture of integrity, a detour from the straight and narrow path of law school and the eventual establishment of a law practice. Just as Goriot is affected by his paternal fervor so, too, is Rastignac haunted by the thought of success in Parisian society. The desire to succeed at any cost, parvenir à tout prix (PG,139), advice offered to the law student by Vautrin in crass terms while the same counsel given by the law student's cousin Madame de Beauséant, albeit in socially acceptable terms, band together with Rastignac's own expectations to enter a socially prominent sphere. Little by little, these recommendations have a toxic effect on him, equated with malady. For social climbing may be considered Rastignac's monomania, his idée fixe, his illness: "Le démon du luxe le mordit au cœur, la fièvre du gain le prit, la soif de l'or lui sécha la gorge" (PG,107). If social climbing renders Rastignac a valetudinarian, it also has its advantages as far as health and vigor are concerned, according to Vautrin: "Les ambitieux ont les reins plus forts, le sang plus riche en fer, le cœur plus chaud que ceux des autres hommes" (PG,137).

The cataclysmic footpaths down which Goriot and

Rastignac tread bespeak a similarity of identity, although their destinations are different--Goriot to be loved and accepted by his daughters and Rastignac to succeed in a socially superior climate. These two wayfarers--one whose journey is just beginning and the other who is near his itinerary's end--encounter each other's route so that their purposes and goals become complementary. Whereas Goriot bestows material wealth upon his daughters whom he has elevated to the status of angels (PG,125), so, too, is that the status of Rastignac's sister, Laure, who in a letter whose style is reminiscent of her namesake Laure de Balzac's epistolary charm, advises him she will send him her savings: ". . . elle est comme l'ange du ciel qui pardonne les fautes de la terre sans les comprendre" (PG,130).

Not only do Goriot's exaggerated mania and Rastignac's vaulting ambitions crosshatch and intersect, but the retired merchant and law student foster and strengthen each other's cause. With his paternal obsession at its extreme point, Goriot assumes the semblance, not of a father, but of an enamored suitor who worships his paramour from a distance; this serves to invest his paternal zeal with incestuous innuendoes. Balzac, indeed, paints Goriot as

the ardent admirer, content to be the lap dog obediently sitting on the daughters' lap (PG,149): "Le vieillard ressemblait à un amant encore assez jeune pour être heureux d'un stratagème qui le met en communication avec sa maîtresse sans qu'elle puisse s'en douter" (PG,147) when the latter is informed of his daughters' whereabouts by their chambermaids, Thérèse and Constance. His face illuminated by the passionate fervor of paternal love (PG,161) while explaining to Rastignac the depth of his adoration for his progeny, Goriot undergoes a physiognomical metamorphosis, not an uncommon occurrence in the Balzacian affinity between thought or feeling and the mechanism that is the human body: "Quelque grossière que soit une créature, dès qu'elle exprime une affection forte et vraie, elle exhale un fluide particulier qui modifie la physionomie, anime le geste, colore la voix" (PG,161). (Italics mine.)

In addition to the incestuous undercurrents verbally implied in Goriot's ardor, he advocates adulterous behavior between Rastignac and Delphine, assuring the law student that he would even polish the boots and run the errands of the man who would make Delphine as happy as a wife is when she is loved (PG,161).

Rastignac, transformed into Goriot's surrogate son--

"Vous voulez donc être aussi mon cher enfant?" (PG,145)-- encourages and perpetrates the retired merchant's monomania by inventing stories of the daughters' filial affection for their father. Rastignac, Goriot's substitute son, in Le Père Goriot of 1834-1835, is afflicted with desires and obsessions similar to those of Raphaël de Valentin in La Peau de chagrin of 1831. There are several concordant points in their natures and the course of events they encounter which imply that they are cast in the same mold. They are both advised by self-appointed guides who try to enlighten them and sharpen their wits so that the two neophytes may approach the rigors of Parisian existence fully armed. While Raphaël receives counsel from the centenarian shopkeeper, Rastignac is tutored in the ways of the world by Vautrin who, although only a quadragenarian has accumulated knowledge about a myriad of subjects and is endowed with the gift of second sight, gestures with a cane in a way that is reminiscent of the serpentine epigraph in La Peau de chagrin (PG,133). It is for Paris and all that it implies that Rastignac suffers and struggles, for it is his challenge and his secret inspiration.¹³ Just as Raphaël could not pay court to Fœdora without new gloves and the coins Pauline surreptitiously offered him to pay for a

horse-driven coach so, too, must Rastignac secure funds for the ammunition needed in the combat waged on the battleground of Parisian society--a change of livery for morning, noon and evening, money for presents and gambling, and resources with which he might pay the tailor, shoemaker, and laundress. Vautrin, the formidable mentor, summarizes the purpose for these indispensable niceties of life by stating: "L'amour et l'église veulent de belles nappes sur leurs autels" (PG,178). Duels, gambling and the theater are other crossroads at which Rastignac and Raphaël's destinies meet. Victorine Taillefer's brother, Frédéric, is killed in a duel by Count Franchessini (PG,215) while Raphaël defends his honor and deals a death blow to his taunting adversary; Raphaël is inordinately lucky at the gaming tables as is Rastignac; like the former, Rastignac is, without being aware, given a phrenological examination after entering the casino: "Il y monte, se laisse prendre son chapeau; mais il entre et demande où est la roulette" (PG,171). (Italics mine.) Finally, as Raphaël and Pauline were reunited years after their first meeting while attending the theater, Rastignac notices Goriot's daughter, Delphine, at the theater (PG,154).

While Goriot admits being inextricably entangled in the

web of paternal passion, he is not cognizant that he is afflicted with a mania. His obsession endows him, to his own way of thinking, with an almost mystical, theological comprehension: " . . . quand j'ai été père, j'ai compris Dieu. Il est tout entier partout, puisque la création est sortie de lui . . . je suis ainsi avec mes filles. Seulement j'aime mieux mes filles que Dieu n'aime le monde, parce que le monde n'est pas si beau que Dieu, et que mes filles sont plus belles que moi" (PG,161). Rastignac, on the other hand, is aware of his mania and its symptoms: he is tormented by a cerebral fever that accompanies the elevated hopes of young people; he is tortured by unholy ideas (PG,164); and he jestingly admits he is mad and asks Bianchon to cure him (PG,164). By espousing Vautrin's malevolent plan, Rastignac could have Frédéric Taillefer murdered and marry Victorine thereby inheriting, after tying the nuptial knot, the Taillefer fortune. This ambition which invades Rastignac's mind like a lethal potion, after its consumption, infiltrates the blood stream has a remedy to counteract the effects of the poison: " . . . il . . . pensa que sa passion de commande pour madame de Nucingen était l'antidote de ses mauvaises pensées involontaires" (PG,163). (Italics mine.)

The third "act" of this melodramatic presentation embodies the foreshadowing of Goriot's morbid condition juxtaposed to Vautrin's cryptic nature and identity. It is Balzac's contention, and one that mirrors reality, that society perpetually will have to cope with antisocial individuals whose presence is multiplied, not absorbed, by life in great cities.¹⁴ Vautrin is part of this criminal population and, not unlike his character in the play Vautrin, has a double-faced nature; Herbert J. Hunt calls him a "half-sinister, half-benevolent gangster."¹⁵ The essence of his benevolence is murky and egotistical, based on what gain he might acquire if Rastignac concurred with his evil advice. The virulent side of his nature is felt by the lodgers who fear him, however, he does not provoke hatred as does Mademoiselle Michonneau when she denounces him to the police. Vautrin is a portent of evil fascination whose second sight and clairvoyance mesmerize and magnetize.

With the guileful verve of a barker at an 1857 Flaubertian county fair, portending the dialogue between Emma and Rodolphe accompanied by the auctioneer's stentorian voice interweaving with theirs, Vautrin alludes to malady by mimicking a carnival barker's jargon in his response to Poiret's rhetorical question as to whether the

stylish Rastignac has a wife: "Une épouse . . . guérissant le mal de dents, et autres maladies approuvées par l'Académie royale de Médecine! . . . meilleure encore contre les maux de tête, les plénitudes et autres maladies de l'œsophage, des yeux et des oreilles . . ." (PG,167).

In addition to Vautrin's farcical banter, whimsical word-play with the rama suffix (PG,91) and occasional outbursts of popular song (PG,92), his counterfeit illness is germane to the theme of malady for it, although only temporarily, identifies him as a valetudinarian. The seemingly apoplectic loss of consciousness, sensation, and voluntary motion, caused by the momentary obstruction of an artery of the brain that Vautrin will experience is police detective Gondureau's notion, to be carried out by Mademoiselle Michonneau and Poiret: "Je vous remettrai un flacon contenant une dose de liqueur préparée pour donner un coup de sang qui n'a pas le moindre danger et simule une apoplexie" (PG,192). Seated on a bench located in a remote path of the Jardin des Plantes (PG,187), Balzac's personages are catapulted into the pretense of a masquerade and assume other identities--the two boardinghouse lodgers don the masks of potential spies, informers, and poisoners; Gondureau is referred to either by his name or by the label

l'inconnu (PG,192) since he is a stranger to Bianchon who overhears the plot while on his way back from Cuvier's lecture; and Vautrin who, owing to Gondureau's explanation, becomes Trompe-la-Mort (PG,192) later is transformed into Jacques Collin (PG,208). Vautrin's appellative designation is modified during the different stages of drugging--pseudo-malady--just as Balzac defines Goriot at various intervals of malady and economic circumstance as Monsieur Goriot, le père Goriot and le malade.

Leading up to the point of Vautrin's pseudo-malady are subtle allusions to impending illness which, although they may not apply directly to him, set the stage for the eventual effects of the elixir-induced poisoning. Goriot conveys the feeling of comfort Rastignac's account of Delphine's actions would give him: "Si j'étais malade, ça me mettrait du baume dans le cœur . . ." (PG,197). When Rastignac is in a somnolent state due to his consumption of wine, Victorine voices her fears that he may be ill: "J'ai peur qu'il ne soit malade . . ." (PG,203); in a letter to Rastignac, Delphine questions why he did not keep an appointment: "Êtes-vous malade? . . . si vous étiez mal portant, mon père serait venu me le dire! . . ." (PG,211). Finally, Frédéric Taillefer is wounded in a duel and the

doctors attending him do not offer an optimistic prognosis (PG,211).

Vautrin's actual soporific state, his pseudo-malady, is rendered with stark dialogue and straightforward detail as Balzac enters into medical particulars pertinent to the situation: the potion's intestinal absorption and its effect; Mademoiselle Michonneau's hysterical "diagnosis" of apoplexy; the appeal for medical help from the neighborhood physician, Grimprel, in case Bianchon cannot be reached; Christophe's efforts to procure an antidote from the pharmacist; the mention of ether (PG,213); the monitoring of Vautrin's heartbeat by Madame Vauquer (PG,214); Bianchon's assessment of the "patient's" pulse (PG,215); and Bianchon's administration of an emetic and the removal of the rendered intestinal matter to the hospital for chemical analysis (PG,216). Once the police officers enter the boardinghouse, the masquerade is disclosed with the ensuing effect that Madame Vauquer feels ill and exclaims, thereby reinforcing the theme: "Mon Dieu! c'est à en faire une maladie . . ." (PG,219). Vautrin who fully realizes the counterfeit stroke of apoplexy, un faux coup de sang (PG,219), to which he had been subjected retaliates by dubbing his fellow creatures social lepers, members of a

gangrenous civilization. It is against this société gangrenée (PG,219), his oppressor, that Vautrin protests for he feels, as Paul Vernière states, that society's underpinnings consist of cowardice, ignorance and mediocrity; this is a debased world he feels capable of dominating.¹⁶

Just as Vautrin's true nature is divulged, thereby resolving the question of the master criminal's identity, so, too, does Balzac proffer innuendoes which lay the groundwork for Goriot's morbid condition. Calling for Rastignac to dine with Delphine, Goriot undergoes the effects of a physiologic phenomenon, experienced by Raphaël in La Peau de chagrin just before his death (Pc,290), wherein the body attempts to recover the deteriorating life force in a semblance of illusory health: "Goriot montra soudain une physionomie brillante et colorée de bonheur, qui pouvait faire croire à sa régénération" (PG,225). It is, oftentimes, this resurgence of a simulated healthy state, a bogus well-being or recovery, that is the very augury of a personage's physiologic and mental downfall in the Balzacian universe.

Pierre Barbéris catalogues Goriot under the heading of "the heroes of solitude"¹⁷--protagonists who are isolated

from society by their vices, their intellect or their ambition only to be ensconced in and, finally, lost in tragic solitude.¹⁸ Goriot's "solitude" is transformed into his paternal monomania, a fervor that inexorably renders him willing to suffer for his daughters at his own expense and eventual death: "Pour bien peindre la physionomie de ce Christ de la Paternité, il faudrait aller chercher des comparaisons dans les images que les princes de la palette ont inventées pour peindre la passion soufferte au bénéfice des mondes par le Sauveur des hommes" (PG,231). The somber foreshadowing of Goriot's fate is announced by Madame Vauquer on two occasions. When Goriot refuses to aid the lodgers in transporting the unconscious Vautrin to his room and, instead, decides to visit his daughter, Madame Vauquer threatens him with a fateful malediction: "Vieil égoïste! . . . je te souhaite de mourir comme un chien" (PG,213). With less specificity with regard to the victim and with a generalized ominous forewarning, Madame Vauquer senses death's imminent presence after Vautrin's arrest and departure from the boardinghouse: ". . . le malheur est ici. Avant dix jours, la mort y viendra. . . . Qui prendra-t-elle?" (PG,235). Delphine has the final premonition of a sinister event which she shares with Rastignac, a fore-

knowledge of sorts that presages Goriot's suffering and death: "Je suis si peureuse, si superstitieuse, donnez à mes pressentiments le nom qu'il vous plaira, que je tremble de payer mon bonheur par quelque affreuse catastrophe" (PG,238). Not only do Madame Vauquer and Delphine's predictions bespeak prophetic predictions but, although only for a moment, show evidence of the Balzacian gift of second sight foretelling future crises that Balzac has bestowed upon them in this instance.

In the final "act" of this paternal tragedy Goriot's morbid condition becomes exacerbated and is unsuccessfully treated, thereby leading to his deathbed scene which is correspondingly paralleled by the demise of Madame Vauquer's boardinghouse. Balzac distinctly underscores the progressive loss of Goriot's life force through the latter's identification as le malade, le moribond and, lastly, le mourant (PG,282), a taxonomic classification of sorts determining the medical status of the "Goriot genus" just as plants and animals are identified according to their affinities in nature. These ominous bywords mirror and represent the aftermath of the early stages of his malady and economic decline wherein he was designated as Monsieur Goriot, subsequently as le père Goriot and, while on the doorstep of

malady, le vieillard (PG,73). While Balzac details Goriot's symptoms and treatment, relating and itemizing the components which comprise his physical and emotional condition it is, firstly, the malady's pathogenesis, the disease process, that plucks at the heartstrings of the reader, ensconced in a velvety armchair, whose pale hand holds the book (PG,50) and, consequently, the moral and social effects of the malady on its host, Goriot, and his surrounding society that add further poignancy to the drama. It is from these two perspectives that Goriot's ebb of the Balzacian life force is perused and examined

Goriot's disease process may be viewed as a gradual one, bridging the duration of his boardinghouse residence. While the deterioration of his health was observed step by step by the lodgers, it is Bianchon's vantage point as a medical student and future clinician that is responsible for recognizing Goriot's inexorable fate. Goriot's purely mechanical gesture employed to sniff bread in order to judge its quality signaled a complete absence of the thought process inherent in this action, la conscience de l'acte (PG,254), underscoring his detachment from reality. From this seemingly trivial motion Bianchon is able to diagnose an imminent serous apoplexy, a cerebral stroke accompanied by the

proliferation of thin, watery fluids in the body's cavities. True to the Balzacian tradition of literary illness in which a physiologic malady is induced or exacerbated by unsettling thoughts, Bianchon asserts that Goriot's illness must be the result of a violent emotional shock which affected his body (PG,254). Indeed, prior to Bianchon's observation Goriot took part in the scenario in which Delphine and Anastasie recounted their amorous, marital, and financial woes (PG,239-249). Their testimony of personal adversities, reinforced by sibling rivalry born of jealousy, and Goriot's inability to resume his commerce in noodle products in order to disentangle his daughters' pecuniary web of problems cast him into the agonie du sentiment paternel (PG,246). The emotional trauma induced by his daughters is the abrupt shock, the "antigen" inherent in the Balzacian "medical universe" that results in emotional and, consequently, physiologic symptoms: ". . . vous m'avez fendu le cœur. Je me meurs, mes enfants! Le crâne me cuit intérieurement comme s'il avait du feu. . . . Vous me feriez mourir" (PG,250). Naturally, this display of deep feelings is contraindicated and serves to hasten Goriot's physiologic downfall. Bianchon, voicing an opinion antithetical to his medical education, states that only a miracle could save

Goriot but, while expressing Balzac's views on malady, suggests that the former avoid all physical movement and emotional stress (PG,258) in order to lessen suffering. On one hand, Balzac depicts Goriot's malady from a graphic optic by evoking a clear-cut picture of his symptoms; his feverish state and intermittent loss of consciousness, and of his treatment; including mustard plasters, poultices and leeches applied to the patient (PG,260). On the other hand, Balzac ironically decides not to offer too much medical detail to avoid compromising "the demure phraseology of the epoch" (PG,260) and, thereby, the code of good form.

Jacques Borel has suggested that Dr. Nacquart, well versed in neurology, outlined the pathological progression of a disease of the nervous system for Balzac's literary use which the latter subsequently applied to Goriot's malady.¹⁹ Balzac has painted a vague clinical picture excluding what should be salient indications of Goriot's condition--motor impulse which is responsible for movement; contractures, a state of permanent contraction of the muscles; and paralysis, the loss of the power of voluntary motion.²⁰ Balzac's intention in detailing Goriot's suffering is not primarily to render an accurate clinical account

of his malady and treatment but, rather, to bring full expression to his paternal fervor, revealed by the ordeal of illness and death.²¹

Accompanying the physiologic manifestations of Goriot's malady are its concomitant circumstances, showing the importance not only of the disease itself but the social and moral effects it has on him and his surrounding society. His illness is employed as a literary mechanism, leading protagonists to evolve to the full extent of their societal potential in the hermetic environment of the Vauquer boardinghouse. As a result of illness, Goriot is able to esteem fully the worth of what may be named the "ecosystem of parenthood"--a continuity of a genealogical line within a community forming a familial line of descendants within the greater scope of society. It is with this in mind that he cautions Rastignac about ungrateful children, part of the societal, evolutionary link: "Vous leur donnez la vie, ils vous donnent la mort. Vous les faites entrer dans le monde, ils vous en chassent" (PG,273). Goriot is on the threshold of the ecosystem's final stage and the delirium brought on by his malady, characterized by confusion, disordered speech and hallucinations (he mistakes Rastignac and Bianchon for his daughters) gives him a type of lucid

understanding of events which he did not have prior to his illness. It is at this point that Goriot realizes he is the cause of his daughters' disdain toward him, his paternal fervor having reached beyond acceptable bounds to fanaticism: "Tout est de ma faute. . . . Moi seul ai causé les désordres de mes filles, je les ai gâtées. . . . Moi seul suis coupable, mais coupable par amour" (PG,276).

For having designed and nurtured the teratological dispositions and characters possessed by his daughters, Goriot, like a mad scientist who devises a monster, is killed by his own creations. Anastasie and Delphine, in fact, commit parricide by ignoring their father's paternal entreaties for love and attention. Refusing to keep vigil at his deathbed, the daughters counterbalance Goriot's malady by offering excuses of an emotional or psychosomatic nature, dealing with bodily disorders induced by mental or emotional disturbances--Anastasie's strength and will were overburdened by a mental and physiologic tyranny (PG,281) while Delphine awaited the doctor, fearing she had caught pneumonia after leaving the Beauséant ball (PG,281).

Goriot's ordeal permits Bianchon to gain clinical knowledge and to demonstrate his humanity by appreciating that illness comprises only a part of Goriot's make-up; he

is the reluctant host to an uninvited microbe. It is, however, Rastignac by virtue of whose "Parisian education," outside of his neglected legal studies, who is the most accomplished and well-educated in the ways of the world. Balzac succinctly implies that the provincial law student, now schooled in the underpinnings of societal woes, will soon be infinitely wise in his chosen subject matter:

"Eugène revient à pied vers la Maison-Vauquer, par un temps humide et froid. Son éducation s'achevait" (PG, 268).

(Italics mine.)

That Rastignac and Bianchon made funeral arrangements and escorted Goriot's remains to a final resting place speaks well of the two societal neophyte's humane actions. A gold locket containing his daughters' childhood curls adorning Goriot's neck, even after death, bespeaks his everlasting paternal fervor, an unbridled emotion which caused his destruction and eventual martyrdom.

Notes

¹ Honoré de Balzac, "Le Père Goriot" in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 3 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976) pp 270-271.

² Idem, Lettres à Madame Hanska 1832-1840 (Paris: Éditions du Delta, 1967), 1:275.

³ Idem, Correspondance, éd. Roger Pierrot, 5 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1960), 2:814.

⁴ Honoré de Balzac and Félix Davin, "Études de mœurs au XIX^e siècle" in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976), p. 1160.

⁵ Nicole Mozet, "La Description de la Maison-Vauquer," in L'Année balzacienne (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1972), p. 125.

⁶ Honoré de Balzac, "Traité des excitants modernes" in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 12 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1981), p. 305.

⁷ E. J. Oliver, Honoré de Balzac, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 67.

⁸ Jules Bertaut, Le Père Goriot de Balzac, (Amiens: Éditions Edgar Malfère, 1928), p. 69.

⁹ Bertaut, Le Père Goriot de Balzac, 81.

¹⁰ Honoré de Balzac, "Traité de la vie élégante" in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 12 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1981), p. 233.

¹¹ Bertaut, Le Père Goriot de Balzac, 95.

12 Diana Festa-McCormick, Honoré de Balzac, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), pp. 74-75.

13 Bertaut, Le Père Goriot de Balzac, 41.

14 Fernand Baldensperger, Orientations étrangères chez Honoré de Balzac, (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1927), p. 70.

15 Herbert J. Hunt, Honoré de Balzac. A Biography, (London: The Athlone Press, 1957), p. 103.

16 Paul Vernière, "Balzac et la genèse de 'Vautrin,'" in Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, January - March 1948), p. 54.

17 Pierre Barbéris, Le Monde de Balzac (Paris: Arthaud, 1973), p. 347.

18 Barbéris, Le Monde de Balzac, 343.

19 Jacques Borel, Médecine et psychiatrie balzaciennes-- la science dans le roman, (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1971), p. 43.

20 Ibid., p. 40.

21 Ibid., p. 37.

CHAPTER IV

SPECTER OF ILLNESS: PIERRETTE

Si les termes de la médecine de Molière étaient barbares, ceux de la médecine moderne ont l'avantage d'être si clairs que l'explication de la maladie de Pierrette . . . effraierait les oreilles.

Honoré de Balzac¹

In the melancholy narrative that is Pierrette, Balzac has typified two categories of ills, sociological and medical, embodying their essential characteristics so that each may be viewed as either distinct or interacting maladies. Amid the backdrop of the "virulence" of society, Balzac accentuates the pathological manifestations of chlorosis, an anemic disease of young women which was prevalent in the nineteenth century, and cranial necrosis, mortification of bone mass, caused by an abscess, both maladies affecting the novella's young heroine. While

exploring sociologic ills, Balzac delves into the science that deals with human society and with the factors involved in his personages' existence as members of an organized community, the Balzacian universe. In keeping with this leitmotiv, Balzac entitled the fourth chapter of this work "Pathologie des merciers retirés" during its appearance as a feuilleton in "Le Siècle." Pierrette, the first part of "Les Célibataires," which is completed by Le Curé de Tours and La Rabouilleuse, deals with cette classe de vertébrés (P,21)--spinsters and bachelors of a certain age, those who are sérieusement célibataires (P,24). In the "Préface" to Pierrette, placed between the dedicatory note and first chapter in the Souverain edition of June 1840, Balzac censures the middle-aged unmarried: "L'état du Célibataire est un état contraire à la société" (P,21). These old maids and bachelors steal from civilization without replenishing its coffers (P,24), therefore, Balzac means to scrutinize them as Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire would compare fossils with living specimens to discern a possible parentage or as Cuvier would set forth hypotheses relevant to the effect of evolution on a species' zoological variations: " . . . l'auteur a l'intention formelle de les flétrir, en les piquant sur le coton, sous verre, dans un

compartiment de son Muséum, comme on fait pour les insectes curieux et rares" (P,24).

In the dedicatory note which introduces the text of Pierrette, Balzac rhetorically ponders how he can offer this somber tale, in which the heroine is mistreated by her celibate cousins, to Anna de Hanska, a young girl who is dearly beloved by her adoring parents--" . . . comment vais-je vous dédier une histoire pleine de mélancolie?" (P,55). He muses that in reading of Pierrette's misfortunes, Anna will realize the extent of her own unalloyed happiness (P,55).

The opening pages of Pierrette are reminiscent of a Breton lai intoned by itinerant minstrels and, subsequently, transcribed into verse by Marie de France. Just as Le Père Goriot is categorized as a tragédie parisienne (PG,97), the nineteenth-century Balzacian lyric poem that is Pierrette is classified as one of those dramas obscurs (P,34), a scène d'intérieur (P,34) which is not rendered less terrible by its secret nature. Composed of a damsel in distress, a troubadour in contemporary dress (P,32), tokens of courtly love which include a nostalgic love song recalling a distant fatherland (P,31), and a golden-yellow flower (P,32), this peaceful scene soon gives way to the appearance, at her window, of a spinster whose unkempt demeanor conveys to

her head the sinister look painters ascribe to witches (P,33). The spinster's ominous introduction in this scene curtails the trouvère's guileless, fairy tale-like beginning which momentarily obscures the underlying tragedy to follow. Balzac, moreover, asserts that the old maid in question, Sylvie Rogron, had a face whose physiognomy portrayed a lack of symmetry, an austere contour, an ungracious pigmentation of complexion and an insensitive expression which would have filled a physiognomist with disgust (P,33).

Victimized by the ogress that is Sylvie, the champion of Pierrette's cause, her defender, is her childhood companion, Jacques Brigaut. Balzac affirms that Brigaut's garments proclaimed him to be what "modern phraseology insolently calls a proletarian" (P,29); thereby defining this "knight-errant" as a member of the wage-earning class. These garments which include a short, square jacket whose pockets reached just over his hips, the traditional Breton blue cloth coat; a coarsely knit vest; earrings; trousers unevenly dyed in blue--" . . . enfin toutes ces choses humbles et fortes qui constituent le costume d'un pauvre Breton . . . " (P,34)--identify, in true Balzacian tradition, the milieu of sixteen-year old Brigaut. In a similar vein, Flaubert recounts the uncomely attire sported by fifteen-

year old Charles Bovary on his first day of school;² however, Charles' clothing, ill-proportioned and uncouth, bespeaks his manifest mediocrity, whereas Brigaut's garb, unpretentious and practical, while indicating his environment, belies his fortitude of spirit and singular devotion to Pierrette.

The personage on whom the novella's inauspicious events will center is Pierrette Lorrain who, by virtue of the "ette" suffix of her given name, may be viewed as fragile and, by implication, as having delicate health. Before commenting on the charming aspects of Pierrette's features--pretty teeth, ears which were masterpieces of sculpture that they might have been carved of marble, and an elegant, although pointed, nose (P,35-36)--Balzac, in his rôle of diagnostician, has specified the symptoms of her disease and determined the state of her systemic health by the mere aspect of her physiognomy: "La blancheur excessive de sa figure trahissait une de ces horribles maladies de jeune fille à laquelle la médecine a donné le nom gracieux de chlorose, et qui trouble l'appétit et annonce de grands désordres dans l'organisme" (P,35). Systemic manifestations of the illness, chlorosis, included her complexion which exhibited a waxen pallor; the paleness of an etiolated plant

which was echoed by her neck and shoulders; the thinness of her arms; and the weakened state and shrunken size of her feet which displayed tired nerves and bluish veins (P,35).

Colloquially referred to by a cluster of expressions inspired by the differing etiological premises assumed to be the underlying cause of this illness, chlorosis has been called fièvre blanche, fièvre d'amour, maladie de la puberté, phthisie nerveuse, maladie des jeunes filles, and pâles couleurs; it is medically referred to as anémie, chloro-anémie, or anémie chlorotique.³ A frequent nineteenth-century affliction of adolescent girls, chlorosis is characterized by a yellowish or greenish paleness of the complexion, the loss of muscle tone and a generalized lethargy. When affecting plants, chlorosis renders them faded in color and limp in form; it is in this sense that chlorosis is synonymous with etiolation or the blanching of plants' colors by the exclusion of sunlight.⁴ It is with this disease of florae in mind that Balzac also describes the anemic Victorine Taillefer (PG,34).

Brigaut's presence at Pierrette's window is the incident destined to give vent to serious assumptions, such as Sylvie's suspicion and jealousy of her young cousin,

and usher in this household drama (P,34). This "window episode," which begins Pierrette, is a leap ahead in the plot's time sequence, which zigzags to and fro in a type of space-time continuum recounting events of this domestic intrigue. After announcing the heroine's plight, Balzac extends an invitation to the reader of the volume to learn the young girl's story: "Pierrette souffrait de bien des manières. Aussi peut-être voulez-vous son histoire? la voici" (P,36).

It is by the detailed explanation of Pierrette's genealogy, tracing her descent from the Rogron, Auffray, and Lorrain families and, thereby, establishing the disparity in age between the young heroine and her middle-aged cousin, Sylvie (P,36-37), that Balzac establishes a hereditary link accounting for Pierrette's valetudinary constitution--her mother was frail, delicate and sickly (P,37). There is, as well, a familial predisposition to a shortened life expectancy due to the Balzacian correlation between the injurious effects of intense emotion and thought on the body's homeostasis. In this vein, Pierrette's maternal grandmother, a widow at thirty-eight, had the unwholesome idea to remarry (P,37). The deleteriousness of certain contractual marriage arrangements in

La Comédie humaine is evident; Pierrette's grandmother dies of grief two years after her remarriage as a result of her second husband, a young doctor named Néraud, having squandered her fortune. Her death may be seen as a direct effect of powerful emotion on the body's physiologic state. Pierrette's mother died three years after the ill-fated second marriage of her own mother (P,37). The progeny of sickly ancestors, vulnerable to the deadliness of thought and emotion that can kill, Pierrette is haunted by the specter of illness which will insidiously manifest itself, announcing a destiny fraught with misfortune.

Orphaned and bereft of any fortune, Pierrette is entrusted to the care of her kindly paternal grandparents who, also, are penniless. Having traced Pierrette's lineage, Balzac proceeds to explain the obliteration of the Auffray finances and the bankruptcy of the Lorrain's retail business of timber, tiles and cornices to the building trade which reduced their standard of living to such a point that they were forced to dwell in a type of almshouse (P,38-39). It is, subsequently, financial ruin that compelled the Lorrains reluctantly to seek housing for their grandchild with the Rogron cousins. The origin of Pierrette's tragedy, therefore, may be viewed as a lack of capital assets. Reflecting

on the ubiquity of money in Balzac's plots and its effects on the personages involved, Henry James avers:

Money is the most general element of Balzac's novels. . . . He rarely introduces a person without telling us in detail how his property is invested, and the fluctuations of his rentes impartially divide the writer's attention with the emotions of his heart. Balzac never mentions an object without telling us what it cost, and on every occasion he mentions an enormous number of objects.⁵

Balzac's concise biographical sketch depicting Pierrette's monetary downfall sets the stage for her subsequent vulnerability as she falls victim to Sylvie's devices.

The arrival of Pierrette in Provins, at the home of her cousins, marks a turning point in the child's life; she is, henceforth, plunged into a changed moral atmosphere consisting of her celibate relatives' indifferent caresses and scoldings, which to her mind were harsh. This is the first of three distinct stages into which her life in Provins would fall (P,83). Lasting three months, it is the only time she found existence at her cousins' house endurable. It is within the framework of these three phases--the second being the proliferation of symptoms of her multiple diseases made bearable only by her love for Jacques and his concern for her welfare, and the third being the fulminant stage of her illness and ensuing death--that Pierrette's drama unfolds.

The unkindly reception afforded Pierrette by the Rogrons was inconsistent with the Arcadian, although moneyless, life she experienced in Brittany, a life in which nature was her only tutor. In homage to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Balzac mentions that Pierrette and Jacques flourished in the guileless existence of Paul and Virginie (P,77). In a similar vein, while they are in a somnolent, angelic state, Balzac compares Victorine Taillefer and Eugène de Rastignac to Bernardin's protagonists (PG,173). Later on, in 1857, it is Flaubert who knowingly places the tome Paul et Virginie in the hands of the young Emma Rouault⁶ before her marriage to Charles Bovary, thereby fostering her quixotic reveries.

Pierrette's new life in Provins, indeed, represents a divergence from former agreeable manners and mores for her while, at the same time, heralding a transition in the habitual deportment and social conduct of the Rogron siblings. These retired haberdashers, accustomed to dealing in small wares and keeping as tight a rein on their salesclerks as on their inventory of pins, needles, and thread, could not deny nor escape their intrinsic personality or nature: "Habitué à régenter, à faire des observations, à commander, à reprendre vertement leurs commis, Rogron et sa sœur

périssaient faute de victimes" (P,82). (Italics mine.)

Pierrette, consequently, is vital to the Rogrons' existence for she revivifies their spirits and dispels their boredom while unwittingly playing the rôle of victim of their cold hearts. Pierrette experiences a decline in status evidenced by her changed nomenclature; Sylvie, at first, affectionately refers to her as ma petite (P,82) and, afterward, simply by her given name. This situation is not unlike Goriot's, who went through a series of appellations, according to his economic means and state of health, at the whim of Madame Vauquer and the boardinghouse residents (PG,47). In Pierrette's case, moreover, Balzac suggests that she would one day fall into the torrent of society (P,82), stressing her eventual anonymity and unimportance in the, oftentimes, malevolent giant machine that is modern civilization. Her plight, therefore, will encompass not only dealings with her cousins, a fight against illness but, also, the indifference of an imperious societal structure that, in devouring her sweet nature, leaves her vulnerable and defenseless. This is not a society that is inherently evil but, rather, as portrayed by the Rogrons, one whose narrow minds are driven to malice by dint of their very nature:

"Or les êtres étroits s'étendent aussi bien par la

persécution que par la bienfaisance; ils peuvent s'attester leur puissance par un empire cruel ou charitable sur autrui, mais ils vont du côté où les pousse leur tempérament" (P,82). Endeavoring to unravel the workings of society, Balzac asserts: "Ajoutez le véhicule de l'intérêt, et vous aurez l'énigme de la plupart des choses sociales" (P,82). Believing they were as useful to Pierrette as they believed they had been to their salesclerks, the Rogrons' actions, therefore, constitute not actual cruelty, but the inherent nature of foolish minds (P,82).

In order to comprehend how two such lackluster creatures as the Rogrons were spewed forth from the gullet of society, Balzac traces the components of their character which form the haberdasher "species." The children of an unattractive, egotistical and avaricious innkeeper and his equally graceless wife, Sylvie and Jérôme-Denis were more hideous than their parents (P,40). The Rogron siblings had the type of upbringing that was antithetical to Rousseau's prototype of a sound moral, intellectual, hygienic, and social education, devised for his imaginary pupil, in the 1762 publication of *l'Émile*. Rousseau formulates the means and origin of childhood instruction and guidance which serve to mold a person: "On façonne les plantes par la culture,

et les hommes par l'éducation. . . . Cette éducation nous vient de la nature, ou des hommes ou des choses."⁷

The Rogrons' tutelage, therefore, set the foundation for the adults they would become. Put in the care of a wet nurse in the country, as inexpensively as possible, these unhappy siblings returned home with the deplorable training engendered by village customs. Their guardian worked in the fields, leaving them locked up in a dark and damp peasant's room. Consequently, the siblings' features became homely and their voices inelegant. Later on, they were left to run in the yards, stables and outhouses of their father's inn, or to roam aimlessly around town; sometimes they were whipped (P,40-41).

After diligent Parisian apprenticeships with raw silk and wholesale mercers, Sylvie and Jérôme-Denis amassed their savings and purchased a retail haberdashery business (P,42). The occupation of shopkeeper, with its implication of obsequiousness in view of retail customers and discipline in view of salesclerks, was another factor that fashioned the Rogron character, carved their physiognomy and molded their nature: "Depuis l'âge de quinze ans, Sylvie Rogron, habituée à se grimer pour la vente, avait deux masques: la physionomie aimable de la vendeuse,

et la physionomie naturelle aux vieilles filles ratatinées" (P,45). Her brother's personality, as well, was formed by his line of business: "Jérôme-Denis offrait la physionomie la plus niaise que jamais un comptoir ait présentée à des chalands. . . . Ses petits cheveux gris, coupés ras, exprimaient l'indéfinissable stupidité des animaux à sang froid. Le regard de ses yeux bleuâtres ne jetait ni flamme ni pensée" (P,42). However, despite the physiognomical façade Sylvie displayed for customers and the air of a cold-blooded animal's indefinable stupidity evident in Jérôme-Denis' gaze, the Rogron siblings had one true passion-- to sell their business and retire in Provins, a town which, Balzac points out, " . . . offre des vertus pharmaceutiques à la science médicale" (P,47). This penchant had become an idée fixe, a two-sided longing, inspired by a nostalgic melancholia caused by their protracted absence from home, metamorphosed into a monomania (P,49). Their pronounced desire to venture homeward, Balzac declares, can be expressed holophrastically by the motto Mourir au gîte (P,48). The Rogron siblings, once settled in Provins, brought with them the customs and characteristics peculiar to the life of Parisian merchants. Their cosmopolitan ways are soon superimposed on the country manners with which they became

reacquainted, thus transforming the retired shopkeepers into confirmed provincials. This subtle process is the hallmark of a rather insidious metamorphosis, having a more serious effect than is apparent: "Cette transition constitue une véritable maladie" (P,50). Henceforth, Jérôme-Denis, whose social awkwardness was such that the words he pronounced had the effect of medicine, torturing him and rendering him incapable of conversing in polite company (P,55); and Sylvie, whose voice resembled that of a hyena's with a cold (P,56), were busily engaged in the embellishment of their home and tried, unsuccessfully, to gain acceptance into the Tiphaine clique, the town's preferred societal faction. Thus, the Rogrons, whose characters were shaped from their earliest childhood, sufficiently filled, in adulthood, the molds into which their natures were cast.

It was, subsequently, into the care of the Rogrons, themselves carved by the workings of society, that Pierrette's welfare, health and, ultimately, very life were placed. The latter's treatment in her cousins' home may be inferred from the title of the sixth chapter of Pierrette--"Histoire des cousines pauvres chez les parents riches"--as it appeared in the format of a feuilleton in "Le Siècle." Her initial

circumstance was one of a visiting relative, lapsing at various stages into that of a poor relation, an overworked maid and, finally, an abused servant.

Just as Balzac proved himself an able diagnostician by recognizing the symptoms of Pierrette's chlorosis by her physiognomy and the tint of her complexion (P,35), he is capable, by the same means, of assessing her proved possession of perfect health and absence of all signs of disease upon her arrival at the Rogrons' residence: ". . . son petit bonnet . . . faisait comme une auréole à son gai visage. . . . Sous ce cadre festonné de lumière, brillait une figure blanche et rose, naïve, animée par la santé la plus vigoureuse" (P,74-75). (Italics mine.) This salubrious image of vigor and vitality does, in effect, decline as Pierrette enters the second phase of her existence in Provins, a stage marked by the proliferation of symptoms of her multiple diseases.

Herbert Hunt has stated that ". . . the aim and achievement of Pierrette are to show how closely individual catastrophe is bound up with social behaviour and the play of social passions."⁸ Pierrette's illnesses and death may be viewed as the "individual catastrophe" in question, while the social machinations of the lawyer, Vinet, and the seasoned

soldier, Colonel Gouraud, to exploit the Rogrons' fortune and unsophistication are the factors that indirectly foretell the young heroine's doom. Having mistaken Brigaut for Gouraud at Pierrette's window, it is Sylvie's presumption that the Colonel is courting Pierrette and wishes to marry her, thereby inheriting the Rogrons' house and money. Making a stand against Vinet and Gouraud is the clique headed by the Tiphaines and composed of former Parisian haberdashers and merchants. The local priest, Abbé Habert and his sister, Céleste, constitute an independent bloc between these two groups. Balzac has, thereby, woven the social tapestry against which Pierrette's drama will evolve, including the discord and covetousness inherent in a small countrified locality. Henry James has summarized Balzac's portrayal of the environment engendered by provincial life:

Provincial life, as Balzac represents it, is a tissue of sordid economies and ignoble jealousies and fatuous tittle-tattle, in cold, musty, unlovely houses, in towns where the grass grows in the streets, where the passage of a stranger brings grotesquely eager faces to the window, where one or two impotently pretentious salons, night after night, exhibit a collection of human fossils.⁹

It is, thus, amid Henry James' comprehensive panoramic description of Balzacian provincial life that the prodromal or premonitory symptoms of Pierrette's impending illness

are apparent. Serving to lay her health in ruins is the synergistic effect of the disease process working in concert with the hostile sociological milieu so aptly characterized by James.

The invidious environment of the Rogrons' home and Pierrette's despair therein account for the latter's stress and anxiety which are linked with, as well as converted into, physical symptoms. Existing as a separate entity, and not a part of the physiologic manifestations of disease, is what may be viewed as Pierrette's emotional conflict in the Rogron household. These physiologic manifestations are a form of conversion reaction or conversion hysteria whereby emotional apprehensiveness, such as that experienced by Pierrette, is transmuted into impaired medical functioning. Inasmuch as health may be defined as a state of bodily, psychologic and emotional well-being, and not purely as the freedom from disease, Pierrette's physical dysfunction due to conversion hysteria is symptomatic of her lack of health. Balzac has translated her emotional discontent into physical indications which, if not frank or manifest malady, suggest the loss of self-esteem and the acquisition of a certain vulnerability capable of upsetting the body's homeostasis and predisposing it to disease. This is evident

in Balzac's symbolic comparison of Pierrette with a frisky squirrel (P,85), denoting the untroubled and inquisitive frame of mind and bodily health she once possessed and which, under the Rogrons' influence, have now been reduced to the mechanical actions of an automaton unintelligently following a routine (P,85). Another instance in which Pierrette's emotional unhappiness is transformed into physical symptoms occurs when the Rogrons infer that she must learn to be financially independent to avoid becoming a permanent burden to them. This admonition results in acute pain in and contraction of her throat and momentary cardiac arrhythmia, a rhythm change of the heart caused by interruption of the normal cardiac impulse: "En écoutant ces horribles avis, Pierrette sentait une douleur dans sa gorge; il s'y faisait une contraction violente, son cœur battait à coups précipités" (P,88).

Up to this point, Pierrette's oncoming illness has remained occult, that is hidden or not readily manifest. Her illness, therefore, is not acknowledged by those around her because her occult disease tends to evade medical diagnosis and lay recognition due to the variety of seemingly unrelated and enigmatic symptoms which serve to obfuscate or mask pathological indications of manifest malady. In

Pierrette's case, a nonspecific, generalized malaise, the harbinger of her disease, begins to declare itself: "Ses brillantes couleurs commencèrent à s'éteindre. Elle se plaignit parfois de souffrir. Quand sa cousine lui demanda: 'Où?' la pauvre petite, qui ressentait des douleurs générales, répondit: 'Partout'" (P,88). (Italics mine.)

In describing the preliminary stages and predisposing factors of chlorosis, the portrait of this malady as painted by Balzac did not depart from contemporary medical opinion, wherein the emotional indications of the disease are depicted as though they might have been lifted from a page of the novelist's prose: "A peu près particulière au sexe féminin, la chlorose reconnaît pour causes prédisposantes . . . le tempérament lymphatique ou nerveux. . . . les émotions morales tristes, les sentiments contrariés . . . sont encore des cause déterminantes habituelles."¹⁰ Balzac's representation of the disease as a generalized, systemic cause of pain and of a pale-complexioned appearance is, as well, unvarnished and does not deviate from the following medical assessment: "Des douleurs vagues et irrégulières apparaissent dans le bas-ventre, les lombes, le dos, les aines et d'autres points . . . la peau se revêt d'une pâleur particulière, qui est une teinte d'un blanc de cire ou jaune verdâtre,

avec décoloration des ongles et des lèvres."¹¹

In addition to the physiologic indications of malady, Balzac has endowed Pierrette, just as he endowed Raphaël in La Peau de chagrin and Goriot in Le Père Goriot, with the instinctive knowledge of the life force's diminution and ephemeral quality: ". . . elle sentit . . . souffler sur elle le froid humide de la tombe. . ." (P,91). Pierrette does not vary from the community of valetudinarians in La Comédie humaine who, although seriously ill and approaching death's door, are able to recapture a counterfeit glow of health which instills the protagonist with a singular, albeit anomalous, beauty. The radiant bloom of Pierrette's appearance, inconsistent with what would medically be expected, was such that it gave Sylvie cause for worry. Pierrette's comeliness established her, in Sylvie's mind, as a possible rival for Gouraud's affections: "Sylvie, qui caressait encore l'idée du mariage, vit enfin dans Pierrette un obstacle: Pierrette avait près de quatorze ans, sa blancheur malade dont les symptômes étaient négligés par cette ignorante vieille fille, la rendait ravissante" (P,97). (Italics mine.) It is here that Balzac envisages an ironical measurement of esthetics, an anticipatory Baudelairian sense of the morbid beauty inherent in grotesqueness, the

fraudulent bloom of health which is perceptible at certain stages of a malady. Having established this contradictory yardstick of beauty and assessed Pierrette's physiognomy, as well as total appearance, according to its standards, Balzac now appraises her physiologic and mental state: "Malgré sa force, elle fut . . . accablée physiquement et moralement" (P, 97).

It is at this point in the novella that the "window scene," which is the beginning of Pierrette, is recapitulated. Three years have expired since its opening page, thereby propelling the action into the present so that it may resume a continuous chronological course from this point. Although Pierrette's chlorosis had an insidious onset, characterized by progressive weakness and pallor, it now presents an extreme and uniform proliferation which is visible even to the layman. Whereas the progression of her disease process is disclosed to the reader of this volume by virtue of Balzac's clinical indicators throughout the novella, Jacques Brigaut, uninitiated in matters medical, is uninformed of the malady's physiologic scope and import. Jacques, nevertheless, intuitively realizes the gravity of its extrinsic manifestations described by Balzac in a morose, albeit poetical, manner: " . . . il

ne voulait pas la quitter sans avoir pénétré le mystère de cette pâleur qui atteignait déjà la vie dans l'organe qu'elle déserte en dernier, les yeux, sans savoir d'où venaient ces souffrances qui lui donnaient l'air d'une fille courbée sous la faux de la mort, et près de tomber" (P,100). Furthermore, in "La Tyrannie domestique," which comprised the seventh chapter of Pierrette, as it appeared in Le Siècle, Balzac asserts that le drame fatal (P,106) which pitted a jealous old maid against her innocent cousin would never have happened if Sylvie had ascertained Jacques' identity by peering through the window shutters. It is, indeed, Sylvie's idiosyncratic ways (P,78-79)--her manie de vieille fille (P,79)--that lead to the domestic tyranny encircling Pierrette. Consequently, it is the "window scene" that represents the focal point of this drama; the reader of this volume may refer to it in order to measure the despair of Pierrette's situation before and after Jacques' arrival in Provins. It is here that Balzac metaphorically likens Pierrette's clinical condition to that of a plant. Prior to Jacques' entrance in this domestic drama, Pierrette's neck and shoulders depicted the colorlessness of an etiolated plant: "Le cou et les épaules expliquaient par leur pâleur d'herbe étiolée la maigreur des bras jetés en

avant et croisés" (P,35). (Italics mine.) After Jacques' appearance at her window, Pierrette's hopes, although not her health, were revived just as a plant deprived of water for a time regains its chlorophyllose aspect after a downpour: ". . . la présence de son ami d'enfance l'avait ranimée comme une plante depuis longtemps sans eau reverdit après une longue pluie" (P,107). The power of thought and emotion on the body's physiologic homeostasis is so preponderant among the valetudinarians of the Balzacian universe that an extrinsic factor may engender the desire--if not the will--to live in a moribund personage. Indeed, before seeing Jacques, Pierrette's disease was twofold--corporeal and emotional, her nostalgia approximating, by its sincerity and intensity, a malady: ". . . elle trouvait trop d'amertume à la vie pour ne pas sourire à la mort" (P,107). Upon having seen Jacques, who is the persuasive factor in her will to live, Pierrette not only shows contempt for death, but the memory of her suffering is momentarily obscured: "Elle voulait vivre, elle croyait ne pas avoir souffert!" (P,107).

Nevertheless, her renewed impetus to live--the resurgence of the Balzacian "life force" accomplished via the power of thought influencing the emotions--is not invincible.

The clinical manifestations and pathologic changes of the disease process prove to be unyielding and, therefore, Pierrette's will to live is vanquished by degrees. She is, in fact, betrayed by her own self--the "physiologic self" whose character and severity of symptoms reduce her resistance to disease and classify her as a true valetudinarian. The perfidious character of the body against itself, inherent in intrinsic immunological anomalies and manifestations of acquired disease, is accentuated with each one of Pierrette's symptoms or indications of malady. One of the systemic designations of her chlorosis is atony, a lack of vital energy; this loss of strength is compounded by the household chores she is obliged to undertake (P,106). With the description of each stage of Pierrette's illness, Balzac remains faithful to medical reality, molding the literary phrase so that it does not stray from the clinical phenomenon as evidenced by the following hallmark of chlorosis:

" . . . les forces se perdent, l'énergie physique . . . est diminuée; il ne reste qu'une irritabilité nerveuse excessive."¹²

Although she shows variegated symptoms, Pierrette's disease still remains occult. Without the confirmation of a diagnosis and in light of the subclinical status of the

disorder, the young protagonist is unaware of her abnormal physiologic state: "Pierrette ne se savait pas malade.

Cependant elle commençait à souffrir. . . . L'innocente enfant ignorait complètement que sa situation constituait une maladie grave et voulait les plus grandes précautions" (P,107). Classically, a change in appetite is a constant finding in chlorosis along with development of dyspepsia or difficult digestion: "L'appétit est plus ou moins altéré; la digestion est souvent difficile; l'estomac devient douloureux. . . ." ¹³ Balzac has mirrored this hypothesis in his description of Pierrette's symptoms: " . . . elle avait des appétits étranges, elle les cachait; elle aimait les salades crues et les dévorait en secret" (P,107).

In spite of the fact that Balzac sought to depict malady in a clinically accurate light for his time by seeking medical opinions from Nacquart and perusing medical texts, here and there in his works, accounts of Moliéresque medical thought may be found. ¹⁴ Devoured by jealousy and curiosity (P,108), Sylvie seeks to discover the identity of the "minstrel" at Pierrette's window:

Sylvie examina Pierrette à la dérobée. L'enfant rougissait, mais sa rougeur, au lieu d'être générale, se divisait par plaques inégales aux pommettes, par taches ardentes, et d'un ton significatif. En voyant ces symptômes de maladie, une

mère . . . aurait pris cette enfant sur ses genoux . . . elle aurait deviné sa maladie et compris que les humeurs et le sang détournés de leur voie se jetaient sur les poumons après avoir troublé les fonctions digestives (P,108-109). (Italics mine.)

Balzac's notion of humors that comprise a malady's symptomatology is derived from ancient Greek medicine which was, later, systematized by the Roman physician, Galen. Health erroneously was believed to be achieved by the balance of the body's four humors--blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile.¹⁵ Vacillating between the contemporary medical thought of his day and that of ancient Greco-Roman physiology, it is, in the final analysis, Balzac the novelist who summarizes Pierrette's situation by inferring the mortal danger of her illness, a danger Sylvie does not recognize: "Ces taches éloquentes lui eussent appris l'imminence d'un danger mortel" (P,109). Balzac continues to entertain the fanciful caprice of "humoral pathology"¹⁶ while recounting Sylvie's physiologic reaction caused by her rigorous standards of housekeeping which border on monomania: "En voyant sa cousine, le teint de Sylvie se plaqua de vert jauni: toute sa bile se mit en mouvement. Elle regarda le corridor, et trouva que Pierrette aurait dû l'avoir frotté" (P,111). (Italics mine.) In keeping

with this capricious Galenic physiology, the author notes the presence of fluide vital (P,112), the almost ineffable component constituting the Balzacian life force, which Sylvie possesses in surfeit due to her marital status:

"Ces organisations que la passion n'a point ravagées ont à leur service une grande abondance de fluide vital" (P,112).

In the Balzacian community of monomaniacs, Sylvie is endowed, as well, with the piercing stare that mesmerizes; this is akin to Vautrin's hypnotic gaze, as portrayed in Le Père Goriot, but does not include his gift of second sight or divination. Chastising Pierrette for an undissolved granule of coffee adhering to a grain of sugar, Sylvie looked upon her as if visually emitting a frightful thunderbolt of anger (P,112). The visual counterpart of la pensée qui tue, this optical phenomenon is used by Sylvie to intimidate and accuse her young cousin, just as it was formerly employed by her in the rôle of storekeeper to instill a "salutary terror" (P,112) in her salesclerks. The oxymoron that is "salutary terror" (P,112) and its inherent stress and pressure brought to bear on Pierrette insidiously assail her emotions which, in the Balzacian universe, infers a cause and effect reaction; her physiologic health, as well, must suffer: "Elle eut à entendre des

paroles si dures, si ^Aâpres, des suppositions si blessantes, qu'en entrant dans la cuisine elle fut prise d'une contraction à l'estomac et d'un vomissement affreux. . . . Elle revint pâle, blême . . . et croyant l'heure de sa mort arrivée" (P,113).

To add to the catalogue of Pierrette's physiologic disorders and emotional ills, Balzac superimposes another medical complaint on her existing symptoms--that of ecchymosis (P,125), the outpouring of blood and its accumulation in a specified subcutaneous area of the skin's surface as a result of a contusion or bruise. This is no mere bump near her ear, for it is depicted by the author as un coup affreux (P,124), one that will have grave consequences. Even though Jérôme-Denis showed a modicum of interest in Pierrette's plight (P,125), Sylvie tightened the reins of her tyranny and remained unsympathetic in light of her young cousin's medical complaints and recent injury, forcing the latter to conceal her pain and behave as stoically as possible: "Pierrette n'osa pas se plaindre des souffrances vagues, des douleurs qu'elle sentit à la tête" (P,125). This masquerade in which Pierrette is obliged to take part--the camouflage of her suffering to prevent incurring Sylvie's insidious wrath--may be seen as a type of sociological

Darwinian defense tactic, serving temporarily to preserve the heroine's emotional survival in a hostile environment.

Momentarily pausing from the account of Pierrette's manifold symptoms, Balzac takes a step backward in order to reiterate the cause of the domestic drama to which the volume's reader is a witness: "La source du mécontentement de sa cousine était la non-révélation relativement à Brigaut, et, par un entêtement breton, Pierrette s'obstinait à garder un silence très explicable" (P,125). Hereabout, the "window scene" which heralds the opening pages of Pierrette is mirrored by a different fenestral episode; this time it is not a gallant melody that is in question--it is the epistolary exchange between a latter-day Paul and Virginie which comprises the second window scene. Once more, the Balzacian reciprocity of the mind's emotions and the body's homeostasis is noted. In spite of the systemic damage of chlorosis and the localized harm due to an abscess forming in her head caused by the door injury, Pierrette's spirits are lifted by the mere thought of written communication with Jacques: "Au milieu de souffrances horribles que causait à Pierrette sa double maladie, un dépôt qui se formait à sa tête et le dérangement de sa constitution, elle était soutenue par la pensée de correspondre avec Brigaut" (P,125). The exchanging

of letters gave Pierrette comfort in her misfortune and proved to be a solace that further shows the effect emotions and thought exercise on the physiologic being: "La nature morale avait tant d'empire sur cette délicate nature physique, que le lendemain Pierrette se leva joyeuse et légère comme une alouette, radieuse et gaie" (P,129).

Nevertheless, the consolation afforded Pierrette is transitory and, therefore, the symptoms of physiologic malady triumph over the ineffable Balzacian life force whose origins are inexorably woven in a personage's physical, emotional, and literary being. Further proof of her continued descent into illness is given to Jacques at the marketplace, where Balzac poetically remarks on Pierrette's frailty: ". . . il la vit tremblante et pâle comme une feuille de novembre près de quitter son rameau . . ." (P,126). Her former rosy-hued complexion and erstwhile overall aspect of health have deteriorated, reducing her to a mere shadow, a remnant of what she once was (P,126-127). Now the specter of her former self, Pierrette's symptoms include systemic malaise, varied aches, severe localized pain and a generalized food aversion and predilection for unusual forms of sustenance: ". . . il me semble que je vais à mal. Je suis bien malade. . . . J'ai dans la tête des douleurs à

crier, et dans les os, dans le dos, puis je ne sais quoi aux reins me tue, et je n'ai d'appétit que pour de vilaines choses, des racines, des feuilles; enfin j'aime à sentir l'odeur des papiers imprimés" (P,128). This exposition of Pierrette's symptomatology, histrionically recounted in her letter to Jacques, attests to the medical accuracy with which Balzac's work is embellished, as suggested by contemporary clinical opinion: ". . . les chlorotiques . . . mangent avec passion les fruits verts, les mets fortement épicés, excitants, et souvent même les substances les plus dégoûtantes."¹⁷ Having shared the same residence in a state of societal antagonistic symbiosis just as if they were two species of zoological creatures struggling for survival, it is Pierrette who is being slowly destroyed by her opponent, Sylvie. In order to preserve her standing in her social circle, Sylvie is obliged to declare her cousin's syncope, or fainting spell, a guileful deception employed for the purpose of getting attention: "La pauvre petite avait régulièrement la fièvre, et ses douleurs à la tête devinrent intolérables. . . . Enfin, un dimanche soir où Pierrette était au salon, alors plein de monde, elle ne put résister à tant de douleurs, elle s'évanouit complètement . . ."

(P,133). If she had acknowledged this fainting episode as

a manifestation of overt illness, Sylvie would have displayed salient guilt and neglect in the matter of Pierrette's insidious symptoms and developing disease. The heretofore hidden physiologic changes indicative of Pierrette's malady, concealed for so long and suddenly made evident to society, announce a new juncture in the young heroine's evanescent existence.

The third and last phase of Pierrette's life in Provins finds her desperately ill and in the midst of the fulminant stage of her maladies that, eventually, proved to be refractory to the delayed medical attention which belatedly she received. The progressive and ultimately fatal course taken by her illnesses, resulting in premature death, may be traced to physiologic disease factors, the "virulent" environment of the Rogron household and the wane of the Balzacian vital life force, without which a protagonist rapidly and inexorably sets sail for the awaiting Stygian shore.

This stage of Pierrette's existence is filled with several circumstances which, with the exception of the ending, are reminiscent of the struggle of good and evil in fairy tales. Following in the footsteps of Perrault's Cendrillon, Balzac's Pierrette is surrounded by a malevolent cousin whose cruelty surpasses that of a wicked stepmother and derisive

stepsisters, a chivalrous prince disguised as a carpenter and a caring grandmother who takes the form of a benevolent fairy godmother, a propitious deus ex machina, the latter "miraculously" appearing in answer to the "imprisoned princess'" urgent entreaty, "Qui me sauvera?" (P,138). In spite of these fabled signposts interspersed along the novella's path, Balzac provides no magical remedy or panacea for Pierrette's ills, her demise appearing inevitable. Trying to protect Jacques' letter from discovery, Pierrette's hand is injured in a frenetic struggle with Sylvie; in this battle the child flashes a terrible mesmeric magnetic glance at her opponent and receives a sinister glare in return (P,137). It is Pierrette's reaction to this contest of wills, with its undue emotional and physical exertion, that has wreaked havoc on her weakened constitution:

"Pierrette alla tomber sur son lit, abandonnée par ses forces et tuée par l'abattement qui, chez une malade, suivit une lutte si violente" (P,138). Whereas Pierrette cast hypnotic eyes charged with animal magnetism on Sylvie, Pierrette's grandmother, with her gift of second sight granted to the aged as they approach the tomb and akin to Vautrin's ability of divination, was able to see at a glance Pierrette's life in Provins and her illness (P,140). Madame Lorrain's

augury and intuitive knowledge of her granddaughter's chlorosis were rendered even more awesome when combined with her imposing physiognomy: "La terreur et la vengeance glissaient leurs flamboyantes expressions dans les milliers de rides qui fronçaient sa peau d'ivoire jauni. Ce front couvert de cheveux gris épars exprimait la colère divine. . . . Elle devina la maladie de jeune fille qui menaçait de mort son enfant chéri!" (P,140). Madame Lorrain's innate comprehension of chlorosis and its baleful consequences certainly is not the result of her medical prowess but, rather, of her societal and familial station in the Balzacian universe. For just as Sylvie's spinsterhood, with the self-centered nature it implies, and consequent antipathy for children rendered her incapable of recognizing any of the specific symptoms Pierrette displayed, Madame Lorrain brings to her rôle of grandmother an acute awareness and insight which enable her to decode the symbols that signal her granddaughter's underlying systemic disorder. It is the local physician, Martener, who referring to the Rogrons and without actually uttering the word "chlorosis" during the course of his diagnosis, confirms Madame Lorrain's medical assumption: "Ils n'ont donc pas voulu voir la plus visible des maladies auxquelles les jeunes filles sont parfois

sujettes et qui exigeait les plus grands soins! . . ."

(P,142). In fact, chlorosis, although implicitly inferred and recognized, is neither clearly mentioned nor defined by Martener or the illustrious Horace Bianchon; it is through Balzac's narrative, encompassing the ongoing chronicle of Pierrette's malady, that meticulous effort is exerted to detail accurately her clinical disorder. Although chlorosis is the illness whose chronicity significantly weakens Pierrette's constitution, the bruises she receives as a result of striking her head and the damage caused to her hand are what eventually point to Sylvie's criminal culpability in the situation. The dire events comprising this domestic drama result in a legal imbroglio with inherent Machiavellian schemes and societal machinations that finally permit Pierrette's enemies to avoid judicial chastisement. The personal intrigues and petty dramas that constitute this case become entangled with its primary legal aspect and, once this happens, according to Herbert Hunt, justice is not likely to be served.¹⁸

It is Martener, acting according to Bianchon's advice, who performs a trepanation procedure on Pierrette (P,152), perforating her skull with a surgical saw in order to remove the necrotic bone and abscess. Balzac succinctly sketches

Martener's character and temperament, revealing that the latter renounced a Parisian medical practice, fearing the apathy produced in a doctor's mind by the plethora of valedudinarians and serious clinical cases to be found in a metropolis. The exiguity of provincial life provided Martener the opportunity to discover and dissect the nature of pathologic phenomena without diminishing his humanity and empathy for his patients: "Pierrette fut pour lui . . . un de ces poèmes mystérieux et profonds, vastes en douleurs, comme il s'en trouve dans la terrible existence des médecins" (P,154). The profound, mysterious poem that is Pierrette, identified by her blancheur de mourante (P,150), goes through the stages of her malady under the appellations of la malade (P,140) and, ultimately, reflecting her exquisite suffering, cette martyre (P,140). Whereas Goriot, during the deterioration of his health, was described in contemptuous terms, Pierrette is affectionately referred to as la chère petite malade (P,154). Upon her arrival in Provins, Pierrette's untainted health was measured by the rosy aspect of her physiognomy (P,74-75); her present physiologic state, albeit deteriorated, again is reflected by her physiognomic appearance, crowned by the very same lace bonnet she once wore:

Sa tête, blanche de la blancheur du biscuit, son front auquel la souffrance imprimait un semblant de pensée profonde, la pureté des lignes amaigries par la maladie, la lenteur du regard et la fixité des yeux par instants, tout faisait de Pierrette un admirable chef-d'œuvre de mélancolie (P,155).

In spite of Pierrette's distressing symptoms and poor prognosis, she undergoes a momentary remission from malady--a physiologic state peculiar to moribund Balzacian personages whereby the life force is temporarily recaptured before its permanent extinction: "Pendant quelques jours l'appétit de Pierrette revint et se satisfit de mets substantiels pour lesquels sa maladie lui donnait jusqu'alors une répugnance caractéristique; la couleur de son teint changea . . ." (P,156). The short-lived amelioration of Pierrette's condition applies specifically to her chlorosis and Balzac is quick to point out that in spite of these transitory improvements and the trepanning operation, her head, nevertheless, remained in a horrible clinical state (P,156). Due to the outlook and extent of her situation, the terrible aruspice (P,156) Desplein, for whom Dupuytren is the archetype, was consulted and performed an operation on Pierrette, that of excising the cranial abscess through the ear (P,156). In addition, Desplein was prudent in discouraging a lithotomic procedure suggested, as a last

resort, by Martener. Lithotrity, referring to the operation of breaking a stone in the bladder into pieces capable of being voided¹⁹, is misused by Balzac in Pierrette's case. However, the author-clinician that is Balzac vindicates himself by specifically noting it would be a treatment of heroic measures, merely ressembling lithotrity (P,156); its similarity to the aforesaid surgical procedure implies that the two are not precisely identical. As Balzac paralleled contemporary medical thought in order to render literary malady as lifelike as possible, the natural history of Pierrette's cranial necrosis, from its cause to treatment, is reflected in the clinical opinion of the era:

Les causes qui provoquent le développement de la carie . . . n'agissent qu'en produisant directement une inflammation dont la carie n'est que l'accident consécutif. Les contusions de l'os, les plaies qui intéressent son tissu . . . telles sont les causes . . . de la carie qui en est la conséquence. . . . Dans le traitement de la carie, les moyens chirurgicaux seuls peuvent présenter quelques chances de succès. . . . Il sera donc toujours préférable d'employer les moyens chirurgicaux actifs.²⁰

Observing the scope and extent of malady and how it encompassed her life, Balzac opines that Pierrette, in the end, does not die but euphemistically "ceases to suffer" (P,157). Whereas Martener and Brigaut are the only ones who constantly think of Pierrette after her demise and know the dreadful truth concerning the domestic drama in which

she was entangled (P,162), those implicated in her death are not bothered by any pangs of conscience and undergo the attendant legal process with impunity. Interestingly enough, a vestige of medical mythology remains in the rumors of the town's busybodies; in one such tale, Desfondrilles implies Pierrette's manifest chlorosis and ensuing poor health were due to an adolescent affair of the heart, conducted barefoot by her window, during the autumnal chill:

" . . . au moment de se former, elle eut une intrigue avec un garçon menuisier, elle venait pieds nus à sa fenêtr̃e y causer avec ce garçon . . . dans son état, aux mois d'octobre et de novembre, il n'en fallait pas davantage pour faire aller à mal une fille qui avait les pâles couleurs"

(P,162).

Singing the praises of his own novella in a laudatory manner totally absent of modesty, Balzac pridefully asserts, "Pierrette est un diamant."²¹ If Pierrette is classified as a sparkling literary gem, one may also acknowledge that its brilliance is accompanied by a drakly melancholy haze.

Notes

- 1 Honoré de Balzac, "Pierrette" in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 4 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976), p. 147.
- 2 Gustave Flaubert, Madame Bovary (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), p. 37.
- 3 "Chlorose," Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle. Français, historique, géographique, mythologique, bibliographique, littéraire, artistique, scientifique, etc., éd. Pierre Larousse (Paris: Administration du Grand dictionnaire universel, 1866), p. 161.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Henry James, French Poets and Novelists, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1884), p. 71.
- 6 Flaubert, Madame Bovary, 70.
- 7 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Émile ou de l'éducation, (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), pp.36-37.
- 8 Herbert J. Hunt, Balzac's Comédie humaine, (London: The Athlone Press, 1964), p. 181.
- 9 James, French Poets and Novelists, 103.
- 10 "Chlorose," Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle, p. 161.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.

14 Moïse Le Yaouanc, Nosographie de l'humanité balzacienne (Paris: Librairie Maloine, 1959), p. 215.

15 "Roman Medicine," The Book of Health, ed. Randolph Lee Clark, M.D., and Russell W. Cumley (New York: Elsevier Press Inc., 1953), p. 733.

16 Ibid., p. 732.

17 "Fille," Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle, p. 370.

18 Hunt, Balzac's Comédie humaine, 180.

19 "The Urinary System," The Book of Health, p. 448.

20 "Carie," Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle, p. 399.

21 Honoré de Balzac, Lettres à Madame Hanska 1832-1840 (Paris: Éditions du Delta, 1967), 1:685.

CHAPTER V

MOMOMANIA AMID THE CLOISTERED LIFE: LE CURÉ DE TOURS

. . . l'appartement de Chapeloud devint pour lui l'objet d'une monomanie secrète.

Honoré de Balzac¹

Balzac's vaulting aspiration to record the vicissitudes of greatness and decay in the world around him transcends the craft of fiction. It emboldens him to vie with nosologists, sociologists, philosophers and historians, as he diagnoses illness and monomania, and chronicles the lives and fortunes of the creatures who formed the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, the lower classes and the peasantry of his day. It lurks beneath the deceptive modesty of his now famous statement: "La Société française allait être l'historien, je ne devais être que le secrétaire."² The era of passions, selfish motives, and crass ambitions which led him to employ scènes to correspond to various

"epochs of human life"³ is analyzed with great subtlety in Le Curé de Tours. In effect, it is these powerful undercurrents of human behavior that are not merely woven into the fabric of Le Curé de Tours, but are at the very core of the story. The title, in itself, is delusory, suggesting a theological or dogmatic basis with which the story line presumably would be imbued. Whereas, the Church's hierarchism and authority are apparent, for Birotteau hopes to be named canon, there is no evidence, in this work, of the dichotomy into which Balzac's beliefs eventually would evolve, encompassing a warm empathy for Catholicism counterbalanced by a tendency toward preternatural concepts.⁴ Nevertheless, religion is one of the pillars on which the structure of Balzac's work reposes: "J'écris à la lueur de deux Vérités éternelles: la Religion, la Monarchie. . . ."⁵ The events that comprise Le Curé de Tours are set in an ecclesiastical milieu, although they could have occurred, without detracting from the story's essence, within the world of bureaucrats, students, lawyers, or other segments of Balzacian society. The narrative's concerns are not basically clerical; they are, instead, secular and would have had similar, if not the same, import if the plot had focused on the laity.

Le Curé de Tours, as described by Balzac, is a drame

bourgeois (CT,200) into which are cast monomania and physiologic illness as understudies or foils to the leading players. Although not apparently as life threatening as Raphaël de Valentin's fanciful psychosomatic disease, Goriot's patriarchal obsession or Pierrette's insidious chlorosis, Birotteau's monomania, which is his eventual failing and, secondarily and less prominently, his physiologic ailment of gout, are intrinsic components of this histoire de mœurs (CT,182). In an avant-scène (CT,200), Balzac sets the foundation for the scenario to follow, formulating the societal precepts and seemingly insignificant circumstances which eventually spell Birotteau's downfall. It is of some significance that the story is situated in the autumn (CT,181), time of decline and impending death for nature's foliage and the hibernation or migration of its beasts, and that Birotteau is caught unaware by a downpour, events that figuratively protend his ill-fated situation.

The picture that Balzac paints at the story's outset provides a physiologic and diagnostic profile of the sexagenarian that is Birotteau, including his plumpness, apoplectic condition, smallness of stature, and his gout (CT,181). Since Birotteau has already suffered several attacks of gout, it may be assumed that the natural history

of his disease is chronic (CT,181). The acute exacerbations he experiences are part and parcel of this malady. It was Hippocrates who gave the specific name of podagra to gout, due to its tendency to attack the foot and hinder walking. The word goutte, coined by a thirteenth-century physician, Radulphe, referred to the antiquated opinion that the etiology of this illness was to be found in the drops of a contaminated humor that gathered in the joints.⁶ Although gout may attack other parts of the body, including the fingers, wrists and elbows⁷, Balzac spares Birotteau these additional disease sites, insists on his malaise de podagre (CT,189), and thereby confines the scope of the malady, if not the pain.

The medical information accumulated by the middle of the nineteenth century divided gout into two spheres: goutte aiguë and goutte chronique⁸, the latter being diagnosed after the patient had experienced several attacks of the acute type, which sometimes could be an isolated and self-limiting medical phenomenon. More typically, however, gout was observed to be a chronic ailment with remissions and exacerbations of symptoms.⁹ Harboring few valid scientific facts, one's tendency to develop gout was marked by contradictory as well as spurious nineteenth-century theories:

L'usage d'une alimentation succulente, l'abus des boissons alcooliques, la vie sédentaire, le célibat, l'abus des plaisirs sont autant de causes prédisposantes de la goutte. L'influence du climat et des saisons est très-marquée dans le développement des attaques de goutte. Ainsi, elles sont plus fréquentes au printemps et en automne. . . . Les tempéraments sanguins, chargés d'embonpoint, y sont plus exposés que les autres.¹⁰

From this catalog of predisposing factors, several items apply to Birotteau. As a literary nosologist, Balzac has either outwardly stated or inferred the following based on contemporary medical lore and belief. Birotteau's corpulence is most likely due to his consumption of tasty meals accompanied by fragrant wines, his calling as a priest includes a vow of chastity (along with poverty and obedience), the rainshower in which he is caught implies a climate where rain is commonplace, and the story begins at the start of autumn (CT,181). Modern medical opinion looks with amusement upon nineteenth-century mythology concerning gout.¹¹ Dietary excesses, sexual abstinence or overindulgence, changes in weather and the seasons are no longer viewed as factors accounting for the disease's etiology. It is now recognized that hyperuricemia, i. e., abnormal uric acid metabolism, apparently resulting from an inherited tendency to overproduce or retain uric acid in the form of sodium urate in the blood, is responsible for

gout.¹² Although one may regard most of the nineteenth-century etiologic factors as medical superstition, the dietary excesses do have an element of truth. It is not the quantity of food consumed that is in question, but the type that is important. To be avoided are aliments rich in purines, complex organic substances, found in abundance in foods such as liver, kidney, brains, anchovies, venison, partridge, and rabbit.¹³

Having succinctly traced Birotteau's underlying physiologic disease, which presupposes characteristic traits possibly gleaned by Balzac from contemporary medical beliefs, Balzac invites us to learn of his personage's two-sided monomania. His desire, harbored for twelve years, was to be named canon. Due to the omnipotence of emotion, its reign over physical symptoms and the ability of auspicious circumstances and events to obfuscate physiologic pain in the Balzacian universe, Birotteau was oblivious to the foul meteorologic conditions and to his rain-soaked gouty feet: ". . . il se trouvait dans une de ces rares circonstances de la vie où d'heureuses sensations font tout oublier" (CT, 182). His monomaniacal desire was completed by the now realized wish to occupy Chapeloud's lodging; this along with his impending nomination as canon figured as the two main

concerns of his life (CT,183). When we meet Birotteau, he has occupied his current lodgings for two years, although his desire to be Mlle Gamard's boarder antedates this period: "Son appartement avait été, comme l'était alors le canonicat, l'objet de son envie et son hoc erat in votis pendant une douzaine d'années" (CT,183). Birotteau's yearning to inhabit Chapeloud's rooms was one that evolved gradually, likened to " . . . une passion vraie, qui chez un jeune homme, commence quelquefois par une froide admiration pour la femme que plus tard il aimera toujours" (CT,184). This reference to the lodging as well as others, such as la convoitise de l'appartement (CT,183), concupiscence mobilière (CT,184) and cupidité cachée (CT,184), attest to the sensual undertones inherent in Birotteau's longing. Léon-François Hoffman has pointed out that if pruriency is absent from the plot of Le Curé de Tours, it is certainly inferred metaphorically.¹⁴ Upon reflecting on the opening page, an undercurrent of hedonism, inasmuch as it applies to creature comforts, is evident in the flannel in which Birotteau wraps his feet " . . . avec le soin que les ecclésiastiques prennent d'eux-mêmes . . ." (CT,181). Balzac has, therefore, taken it upon himself to fashion his clergy into people more concerned with the temporal

niceties available in the here and now and seemingly uncaring about an afterlife or celestial reward for their good works on earth. This meshes well with his views on the egotism of the middle-aged unmarried which he described in Pierrette. Although Balzac's priests in Le Curé de Tours may wear the vestments of the clergy, they live a non-spiritual life, and their obsessions may seem unimportant, indeed, in comparison to those of other personages in La Comédie humaine whose existences flourish outside of the restraints of clerical life. There is a certain polarity of feeling apparent in Le Curé de Tours between the admiration professed by Balzac for religion and the depiction of the ecclesiastics in a setting that is, at once, clerical and secular. Birotteau never actually crosses the threshold of Saint-Gatien so that the reader may view him at his priestly duties; the drama is performed entirely in the shadow of the Cathedral. For those able to see the inherent nature of things beneath the Balzacian façade, the stultifying routine and void that constitute Birotteau's life find expression even in the architectural aspect of le Cloître: "Cet endroit est . . . une solitude pleine de physionomie, et qui ne peut être habitée que par des êtres arrivés à une nullité complète ou doués d'une force d'âme

prodigieuse" (CT,183). It seems that Balzac had no other alternative than to create an obsession for his personage, whose life is fraught with a tiring mediocrity, an inevitable predictability of a game of whist at Mme de Listomère's (CT,182) and a daily walk with Chapeloud, a tradition unchanged for twenty years (CT,186), only to be interrupted by the latter's death. These innocuous occupations serve to pass only the time, not to enrich or embellish it. These characters are so prosaic as not to be interesting; it is the monomanias, petty rivalries and political machinations that breathe life into this particular company of Balzacian celibates who, without their idiosyncrasies, would cease to exist on the printed page.

Birotteau's obsession certainly may be seen as pathological, but it is also a type of seduction that entangles him in the passionately overwhelming existence of the monomaniac. Not of simple or ascetic taste, Birotteau has a predilection for epicurean comfort and environmental luxury. This is not immediately evident in the quality of the furnishings he admired in Chapeloud's lodgings which are not intrinsically sumptuous but, rather, tastefully utilitarian. However, in light of Birotteau's humble family origins and dire economic conditions endured during the

French Revolution (CT,184), his penchant for Chapeloud's rooms and furniture bespeaks the preference of an aesthete. The attractiveness of Chapeloud's habitation, apparent in the furniture's regal color and fine texture and in the rooms' harmony of design, appeals to Birotteau's visual and tactile senses. The metaphorically amorous attachment Birotteau developed for Chapeloud's rooms is a gradual process, paralleled by the embellishment and, consequently, allure of the lodgings. The furnishings slowly acquire an anthropomorphic character, appealing to Birotteau's sense of refinement and self-indulgence. The first stage of his seduction begins with an almost total apathy toward Chapeloud's lodging, which was no more than utilitarian and in a state of disrepair, if not architectural decay. Since Chapeloud, of the same humble origins as Birotteau (CT,184), is able to outfit his bedroom with only those furnishings necessary for human habitation (CT,185), the aridity and desolateness of the environment is apparent: "L'appartement ressemblait à une belle femme en haillons" (CT,185). Beginning with utilitarian furnishings, the evolution of Chapeloud's surroundings starts with an ascetic character and flowers into an elegant one. This is seen in the fine quality of the materials used to

decorate the study: an oak bookcase, a marble fireplace, walnut armchairs, an ebony table, furniture crafted by Boulle (CT,185), all serving to endow the lodging with une physionomie pleine de caractère (CT,185). The parlor attains the height of gracefulness with red silk curtains, mahogany furniture and an Aubusson carpet (CT,186), all bespeaking innate quality. Also appreciated is the fine library of ecclesiastical works that Chapeloud acquires (CT,185) and the household, linen and culinary amenities supplied by Sophie Gamard (CT,187-188). It is, consequently, with a sentiment secret et profond (CT,186) that Birotteau yearned for Chapeloud's lodgings, a torturing and insistent monomania, culminating in the blasphemous thought that Chapeloud's death would result in Birotteau's acquisition of the former's lodgings (CT,186). It is Chapeloud's nebulous and undisclosed illness (CT,186) that serves as the catalyst for the realization of Birotteau's obsession.

Nineteenth-century opinion classified monomania as an aberrant behavioral pattern in which the afflicted is obsessed with an idea or a group of ideas.¹⁵ Birotteau's monomania is an eccentricity of sorts, an extravagant desire that occupies his every waking moment. Balzac designates Birotteau's obsession as a monomania throughout

the narrative, the latter's malady encompassing specifically a classification or subgroup of monomanias, an idée fixe¹⁶, defined as a passion with an exclusive focus¹⁷, which is not pathological in the sense that psychoses or neuroses are but, rather, symptomatic of the inexorable relationship between the Balzacian power of thought and the body's physiologic status. It is in this regard that Birotteau's monomania will be viewed. This focal passion, replete with obsessive thoughts which eventually dissipate Birotteau's effectiveness as a clergyman and as a literary protagonist, is redolent of the timeworn antiquarian's philosophy of life and longevity emphasized in the vouloir, pouvoir and savoir (Pc,87) of La Peau de chagrin. It is the antiquarian's espousal of the precept of savoir, as a means of living life, that temporarily shielded him from the harmful effects of the other two forces. The triad of voluntary energies which comprises the Balzacian life force, serving to enhance it if savoir is its pivotal point or to diminish it if vouloir or pouvoir are at its core, is resumed by vouloir in Birotteau's case. It is his keen longing, the fervent eagerness for the desired lodging that is the height of Birotteau's ambition in the avant-scène and the reason for his ensuing downfall.

Birotteau certainly does not present the symptoms of psychogenic illness inherent in psychoneurotic disorders. His salient personality characteristics are a surfeit of timidity and a vacuous wit, however, he is intrinsically a monomaniac, a creature of a distinct Balzacian stratum of society within specific bounds:

L'homme peut, sans cesser de jouir de la faculté de coordonner ses idées, de juger sainement des qualités et des rapports des objets extérieurs, être atteint d'un vice partiel du jugement . . . et manifester une série d'idées extravagantes. . . . Cet état maladif, ce délire partiel, cette aberration circonscrite sur un ou plusieurs objets déterminés constitue la monomanie.¹⁸

Birotteau's monomania is a partial delirium, a circumscribed aberration in which his identity is not synonymous with his monomania; it is but a facet of his emotional being which does not physically engulf him in the way that Pierrette's chlorosis insidiously demolished her physiological equilibrium and, subsequently, her will to live. Birotteau's monomania does, however, serve to destroy the societal balance inherent in his world, for his idée fixe is self-perpetuating; once his aspiration to replace Chapeloud in his rooms and to become Mlle Gamard's lodger are satisfied, these yearnings, now gratified, are replaced by his desire to become canon: " . . . il est difficile à tout le monde,

même à un prêtre, de vivre sans un dada. . . . Le titre de chanoine était devenu pour lui ce que doit être la pairie pour un ministre plébéien" (CT, 188). Balzac clearly advises the reader that a monomania of one sort or another is endemic to humankind, thereby obviating the notion of malady as a foreign entity invading one's physiologic or psychologic being and emphasizing malady as an intrinsic component of the human organism, a derangement or tendency toward the darker side of human nature. Balzac has placed Birotteau's monomania in this category, a part of the "self," and, therefore, not a specific clinical condition, but a generalized attitudinal component. Balzac also designates Birotteau as a member of the clergy, a special social entity.¹⁹ The reader is thus invited to scrutinize the novelist's eye much as a student of science might go to Cuvier in order to divine the prior life of a fossil.

Awaiting the fulfillment of his monomaniacal desire to be named canon, Birotteau's sensitiveness to the attitude of others toward him becomes manifest in the hidden significance he sees in four commonplace events (CT, 190) which presage his endangered situation as Mlle Gamard's boarder. His misplaced slippers, Marianne's lies regarding

the fire, the removal of his candlestick to the table in the vestibule, and the inconvenience he endured while waiting, rain soaked, on the doorstep encouraged him to believe he was deliberately being slighted and that behind these occurrences lurked the enmity of those around him. These four events, which would not excite the curiosity of a personage whose self-esteem did not depend upon others, became the focal point of Birotteau's existence and were transformed into quatre catastrophes (CT,190). This transformation is due to Birotteau's personality--" . . . la nature des esprits étroits les porte à deviner les minuties . . . "--and to the nature that his rôle of clergyman has imprinted on his very being--" . . . cette sagacité questionneuse que contractent les prêtres habitués à diriger les consciences et à creuser des riens au fond du confessionnal . . ." (CT,191). By virtue of these character traits, Birotteau is, indeed, a Balzacian creature, for his character is inherent in his occupation, here defined as his calling, just as his rôle as priest is indicative of his personality traits. A creature of his clerical station in life, Birotteau has a place in the Church's hierarchy and aspires toward an even higher place. Just as there are ecclesiastical ranks and orders, there are

secular ones, and in this community of monomaniacs, it is Mlle Gamard who is at the head of the societal order. It is strange, indeed, that Birotteau, who as a priest wields the power of religion, plays the rôle of vassal to Mlle Gamard's suzerain. Indeed, he had placed himself under her protection as if she were a feudal lord. As a feudal tenant, however, he is remiss in his vow of homage and fealty, wherein lies his mistake. Unbeknownst to Birotteau, Sophie Gamard also is afflicted with a type of monomania whose symptoms are manifested in the desire to establish her very own clerically oriented social clique, rivaling the popularity of Mme de Listomère's or Mlle Merlin de la Blotière's: "L'hôtesse avait, depuis quelques années, enfanté un désir qui se reproduisait plus fort de jour en jour. Ce désir . . . était devenu chez elle une passion semblable à celle de Birotteau pour l'appartement de son ami Chapeloud . . ." (CT,195). Birotteau's monomania is a sort of torment of Tantalus, for he takes occupancy of Chapeloud's rooms only to be evicted, and his high hopes of being named canon are not realized. His monomania is at cross purposes with Mlle Gamard's and he deserts her nightly games of boston, departing with Mlle Salomon de Villenoix and leaving Mlle Gamard without the constituency

necessary for a game of cards, the social activity around which provincial mores revolve, thereby negating her heretofore precariously established social coterie. Birotteau, a celibate by dint of holy orders, and a simpleton by nature (CT,197) could not endure the boredom engendered by Sophie Gamard, also a simpleton, classified under the Balzacian "species" vieille fille: ". . . le pauvre abbé Birotteau s'aperçut un peu tard, pour son malheur, des défauts qu'elle partageait avec toutes les vieilles filles et de ceux qui lui étaient particuliers" (CT,197). The clerical society of Le Curé de Tours, a world in itself and a world apart from the secular community, has its own standards and rules. All its personages are celibates, some by choice and others by chance; Mlle Gamard falls into the latter category. Balzac avers that a woman's destiny is to mold her character around those of others, implying marriage and motherhood. Denying this destiny is to incur the monomania for having all events revolve around oneself (CT,197-198). Desiring a matriarchal position in a society where she would govern social life becomes Sophie Gamard's monomania, and Balzac's ideology of the "species" to which she belongs (CT,206-209) reflects popular nineteenth-century sociologic opinion on spinsters and presages

Mlle Gamard's impending illness and subsequent demise:

"Le célibat paraît moins favorable à la longévité que le mariage, parce qu'une vieillesse pour ainsi dire abandonnée, sans enfants, sans époux, sans secours des proches, qui n'aspirent, au contraire, qu'à jouir des dépouilles d'un célibataire décrépît, loin d'entretenir la vie par des soins affectueux, ne tend qu'à en abrégé le cours."²⁰

According to Balzac, Mlle Gamard's celibate status caused her personality to turn toward a domestic type of despotism (CT,198) and her acerbic nature and tendencies were to claim Birotteau as victim.

Citing the veracity of the impending events in Le Père Goriot (PG,50) and, thereby, inviting the reader to believe the tumultuous occurrences which will unfold, Balzac uses a similar technique in Le Curé de Tours, stressing the story's relative universality in both historical time and social classes: "Cette histoire est de tous les temps: il suffit d'étendre un peu le cercle étroit au fond duquel vont agir ces personnages pour trouver la raison efficiente des événements qui arrivent dans les sphères les plus élevées de la société" (CT,196). At this point, the author terminates the description of the avant-scène (CT,200) of this Balzacian drama while reiterating his

rôle of historian, that of an impassive observer and recorder of life who steps back in order to witness the grand passions so often evident in the trifling circumstances of existence. Balzac means to take a giant's stride away from the situation in order to appreciate it by way of an unprejudiced perspective. The ensuing action stresses the domestic machinations of Sophie Gamard and the strategic steps Troubert takes to counter the efforts of Birotteau's friends. The latter's confidants support him at first and, later on, relinquish that help when threatened by Troubert's power and its consequences.

The nucleus of Le Curé de Tours is a "dramatization of the commonplace"²¹, a promenade down the footpath of everyday occurrence, of an almost hackneyed conventionalism. Within this ebb and flow of inconsequential small town passions, malady and innuendoes of malady are threads that are woven within the fabric of the personages' identities. This leitmotif, alternatively pellucid or implicit, may be seen in the description of the two clerics' physiologic appearances which Balzac typically renders by an account of the physiognomy, a favorite tool of the author through which he diagnoses his personages' corporeal inadequacies. The Balzacian premise that personality is reflected by

outward appearance is not dismissed in the ecclesiastics' portraiture. In the same vein, one's demeanor and countenance are indicative of one's inner character. Within the anthropological scheme of body types, both priests are at either end of the mesomorphic prototype which represents the average human body structure. Troubert's slender skeletal contour and tall stature are characteristic of the ectomorphic body profile. His bloodless complexion and infrequent facial response to emotion are reflective of his ascetic predisposition. Atrabilious in temperament and physiognomy, he possesses the piercing stare, akin to a mesmeric regard, displayed elsewhere by Vautrin. Diametrically opposed to Troubert's body configuration is the endomorphic body mold of Birotteau, evident in his corpulence and rufescent skin tone which, in turn, infer his good-humored nature and epicurean leanings (CT,201). Consequently, it is the clerics' countenance, mien and corollary personality traits that determine their advancement in the Church's hierarchy. It is here that malady plays an important, although inferential, role. Like the late Chapeloud, Troubert had developed a chronic disease within the past year, thus rendering his appointment as vicar-general favorable since his opponents

believed that a sickly cleric would not be far from death's door, giving them a chance for his appointment (CT,202). Troubert's unnamed chronic malady may be a pulmonary one, suggested by his admission that he coughed a great deal during the night (CT,202). Conversely, Birotteau's ro-
 tundness announces in an oxymoronic phrase les symptômes d'une santé florissante (CT,202) while the gout with which he is afflicted proverbially presaged a long life. There is apparent an ecclesiastical ecosystem of survival in Le Curé de Tours, for just as Chapeloud had to die so that Birotteau could inherit his belongings and lodgings, Birotteau had to be evicted from his rooms so that Troubert could claim them. To add to his misfortune, Birotteau's semblance of health is antithetical to his canonical nomination. Chapeloud's admission of his impending demise (CT,186), a physiologic sensorial mechanism possessed by Balzacian valetudinarians, signaling the imminent decay of the biological machine, is mirrored by Troubert's disclosure that due to his failing health, he might soon be residing in the cemetery (CT,203).

Balzac's subtle, yet effective, method of labeling his valetudinarians to reflect their afflictions brings him to dub Birotteau le goutteux (CT,203) in the same

paragraph in which Troubert is referred to as le grand chanoine (CT,203), implying the latter's physical superiority and inferred stamina. This reference is instrumental in astutely establishing the persistence of Birotteau's physiologic malady and, therefore, his ensuing emotional frailty. It differs only slightly from the suggested state of health, heretofore mentioned, gleaned from the clerics' characteristic body types and is indicative of Balzacian pseudo-science which seeks to find a niche for its personages in established anatomical categories. The pyknic body type, in which Birotteau is classified, presupposes an amplitude of girth and a presumptive fondness for culinary delicacies. Balzac, following the doctrine of Brillat-Savarin, believed in the influence that a dietary regimen exerted on the physiologic component of the body and on the psyche.²² In keeping with this notion of cause and effect, the former's literary creation, Briotteau, holds a particular belief concerning conversation and its relationship to the satisfactory digestion of a meal: ". . . il prétendait, sans avoir pu donner aux médecins une seule raison de son opinion, que les paroles favorisaient la digestion" (CT,204). This notion combines the power of thought with physiologic

processes. It is the task of dialogue to ameliorate digestion and, thereby, enhance the Balzacian life force. It represents a small step toward increasing the life expectancy of valetudinarians, a doctrine hygiénique (CT,204) to which Mlle Gamard also subscribed. Within the putatively therapeutical conversation during meals, Mlle Gamard expressed her farcical belief in medical myths which held that matutinal ingestion of an egg for a year implies fatal results, and that the ingestion of bread and the exclusion of beverages for several days cures sciatica (CT,205). Mlle Gamard's dietary cure for sciatica is possibly based on the prognosis concerning this condition, as evidenced by nineteenth-century credence: "Il n'y a rien de régulier dans la marche de la sciatique. . . . Les douleurs, en se prolongeant et en nécessitant un repos de longue durée, finissent par altérer les fonctions digestives, la nutrition et la santé générale."²³ Modern medical thought, far removed from the last century's theories, implies that subsequent to treatment the residual effects of sciatica are localized and, therefore, not systemic.²⁴ One may pause to ponder why Balzac has included diverse pseudomedical myths in his writing. In the tomes comprising La Comédie humaine, there is, indeed,

a notable partiality toward the inclusion of pseudo-medical and medical information as distinct aspects of idle conversations, appendages of the underlying theme of malady. These declarations, often preposterous, serve to impart a comical aspect to the unreasoning protagonists who pronounce them, oftentimes with an air of absolute authority. This preponderant guise of supremacy with which Mlle Gamard asserts her medical "knowledge" is the same type of authoritativeness she displays in domestic dealings with her boarders. She does not assert mastery over everyone. Chapeloud knew how to get around her by carefully observing household etiquette. The monarchical influence she wields is part of a vicious circle: Birotteau, by his timidity, gives his landlady permission to be dominant and is thereby dominated by her. His faint-hearted simplicity offers her the opportunity to reign over a shrinking provincial cleric.

Birotteau's constitutional timidity has a causal effect on his health--a blatant example of the Balzacian power of thought over physiologic homeostasis. Terrified by the lack of conversation at breakfast--palaver, he was convinced, was essential for proper digestion--he felt a constricting pain in his heart, which could have been

merely a sign of pyrosis (heartburn), dyspepsia, indigestion, or the weight of his morning's coffee in his stomach (CT,210). Birotteau's self-diagnosis also reveals a loss of not only weight, but body mass and muscle tone, as evidenced by the narrowing of the circumference of his calf (CT,212). Consequently, the trivial domestic matters that had influenced his emotional being now exact a price on the equilibrium of his physiologic being: "Enfin, ses souffrances devinrent intolérables. . . . le malheur secret qui flétrissait les heures de sa vieillesse altéra sa santé" (CT,212). This descent into the gradual vitiation of the human machine's flesh and blood components, initiated by the ebb and flow of the intellect's emotive response to its environment, is an ineffaceable aspect of Balzacian valetudinarians.

Birotteau is not unique in this case, for Balzacian personages who experience the tempestuous agitation of emotion or the feverish ferment of thought also experience a correlative consequence or effect which, depending upon the circumstances, either undermine or enhance the state of health. Cachexia, or a predisposition to it, is the resultant outgrowth of unbridled emotions, the nucleus of Birotteau's problems. A seemingly innocuous event,

consulting Troubert about Mlle Gamard's behavior, turns into a traumatic one for Birotteau, for the turbulent emotion emanating from this conversation causes the physiologic processes of his body to initiate abnormal heart palpitations (CT,212). The inexorable relationship between mind and body is omnipresent among the valedudinarians and monomaniacs in the Balzacian community, affecting personages whether they be part of the lower class, upper crust or middle class.

Birotteau's survival instinct is, indeed, thwarted, for in addition to the afflictions of gout and underlying monomania, he is a hostage to his timidity and, therefore, an unwitting cat's-paw in the turmoil of domestic politics and, later, in the politics of his cowardly friends. Birotteau, however, is not the only personage struggling for physiologic and social survival in the literary universe he inhabits. His adversary, Troubert, suffers from a disease whose exact nature Balzac keeps a riddle, never divulging more than a hint here or there. Since the symptoms include the cutaneous manifestation of a spotty, yellowish complexion (CT,212-213), we may assume that Troubert has a functional liver disorder which releases an oversupply of the bile pigment into the blood and causes

jaundice, a xanthic skin discoloration.²⁵ Unlike other Balzacian valetudinarians, Troubert is unable to exercise the power of mind over matter, and exacerbates his symptoms by concealing his emotions in a conversation with Birotteau. In keeping with the precepts of the Balzacian ecosystem of literary personages, Troubert overcomes his nebulous malady and triumphs in the end precisely because his temperament is intrinsically different from that of Birotteau, who is intimidated merely by his landlady. At cross purposes, Troubert, a designing and cunning creature, is schooled in the stratagems necessary for survival and is not unwilling to pounce upon Birotteau, downtrodden and well on the road to ruin, to devour him as his prey.

Completing the trio of insalubrious protagonists in Le Curé de Tours, along with Birotteau and Troubert, is Sophie Gamard whose malady appears to be pulmonary tuberculosis, as recounted by Troubert: ". . . il fallait attribuer les légers changements de son humeur aux souffrances causées par une pulmonie dont elle ne parlait pas . . ." (CT, 213). Contemporary opinion of the symptomatology of tuberculosis recounted two types of disease origin, one clinically frank, the other, clinically occult or latent:

Une petite toux, plus fatigante par sa persévérance què par son intensité . . . ouvre presque toujours la scène. . . . Une certaine langueur, un léger essoufflement dans les grands mouvements . . . un amaigrissement peu prononcé et quelquefois des sueurs nocturnes sont les premiers symptômes que l'on observe après la toux. Dans un nombre assez considérable de cas, le début a lieu d'une . . . autre manière; soit que le malade n'ait eu que des symptômes trop légers pour être remarqués, soit qu'il n'en ait éprouvé aucun, il n'est prévenu du début de la maladie que par une hémoptysie plus ou moins considérable.²⁶ (Italics mine.)

In addition to the physiologic and psychologic variations in the body and psyche caused by malady, Mlle Gamard's consumptive condition serves as an excuse for the changes in her moods, a device that intimidates Birotteau and defines his place in the landlady's hegemonic universe. The latency of Mlle Gamard's symptoms serves a dual purpose, since her illness is subclinical, not readily detectable, she is still able to participate in the narrative's action, while her disease serves as an excuse for her behavior toward Birotteau.

This brings to mind another component of the many-sided phenomenon that is malady. In addition to the anomalies that illness visits on the body and mind, reinforced by the corresponding, inexorable effect each has on the other, malady, in the context of Balzac's writing, implies an influence on the social order of directly

afflicted personages and those indirectly felled, as if by osmosis, by a virus, bacterium or obsession. The differentiation of valetudinarians and monomaniacs contaminated by disease and of those affected by the consequences of other personages' maladies is clearly stated in La Comédie humaine. Even amelioration of symptoms or the disappearance, either by cure or spontaneous remission, of a protagonist's disorder do not diminish the importance of the rôle played by malady. For, once symptoms and signs of a physiologic or psychologic anomaly have existed, a significant causal relationship is established between those leprous with disease and the social network of unscathed personages affected emotionally or intellectually by the ailments of others. Just as Goriot's illness, for example, involved the social structure represented by his family, his financial means and the boardinghouse's inhabitants, Le Curé de Tours displays inherent and peripheral influences of malady. Balzacian valetudinarianism may have as a causative agent an intrinsic or extrinsic insult to the human body or mind. Birotteau's gout, for example, is intrinsically induced according to medical knowledge, by his body's overproduction of uric acid, whereas his monomania is an extrinsic

manifestation of the lure provided, at first, by Chapeloud's rooms and furnishings and, secondly, by the former's ambition to attain a higher ecclesiastical post. The significance of disease as depicted by Balzac and the importance it comes to bear on society is inevitable, just as it is reciprocal, for the afflicted personage, in addition to suffering from his particular malady, suffers from societal attitudes concerning his ailment.

Having established and examined the essence and underpinnings of the Birotteau-Gamard-Troubert triad, filled with underlying petty jealousies, provincial aspirations and small-scale Machiavellian ruses, Balzac presses on to detail the steps of Birotteau's cachectic, societal and ecclesiastical downfall. Placing himself under the imperious tutelage of Mme de Listomère in an effort to escape temporarily the wrath of Sophie Gamard and to hope for its diminution, Birotteau must buffet the waves of authority created by his new monarch and her court, as it were. Although a benevolent despot, Mme de Listomère's power over Birotteau is essentially a replacement for Sophie Gamard's ascendant authority which, under the guise of domesticity, dictated her boarders' behavior. This is

redolent of a sort of archetypal notion, that of the supremacy which a personage of a lesser social stratum wields over his superior. Madame Vauquer was empowered, in Le Père Goriot, with the ability to classify her boarders by gradations through the means of a telling look, an acerbic comment and, significantly, by the amount of food they were allotted at the dinner table. In Le Curé de Tours, the case in point seems to be that of the secular influence of parishioners over the clerical posture of a man of the cloth. However, to reiterate a theme previously mentioned, this story's theological ramification serves as its physiognomy, in a sense. The story's lifeblood, its important part and message, may be indigentous to all callings, occupations and walks of life. Birotteau's weakness is a liability which renders him vincible and weaponless. It allows others to mold his decisions or sway his judgment. It even causes him to sign the document presented to him by Caron, and thereby relinquish his right to his rooms and furnishings (CT,218). Drawing a causal relationship between ruinous emotions and their physiologic counterparts, in this case a mild cardiac arrhythmia, Balzac details Birotteau's reaction on his return to Sophie Gamard's in order to supervise the removal

of the furniture which he believed to be legally his: "Il ne sonna pas sans éprouver de violentes palpitations de cœur à la porte de cette maison où il avait l'habitude de venir depuis quatorze ans, qu'il avait habitée, et d'où il devait s'exiler à jamais, après avoir rêvé d'y mourir en paix, à l'imitation de son ami Chapeloud" (CT, 221). This passage reflects the prevalent stages of Birotteau's life: the customary existence he lived as a creature of habit, his banishment from the consuetudinary convention of his life as Mlle Gamard's boarder and his vision of breathing his last breath in this familiar environment. Birotteau's requirements are a testimony to mediocrity, and the modest nature of his wishes would not have been difficult to fulfill had he been assertive and, thereby, in control of his destiny.

If Birotteau is devoured by a craving desire for Chapeloud's rooms and possessions, Troubert, as well, falls prey to a similar yearning. Troubert regarded Chapeloud as his enemy and, therefore, entertained an aversion toward Birotteau because he was a constant reminder of the late ecclesiastic (CT, 221-222). Troubert's wish to inhabit Birotteau's rooms is reminiscent of a disease's prodromal symptoms, carefully obscured below the surface,

away from the clinical eye of diagnosis, until such time as the malady's signs become frank or manifest and, thereby, easily recognized. Birotteau's guileless, unsophisticated behavior betrayed his motives to Chapeloud, who soon divined his friend's desire to inherit his belongings and lodging. Troubert, on the other hand, appropriated the same belongings and lodging by insidious craftiness.

Resembling other Balzacian valetudinarians and monomaniacs who have sustained emotional trauma, Birotteau falls into this category when he learns that Poirel has been named canon and now inhabits Troubert's old rooms, the latter now residing in Birotteau's lodging. Due to this inevitable sociological and ecclesiastical ecosystem of transformation of rôles, entailing the change of personages' societal status, Birotteau fears he will collapse from despair, develops an unsteady ambulatory gait reminiscent of a drunkard and breaks down in tears (CT,223). These emotional and physiologic reactions are the culmination of Birotteau's lifelong behavior patterns. In response to the environmental and social changes in his life, Birotteau is incapable of maintaining a modicum of physical or emotional stamina, a dangerous signal in the Balzacian universe, for it indicates predisposition to

disease or worsening of disease symptoms already present. Such a personage is bent upon failure, if not extinction, for he has not learned the adaptive survival techniques necessary in the ecosystem of Balzacian literary species, so to speak. The most adamant and robust plant and animal species have survived because of their ability to change their adaptive mechanisms for survival. Not intended for physiologic death, Birotteau eventually loses his efficacy as a protagonist, and becomes a pitiable literary fixture. This necessarily is precursory to his loss of identity, for without his monomaniacal wishes for the lodging and ecclesiastical post, both having been usurped by others, Birotteau becomes a virtual nonentity, an eviscerated literary phantom. Deprived of the security that the routine of habit brings, Birotteau is not unlike a plant that fails to flourish after its uprooting from life-giving soil: "Les célibataires remplacent les sentiments par des habitudes. . . . Aussi Birotteau était-il devenu semblable à quelque végétal: le transplanter, c'était en risquer l'innocente fructification. . . . pour vivre un arbre doit retrouver à toute heure les mêmes sucs, et toujours avoir ses chevelus dans le même terrain. . ."

(CT, 226). Barring Birotteau from his post in Saint-Gatien

and the established practices of his life up until this point eventually precipitates his downfall. Just as Balzacian protagonists reflect their environment, while their environment is indicative of the protagonists' very being, Birotteau derived the same sense of self-identity from his priestly functions and from his status as Mlle Gamard's lodger. Corresponding to Birotteau's despair, vain expectations that rendered his current life analogous to agony (CT,235), is Mlle Gamard's own descent into illness, one to which Troubert had previously alluded and, now, which has worsened: "Mlle Gamard avait pris du froid en sortant de la cathédrale, s'était mise au lit et passait pour être dangereusement malade" (CT,236). Originally a valetudinarian with only prodromal symptoms of pulmonary tuberculosis (CT,213), Mlle Gamard saw herself degenerate into a pauvre mourante (CT,240), as her malady progressed to an extreme stage. Having been named priest of Saint-Symphorien and, thereby, exiled from the societal core around which his life evolved, while Troubert was named bishop of Troyes, Birotteau is now dubbed le malheureux (CT,242). Due to his misfortunes he lost a great deal of the ambulatory facility he once possessed (CT,242), possibly due to an exacerbation of

gout, and experienced the onset of a fever which forced him to rest in bed (CT,242). Having lost the inheritance left to him by Mme de Listomère as well as all his possessions, including Chapeloud's portrait, Birotteau is not only maltreated by Troubert, but by the physiologic effects of malady exacerbated by the power of pernicious emotions: "Ce pauvre prêtre . . . était pâle et maigre. Le chagrin empreint dans tous les traits, décomposait entièrement ce visage qui jadis était si doucement gai. La maladie jetait sur ces yeux . . . un voile qui simulait une pensée" (CT,243). In the Balzacian community of chlorotics, phthisics, and lepers, the emotions often serve as a mirror of physiologic disease. Corporeal infirmity, as well, exerts an influence over the psyche in those personages withered with cachexia. Affected by manifestations of both types of ills, Birotteau's prognosis is one of dashed hopes and gloom.

Notes

¹ Honoré de Balzac, "Le Curé de Tours" in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 4 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976), p. 186.

² Honoré de Balzac, "Avant-Propos" in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976), p. 11.

³ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴ Philippe Bertault, Balzac et la religion, (Paris: Boivin et Cie., Éditeurs, 1942), p. 307.

⁵ Honoré de Balzac, "Avant-Propos," p. 13.

⁶ "Goutte," Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle. Français, historique, géographique, mythologique, bibliographique, littéraire, artistique, scientifique, etc., éd. Pierre Larousse (Paris: Administration du Grand dictionnaire universel, 1866), p. 1403.

⁷ Gerald P. Rodnan, M. D., ed., Primer on the Rheumatic Diseases (Atlanta: Arthritis Foundation, 1973), p. 97.

⁸ "Goutte," Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle, p. 1404.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Gerald P. Rodnan, M. D., Primer on the Rheumatic Diseases, p. 100.

¹² Ibid., p. 95.

- 13 Randolph Lee Clark, Jr., M. D. and Russell W. Cumley, "Gout" in The Book of Health (Houston: Elsevier Press, Inc., 1953), p. 282.
- 14 Léon-François Hoffman, "Eros en Filigrane: 'Le Curé de Tours'" in L'Année balzacienne (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1967), p. 95.
- 15 "Monomanie," Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle, p. 463.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Paul Louis, Les Types sociaux chez Balzac et Zola, (Paris: Les Éditions du Monde Moderne, 1925), p. 149.
- 20 "Vieille fille," Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle, p. 371.
- 21 Herbert J. Hunt, Balzac's Comédie humaine, (London: The Athlone Press, 1964), p. 33.
- 22 Rose Fortassier, "Sur Brillat-Savarin et de l'alimentation dans la génération" in L'Année balzacienne (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1968), p. 107.
- 23 "Sciastique," Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle, p. 390.
- 24 "Sciatica," The Book of Health, p. 283.
- 25 "Jaundice," The Book of Health, p. 432.
- 26 "Phthisie," Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle, p. 905.

CONCLUSION

TAINED FLESH AND FRENZIED MINDS: A PERSPECTIVE

Là où il n'y a pas maladie physique, il y a maladie morale.

Honoré de Balzac¹

Similar to the feeble quarry in nature's scheme, valetudinarians and monomaniacs, who constitute society's cachectic stratum in La Comédie humaine, are devoured by predatory maladies of body or mind. Balzac's depiction of malady is unique and inimitable, for he has created a new definition of illness by intertwining medical facts and pseud-scientific fiction. Furthermore, Balzac's theory of illness is emblazoned with his personal crest, an unparalleled one, at best, for no other author has defined morbid infirmity or its antithesis, the bloom of health, as he has. Balzac's view of disease is an admixture of the physiologic and psychologic phenomena to

which his protagonists are subjected. These two factors are blended, inexorably exerting a reciprocal effect on each other, thereby resulting in malady that is neither entirely of physical nor wholly of mental origin. Of paramount importance in La Comédie humaine, it is la pensée that ultimately determines a personage's corporeal and intellectual well-being. The mechanism of thought, as depicted by Balzac, is a Janus-faced one, having either deleterious or benevolent consequences according to the use the personage makes of it. The importance of the thought mechanism, in Balzacian malady, goes beyond the traditional nineteenth-century view of malady: "Les maladies se révèlent à la simple observation par un état de souffrance ou de malaise qui accompagne un désordre plus ou moins apparent dans les fonctions de l'économie."² In addition to overt or occult symptoms from which his personages suffer and the keenness of monomaniacal penchants that define their lives, it is thought that has the power to exacerbate a minor disorder or palliate the anguish of severe pain. Thought also can render a heretofore healthy protagonist profoundly ill or extract the life's breath from a personage who otherwise displays the promise of a centenarian's longevity. Balzac's "scientific" beliefs and his personal

attitudes toward medicine emanate from the potpourri of mesmerists', phrenologists', and physiognomists' lore blended with the contemporary knowledge of physiology, psycho-physiology, and advice from his personal physician. The novelist's view of symptoms, diagnoses, and treatments of malady is quaint and picturesque, bespeaking a rather fanciful notion of the tainted flesh and frenzied minds which he has chronicled in his novels. Nevertheless, the notion of Balzacian malady is an interesting nosological aspect of La Comédie humaine, a sort of medical mythology interwoven with the threads of fact and fiction to form a unique medical vernacular.

Les Martyrs ignorés is Balzac's definitive treatise on malady engendered by thought. In fact, thought is the primary etiologic factor of protagonists' anatomical and psychological aberrations, eclipsing the bacterial or viral causes of disease. Balzac alleges that the etiology of physiologic and psychologic maladies is to be found in the anomalies of the blood's circulation, a mechanism which not only nourishes the body but, also, produces the serum liquidity in which thought thrives. This whimsical hypothesis establishes a hematological hierarchy of the body's workings and declares that blood is the focal point

from which bodily functions evolve. Digressions in the workings of the blood, therefore, increase the tendencies toward malady, the malady corresponding to the venous site of impairment:

Une idée . . . est le produit du fluide nerveux qui constitue une circulation intime, semblable à la circulation sanguine, car le sang engendre le fluide nerveux, comme le fluide nerveux engendre la pensée. Mais il y a des abus dans l'une comme dans l'autre. Ces abus se nomment maladie pour le sang, et folie pour la pensée.³

Associated with the mechanism of thought is l'idée, a vital component of personages' homeostasis. The ability of Balzac's protagonists to maintain within themselves relatively stable physiologic and psychologic conditions by means of their own regulatory mechanisms (temperature, digestion, respiration, soundness of mind, etc.) may be changed for better or worse by thought. The entity that comprises thought's essential nature and imparts to it a certain amount of tangible substance is the idea. The idea is a homeostatic implement, the motivating force behind thought; its action, beneficial or harmful, is mediated through the thought process and may result in suppression of disease, rapidly induced toxic responses such as cardiac arrhythmia--experienced by Raphaël de Valentin at the gaming table--cardiac arrest, or an increased

perpetuation of emotional shock, followed by death. This hypothesis is expounded upon by the physician, Physidor, one of a group of several polemicists debating the question of malady:

. . . n'y a-t-il pas des idées pernicieuses qui, introduites dans le système où s'élabore la pensée, la vicient et la pervertissent? . . . On change la nature de la pensée comme on pourrait changer la nature du sang en donnant à un homme telle maladie indiquée. Cette expérience qu'aucun médecin ne peut, ne doit, ni ne veut faire, les passions la font, comme les fanatismes font l'autre expérience sur la pensée (Mi, 739-740).

The thought mechanism, by its very nature, is mutable in accordance with the type of ideas which may influence it. Danger lurks within the possibility for change since that which is volatile implies a lack of stasis, of physiologic and psychologic homeostatic control. Consequently, without a safety valve, a sentinel of sorts to prevent the infiltration of insidious ideas which may contaminate thought, protagonists are vulnerable to disease.

The transformation that thought undergoes initiates a chain reaction, for the protagonist, now corrupted by this nefarious effect, assumes the dual rôle of protagonist-host, exhibiting the adverse clinical manifestations and results of malady. The theory of the thought-disease process, formulated by a nonagenarian doctor from Tours, is related by

Physidor, thereby summarizing Balzac's steadfast self-conviction: "La pensée est plus puissante que ne l'est le corps, elle le mange, l'absorbe et le détruit; la pensée est le plus violent de tous les agents de destruction, elle est le véritable ange exterminateur de l'humanité, qu'elle tue et vivifie, car elle vivifie et tue" (Mi,744).

This physician, ten years younger than the time-worn antiquarian in La Peau de chagrin, defines the components of the thought mechanism and, in so doing, corroborates the aged shopkeeper's dogma of malady: "Les passions, les vices, les occupations extrêmes, les douleurs, les plaisirs sont des torrents de pensée" (Mi,744). These potentially venomous elements of emotion are capable of evoking the required amount of toxicity which may induce the mind to order the body to cease its homeostatic hold on the vital spark that is life: "Réunissez sur un point donné quelques idées violentes, un homme est tué par elles comme s'il recevait un coup de poignard" (Mi,744). This important premise hangs like a sword of Damocles over each protagonist-host. Even medical treatment prescribed by Desplein or his disciple, Bianchon, cannot correct the physiologic anomalies and completely reverse the course taken by the disease process once it is initiated by the idea-thought

mechanism; the natural history of a protagonist-host's malady may be reversed only when challenged by the therapeutic action of benevolent thoughts. The roseate hopes contained within the beneficial aspect of thought can reduce symptoms of disease and ensure an optimistic prognosis. However, a protagonist's aim, whenever possible, entails preventing the onset of signs which lead to the long, somber walk down the footpath of valetudinarianism or monomania. Balzac has recommended a counterpoison, a sovereign remedy which has various effects on different stages of malady. When followed, this prescription may obstruct the disease process, thwart the transformation of an acute condition into a chronic one, or restore the bloom and vitality of health to a protagonist. This vulnerary is not only a panacea for personages' ills but, also, an effective counterpoise, a countercharm of the novelist's invention to hinder malady before it becomes clinically manifest and, consequently, virulent. Although this antidote may be palliative as well as curative, its prime usefulness resides in preventing the peccant humors, quinsy, and breakbone fever of the protagonist-host's sickroom. According to Balzacian medical lore, one's life span may exceed an entire century if the passions, vices,

sorrows, pleasures, and drastic pursuits which constitute human thought are kept to a minimum and if one's professional life is spent in manual labor (Mi, 744). Balzac's fanciful premise implies the conservation of the life force and its storage in one's personalized warehouse of sorts, an arrière-boutique where the vital energy of life is stockpiled. With the accumulation of emotional energy which otherwise would have been expended on the intoxicating ebb of thought, one's days similarly are lengthened: "Ce feu de notre organisation est modifiable. Pensez beaucoup, vous vivrez peu; ne pensez point, vous ferez de vieux os" (Mi, 745). Conversely, longevity is due to the inertia of thought (Mi, 749), implying its possible dormant, latent state. In order to enhance the benefits of this prescribed way of life, Balzac recommends a meager dietary regime that contains an insubstantial intake of food (Mi, 745), eschewing mutton, pudding, and pastry, i. e., the fixings of the regal repasts which he himself would devour one day, only to drink exclusively strongly brewed coffee the next.

Consequently, Balzac would have his personages lead a stagnant existence, unruffled by nefarious emotions and impervious to joy, a cataleptic life of statue-like repose

in which one would hold the life's breath within one's lungs, for to exhale would set in motion the mercurial nature of thought. This regime is not practical, however, for personages of La Comédie humaine who are involved in plots and machinations revolving around passions, pleasures, and sorrows. It necessarily would eliminate the possibility for the various serpentine schemes found within his pages. His few centenarians, therefore, are primarily mentors of sorts, such as the antiquarian in La Peau de chagrin and the age-old physician in Les Martyrs ignorés, giving counsel and recommending the required comportment for a long life which one might live sound of wind and limb, invulnerable to the cholera and chlorosis, galloping consumption and churchyard cough which may cut short the thread of life. If espousal of the thought-disease mechanism prevents illness--for when one recognizes this premise--one may take the necessary steps to avoid malady, refutation of this theory invites impairment and deterioration of the body and mind. The centenarian shopkeeper was reduced to a rotten and blighted cadaver once he rejected savoir as a way of life and lived by the tenets of pouvoir and vouloir, just as Raphaël de Valentin eventually was reduced to a graveyard relic for having

plunged into the dissipation of an intemperate existence. In a similar vein, Goriot, unloved by his daughters, eventually goes the way of all flesh primarily due to a broken heart; Pierrette, frail and defenseless, succumbs to the physical ills of chlorosis and to the cruel treatment she received at the hand of her cousins; and Birotteau falls prey to his steadily increasing monomania and to the evil scheming of his adversaries.

It is within the pages of the Pathologie de la vie sociale, whose title implies the morbid nature of society and civilization, that thought, once more, is the unifying theme. At times, the power of thought permeates this treatise and accounts for all manner of ills; at other times, thought resides just below the surface, scarcely visible but, nevertheless, present. The pseudo-medical ideas expressed in Les Martyrs ignorés concerning a restricted diet and absence of passionate pursuits may not be conducive to keeping body and soul together. A dietary regime containing sufficient nutrients is vital for the body's homeostasis, whereas uninquisitive and impassive enterprises may induce a dreary boredom not beneficial for the mind and, hence, the body. Some of the tenets Balzac outlines in the Traité des excitants modernes, however, are

consistent with the demonstrated opinions of medical science. Several aspects of a personage's state of health depend upon factors beyond his control. Hereditary is the practically inalterable element which determines, to a large extent, a personage's physiologic and psychologic well-being; this primary force, composed of a diverse possibility of genes and chromosomes, is counterbalanced by environment. The geographic locale, with its attendant customs and mores, acts in concert with heredity, thus adding another component to a protagonist's psychophysiologic make-up. Pierrette is an example of a child both predisposed to illness by virtue of her sickly ancestors and psychologically tortured by her cousin, Sylvie, in a viperous, antagonistic environment. Added to the ragoût of life, which contains sundry ingredients, Balzac offers an admonition concerning the excessive use of stimulants, society's tonics and elixirs: "L'excès du tabac, l'excès du café, l'excès de l'opium et de l'eau-de-vie, produisent des désordres graves, et conduisent à une mort précoce. L'organe, sans cesse irrité, sans cesse nourri, s'hypertrophie; il prend un volume anormal, souffre, et vicie la machine qui succombe."⁴ Tea and sugar, as well, are affixed to the inventory of possibly toxic indulgences.

Whereas nature wants the organs of the human body to cooperate by working in concert to assure radiant health, it is society that instills in man the desire for particular sources of pleasure (Tem,308). His appetite whetted, man develops a proclivity toward excess, yielding to the pleasures and attendant sorrows that constitute thought. Eventually, this excess causes the deterioration of man's constitution and temperament. The overly pungent scent of a cigar, the acrid taste of coal-black coffee, the bizarre reveries occasioned by opium, the maudlin mood induced by brandy, and the vulgar taste of vapid tea rendered sweet with sugar are all extremes to be avoided, for like nefarious thought, they are capable of snuffing out the spark of life. In his culinary manual, which is an addendum of sorts to the Traité des excitants modernes, Brillat-Savarin advises that, given man's physiologic condition, to eat heartily and drink one's fill of corrosive substances may have unwholesome effects: ". . . l'homme est bien plus fortement organisé pour la douleur que pour le plaisir. Effectivement, l'injection des substances acerbes, âcres ou amères au dernier degré, peut nous faire essayer des sensations extrêmement pénibles ou douloureuses."⁵ Gluttony and insobriety, therefore,

represent a thorn in man's side, rendering the human machine's functions less effacacious. Balzac asserts that it is, once more, la pensée that introduces a protagonist to the very excesses diametrically opposed to a salubrious way of life: "Tout excès se base sur un plaisir que l'homme veut répéter au-delà des lois ordinaires, promulguées par la nature. Moins la force humaine est occupée, plus elle tend à l'excès, la pensée l'y porte irrésistiblement" (Tem,307). Having justly acknowledged the ruinous effects originating from sybaritic indulgence in society's elixirs, Balzac presses onward to outline a few droll pseud-scientific beliefs by insisting on their invidious potential. Just as he believes each of his pseud-medical beliefs to be devoid of charlatanism and effrayante de certitude (Tem,308), Balzac insists on the fictive speculation that a generation's consumption of fresh fish results in the birth of female infants, whereas the consumption of red meat is responsible for the birth of male infants (Tem,309). The novelist asserts that dearth of sugar in one's diet is the etiologic factor responsible for pulmonary afflictions, while the excessive intake of sugar produces maladies of the skin (Tem,327).

The particular brand of his precepts and axioms

concerning infirmity and robust health is affirmation of Balzac's status as a writer, a recorder of society's conduct and behavior. Many of his concepts, which he catalogues under the caption of medical and scientific fact, are no more than eccentric notions--current nineteenth-century folklore. Nevertheless, Balzac's view of malady causes him to diagnose Raphaël de Valentin's physiologic symptoms as pulmonary tuberculosis, while the signs constituting Pierrette's chlorosis are depicted quite accurately. In his Théorie de la démarche, he acknowledges the dichotomization of science and superstition, the juncture where the two meet, and the dilemma posed by the possibility of combining the tenets of both: "Je me place au point précis où la science touche à la folie, et je ne puis mettre de garde-fous."⁶ Perpetually the attentive observer of humankind depicted in the autobiographical account that is Facino Cane, he is constantly cognizant of a voice's musical or inharmonious intonation and a hand's graceful or inelegant contour. He is, thereby, able to detect and diagnose malady by taking note of his subjects' movements: "N'est-il pas effrayant de penser qu'un observateur profond peut découvrir un vice, un remords, une maladie en voyant un homme en mouvement?"

(Td,280). Argus-eyed and inquisitive, he not only differentiates zymotic maladies from inherited anomalies but, also dissects and then examines the inner mechanism of the personality. Perhaps it is he who duly may be accredited with the discovery of "body language," the physiologic translation of the emotions: "Quel riche langage dans ces effets immédiats d'une volonté traduite avec innocence! . . . Un simple geste, un involontaire frémissement de lèvres peut devenir le terrible dénouement d'un drame caché longtemps entre deux cœurs" (Td,280).

This aphonic dialect, a pantomime of the unspoken word, is the soul's shorthand and emanates from the powerful Balzacian phenomenon, thought. In La Comédie humaine, the thought mechanism acquires an almost tangible aspect and asserts itself in one's movements: "L'inclination plus ou moins vive d'un de nos membres; la forme télégraphique dont il a contracté, malgré nous, l'habitude, l'angle ou le contour que nous lui faisons décrire, sont empreints de notre vouloir, et sont d'une effrayante signification. C'est plus que la parole, c'est la pensée en action"

(Td,280). Other material manifestations of thought are found in the supplementary details and items of a protagonist's life and environment. These objects, even the

inert ones, are endowed with their own brand of animation: a protagonist's garments, household furniture, parlor-maids and livery servants (Td,293), etc., define a personage's identity. Balzac has adhered faithfully to this dogma, for his personages are mirror reflections of their environments, just as the environments are counterparts of the personages. Madame Vauquer is a salient example of this tenet; her boardinghouse, inhabited by Goriot, embodies her existence, while she incarnates the mildewed and decrepit boardinghouse.

In the Traité de la vie élégante, defined by Balzac as "the science of manners,"⁷ the unaffected affectations and refined embellishments of sartorial and social precepts are scrutinized. Within these pages that emphasize the importance of luxury, the way to hold one's walking cane, and the necessity of observing the convictions of genteel decorum and propriety, the author admits, curiously enough, that there are also "revolting perfections" (Tve,236) to be found within the confines of polite society. Perhaps this singular statement in a treatise that prescribes adherence to the conventions of society and avoidance of ungallant, churlish behavior and ill-bred inurbanity is not all that strange when one considers, for

example, the radiant and delicate contours Pierrette's face acquired on her deathbed. Balzac, consequently, has created an aesthetics of illness, seeing the beautiful in the grotesque and symmetry in distortion. All concepts have a dual nature wherein similarity may be found in dissimilarity: it would be difficult, if not impossible, to define perfect health and soundness of mind without the knowledge of plague and lunacy, whereas pulchritude might be unappreciated without its counterpart, gruesomeness and its attendant inelegance. Therefore, Balzac advises the ungainly and distorted, hunchbacked and crippled to cultivate the engaging qualities of captivating charm and nimble-witted conversation. In order to distinguish oneself from the commonplace and second-rate mediocrity of life, one should, therefore, develop social graces. These attributes are capable not of overshadowing infirmity but, ironically, of giving an advantage in society, since an afflicted personage seeks to sharpen his or her social comportment in the beau monde. A personage resplendent with health and grace, on the other hand, being self-satisfied and egotistic, is a plague on polite society: "Nous ne savons pas quand les femmes comprendront qu'un défaut leur donne d'immenses avantages! . . .

L'homme ou la femme parfaits sont les êtres les plus nuls" (Tve, 257).

The sundry maladies of Balzac's protagonists form the pith and marrow of many of his novels. They let us see the viscera and intestines of the creatures that he has created--their innermost hopes and ominous fears. Although Balzac's depiction of the diagnostic, symptomatic, and pathognomonic aspects of illness is tinged, at times, with fanciful opinions and outlandish suppositions, his discerning novelist's eye is responsible for detailed accounts of malady worthy of a Dupuytren or a Desplein: "On s'est parfois étonné de la précision avec laquelle l'auteur du Père Goriot a décrit certaines espèces morbides, exposant, avec la rigueur d'un clinicien, les symptômes, la marche et le dénouement d'une maladie."⁸ The manifestations of illness--whether they be mild, moderate, or extremely severe in intensity or continuous, intermittent, or fluctuating in duration--are subject to his diagnoses. There is a reciprocity of scientific facts as well as pseudo-medical beliefs between him and the members of the medical profession that he has invented: "Ses médecins n'ont pas de plus grand plaisir que la découverte d'une maladie étrange ou perdue; il est

médecin et fait comme eux."⁹ There is, indeed, a transposition of his identity with that of his clinicians who exist theoretically on the printed page, but into whose inert and dormant lungs he has breathed the spark of life.

Hippolyte Taine, one of Balzac's severest critics, frowns upon the unsymmetric and entangled nature of Balzac's writing. He reproaches the novelist's tendency to diverge from the subject at hand to develop subplots and to recount seemingly superfluous details and interminable descriptions. He views these points of style as blemishes on the printed page. These points of style, however, are the embossment of Balzac's rhetorical form. They fuel his furor scribendi and impart chaotic elegance to his work. The manifold trifles he includes in his manuscripts, from the color, weave, and texture of a rug on a drawing room floor to the delicate flowers painted on a gilt-edged chinaware tea cup, contribute to the natural history of his protagonists' lives. Using a medical metaphor which is well-founded, Taine acknowledges Balzac's modus operandi used in compiling la fleur malade, étrange et magnifique¹⁰, his life's opus:

Il commençait à la façon non des artistes, mais des savants. Au lieu de peindre, il disséquait. Il n'entrait point du premier saut . . . dans

l'âme de ses personnages: il tournait autour d'eux, patiemment, pesamment, en anatomiste, levant un muscle, puis un os, puis une veine, puis un nerf, n'arrivant au cerveau et au cœur qu'après avoir parcouru le cercle entier des organes et des fonctions..¹¹

Taine's medically hued account of the novelist-anatomist's manner of writing suggests a post mortem examination by which the nature and extent of disease as well as the cause of death are determined. Taine's assessment is partially correct; dissection implies the analysis of mortal remains before the journey into the long night of the sepulcher. Balzac's method, however, suggests a vivisectional approach to his protagonists; physiological, pathological, and even psychological investigations are performed, for the most part, while the personages are rife with the vital force of life and before they are numbered with the dead. Balzac's temperament as a writer compels him to peruse and utilize the mutuality of the physiologic machine and the workings of the mind, thereby establishing an affinity between personages' pathologic states and the existence they lead within a volume's pages. In this vein, Balzac authenticates the filiation of literature and malady and the prolific themes which can be entwined through both. The novelist leaves no

stone unturned in probing the drama, tragedy, and spectacle to be found within the depths of illness. It is not just survival, simply existing that is significant in Balzac's works but, rather, the criterion of excellence to which a personage aspires in order to live his life. It is not enough to maintain the body's homeostasis, as Raphaël de Valentin discovers but, instead, to develop an aesthetic standard by which a personage may live life. Parallels of this ideal are to be found in other areas of Balzac's thought, such as the trappings of one's wardrobe. For instance, the garish ostentatiousness of dandyism should be avoided, for one is properly attired only when the total sartorial effect is noticed and not the individual vestments that comprise one's costume as a whole; this tenet is implied throughout the pages of the Traité de la vie élégante. A first love, for example, should be pristine and redolent of Paul and Virginie's affection for each other; Pierrette and Jacques' love, therefore, is patterned after the tenderness and devotion that Bernardin's protagonists shared. Malady is not only the discomfort and malaise of loss of health or the vexation of spirit and infelicity produced by monomania but, also, a phenomenon that distinguishes a

personage from others. Malady endows a protagonist with a new and separate identity that differentiates him from those on whom the glow of health shines. Those who quaff the bitter cup of cachexia are destined to swallow its dregs. Those protagonists who drain the cup, thereby offering a sacrifice at the shrine of Bacchus, do not emerge in a state of maudlin intoxication. Instead, they become pupils of a harsh master, malady is a teacher of sorts, albeit a rigorous and uncompromising one whose lessons are taught at the protagonist's expense. Consistent with this point is the realization, on his deathbed, that Goriot had overindulged his daughters, consequently, transforming them into thankless, unmindful adults.

Balzac's own tempestuous existence and state of health at various points of his life inextricably seem to proceed from La Comédie humaine just as this master opus emanates from the writer's perennial creativity; this is not unlike the way in which Minerva sprang, fully armed, from the head of Jupiter. Among the mosaic of virulent effects attributable to the adynamia of malady and the asthenia of disability, the creative impulse, whether it be composing a melodious sonata or taking up the pen to write lachrymose prose, is a beneficial out-

growth of one's departure from health: "D'éminents savants voient même dans les maladies et les infirmités, soit physiques soit psychiques, un terrain particulièrement propice pour l'éclosion des talents exceptionnels, un puissant levain, un vigoureux catalyseur, sans lesquels les forces géniales resteraient, dans maint cas, assoupies."¹² The ability to conjure up fanciful visions and to indulge in quixotic reveries perhaps is enhanced by the thorns of malady piercing the flesh and the mind. In those upon whom the Muse smiles, malady engenders a need to compensate for a body that may be weak of limb or a mind that is overcast by monomania; time is the unifying element in this scheme, for each mortal's days are numbered, every being ultimately is condemned to death. Certainly, Balzac's prolific imagination and the seemingly limitless flow of words on his every page serve as proof of his creativity. The Herculean task he undertook of populating his volumes with a swarming profusion of distinct personages is tribute to his extravagant originality. Although it is not necessary for malady to have inspired Balzac, persuading and cajoling him to create a mythic universe, the zeal and enthusiasm which he brought to his writing may be seen as a type of monomania, an

all-encompassing desire to create an entire civilization on the printed page. The investigation of Balzac's health, by way of a theoretical disinterment and belated hypothetical necropsy, adds another dimension not only to the writer-as-mythographer but, also, to the writer-as-valetudinarian.

It is, indeed, ironic that the author who penned the Traité des excitants modernes, and in so doing proscribed the use of such substances as tobacco and alcohol, then excessively drank strongly brewed, pungent coffee. This unsavory beverage, a nocturnal potion which he consumed in great quantities in order to assure wakefulness and, thereby, profitably consume the midnight oil was, if not the cause of his death, at least, unwholesome and harmful to his health: "Il réservait toutes ses prédilections pour le café, qui lui fit tant de mal et le tua peut-être quoiqu'il fût organisé pour devenir centenaire. . . ."13

Sketchers, painters, and sculptors have held up a mirror to nature so that they might catch Balzac's likeness, just as Pierre Grassou captured and counterfeited Rembrandt's technique of chiaroscuro and Rubens' perspective of composition on canvas. If their charcoal, paint and bronze did not depict a steadfast consumer of coffee, Gavarni,

David d'Angers, and Rodin's works do portray a man who presents to view an unusual contour of countenance and a singular anatomical expression. Balzac, by virtue of his exceptional and unsymmetric appearance, might have burst forth from the pages of La Comédie humaine as one of his very own creations. His physiologic complexion and bearing do not emanate entirely from inherited characteristics, a familial resemblance cached in a dominant, or even recessive, gene and passed on from ancestor to progeny. Instead, the particular figure that he cut may have been due to Cushing's syndrome.¹⁴ This clinical condition is produced by excessive secretion of cortisol, a hormone excreted by the adrenal cortex which influences metabolic function. The illness' signs include a type of obesity confined to the face and torso, a protruding stomach, and a fat pad on the back of the neck. The extremities, arms and legs, remain slender, exhibiting good muscle tone although, in theory, muscular weakness is present. Migraine headaches and increased blood pressure accompany the above symptoms and are associated with the psychological manifestations of intermittent depression, melancholia, and irritability.¹⁵ Although abnormally high arterial blood pressure and attendant cardio-vascular abnormalities are

the more serious manifestations of this malady, they do not become evident until well after the other symptoms are apparent. The insidious onset of hypertension eventually is followed by renal dysfunction, ophthalmic difficulties, cardiac insufficiency and, consequently, an untimely death.¹⁶ Dr. Michel Folman avers that it was the arterial hypertension of Cushing's syndrome, progressing in a furtive manner, that ultimately killed Balzac.¹⁷ The symptoms of illness to which Balzac alluded in his correspondence during the last year of his life seem to suggest the strong possibility of Cushing's syndrome.

April of 1849 finds Balzac, a martyr to disease, in Wierzchownia with Madame Hanska. There, more than a giant's stride from Paris, he is cloué par la maladie¹⁸ and a cardiac hypertrophy, or enlargement, is diagnosed: "Enfin ici je suis arrivé à ce point que je ne pouvais pas me peigner sans des étouffements et des palpitations, et il y a eu deux fois des attaques de strangulation complète, par impossibilité d'aspirer et d'expirer l'air."¹⁹ Later on, Balzac would write to Madame Bernard-François Balzac, his mother, complaining of a malady turned chronic--severe headaches, a dreadful cold accompanied by expectoration, and a fever and chills.²⁰ Balzac's ophthalmic

problems, in the form of partial blindness, render reading and writing an arduous task,²¹ while his cardiac anomalies make climbing stairs an almost Sisyphean labor.²² Deprived of his sight but, metaphorically, not of his vision, like the musician in Facino Cane and forced to conserve the vital spark of physiologic life like Raphaël de Valentin--" . . . je dois toujours rester à l'état de momie, privé de la parole et du mouvement. . . ."23-- Balzac is obliged, as well, to follow his centenarians' advice and carefully measure, up to the point of elimination, his emotional responses: " . . . est-ce vivre que de prendre garde à tout, à la moindre expression de sentiment, à une parole trop vive, à un pas trop rapide! . . ."24 Balzac's life ended prematurely due to the inexorable depletion of his own peau de chagrin. The author-teratologist, whose novels are rife with valetudinarians and monomaniacs, is lyrically portrayed by an anonymous nineteenth-century troubadour who pays tribute to his skill as a nosographer: "C'est le musée Dupuytren in-folio. C'est un beau champignon d'hôpital. C'est Molière médecin. . . ."25 One may hope that, through the centuries of neverending time, Balzac catches the sound of this verse and, thereby, sleeps contentedly!

Notes

¹ Honoré de Balzac, "Traité des excitants modernes" in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 12 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1981), p. 305.

² "Maladie," La Grande encyclopédie. Inventaire raisonné des sciences, des lettres et des arts, (Paris: H. Lamirault et Cie., 1886), p. 1037.

³ Honoré de Balzac, "Les Martyrs ignorés" in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 12 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1981), p. 739.

⁴ Honoré de Balzac, "Traité des excitants modernes," 308.

⁵ Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, Physiologie du goût ou méditations de gastronomie transcendante dédiée aux gastronomes parisiens, (Paris: H. Fournier et Cie., 1838), p. 88.

⁶ Honoré de Balzac, "Théorie de la démarche" in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 12 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1981), p. 266.

⁷ Honoré de Balzac, "Traité de la vie élégante" in La Comédie humaine, Vol. 12 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1981), p. 219.

⁸ Docteur Auguste Cabanès, Balzac ignoré, (Paris: A. Charles, Éditeur, 1899), p. 65.

⁹ Hippolyte Taine, Nouveaux essais de critique et d'histoire, (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie., 1880), p. 108.

- 10 Ibid., p. 51.
- 11 Ibid., pp. 65-66.
- 12 Docteur Michel Folman, Honoré de Balzac. Moine et amant. Sa Maladie. Sa Vie intime, (Genève, l'Imprimerie de "La Tribune de Genève," 1959), p. 9.
- 13 Théophile Gautier, Honoré de Balzac, (Paris: Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, Libraires-Éditeurs, 1859), p. 145.
- 14 Folman, Honoré de Balzac, 89.
- 15 "Cushing's Syndrome," The Book of Health, ed. Randolph Lee Clark, M. D., and Russell W. Cumley (New York: Elsevier Press Inc., 1953), p. 306.
- 16 Folman, Honoré de Balzac, 88-89.
- 17 Ibid., p. 91.
- 18 Honoré de Balzac, Correspondance, éd. Roger Pierrot, 5 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1969), 5:556.
- 19 Ibid., p. 557.
- 20 Ibid., p. 697.
- 21 Ibid., p. 783.
- 22 Ibid., p. 754.
- 23 Ibid., p. 784.
- 24 Ibid., p. 558.
- 25 Taine, Nouveaux essais de critique et d'histoire, 140.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Balzac, Honoré de. Avant-Propos. Vol. I of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976.
- . Le Curé de Tours. Vol. IV of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976.
- . Facino Cane. Vol. VI of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1977.
- . Les Martyrs ignorés. Vol. XII of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1981.
- . La Peau de chagrin. Vol. X of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1979.
- . Le Père Goriot. Vol. III of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976.
- . Physiologie du mariage ou méditations de philosophie éclectique sur le bonheur et le malheur conjugal. Vol. XI of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1980.
- . Pierrette. Vol. IV of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976.
- . Théorie de la démarche. Vol. XII of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1981.
- . Traité des excitants modernes. Vol. XII of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1981.
- . Traité de la vie élégante. Vol. XII of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1981.

Balzac, Honoré de and Davin, Félix. Études de mœurs au XIX^e siècle. Vol. I of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976.

----- . Introduction, par Félix Davin, aux Études philosophiques. Vol. X of La Comédie humaine. Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1979.

Correspondence

Balzac, Honoré de. Correspondance inédite de Honoré de Balzac avec le Docteur Nacquart (1823-1850). Paris: Marcel Bouteron et Les Cahiers balzaciens. Éditions Lapina, 1928.

----- . Lettres à Madame Hanska. 4 vols. Paris: Éditions du Delta, 1967.

Pierrot, Roger, éd. Correspondance de Balzac. 5 vols. Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1960.

Secondary Sources

Medical and Pseudo-medical Influences and Topics

Baldensperger, F. "Les Théories de Lavater dans la littérature française." Études d'histoire littéraire, Deuxième Série (1910), 51-91.

Bersot, Ernest. Mesmer et le magnétisme animal. Les Tables tournantes et les esprits. Paris: L. Hachette et Cie., n. d.

Bichat, Marie-François-Xavier. Recherches physiologiques sur la vie et la mort. Paris: Fortin, Masson et Cie., n. d.

Blanchard, Raphaël. Centenaire de la mort de Xavier Bichat. 3 thermidor an X - 22 juillet 1902. Paris: Librairie Scientifique et Littéraire, 1903.

Bonnet-Roy, Dr. F. Balzac, les médecins, la médecine et la science. Paris: Éditions des Horizons de France, 1944.

Bonnette, Dr. P. Broussais. Sa Vie--son œuvre--son centenaire 1772-1838. Paris: Imprimerie Jouve, 1939.

Borel, Jacques. Médecine et psychiatrie balzaciennes-- la science dans le roman. Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1971.

Brillat-Savarin, Anthelme. Physiologie du goût ou Méditations de gastronomie transcendante dédiée aux gastronomes parisiens. Paris: H. Fournier et Cie., 1838.

Cabanès, Dr. Auguste. Balzac ignoré. Paris: A. Charles, Editeur, 1899.

Cabanis, Pierre-Jean-Georges. Œuvres philosophiques. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956.

----- . Rapports du physique et du moral de l'homme. Paris: Fortin, Masson et Cie., 1843.

Cahn, Théophile. La Vie et l'œuvre d'Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962.

"Carie." Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle. (1866).

"Chlorose." Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle. (1866).

"Cushing's Syndrome." The Book of Health. (1953).

D'Alsò, Hélène. "Balzac, Cuvier et Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. 1831-1843." Revue d'histoire de la philosophie et d'histoire générale de la civilisation, (15 octobre 1934), 339-354.

Delhoume, Dr. Léon. "Dupuytren." Société archéologique et historique du Limousin, 76 (1935), 25-47.

- Dubos, René. Mirage of Health. Utopias, Progress and Biological Change. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- Du Fail, Noël, Marguerite de Navarre, and Bonaventure des Périers. Three Sixteenth-Century Conteurs. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- "Fille." Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle. (1866).
- Folman, Dr. Michel. Honoré de Balzac. Moine et amant. Sa maladie. Sa vie intime. Genève: l'Imprimerie de "La Tribune de Genève," 1959.
- Fortassier, Rose. "Sur Brillat-Savarin et de l'alimentation dans la génération." L'Année balzacienne, (1968), 103-114.
- Foucault, Michel. The Birth of the Clinic. An Archaeology of Medical Perception. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. Ed. R. D. Laing. New York: Random House, Inc., 1973.
- Gall, F. J. Sur les fonctions du cerveau et sur celles de chacune de ses parties. Paris: J.-B. Baillièrre, Libraire, 1825. Vol. I-VI.
- "Gout." The Book of Health. (1953).
- "Goutte." Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle. (1866).
- Herzlich, Claudine. Health and Illness. A Social Psychological Analysis. Trans. Douglas Graham. Ed. Henri Tajfel. London: Academic Press, 1973.
- "Jaundice." The Book of Health. (1953).
- Kiev, Dr. Ari. The Courage to Live. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1979.
- Lavater, Jean-Gaspard. Essai sur la physiognomonie, destiné à faire connaître l'homme & à le faire aimer. La Haye: Jacques Van Karnebeek, 1781. Vol. I-III.

Le Yaouanc, Moïse. Nosographie de l'humanité balzacienne.
Paris: Librairie Maloine, 1959.

"Maladie." La Grande encyclopédie. Inventaire raisonné
des sciences, des lettres et des arts. (1866).

May, Dr. Étienne. La Médecine. Son passé--son-présent--
son avenir. Paris: Payot, 1957.

Mesmer, M. Mémoire sur la découverte du magnétisme animal.
Paris: Didot le jeune, Libraire, 1779.

Molière. "Le Malade imaginaire." Œuvres complètes.
Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1962.

"Monomanie." Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle.
(1866).

Neefs, Jacques. "La 'Localisation des sciences.'" In
Balzac et La Peau de chagrin. Éd. Claude Duchet.
Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur,
pp. 127-142.

"Phthisie." Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle.
(1866).

The Phrenological Gem. A Concise View of the Science,
with its Moral Influence. New York: Charles S.
Francis, 1836.

Poyer, Georges. "Les Origines de la psycho-physiologie.
Cabanis." Journal de psychologie normale et
pathologique, (1910), 115-132.

Raviart, G. "Le Génie de Balzac du point de vue
psychiatrique." Annales Médico-Psychologiques,
No. 4 (novembre 1954), 487-512.

Rodnan, Dr. Gerald P. Primer on the Rheumatic Diseases.
Atlanta: Arthritis Foundation, 1973.

"Roman Medicine." The Book of Health. (1953).

Roure, Lucien. "De la physiognomie et de Lavater." Études.
Revue catholique d'intérêt général, (5 janvier 1925),
53-68.

- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. Émile ou de l'éducation. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966.
- Rouvin, Charles. La Tête humaine. Études de phrénologie de de physiognomonie. Paris: Imprimerie Jules Boyer et Cie., n. d.
- "Sciastique." Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle. (1866).
- Smith, G. Elliot. "The Old and New Phrenology." The William Ramsay Henderson Trust Lectures, No. 1. University of Edinburgh, (26 January 1928).
- Taine, Hippolyte. Nouveaux essais de critique et d'histoire. Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie., 1880.
- Tatar, Maria M. Spellbound. Studies on Mesmerism and Literature. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- "The Urinary System." The Book of Health. (1953).
- Voltaire. Lettres philosophiques. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1964.

Literary Criticism and Influences

- Abraham, Pierre. Créatures chez Balzac. Recherches sur la création intellectuelle. Paris: Gallimard, 1931.
- Amossy, Ruth. "La 'Confession' de Raphaël: Contradictions et Interférences." In Balzac et La Peau de chagrin. Éd. Claude Duchet. Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, pp. 43-59.
- Baldensperger, Fernand. L'Appel de la fiction orientale chez Honoré de Balzac. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1927.
- . Orientations étrangères chez Honoré de Balzac. Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1927.

- Barb eris, Pierre. Le Monde de Balzac. Paris: Arthaud, 1973.
- Bard eche, Maurice. Balzac romancier. La Formation de l'art du roman chez Balzac: 1820-1835. Paris: Plon, 1940.
- . Une Lecture de Balzac. Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1964.
- Bertault, Philippe. Balzac et la religion. Paris: Boivin et Cie.,  diteurs, 1942.
- Bertaut, Jules. Le P re Goriot de Balzac. Amiens:  ditions Edgar Malf re, 1928.
- Festa-McCormick, Diana. Honor  de Balzac. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979.
- Flaubert, Gustave. Madame Bovary. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966.
- Gautier, Th ophile. Honor  de Balzac. Paris: Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, Libraires- diteurs, 1859.
- Hoffman, L on-Fran ois. "Eros en filigrane: 'Le Cur  de Tours.'" L'Ann e balzacienne. (1967), 89-105.
- Hunt, Herbert J. Balzac's Com die humaine. London: The Athlone Press, 1964.
- . Honor  de Balzac. A Biography. London: The Athlone Press, 1957.
- Jallat, Jeannine. "F dora ou le corps de l'autre." In Balzac et La Peau de chagrin.  d. Claude Duchet. Paris: Soci t  d' dition d'Enseignement Sup rieur, pp. 143-160.
- James, Henry. French Poets and Novelists. London: Macmillan and Co., 1884.
- Louis, Paul. Les Types sociaux chez Balzac et Zola. Paris: Les  ditions du Monde Moderne, 1925.

- Maurois, André. Prométhée ou la vie de Balzac. Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1965.
- Mozet, Nicole. "La Description de la Maison-Vauquer." L'Année balzacienne. (1972), 97-130.
- Nykrog, Per. La Pensée de Balzac dans La Comédie humaine. Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1965.
- Oliver, E. J. Honoré de Balzac. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964.
- Picon, Gaëton. Balzac par lui-même. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1956.
- Reboussin, Marcel. Balzac et le mythe de Fœdora. Paris: Éditions A.-G. Nizet, 1966.
- Surville, L. Balzac. Sa vie et ses œuvres d'après sa correspondance. Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1858.
- Van Der Gun, W. H. La Courtisane romantique et son rôle dans la Comédie humaine de Balzac. Assen, Pays-Bas: Van Gorcum & Comp. S. A., 1963.
- Vernière, Paul. "Balzac et la genèse de 'Vautrin.'" Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France, (janvier-mars 1948), 53-68.
- "Vieille fille." Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX^e siècle. (1866).