

**Honoré de Balzac's
Treatise on
Modern Stimulants**

An Annotated Translation

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For Lila Sabine

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Finally, I cannot forget the great, black beverage, Coffee, to which I owe perhaps the greatest acknowledgment for keeping my intellect fired up and allowing me to commune with Honoré de Balzac.

Abstract

Honoré de Balzac is most often celebrated for his realist fiction, but what is less well-known is that he also had philosophical aspirations, and published numerous analytical works which have largely been overlooked by French-English translators. One such work, *Traité des excitants modernes*, traces the societal impact of five commonly-used stimulants: tea, sugar, coffee, alcohol, tobacco. It was first published in 1839 as an appendix to the cornerstone gastronomic work, *Physiologie du goût*, by Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin.

The translation, “Treatise on Modern Stimulants,” will give readers a rare insight into life in Balzac’s Paris in the 1800s, a city which was undergoing a revolution culturally, politically and within the scientific fields. Balzac’s treatise is delicately balanced between science and satire, and includes anecdotes about the author overindulging in coffee, cigarettes and alcohol. Further, it sketches out Balzac’s beliefs about the impact of diet on reproduction, and he cites stimulants as one of the causes of degeneration and decline in France.

The accompanying commentary examines the context of the work, and presents new ideas about the way in which the essay was written and why. Importantly, it also discusses the challenges of translating a historical work and explores whether translation can bridge the divide between generations, disciplines and cultures.

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Introduction

Honoré de Balzac's novels are rich depictions of human society; they meticulously record the foibles and diversity of the species, at least as he saw it. For today's reader they have the added complexity and interest of being set within the unique social, political and cultural context of France in the 1800s.

Balzac's curiosity about the social aspects of mankind led him to make a determined incursion into philosophy and analysis, and he carefully framed his thinking through his *études analytiques*. One of these *études* was to be called "Pathologie de la vie sociale," in which Balzac had planned to include three essays: *Traité de la vie élégante* (1830), *Théorie de la démarche* (1833) and *Traité des excitants modernes* (1839) (Balzac 2012, 445-448).

Traité des excitants modernes was first published alongside Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du goût*, which, even today, constitutes one of the cornerstone works of gastronomic literature. The two works were brought together in one tome in 1839 by the publisher Gervais Charpentier who placed the two writers side by side for the second time, the first being the successful pairing of Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du goût* and Balzac's *Physiologie du mariage* in 1838.

Brillat-Savarin's literary work details matters of the palate, while Balzac's treatise explores modern stimulants – tea, coffee, alcohol, sugar and tobacco – and their potency to both inspire the intellect and harm the body.

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To date, a complete English translation of *Traité des excitants modernes* has never been published. However, a translated extract of the coffee section (Balzac 1996, 273-277) has allowed Anglophones some insight into this unique text. In one respect, it is surprising that there is no full English translation of the work, given the significant interest in Balzac's fictional works or the fact that *Traité des excitants modernes* has already proven that it has wide appeal in French, evident in the large number of editions published since its inception.¹

¹ Fifteen of which were analysed as part of this thesis. See pages 52-54.

Having now translated the *Traité des excitants modernes* in its entirety, it is plain to me why other translators may have been dissuaded from the challenge. *Traité des excitants modernes* has several key peculiarities which make it arduous to translate – including outdated scientific theories, historical political discourse, the unique characteristics of nineteenth-century French, the cultural context, and Balzac’s idiosyncratic writing style. However, any translator prepared to plumb such depths is richly rewarded. The treatise offers a rare insight into Balzac’s world, at a time when France was changing fast – politically, culturally and socially. Further, it reveals Balzac’s thinking on matters of considerable interest, from degeneration and decline, to practical methods for brewing the kind of coffee that he believed could inspire artists, composers and writers.

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This thesis includes a translation with detailed footnotes which elucidate some of the more obscure references to antecedent schools of thought or the anecdotes about Balzac’s contemporaries.

Following the translation are five main chapters that highlight the different concerns that should be considered in the reading and rereading of the text.

The first chapter after the translation looks at the intersection between gastronomy and literature, and how Brillat-Savarin and his seminal work the *Physiologie du goût* inspired Balzac to write not just the *Traité des excitants modernes* but a number of other *physiologies* and essays on gastronomic themes. Further, it investigates the similarities between *Physiologie du goût* and *Traité des excitants modernes*.

The second chapter attempts to unravel two mysteries associated with the *Traité des excitants modernes*: first, why Balzac wrote the closely-related but unpublished, undated manuscript titled “Sur Brillat-Savarin et de l’alimentation dans la génération”² which contains some of the same ideas and aphorisms as the *Traité des excitants modernes*; and second, why the different editions of the *Traité des excitants modernes* have so many variations in the text.

² Ms. Lov. A 166, folios 22-29, Institut de France.

The third chapter looks at Balzac's relationship with each of the modern stimulants, with a special focus on his coffee dependence and its role in helping him maintain a rigorous writing schedule.

The fourth chapter provides useful background on nineteenth-century medicine and physiology to help the reader comprehend the treatise, especially some of the underlying ideas about the workings of the body.

The fifth chapter summarises the translation challenges and how they were surmounted, including through the development of a methodology that can be applied more generally to the translation of historical works.

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It is the translator's aspiration that, through this annotated translation, Balzac's idiosyncratic essay on the use and abuse of modern stimulants be made accessible to Anglophone academics, *balzaciens* and readers of nineteenth-century literature alike.

NOTE: This thesis uses the MLA 8 referencing style but it has been adapted slightly to take into account the considerable number of Balzac works in the bibliography, which I have listed chronologically. In-text citations feature the date as well as the appropriate page numbers – for example: Balzac 1981, 327.

Treatise on Modern Stimulants by Honoré de Balzac

A Translation by Kassy Hayden

*All excesses that harm our mucus systems
shorten our lifespans. 7th axiom³*

THE SUBJECT AT HAND

The ingestion of five substances – discovered about two centuries ago, and introduced to the general public – has increased so radically in recent times that modern society has changed immeasurably.

These five substances are:

1. Eau-de-vie or alcohol, the base of all liquors, which first appeared in the last years of the reign of Louis XIV, and which was invented to warm his aging bones.
2. Sugar. This substance only recently invaded popular diets, when French industry learned how to produce it in great quantities and at its old price,⁴ which will surely go down even further, even with the taxman lying in wait to raise the tax.
3. Tea, which has been popular for around 50 years.⁵
4. Coffee. While it was discovered long ago by the Arabs, Europeans did not take to this stimulant in great numbers until the middle of the eighteenth century.

³ Balzac specified on an 1839 printer's proof – which is held in the Lovenjoul Collection at the Institut de France – that this axiom should appear at the head of the text. The changes were not published until the second reprint was published in 1855 by Louis de Potter.

⁴ After the loss of France's cane sugar interests in the French West Indies, the French turned to sugar beet. By 1835, beet sugar accounted for a third of all sugar consumption in France (Stein 1988, 166-167).

⁵ Tea was first introduced to France in the 1600s but its growing popularity was cut short by the Revolution, as it was perceived to be an elitist beverage. In Balzac's era, tea was developing a new following as part of growing Anglomania (Burns 2000, "Tea and the Guillotine").

5. Tobacco. The smoking of tobacco did not become widespread and excessive⁶ until peace was restored⁷ in France.

Let us consider the matter with the utmost impartiality.

Some of our vital force⁸ is used in satisfying a need; this results in a sensation – that varies depending on our different temperaments or according to the climate – which we call *pleasure*. Our sensory organs are the ministers of our pleasures. Almost all have a double purpose: they capture substances, absorb them, then release them, in one form or another, into the environment, into the soil, or into the atmosphere, the arsenal from which all creatures draw their *neocreative* energy.⁹ These few words encompass¹⁰ the chemistry of human life.

No scholar could dispute this. There is not a single organ – when taking the whole of the sensory system into account – that does not submit to this dictum in its particular sphere of influence. All excess is based on man’s desire to relive pleasure beyond the limits ordinarily imposed by nature. The less the human spirit is occupied, the more it tends towards excess; the mind is irresistibly drawn to it.

I

For social man, to live is to expend oneself more or less quickly.

It transpires that the more societies are civilised and at peace, the more they indulge in excess. For certain individuals, being at peace is a dreadful condition. Perhaps this is what prompted Napoleon to say: “War is a natural state.”

To absorb, reabsorb, decompose, assimilate, make or recreate any or every type of substance – actions which describe the mechanism of all pleasures without exception – man must dispatch all or part of his vital force to the sensory organ or organs responsible for administering the desired pleasure.

⁶ Balzac added the word “excessif” on the printer’s proof but this change, and his other amendments, were not published until the second edition in 1855 by Louis de Potter.

⁷ That is, after the Revolution.

⁸ Certain Vitalists believed that “vital forces” helped to regulate the body’s functions and that any disruption in their workings could cause sickness or death (Normandin 2005, 44-46).

⁹ Balzac made the addition “ou à l’atmosphère, l’arsenal dans lequel toutes les créatures puisent leur force néocreative” on the printer’s proof.

¹⁰ Balzac changed “est” to “comprend tout” on the printer’s proof.

Nature wants all sensory organs to participate in life in equal proportions, whereas society has cultivated in men a kind of thirst for certain pleasures that provide this or that organ with more vital force than it is due (and even all the vital force). The agents tasked with maintaining their function desert the starved sensory organs in equal proportion to the attentions that they provide to the gluttonous organs. From this comes sickness, and, ultimately, the abbreviation of life. This theory is frightening in its certainty, like any other based on facts, as opposed to those ideas promulgated without any basis. The constant intellectual work of the brain, and the vital force deployed there, enlarge the delicate membranes, enrich the pulp; but, as a result, they so completely desert the lower realms that the man of genius would come face to face with the sickness that medicine has so aptly named *impotence*. On the other hand, if you spend your life at the foot of the divans of infinitely charming women, if you are audaciously amorous, you will become a true Cordelier¹¹ monk without his habit. Intelligence is incapable of functioning in the higher spheres of ideation. True strength lies between these two excesses. When he is too excessive in his intellectual and romantic life, a man of genius will die like Raphael and Lord Byron. Chaste, one dies from overwork, just as one can die from debauchery; but this type of death is extremely rare. Excessive consumption of tobacco, coffee, opium and spirits produces grave disorders, and drives one to an early death. The sensory organs, endlessly irritated, endlessly nourished, become hypertrophied; they become abnormally enlarged, damaged, and corrupt the machine, which succumbs.

We are each the master of ourselves, in accordance with modern law; but, if the ruling classes and the proletarians who read these pages believe that it is only themselves who will suffer in smoking like a tugboat or drinking like Alexander the Great, they are living a strange fantasy; they adulterate the human race, bastardising the generations, which will lead countries into ruin. One generation does not have the right to diminish the next.

¹¹ Members of the Club des Cordeliers, founded in 1790 during the French Revolution to fight against abuses of power. Their headquarters was a Franciscan (or Cordelier) monastery (Encyclopædia Britannica 2017, “Club of Cordeliers”).

II

Your alimentation alters the next generation.¹²

Engrave this axiom in golden letters in your dining rooms. It is strange that Brillat-Savarin, after requesting that Science augment the nomenclature of the senses to include the *reproductive* sense,¹³ forgot to remark upon the link that exists between man's progeny and the substances that can change the state of his vitality. What pleasure I would have had to read this other axiom in his work:

III

The fisherman's catch gives us girls, the butchery makes boys, the baker is the father of thought.¹⁴

The destiny of a nation is dependent on its food and diet. Grains created artistic peoples.¹⁵ Spirits killed the Indians.¹⁶ I call Russia an aristocracy propped up by alcohol. Who knows if the abuse of chocolate did not contribute to the degradation of the Spanish nation, which, at the moment it discovered chocolate, was about to recreate the Roman Empire? Tobacco has already brought down the Turks and the Dutch, and now it threatens Germany. None of our Statesmen – who are generally more occupied with themselves than with the public good, unless we consider their ego, their mistresses and their assets as public goods – know what will happen to France because of its excessive consumption of tobacco, sugar, potatoes substituted for wheat, spirits, etc.

Look at the difference in the colouring and the shape of the great men of today and those of centuries past, who each reflect their generation and their habits! How many of us today have not realised our full potential, weary after just one feeble endeavour? Our fathers are responsible for this weak will.

¹² This axiom links to Brillat-Savarin's famous adage: "Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es" (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 11). Here, Balzac goes one step further, suggesting that what you eat now will also influence your offspring.

¹³ Brillat-Savarin makes a case for the reproductive sense (physical desire) to be added as the sixth sense in the *Physiologie du goût* (1839, 37-38).

¹⁴ Balzac added "le boulanger est le père de la pensée" on the 1839 printer's proof.

¹⁵ Balzac added "Les céréales ont créé les peuples artistes" on the printer's proof.

¹⁶ Native Americans.

Here are the results of an experiment conducted in London, which were confirmed to me by two credible sources, a scholar and a politician, and which relate to the topics we are going to address.

The British Government gave three condemned men the option of being hanged, as was the custom in the country, or to each live exclusively on either tea, coffee or chocolate, and without consuming any food whatsoever, or drinking any other liquid. The rogues accepted the latter proposition. Perhaps any man condemned to death would have done the same. As each beverage offered more or less the same odds, they drew straws.

The man who lived on chocolate died after eight months.

The man who drank nothing but coffee lasted two years.

The man who lived on tea finally succumbed three years later.

I suspect the East India Company had solicited the experiment in the interests of its own commerce.

The man who lived on chocolate died in an appalling state of putrefaction, devoured by worms. His limbs fell, one by one, just like the members of the Spanish monarchy.

The man who lived on coffee burned to death, charred to a crisp as if by the fire of Gomorrah. He could have been used as quicklime. This was, in fact, proposed but it seemed contrary to the principles of the soul's immortality.

The man who lived on tea became gaunt and semi-transparent. He died of consumption. Like a lantern, one could see right through his body. A philanthropist was able to read *The Times* through his body when a light was placed behind it. English decency did not permit a more original experiment.

I cannot help but observe how altruistic it is to make such good use of condemned men, rather than brutally cut off their heads. The adipocere¹⁷ from surgical amphitheatres is already used to make candles; and we must not limit ourselves to half-measures where there is such great potential. If only the condemned were delivered to scientists instead of to the executioner.

Another experiment was conducted in France, which relates to sugar.

¹⁷ A waxy substance created as a post-mortem by-product of the decomposition of fat (Galeotti 2014, "adipocere"). Also known as grave wax.

Monsieur Magendie¹⁸ exclusively fed sugar to some dogs, and the terrible results of his experiment were published, as was the nature of their deaths. Man's best friends incidentally share the same vices (dogs are also players). The results, however, prove nothing in relation to us.

*

ALCOHOL

The grape was the first to reveal the laws of fermentation, a reaction that occurs through natural environmental processes, and the alcohol component can now be obtained by distillation. Chemistry has since found that alcohol occurs naturally in many botanical substances. Wine, our primary product, is the oldest of all stimulants and, giving credit where credit is due, it will likely remain number one. Incidentally, spirits are today the number one killer in the world. We might be petrified of cholera, but alcohol is perhaps an even greater scourge!

What *flâneur* has not observed around the Grande Halle, in Paris, the human tapestry that emerges, between two and five o'clock in the morning? Patrons, both male and female, gather in these squalid bars, which are worlds apart from the gin palaces in London, but for those who squander themselves here, are the results not the same? Tapestry is the right word. Their tattered clothing and their faces are in such harmony that you cannot guess where their rags end, or where their flesh begins, where the hat is, or where to find the nose. Stunted, sunken, withered, washed out, bruised, and twisted by alcohol, the faces of these monstrous characters are often more grimy than their shabby attire. It is these men who spawn the revolting urchins of Paris. The feeble creatures who make up the working class can be found spilling out of these bars. Most of Paris' courtesans have been destroyed by the abuse of strong spirits.

As an observer, it was reprehensible of me to ignore the effects of inebriation. I was obligated to study these pleasures, which are seducing populations as well as, apparently, Byron and Sheridan, and *tutti quanti*. This task was challenging. As a drinker of water – and perhaps prepared for the assault by my longstanding custom of taking coffee – wine does not have the slightest hold on me, and my gastric capacity allows me to consume great

¹⁸ Professor François Magendie (1783-1855) was a pioneer in physiology. The results of his studies on dogs are documented in his *Précis élémentaire de physiologie*, which was published in 1816.

quantities. I am an expensive guest. This fact, known by one of my friends,¹⁹ inspired in him the longing to vanquish this virginity. I had never smoked. His planned victory over me was based on the premise that I would succumb to these other offerings to *diis ignotis*.²⁰ So, one evening in 1822, when an opera was being performed at the Théâtre-Italien, my friend challenged me – in the hope of making me forget the music of Rossini, La Cinti,²¹ Levasseur,²² Bordogni,²³ La Pasta²⁴ – from a divan that he had been eyeing from the dessert course onwards, and where he would finally fall asleep. Seventeen empty bottles bore witness to his defeat. As he had obliged me to smoke two cigars, the tobacco’s effects were felt in descending the stairs. The steps appeared to be made of some soft substance; but I still climbed gloriously into a carriage, reasonably upright, serious, and not in the mood to talk. Here, I believed that I was inside a crucible, and when I lowered my window, the air *shot me in the neck*, a technical expression used by drunkards. The world seemed exceptionally hazy. The steps at the Bouffons²⁵ felt spongier than the others, but I had no further mishaps in taking my seat on the balcony. I would not have dared to admit that I was in Paris, amidst such dazzling society, and unable to distinguish either their clothing or their faces. I felt quite tipsy. Right from the sublime opening of *La Gazza*,²⁶ it was as if the heavens were tumbling into the ear of a woman in the throes of ecstasy. Each musical phrase reached down to me through shining clouds, plucked clean of all human imperfection, yet full of artistic sentiment and imprinted with the divine. The orchestra appeared to me like a vast instrument of which I could fathom neither the movement nor the mechanism, seeing only the confused action of the cellos’ fingerboards, the bows gliding,

¹⁹ Novelist Eugène Sue (1804-1857), as indicated in Balzac’s correspondence (Balzac 1990a, 32).

²⁰ *Diis ignotis* is Latin for unknown gods, an expression that was used regularly by Balzac (Fortassier 1981, 986).

²¹ Laure Cinti-Damoreau (1801-1863), a French soprano often associated with Rossini’s operas. Known as La Cinti (Robinson 2008, 88-89).

²² Nicolas-Prosper Levasseur (1791-1871), a French bass who performed with the Théâtre-Italien and the Opéra de Paris (BNF Catalogue Général 2014, “Levasseur, Nicolas-Prosper”).

²³ Giulio Marco Bordogni (1789-1856), an Italian operatic tenor who performed with the Théâtre-Italien between 1819 and 1831 (BNF Catalogue Général 2012, “Bordogni, Giulio Marco”).

²⁴ Giuditta Pasta (1797-1865), an Italian soprano, who performed with the Théâtre-Italien in 1816 and 1821-1831 (BNF Catalogue Général 2013, “Pasta, Giuditta”).

²⁵ Balzac is referring to the company Opera Buffa, which was known colloquially as the Bouffons (Charlton 1992, 870-871).

²⁶ Rossini’s *La Gazza Ladra* or *The Thieving Magpie*.

the curved gold of the trombones, the clarinets, the lights, but no people. Just one or two immobile, powdered heads and two swollen faces were distinct, each grimacing, and giving me cause for worry. I was half-asleep.

‘This man is drunk,’ whispered a woman whose hat kept brushing my cheek, which unbeknownst to me, my cheek was brushing in turn.

I’ll admit that I was vexed.

‘No, Madame,’ I responded, ‘I am simply drunk on the music.’

I left, holding myself remarkably upright, calm and cool like a man who, not having been suitably appreciated, makes his critics feel that they have accosted someone of superior intellect. To prove to this lady that I was incapable of drinking to excess, and that my particular perfume could only be the result of some peculiar incident contrary to my usual customs, I made up my mind to go to the box of the Duchess of ... (let us keep it a secret), whose beautiful head was so outlandishly enveloped by feathers and lace that I was overcome by the desire to verify if this inconceivable coiffure was real, or due to some special vision with which I had been gifted for a few hours.

‘When I am there,’ I thought, ‘between that elegant gentlewoman, and her prudish friend with all her airs and graces, no-one will suspect me of being between one drink and the next, and people will think that I am some considerable man between two ladies.’

But I was still wandering in the interminable corridors of the Théâtre-Italien, unable to find the damned door to that box, when the crowd, leaving after the show, pinned me against a wall. The evening was undeniably one of the most poetic of my life. Never before had I seen so many feathers, so much lace, so many pretty women, so many little oval windows through which lovers and the curious peered into the boxes. Never had I expended so much energy, nor showed so much character, I would even say pigheadedness if I had less respect for myself. The tenacity shown by the Dutch King William I during the Belgian campaign²⁷ was nothing compared to my perseverance in staying upright and maintaining an agreeable smile. However, I in turns flew into a rage or wept. This weakness placed me beneath the

²⁷ William I (1772-1843) was an autocratic ruler of the Netherlands and Luxembourg. European powers advocated for Belgium to become an independent state but William I defied this decision and his military campaign continued until 1839 when he finally conceded defeat and allowed Belgium to have its independence (Encyclopædia Britannica 2007, “William I”).

King of Holland. Then I was tormented by the ghastly thought of what that lady would quite rightly think of me if I did not resurface to take my place between the duchess and her friend, but I consoled myself by scorning all of humanity. I was, however, mistaken. That evening, there was good company at the Bouffons. Everyone fussed over me and stepped aside to let me pass. A very pretty lady even gave me her arm to help me out. I owe this attention to the high esteem in which Rossini held me. He imparted several flattering words that I no longer remember, but which must have been eminently witty; his discourse is just like his music. This lady was, I believe, a duchess, or perhaps an usherette. My memory is so confused that I believe she was more likely the usherette than the duchess. However, she wore feathers and lace! Always feathers and lace! Finally, I found myself in my carriage, if only because my coachman had something in common with me, much to my dismay; he had fallen asleep alone on the Place des Italiens. The rain came down in torrents, but I do not remember one drop falling on me. For the first time in my life, I tasted one of the most powerful and fantastic pleasures in the world, indescribable ecstasy, a delight that one feels when crossing Paris at half past eleven at night, rapidly transported amongst the streetlamps, passing a myriad of shops, lights, signs, silhouettes, groups, women under umbrellas, astonishingly-lit street corners, squares in shadow; all while observing, through the ribbons of rain, a thousand things that one wrongly believes one has already seen somewhere in the full light of day. And everywhere the feathers and lace, even in the cake shops.

I now fully understand the pleasures of intoxication. It throws a veil over reality, it extinguishes any awareness of pain and sadness, it allows us to lay down the burden of thought. One can understand how it has served the illustrious, and why people cannot get enough of it. Instead of stimulating the mind, wine numbs it. Rather than sending energy from the stomach to the brain, wine – depending on the value of the bottle imbibed – muddles the tastebuds in such a fashion that that they no longer function, the circuits are saturated, nothing tastes of anything, and the tippler can no longer distinguish any subtlety in the liquids served. Alcohol is absorbed and a portion passes into the bloodstream. With this in mind, commit this axiom to your memory:

IV

Intoxication is a momentary poisoning.

Further, through constant repetition of this poisoning, the alcoholophile²⁸ eventually changes the very nature of his blood. He changes the way it moves around him by removing its principal purpose or by altering it, and creating within him grave disorders, like the majority of drunkards who lose or corrupt their reproductive abilities and give birth to hydrocephalic babies. Do not overlook the fact that the boozer also has an excessive thirst the day after, and usually at the end of his debauchery. This thirst, evidently produced as a result of the overuse of gastric juices and key ingredients in saliva, may well prove the accuracy of our conclusions.

*

COFFEE

On this subject, Brillat-Savarin is far from being complete. I can add to what he says about coffee because I consume it in such quantities that I have been able to observe its effects on a grand scale. Coffee roasts²⁹ your insides. Many people ascribe to coffee the power to provide inspiration, but everyone knows that the boring bore us even more after they have drunk it. Certainly, despite the fact that the grocery stores in Paris stay open until midnight, certain writers are not getting any wittier.

As Brillat-Savarin so shrewdly observed, coffee gets the blood moving by making the engine of the mind spring to life – an arousal that speeds up digestion, chases away sleep, and allows the brain to keep going a little longer.

I will take the opportunity here to revise Brillat-Savarin’s passage by including some personal experiences and some observations made by several great thinkers.

Coffee acts on the diaphragm and the solar plexus, where it spreads to the brain via immeasurable emanations that escape all analysis; however, we can presume it is the fluids of the nervous system that conduct the electricity which this substance releases, and which it either finds or stimulates in our bodies. Its power is neither constant nor absolute. Rossini has personally experienced the effects that I have already observed on myself.

‘Coffee’s effects,’ he told me, ‘last only 15 to 20 days, which, fortunately, is the time it takes to write an opera.’

²⁸ Balzac coined the word “alcooolâtre.” This has been translated, using a similar strategy, to “alcoholophile.”

²⁹ In the original, Balzac says coffee is a “torréfiant intérieur.”

This is a fact. But the period during which one enjoys the benefits of coffee can be extended. This information is too important for too many people for me not to describe the way in which to obtain these precious fruits.

All of you leading lights, who burn the midnight oil, come close and listen to the gospel of alertness and intellectual effort!

1. Coffee ground using the Turkish method³⁰ has more flavour than coffee ground in a coffee-mill.

In many practical matters related to the exploitation of pleasure, the Orientals are far superior to the Europeans. Their natural disposition, being as observant as toads that spend years watching from their holes with their golden eyes like two suns open wide, has revealed to them what science shows us through analysis. The most harmful compound in coffee is *tannin*, a malignant substance that chemists have not yet fully studied. When the membranes in the stomach are *tanned*, or when the action of the tannin particular to coffee has stupefied them through too frequent use, they refuse to perform the violent contractions that workers require of them. This causes serious disorders if the connoisseur continues. There is a man in London whose immoderate use of coffee twisted him just like those old men knotted with gout.³¹ I knew an engraver in Paris who took five years to recover from the state to which his love for coffee had reduced him. Lastly, an artist, Chenavard,³² recently died, his body burned. He used to walk into a café as a labourer walks into a tavern, at all hours. Coffee connoisseurs begin as with any passion: by degrees, and, as with Nicolet,³³ they take stronger and stronger doses until they go too far. By grinding coffee, you pulverise it into molecules of strange shapes which retain the tannin and release only the aroma. This is why the Italians, the Venetians, the Greeks and the Turks can endlessly

³⁰ Turkish coffee is very finely ground.

³¹ Balzac's description clearly comes from the *Physiologie du goût*, where Brillat-Savarin writes: "J'ai vu à Londres, sur la place de Leicester, un homme que l'usage immodéré du café avait réduit en boule" (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 129).

³² Aimé Chenavard (1798-1838), a decorative painter from Lyon (Fortassier 1981, 987).

³³ Jean-Baptiste Nicolet (1728-1796) was a theatre director who made great use of puppets and tightrope walkers. His drive to make his shows more and more spectacular led to the development of the expression, "De plus en plus fort, comme chez Nicolet" (Fortassier 1981, 987).

drink, and without causing themselves any harm, the coffee that the French consider to be a *cafiot*,³⁴ a contemptuous word. Voltaire used to drink this kind of coffee.

Take note of this. Coffee has two elements: one, the extractable matter, which hot or cold water dissolves, and rapidly, and which carries the aroma; the other, the tannin, which is more water resistant, and which does not abandon the areolar tissue except with time and great effort. Hence the axiom:

V.

To leave boiling water, especially for a long time, in contact with coffee, is a heresy; to reuse coffee grounds is to subject³⁵ one's stomach and organs to tanning.

2. Supposing that coffee is prepared in the immortal coffeepot invented by de Belloy, not du Belloy (the man to whose meditations we owe this method was the distant cousin of the Cardinal, and, like him, from the very old and distinguished family of Marquis de Belloy),³⁶ it has more virtue if it is infused with cold water than with boiling water. This is the second method for regulating its effects.

By grinding the coffee, you release the aroma and the tannin at the same time, you whet the appetite and stimulate the solar plexus, which impacts on the thousands of capsules in the brain.

Thus, there are two grades: finely ground Turkish coffee, and milled coffee.

3. The strength of the coffee depends on the quantity placed in the upper receptacle, the fineness of the grind, and the amount of water used; this constitutes the third step in preparing coffee.

Using this method, over a period of one or two weeks at the most, you can become stimulated by one, then two cups, using increasing amounts of milled coffee infused with boiling water.

³⁴ A terrible, watery coffee (Jouancoux 1880, 71).

³⁵ Balzac originally wrote "assimiler" but changed it on the printer's proof to "soumettre."

³⁶ Jean-Baptiste de Belloy, the Archbishop of Paris and Cardinal, was credited with inventing the coffeepot ("La France dans l'histoire du café," Cafés Richard) but Balzac is pointing out here that it was in fact the Cardinal's cousin. He is also noting that the coffeepot should be called "de Belloy" after the family name and not adapted to "du Belloy" as is often the case. Balzac would likely have had the intimate details of this story as his secretary was Auguste de Belloy, the great nephew of the Cardinal (Fortassier 1981, 988).

Over the course of another week, by cold infusion, by finely grinding the coffee, by crushing it into a powder and reducing the amount of water, you get another surge of brainpower.

When you arrive at the finest grind and the least amount of water possible, you then double the dose by taking two cups, with some robust constitutions managing three cups. In this way, you can draw out the effects a few days more.

Finally, I discovered a terrible and cruel method, which I would recommend only to men of excessive strength with black, coarse hair, mottled vermilion and ochre skin, square hands and legs shaped like the balusters in the Place Louis XV.³⁷ It involves the use of milled coffee, crushed, cold and anhydrous (a chemical word that means little or no water), taken on an empty stomach. This coffee falls into your stomach, which, as you know from Brillat-Savarin, is a velvety bag lined with suckers and papillae. The coffee, finding nothing, attacks this delicate and voluptuous lining, it becomes a kind of food that demands its juices; it wrenches at them, it solicits them like a prophetess, calling to her god, it assaults these lovely linings the way a cart-driver abuses young horses; the solar plexus is set alight, it blazes and shoots sparks up all the way to the brain. From then on, everything becomes agitated: ideas march like the battalions of a great army onto the battlefield, where the battle has begun. Memories charge in, flags flying; the light cavalry of comparisons advances at a magnificent gallop; the artillery of logic rushes in with its convoy and its charges; witticisms appear like snipers; characters rise up; the paper covers itself in ink, because the evening begins and ends with torrents of black water, as the battle does with its gunpowder. I recommended this same beverage to one of my friends who absolutely had to complete a task by the next day: he thought he had been poisoned, he took to his bed, and he stayed abed like a bride. He was tall, with blond, sparse hair, a stomach like paper-maché, thin. I should have been more observant.

Once you manage to take coffee with the most superlative emulsions on an empty stomach, and you have emptied the cup, if you dared to continue, you would experience terrible sweating, a weakened nervous system, drowsiness. I personally do not know what would happen: a natural prudence has counselled me to abstain, given that I am not one of those who has been condemned to die. You would have to drink milky preparations, limit your

³⁷ The description bears a remarkable resemblance to Balzac, and suggests that this is how he took his coffee. The Place Louis XV is now the Place de la Concorde (Ayers 2004, 151).

diet to chicken and white meats; and, lastly, loosen your neckcloth, and return to the sauntering, carefree, itinerant, cryptogamic³⁸ life of the insulated *bourgeoisie*.

Under certain exceptional conditions, the state you are in when you drink coffee on an empty stomach produces a kind of nervous energy that resembles anger: your voice is raised, your gestures denote a pathological impatience; you want everything to get moving, your ideas race; you are antagonising, enraged for no reason; you embody the temperamental character of the poet who is so often condemned by grocers; you imagine others are as lucid as you feel. A man of intelligence would be wise to neither reveal himself nor let others approach. I discovered this rare state by certain happenstances that made me lose, without trying, the exaltation I had procured. Some friends, at whose country house I was staying, saw that I was bad-tempered and bellicose, hypocritical in conversation. The next day, I acknowledged my faults, and we sought the cause. My friends were learned men of the highest order, we had soon found it: coffee wanted a victim.

Not only are these observations based on fact and not subject to other vagaries than those which result from different idiosyncrasies, but they are consistent with the experiences of many practitioners, one of whom is the famed Rossini, one of the most educated men in the laws of taste, a hero worthy of Brillat-Savarin.

AN OBSERVATION: For some of those with weak constitutions, coffee creates a congestion in the brain, but without the dangerous effects; instead of feeling stimulated, these individuals are prone to somnolence, and say that coffee makes them sleep. These people could have the legs of a stag, the stomach of an ostrich, but they are poorly *equipped* for intellectual undertakings. Two young travellers, Monsieur Combes and Monsieur Tamisier,³⁹ found the Abyssinians generally impotent; the two travellers did not hesitate to attribute the abuse of coffee, which the Abyssinians take to the extreme, as the reason for their great disgrace. If this book makes it to England, the English Government is requested to resolve this serious matter on the first condemned person they have at hand, provided that they are neither a woman nor an old man.

³⁸ An adjective relating to spore-bearing plants, such as mosses, lichen and fungi (Oxford Reference 2010, “cryptogamic”).

³⁹ French explorers who wrote *Voyage en Abyssinie*, an account of their travels in Abyssinia which was published in 1838 by L. Desessart.

Tea also contains tannin, but it has narcotic virtues; it does not act on the brain; it has an effect only on the solar plexus and on the intestines, which absorb the narcotic more quickly and in a very particular fashion. Up till now, the method for preparing tea has been absolute. I do not know to what extent the volume of water that tea-drinkers pour into their stomach should be factored into the effects obtained. If the English experience is real, tea gives the English their morals, makes their skin pallid, makes them prone to hypocrisy and back-biting; this much is certain, it does not improve women's moral or physical hygiene.⁴⁰ Where women drink tea, love is defiled at its very core. Such women are wan, feeble, gossipy, tedious, holier-than-thou. For some strong constitutions, strong tea taken in large doses creates an irritation that lends itself to rich melancholy; it provokes dreams, although they are less powerful than those brought about by opium, because that phantasmagoria takes place in a smoky, grey environment. These ideas are about as weak as blonde women. Your state is not like the leaden sleep that characterises a robust constitution in a weary state, but an indescribable somnolence similar to morning reveries. Excessive coffee, like excessive tea, makes the skin very dry and start to burn. Coffee often makes you sweat and produces a violent thirst. For those who abuse it, the saliva is thick and virtually non-existent.

*

TOBACCO

I did not save tobacco for last without good reason. First, this stimulant is the most recent; second, it triumphs over all the others.

Nature has put some limits on our pleasures. God forbid that I should list here all the militant virtues of love, and scare off the delicate gentility; but it is extremely well-known that Hercules owes his fame to his twelfth labour,⁴¹ generally regarded as mythical, now that women are so much more tormented by the smoke of cigars than by the fire⁴² of love.

⁴⁰ In the nineteenth century, physicians believed that the concept of moral and physical hygiene, *le physique et le moral*, could transform the mind and body and would serve as a means to reverse the degeneration and decline of the nation (Furst 2000, 5).

⁴¹ Hercules' twelfth and final labour was to go down into the Underworld and bring back Cerberus, the triple-headed dog and guardian of the gates (Encyclopædia Britannica 2016, "Heracles").

⁴² Balzac originally wrote "les exigences de l'amour" but changed it on the printer's proof to "le feu de l'amour."

Where sugar is concerned, aversion arrives promptly after excess, amongst everyone, even children. With strong liqueurs, death comes within two years of abuse; while coffee produces illnesses that put a stop to continued abuse. By contrast, man believes he can smoke indefinitely. Wrong. Broussais,⁴³ a heavy smoker, was built like a strongman, and had it not been for overwork and excessive smoking, he would have lived to over a hundred. He recently died in the prime of his life, at least in terms of his robust constitution. And to conclude, one tobaccophile⁴⁴ dandy had a gangrenous throat, and, because its surgical removal was obviously quite impossible, he died.

It is astonishing that Brillat-Savarin, in naming his book *The Physiology of Taste*, and after so thoroughly demonstrating the role that the nasal cavities and palate play in rendering pleasure, forgot to include a chapter on tobacco.

After many years of being taken up the nose, tobacco today is consumed via the mouth. It affects those double organs so marvellously described by Brillat-Savarin: the palate and all its parts, and the nasal cavity. When the eminent professor penned his book, tobacco had, in fact, not yet invaded all of French society as it has today. Over the past century, it was taken more as snuff than smoked, but now the cigar is infecting society. We had never previously suspected what pleasure can be obtained from smoking like a chimney.

At first, smoking tobacco causes bouts of vertigo; for the majority of neophytes it induces excessive salivation, and often nausea that leads to vomiting. Despite the presence of an irritated essential nature, the tobaccophile persists, he becomes used to it. This apprenticeship sometimes lasts several months. The smoker eventually triumphs like Mithridates,⁴⁵ and he enters into paradise. How else can we describe the effects of smoking tobacco? If given a choice between bread and tobacco, the pauper will never hesitate; the penniless young man wears out his boots on the asphalt of the boulevards, while his mistress works day and night playing the pauper; the Corsican bandit, hiding behind inaccessible rocks, or on a beach where he can keep an eye out, will offer to kill your enemy for a pound of tobacco. Men of great significance vow that cigars comfort them during their greatest

⁴³ François Broussais (1772-1838), a physician, died at the age of 66. According to him, all illnesses arose from inflammation and gastro-enteritis, and he made great use of bloodletting as a remedy (Appelboom 2013, 27-30).

⁴⁴ Balzac coined the word “tabacolâtre.” This has been translated, using a similar strategy, to “tobaccophile.”

⁴⁵ Mithridates, the King of Pontus (120-63 BCE), took increasing doses of poisons until he built up immunity (Valle et al. 2011, 138-139).

adversities. Given a choice between his beloved and a cigar, the dandy would not hesitate to leave his woman, just as a convict would stay in jail if he could have unlimited quantities of tobacco at his own discretion! What power does this pleasure have if the King of kings would have paid half of his empire for it, and if it is above all the vice of the unhappy? This pleasure, which I initially denied, gave me this axiom:

VI

To smoke a cigar is to smoke fire.

George Sand⁴⁶ gave me the key to this treasure, although I will only acknowledge the Indian hookah or the Persian nargile. In matters concerning material pleasures, the Orientals are truly superior to us.

The hookah, like the nargile, is a most elegant contraption; it offers up a visual feast of strange and disturbing shapes that lend a kind of aristocratic superiority to the wide-eyed *bourgeoisie*. It is a receptacle, globular like a Japanese pot, that supports a kind of clay dish in which burn the tobacco, patchouli, substances whose smoke you inhale – because there are many kinds of botanical substances that can be smoked, each more enjoyable than the last. The smoke passes through leather pipes several feet long, adorned with silk and silver thread, that plunge into a vase filled with perfumed water, which is also where the pipe that descends from the main conduit reaches the liquid. Your inhalation pulls the smoke, which is compelled to traverse the water towards you because of Nature's horror of a vacuum. As it passes through the water, the smoke divests itself of its sooty taste, it refreshes itself, perfumes itself, without losing the essential qualities produced by burning the plant, it refines itself in the spirals of leather, and reaches the palate, pure and perfumed. It spreads across your tastebuds, it saturates them, and ascends to the brain like scented and melodious prayers rising towards heaven. You recline on a divan, you are occupied without doing anything, you think without fatigue, you get drunk without drinking, without distaste, without the syrupy bubbles of champagne repeating on you, without the jittery fatigue of coffee. Your brain acquires new faculties, you no longer feel the bony, oppressive cap of your skull, you take wing in the fantasy world, you catch your fluttering hallucinations as a child does with a butterfly net, running after dragonflies in a divine meadow, and you see them in their ideal form, which makes you want to fulfil them. The most beautiful dreams

⁴⁶ Correspondence from Balzac to his lover Madame Hanska in 1838 confirms that George Sand introduced him to the hookah and that it became a force almost as important as coffee (Lotte citing Balzac 1963, 40).

flow past again and again, no longer illusions, they take on a bodily form, and dance about like so many Taglionis,⁴⁷ and so gracefully! You know this, smokers! The spectacle embellishes Nature, all the difficulties of life disappear, life is effortless, your head is clear, the grey clouds of the mind lift, revealing blue skies; but strangely, the backdrop for this opera falls away as soon as the hookah, the cigar or the pipe goes out. This excessive pleasure, at what price have you conquered it? Let us examine it. This test can equally apply to the temporary effects produced by alcohol and coffee.

The smoker has suppressed his ability to salivate. If he has not lost that ability, he has changed its formula, he converts it into some kind of thicker secretion. To sum up, if he is not able to spit, then he has engorged his vessels, he has blocked or annihilated his suckers, his valves, those ingenious papillae whose admirable mechanism is so minute that it can only be observed under Raspail's microscope;⁴⁸ I await the description of it which seems to me to be of urgent practical use. Let us stay on this subject.

The movement of the different types of mucus – that marvellous pulp positioned between the blood and the nerves – is, of all the human circulatory systems, one of the most skilfully created by the Great Watchmaker⁴⁹ to whom we owe this ingenious joke called Humanity. The future of the human race depends on mucus, the intermediary between the blood and its quintessential ingredient, which is so vital to the internal workings of our machine that, when we experience violent emotions, it also reacts violently, making its impact known in some mysterious centre. Finally, life has such a great thirst for it that all those who have experienced great anger will remember how their mouth suddenly dried up, how their saliva thickened, and the time which it took to return to its normal state. This fact had so violently struck me that I wanted to verify it within the realm of the most terrible emotions. I

⁴⁷ Marie Taglioni (1804-1884) was a celebrated Swedish-Italian ballet dancer who turned dancing on pointe into a poetic art form (Craine and Mackrell 2010, "Taglioni, Marie").

⁴⁸ François-Vincent Raspail (1794-1878) was a French physician and chemist. He was an early pioneer of the microscope, using an adapted version commonly referred to by his contemporaries as "Raspail's microscope." It was equipped with special lenses, including some made with tourmaline ("The Microscopes of François-Vincent Raspail," *Microscope Antiques*).

⁴⁹ Research suggests that this was not a known expression in French in the nineteenth century but it was used by Balzac, suggesting he had read English creationist texts such as that by William Paley who first introduced the idea of God being like a watchmaker in *Natural Theology; or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature*, which was first published in 1802 (See Paley 1819, 6, and also Colman 2015, "blind watchmaker").

negotiated for a long time to be present at a dinner with some individuals who, for obvious reasons, were distanced from society: the Head of State Security⁵⁰ and the High Executioner⁵¹ for the royal court of Paris, both incidentally citizens, voters, and able to enjoy their civic rights like any other French person. The celebrated Head of State Security told me the unequivocal fact that all the criminals he had arrested needed between one and four weeks before they recovered their normal ability to salivate. Murderers recovered their ability last. The executioner had never seen a man spit before his own execution, not even when he performed his final ablutions.

Allow me to recount a story heard from the commander of the ship where this actual event took place, and which corroborates our reasoning.

A theft was committed on one of the King's frigates, before the Revolution, out on the open sea. The guilty party was clearly on board. Despite the most thorough searching, despite their habit of observing the tiniest details of communal life on the vessel, neither the officers nor the shipmates could work out who the thief was. This became an obsession for the whole crew. When the captain and his general staff had given up hope that justice would be done, the quartermaster told the commander:

'Tomorrow morning I will find the thief.'

Great astonishment.

The next day, the quartermaster rounds up all of the crew on the forecandle, announcing that he is going to find the culprit. He orders each man to hold out his hand, in which he places a small quantity of flour. As he moves down the line, he orders each man to make a ball with the flour by mixing it with saliva. There was one man who could not make his ball, for lack of saliva.

'Here is the culprit,' he said to the captain.

The quartermaster was not mistaken.

⁵⁰ This was most likely to be Eugène François Vidocq (1775-1857), a former criminal who set up the first crime detection agency, the Sûreté Nationale (Encyclopædia Britannica 2013, "François Vidocq"; Fortassier 1981, 990).

⁵¹ Likely to be Henri Sanson one of a long family line of executioners (Pattou 2014, 5; and Fortassier 1981, 990).

These observations and facts show the importance that Nature attaches to the mucus membranes, which discharge their overflow via the organs of taste, and which essentially comprise the gastric juices, those clever chemists, the despair of our laboratories. Medicine will tell you that the most serious illnesses, the chronic ones and those that are the most brutal at the outset, are those that are produced by inflammation of the mucus membranes. Coryza, which is commonly called a head cold, strips us of our precious faculties for several days, but is nothing more than a minor irritation of our nasal and cerebral mucus membranes.

In any case, the smoker interferes with this circulation, by removing its spillway, by extinguishing the action of the tastebuds or by making them absorb juices from the valves. For this reason, the smoker is as good as stupefied for all of his working days. Smoking nations, like the Dutch, who were the first smokers in Europe, are essentially apathetic and limp; Holland is certainly not overpopulated. A diet composed mainly of fish, especially salt-cured fish, and a certain very strong wine from Touraine, the Vouvray wine, will negate some of the effects of tobacco; however, Holland will always belong to whoever wants to take it – it exists only because of the jealousy of other governments which will not let it become French.

In the end, tobacco, smoked or chewed, has some immediate effects worthy of remark. The enamel on teeth corrodes, gums swell and secrete pus that mixes with certain elements and alters the saliva.

The Turks, who make immoderate use of tobacco weakened by washing, are spent well before their time. Because so few Turks are rich enough to have those famous seraglios where they can squander their youth, we must concede that tobacco, opium and coffee – three comparable stimulants – are the principal causes of infertility in Turkey, where a thirty-year-old man is equivalent to a fifty-year-old European. The issue of climate hardly counts: the latitudes compared are not significantly different. Yet, the ability to reproduce is the *criterion* of vitality, and this ability is closely linked to the condition of the mucus.

In connection with this, I know the truth about an experiment, which I am publishing here in the interest of science and the nation. A very lovely woman, who loved her husband only in his absence – a very rare case and thus worthy of remark – did not know how to keep him at bay while still adhering to the civil code. This husband was a former mariner and he smoked like a steamer. She observed his advances and gathered evidence that on the days he

consumed fewer cigars for whatever reason, he was, as prudes would say, more attentive. She continued her observations, and found a strong correlation between these pauses in their romance and the consumption of tobacco. Fifty cigars or cigarettes (that's how much he might smoke) brought her a sense of peace, much needed, as the sailor had belonged to that lost race of knight-riders of the old regime. Delighted with her discovery, she permitted him to chew tobacco, a habit that she had previously made him give up. After three years of him chewing tobacco and smoking a pipe, cigars and cigarettes all together, she became one of the happiest women in the kingdom. She had the husband without the marriage. 'The chewing of tobacco pacifies our men,' I was once told by a sea captain, who was remarkable for his powers of observation.

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CONCLUSION

The administration would undoubtedly contradict these observations on the stimulants for which it has imposed taxes, but they are well-founded, and I would go as far as to say that the pipe has played a large part in bringing Germany peace; it relieves men of some of their energy. The *fisc*⁵² is by its very nature stupid and anti-social; it would push the nation towards the depths of cretinism, just to give itself the pleasure of passing *écus* from one hand to another, as Indian jugglers do.

These days, there is amongst all classes a slide towards intoxication that moralists and Statesmen must resist; because intoxication, however it manifests itself, is the enemy of social progress. Alcohol and tobacco threaten modern society. When one has seen the gin palaces in London, one understands the temperance movement.

Brillat-Savarin was one of the first to remark on the relationship between what enters our mouths and our destinies. He could have stressed the value of raising its importance through statistical research, as it well deserves, by making the diet of great thinkers the base on which it is conducted. Statistics must provide the budget for things; they could answer the serious questions about the impact of modern excesses on the future of nations.

⁵² Refers to the Royal Treasury; the fiscal administration that collects taxes (*Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* 1835, "Fisc").

Wine, the stimulant of the lower classes, has a harmful component in its alcoholic base, but at least it requires more time, depending on the individual's constitution, to bring about spontaneous human combustion,⁵³ an extremely rare phenomenon.

France was deprived of sugar for a long time, and I am aware that diseases related to the chest – whose prevalence in the generation born between 1800 and 1815 has surprised medical researchers – can be attributed to this deprivation, just as excessive consumption can cause skin diseases.

Surely, alcohol, which forms the base of the wine and liquors that the majority of French people abuse, coffee, which is widely used as a stimulant by the nobility, and sugar, which contains phosphorescent and inflammatory substances and is now used immoderately, must all have an impact on reproductive abilities, given that Science has now discovered that a diet based on fish influences the gender of our offspring.

The administration is perhaps more immoral than gambling, more deprived, more anti-social than roulette.⁵⁴ Alcohol is perhaps a deadly creation and sales must be monitored. The people are big children, and politicians should be their mother. The public's diet, when considered as a whole, is a huge component of policy and it is the most neglected; I would even dare to suggest that it is in its infancy.

These five kinds of excess have similar consequences: thirst, sweating, depletion of mucus and, as the end result, loss of reproductive abilities. This axiom should therefore be adopted by Science:

VII

All excesses that harm⁵⁵ our mucus systems, shorten our lifespans.

Man has only a determinate amount of vital force; it is shared equally between the circulatory system, the nervous system and the mucus system – to take that force from one to benefit the others, is to bring death to a third. We will conclude with this axiomatic image:

⁵³ In the nineteenth century, it was commonly believed that alcoholics and heavy drinkers could spontaneously combust. See for example, Lair's 1800 essay on the subject.

⁵⁴ Balzac added "que la roulette" on the printers proof.

⁵⁵ Balzac changed "frappe sur" to "atteint" on the printer's proof.

VIII

When France sends 500,000 men to the Pyrenees, it does not send them down the Rhine. The same applies with man.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Balzac added this line “Ainsi que l’homme” on the printer’s proof.

A *Gastronome* and a *Romancier*: How Brillat-Savarin and Balzac Influenced New Genres of Literature

This chapter looks at the intersection between gastronomy and literature, and how Brillat-Savarin and the *Physiologie du goût* inspired Balzac to write a number of his own *physiologies* as well as essays on gastronomic themes.

In particular, we discuss the impact that Brillat-Savarin had on the creation of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, which was commissioned by the publisher Charpentier for a re-edition of the *Physiologie du goût*.

Further, we look closely at the similarities between the *Physiologie du goût* and the *Traité des excitants modernes*, such as in the format, focus, leitmotifs, style and tone.

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Brillat-Savarin, Balzac and the birth of gastronomic literature

Parisians' eating habits, and tastes, were rapidly changing in Balzac's era. While food had previously been primarily consumed at home, Parisians were now starting to dine out (Buford 2009, x), and more and more eating establishments opened in Paris to accommodate their growing appetite (Parkhurst Ferguson 1998, 604-605). Further, changes in fortunes in post-Revolution France led to the development of new audiences eager to indulge their tastebuds (Abramson 2003, 103). The term 'gastronomy' emerged at the dawn of the nineteenth century in France, with the first known occurrence found in an 1803 poem by Joseph de Berchoux, titled "La Gastronomie, ou l'Homme des champs à table" (Parkhurst Ferguson 1998, 602), and it quickly swept cultural circles, becoming a signifier for good food or, more specifically, food as both an art and a science. Brillat-Savarin, Alexandre Grimod de La Reynière and Antonin Carême were seminal in the development and legitimisation of gastronomy as a cultural field of its own, writing numerous publications on French cuisine as an art form. As Parkhurst Ferguson states, "gastronomy constructed its modernity through an expansive culinary discourse, and, more specifically, through texts" (ibid, 600).

Buford paints a vivid picture of Brillat-Savarin's place in this developing field:

In between [Beauvilliers and Carême] – and the origin of the menu, the *plat du jour*, the caterer, the codifying of the *pot-au-feu*, the checkered tablecloth, the restaurant critic, the specialist purveyor, the diner, and the curious appropriation of oily black Russian fish eggs as an expensive French condiment – there was Brillat, tasting, making notes, reading, attending chemistry lectures, reflecting, trying to make sense of it all, connecting ideas that didn't seem to have a connection, a library of meditations, fashioning a gastronomy, getting closer to an elusive understanding, an evanescent achievement that can be summed up in the two most important words of the title: “physiology” and “transcendental” (Buford 2009, x).

According to Dubois, the success of the *Physiologie du goût* demonstrated the public's avid interest in the emerging cultural field of gastronomy. Certainly, it was a time when many new transcendental flavours, like that of sugar and chocolate, were becoming more widely available in various forms. Along with the medical revolution also discussed in this thesis, Paris was experiencing a culinary revolution that would shape and enrich French culture and infuse art and literature:

La révolution du culinaire, commencée avec Grimod de la Reynière et Antonin Carême, deviendra rapidement un évènement culturel, esthétique et littéraire aux conséquences considérables, et influencera certains des changements qui vont marquer le XIXème siècle. Le discours gastronomique, auquel contribuent Grimod sous forme journalistique et Carême en tant que praticien, s'enrichit avec Brillat-Savarin d'une langue, d'un ton et d'un style aux qualités littéraires remarquables et auxquelles sera sensible le maître *ès bouffes* qu'est Balzac. (Dubois 2004, 75)

Gastronomy writer Parkhurst Ferguson is even more precise, identifying the specific literary genres that these great *gastronomes* created, subsequently laying the foundations for the gastronomic field. She suggests that Grimod de la Reynière created “gastronomic journalism,” Carême was the pioneer of “culinary treatises,” Brillat-Savarin set a course for “cultural commentary and protosociology” on food, Charles Fourier (1772–1837) contributed “political philosophy” and Balzac wrote novels (Parkhurst Ferguson 1998, 611-612), enriched as they were by descriptions of food and eating rituals. However, as

discussed in this thesis, Balzac went much further than novels with several analytical and philosophical works that provide commentary on food, stimulants and their place in society.

With the publication of the seminal work, *Physiologie du goût, ou méditations de gastronomie transcendante*, in 1825, Brillat-Savarin had a profound influence on the emerging field of gastronomy in the early nineteenth century. One individual in particular was influenced and inspired: Honoré de Balzac.

Born on the 1st of April 1755 in Belley, a small town at the foot of the Alps not far from the Rhone, Jean Anthelme Brillat came from a long line of lawyers and judges. He was a “magistrat intègre, administrateur courageux, et surtout homme doux, conciliant et aimable” (Richerand 1839, 6), and spent the last 25 years of his life as a judge for the Supreme Court (ibid, 8), during which he wrote his life’s work: *Physiologie du goût*. He took his manuscript everywhere, adding to it from behind the bench, and even lost it once. When Brillat-Savarin first submitted the manuscript for publication, it was rejected, leading him to finance the publication himself, with a first print run of 500 copies (Buford 2009, vii). The book has since been reprinted by many different publishers in France and elsewhere, becoming a great classic of gastronomy. Brillat-Savarin died of pneumonia just two months after the book’s publication in 1825, barely long enough for him to witness the profound effect it would have on the emerging field of gastronomy and on other writers – and especially on Balzac.

According to Bonnaud, Balzac had already seen a copy of the manuscript for *Physiologie du goût* before it was published because of his personal relationship with the editor Philibert Auguste Sautelet, and he may even have helped finance its publication (Bonnaud 2013, 22).

Inspired by its style and format, Balzac wrote the *Physiologie du mariage ou méditations de philosophie éclectique, sur le bonheur et le malheur conjugal*. It was first published in 1826, most likely on his own printing presses (Vachon 2009, 257), although in the preamble to the *Traité des excitants modernes*, Balzac states that he first started developing the ideas for *Physiologie du mariage* in 1820. It was later republished by Levavasseur and Urbain Canel in 1829, and this is the version most widely cited as the first edition. The essay is a satirical account of the state of conjugal relations in France, as evidenced by the warning to female readers on the introductory page: “La femme qui, sur le titre de ce livre, serait tentée de l’ouvrir, peut s’en dispenser, elle l’a déjà lu sans le savoir.”

Seeing the potential to increase the audiences for both authors, the publisher Gervais Charpentier reprinted *Physiologie du goût* in August 1838 with Balzac's *Physiologie du mariage* as an appendix. Its success led to Charpentier commissioning another piece from Balzac. Further correspondence between Balzac and his publisher shows that, on the 30th of October 1838, Balzac received 500 francs for a new preface for *Physiologie du goût*, which Charpentier wished to reprint (Balzac 1964, 450). There is scholarly debate about whether the uncompleted manuscript titled "Sur Brillat-Savarin et de l'alimentation dans la génération," was indeed a draft of this preface.⁵⁷ To meet his obligations to his publisher, Balzac finally produced the philosophical essay, *Traité des excitants modernes*, which was published as an appendix to a Charpentier edition of the *Physiologie du goût* on the 11th of May 1839.

In his preamble to the *Traité des excitants modernes*, Balzac, referring to his publisher, says that "à ses yeux, ce traité semble compléter la *Physiologie du goût*" (1839b, 448), demonstrating the importance which he believed Charpentier accorded to it. In the same preamble, Balzac also introduces the idea of the "Pathologie de la vie sociale," a collection of analytical works of which *Traité des excitants modernes* was to form just a "fragment." He announced that it would be printed in its entirety in 1839 and would be "[...] une Anthropologie complète, qui manque au monde savant, élégant, littéraire et domestique" (Balzac 2012, 447). By this time, Balzac had even signed an agreement to produce the work, with Charpentier buying the rights from the publishers Henri-Louis Delloye and Victor Lecou, who owned the rights to Balzac's *Œuvres complètes* (Castex 1979, 7). The agreement notes that the "*Pathologie de la vie sociale* devra être entièrement inédite, sauf les parties qui sont à la connaissance de Mr Charpentier et que Mr de Balzac lui a communiquées, telles que les publications faites dans la *Mode* et la *Théorie de la démarche*" (ibid, 493). The agreement stipulated that the "*Pathologie de la vie sociale*" was to be delivered by the 15th of July 1839. As an ensemble, however, the project was never fully realised.

The *Traité des excitants modernes*, however, had its own legitimate impact, especially coupled with the *Physiologie du goût*. Dubois notes that, while printing Brillat-Savarin's

⁵⁷ See the chapter titled "The Mystery of the Manuscript" for more discussion on this subject.

and Balzac's texts together was primarily for promotional purposes, together they had the effect of legitimising the emerging genre of gastronomic discourse:

Nous voyons qu'à travers les circonstances éditoriales orchestrées par Charpentier, un dialogue, d'ordre purement promotionnel d'abord et critique ensuite, semble s'établir entre les textes de Balzac et de Brillat-Savarin. Les liens étroits qui vont unir le *Traité des excitants modernes* et la *Physiologie du goût* à partir de cet instant apporteront une certaine légitimation littéraire à l'émergence d'un nouveau discours gastronomique, en même temps que s'étend au romanesque la couverture scientifique d'une physiologie dont il a besoin pour s'imposer en tant que genre. (Dubois 2004, 76)

Aside from publishing alongside Brillat-Savarin, Balzac made a number of other contributions to gastronomic discourse, as well as writing about the man himself. Dubois notes that in 1835 Balzac penned an article on Brillat-Savarin for the *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne de Michaud*, and he may also have contributed to Horace Raison's 1827 *Code gourmand* (ibid 76). The success of these pieces encouraged Balzac to write more on the subject, such as the "Nouvelle théorie du déjeuner" (*La Mode*, 29 May 1830), and the "Physiologie gastronomique," which was published in two parts in *La Silhouette* on the 15th of August and the 14th of October 1830.

Dubois also notes that, influenced by his reading on gastronomy, Balzac integrated food into other works, with his greatest interest applied to "les fonctions stimulantes ou stupéfiantes et les sensations de libération ou d'oppression qui leur sont associées" (2004, 75).

Bonnaud sums up Brillat-Savarin's influence on Balzac:

Moins connues que les *Études*, les *Physiologies* [de Balzac], sont, tout comme les premières, les témoins privilégiés de l'écriture aphoristique, des énoncés gnominiques, des axiomes et des anecdotes lesquels sont autant d'arguments scientifiques pour justifier de l'influence de M. Brillat-Savarin sur M. de Balzac. (2013, 14)

Balzac penned many more *physiologies*, written in a similar style and format to Brillat-Savarin's original work. In his long list we can include even those without *physiologie* in the title, because of their nature: *Physiologie du mariage* (1829), *Physiologie gastronomique* (1830), *Physiologie de la toilette* (1830), *Physiologie des positions* (1831), *Physiologie du*

cigare (1831), *Théorie de la démarche* (1833), *Traité des excitants modernes* (1839), *Traité de la vie élégante* (1839), *Physiologie de l'employé* (1841), *Physiologie du rentier de Paris* (1841), and *Histoire et physiologie des boulevards de Paris* (1845).

Brillat-Savarin and Balzac's *physiologies* inspired a proliferation of satirical works by other French writers, with titles such as *Physiologie de la poire* (1832), *Physiologie du parapluie par deux cochers de fiacre* (1841), *Physiologie du vin de champagne, par deux buveurs d'eau* (1841), or *Physiologie des physiologies* (1841), which was "plus ou moins parodique du genre tout entier" (Sieburth 1985, 43).

According to Sieburth, the *physiologies* were among the "premiers exemples du livre instantané" (ibid, 43). He states that from 1840 until 1842 more than 120 works bearing the name physiology were published by Parisian editors, with an estimated 500,000 being printed in a pocketbook format. This seems extraordinary in a city inhabited by one million people, of which only half knew how to read, but the market was driven by well-known authors such as Balzac (ibid, 39).

*

Balzac and gastronomy: a short timeline

1799 Balzac is born in Tours, France.

1803 Alexandre Grimod de La Reynière – who is considered the forefather of literature on gastronomy – publishes the first volume of *L'Almanach des gourmands*.

1825 Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du goût* is first published by Sautelet.

1830 Balzac's "Nouvelle théorie du déjeuner" is published in the magazine *La Mode* on 29 May 1830; and his "Physiologie gastronomique" is printed in two parts in the magazine *La Silhouette* on 15 August and 14 October 1830.

1830 Balzac has his essay "L'Opium" published in *La Caricature* on 11 November.

1833 First volume of *L'Art de la cuisine française au dix-neuvième siècle* by Antonin Carême published.

1835 Balzac writes an article on Brillat-Savarin for the *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne de Michaud* (Bonnaud 2013, 21).

1838 New edition of Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du goût* along with Balzac's *Physiologie du mariage* by the publisher Charpentier.

c.1838 Balzac writes "Sur Brillat-Savarin et de l'alimentation dans la génération," an incomplete and unpublished manuscript which contains similar axioms to those in *Traité des excitants modernes*.

1839 Charpentier publishes the *Physiologie du goût* with Balzac's *Traité des excitants modernes* as an appendix.

1850 Balzac dies in Paris, France.

1855 Second publication of the *Traité des excitants modernes* in Louis de Potter's fifth volume of the first edition of *Les Paysans: scènes de la vie de campagne*, with *Voyage de Paris à Java*. This version contains the amendments that Balzac made on the printer's proof in 1839.

Connecting the dots: similarities between the *Traité des excitants modernes* and the *Physiologie du goût*

The *Physiologie du goût* and the *Traité des excitants modernes* share many common threads; we can easily discern the distinctive imprint of Brillat-Savarin's influential work in the format, scientific focus, leitmotifs, style and tone of the *Traité des excitants modernes*. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Balzac clearly deeply admired Brillat-Savarin.

The connection between the two texts is emphasised in the original preamble to the *Traité des excitants modernes*, which is included in the 1839 edition of the *Physiologie du goût*, where Balzac describes his essay as “audacieusement placé en manière de dessert, après un livre aimé, fêté par le public comme un de ces repas dont, suivant l'auteur, on dit: *il y a nopces et festins*” (Balzac 1839b, 448-449).

Here we examine how closely the two texts were wedded, and where Balzac's opinion diverged from Brillat-Savarin's while indicating to the reader his imperative for doing so.

Format and content

One of the first observations that can be made in comparing the two texts is the similarity in format. While the *Physiologie du goût* constitutes a significantly longer work, they are both composed of individual sections that detail particular foodstuffs, stimulants or the mechanisms related to taste and appetite. Brillat-Savarin names his chapters *méditations* (a style that Balzac emulated in his *Physiologie du mariage*), which are each broken into sub-sections with titles such as “Des sens,” “De la soif,” “Théorie de la friture” or “De la gourmandise.” Balzac's treatise is presented as if it was the final *méditation* in Brillat-Savarin's work, with each of its five sections titled accordingly: “La question posée,” “De l'eau de vie,” “Du café,” “Du tabac” and “Conclusion.”

As evidenced by the titles in the *Physiologie du goût*, Brillat-Savarin focuses on food and drink, while Balzac delves into the impact of modern stimulants, concentrating primarily on the effects of coffee, tobacco and alcohol. The *Traité des excitants modernes* is, in this way, an extension of the *Physiologie du goût*, or, at the very least, fills in some key facts that Balzac believes Brillat-Savarin had omitted, as evidenced by phrases such as, “Sur cette matière, Brillat-Savarin est loin d'être complet” (Balzac 1981, 315), or “Il est étrange que

Brillat-Savarin [...] ait oublié de remarquer [...]” (ibid, 309), which he uses as a launchpad from which to provide more detail.

Balzac makes aphorisms a key feature of his *Traité des excitants modernes*, just as Brillat-Savarin did. While Brillat-Savarin’s axioms are all listed on the same page at the beginning of the book, Balzac used his aphorisms to partition different sections of text or introduce new themes. Both sets of aphorisms constitute highly quotable lines of text, although Brillat-Savarin achieved the most celebrity for his statements, such as with the aphorism, “Les animaux se repaissent; l’homme mange; l’homme d’esprit seul sait manger” (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 11). Balzac took a slightly more obscure approach with axioms in his *Traité des excitants modernes*; for example, “Fumer un cigare, c’est fumer du feu” (Balzac 1981, 322).

Another similarity in comparing the two works can be found when analysing how both authors use personal anecdotes to back up key points, particularly where scientific evidence is lacking. The anecdotes make compelling reading. For example, to demonstrate where tastebuds are located, and how they function, Brillat-Savarin recounts a story of a man he met in Amsterdam whose tongue had been cut out as a punishment, yet he still maintained his facility to taste, although bitter or sour foods caused him intolerable pain (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 48). Balzac, on the other hand, includes an anecdote about a thief on a ship being discovered because he was the only one who was unable, due to nervousness, to produce enough spit to mix with flour and make a small ball (Balzac 1981, 324). This story was used to demonstrate how extreme emotions affect the production of mucus, with fear having the effect of preventing the production of saliva.

Science versus pseudo-science

Both texts employ what can only be described as a pseudo-scientific tone and style. Neither Brillat-Savarin nor Balzac was a man of science, but they clearly sought to be taken seriously. The absolutist aphorisms employed by the two authors help to achieve this effect, as do the references to scientific experiments which appear to have the sole purpose of increasing their credibility. On the latter point, Balzac references François Magendie’s study on the effect of sugar on dogs (Balzac 1981, 310-311), while Brillat-Savarin cites research by a certain Doctor Bailly, who had apparently proved, using a century’s worth of data, that

births of girls outnumbered those of boys when circumstances were “débilitantes” (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 86).

Both writers give detailed accounts of various bodily functions. Brillat-Savarin, for example, dedicates a whole chapter to the workings of taste, while Balzac, impatient to set a scientific tone from the outset of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, describes the mechanisms in the body that allow pleasure to be experienced:

Nos organes sont les ministres de nos plaisirs. Presque tous ont une destination double: ils appréhendent des substances, nous les incorporent, puis les restituent, en tout ou en partie, sous une forme quelconque, au réservoir commun, la terre. Ce peu de mots est la chimie de la vie humaine. (Balzac 1981, 307)

Today, this excerpt bears little relation to our common understanding of the body, but in Balzac’s era it was linked to widely-held beliefs about vital forces that were promulgated by physiologists. Brillat-Savarin and Balzac were both extremely interested in the medical advances occurring in Paris in the early 1800s.⁵⁸ Along with his reference to François Magendie, Balzac makes mention of the celebrated scientist François-Vincent Raspail (Balzac 1981, 323) and physician François Broussais (Balzac 1981, 320) in the *Traité des excitants modernes*; while in the *Physiologie du goût*, Brillat-Savarin refers to Xavier Bichat (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 27) and Joseph-Claude Récamier (ibid, 28).

In the *Traité des excitants modernes*, Balzac attempts to position the reader as a fellow savant, exploring the scientific terrain alongside him, thus elevating the credibility of the text by using flattery as a tool. “Examinons d’abord la question,” he states, “en nous plaçant au point de vue le plus élevé” (Balzac 1981, 307). He uses this technique later in conjunction with reported scientific evidence: “Voici le résultat d’une expérience faite à Londres, dont la vérité m’a été garantie par deux personnes dignes de foi, un savant et un homme politique, et qui domine les questions que nous allons traiter” (Balzac 1981, 309-310), although the scientific experiment that follows appears to be satirical.

Balzac frequently states the absolute where the subject matter is in fact grey, thus denoting his authority in commenting on the subject in question. For example, after describing how overindulging in certain pleasures can upset the delicate balance of the body, he backs up

⁵⁸ See also the chapter “Balzac, Witness to the French Medical Revolution and Public Health Reform.”

his statements by saying, “Cette théorie est effrayante de certitude” (Balzac 1981, 308), giving the reader no choice but to accept his statements’ veracity.

Both Balzac and Brillat-Savarin convey their erudition and knowledge by employing Latin and chemical terms, which help build a sense of scientific credibility. Brillat-Savarin, for example, uses *eleosaccharum* (oil + sugar) to describe chocolate (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 134), while Balzac, uses the Latin chemical term *anhydre* (the absence of water) in his analysis of coffee (Balzac 1981, 318).

Bonnaud notes that both authors exercise scientific mimesis which lends itself better to satire, saying that “l’humour, conséquence malheureuse d’une adaptation de la technique scientifique au sujet humain, crée davantage un effet de science qu’un véritable discours scientifique” (Bonnaud 2013, 27). Certainly, the subjects of other physiologies printed in the same era were largely satiric, and the two texts in question incorporate wit and satire that neatly balances their more serious tone. Balzac’s anecdote about the three men condemned to death perfectly illustrates this point. In his story, Balzac recounts an experiment undertaken by the English government which had given three condemned men a morbid choice: either be hanged or choose to live but be nourished by only one of three stimulants, coffee, tea or chocolate. The three men all accepted the latter proposition. The man who drank nothing but tea died after three years. He was diaphanous; one could hold a lantern behind him and read *The Times* through his body. The man who drank nothing but chocolate died in an abominable state, rotten and eaten by worms. And the man who drank nothing but coffee died too, his body so burned and calcified that he could be crushed and used as lime (Balzac 1981, 310). The moral of this story is that these three stimulants can stimulate grave problems in the body, a message upon which he expands later in the treatise.

To sum up, Brillat-Savarin and Balzac attempted scientific mimesis; however, Balzac, at least, did not let this earnestness stand in the way of a good story.

Recurring themes

The primary theme expounded by Balzac in the *Traité des excitants modernes* is the link between food and reproduction. While this is not a key theme in the *Physiologie du goût*, Balzac pays homage to Brillat-Savarin’s chapter on the senses, which includes a call to augment the five senses with a sixth: the reproductive sense. Balzac proposes that diet can affect this sense, thus the body, and thus a nation through congenital defects or the

degeneration of a population, and he insists that Brillat-Savarin should have made the link himself:

Il est étrange que Brillat-Savarin, après avoir demandé à la science d'augmenter la nomenclature des sens, du sens *génésique*, ait oublié de remarquer la liaison qui existe entre les produits de l'homme et les substances qui peuvent changer les conditions de sa vitalité. (Balzac 1981, 309)

After chastising Brillat-Savarin for not going far enough in making the link between diet and reproduction, Balzac makes this absolute statement: "L'alimentation est la génération" (ibid). The *Traité des excitants modernes* calls for more public research, using collected data, into the effect of diet on populations:

Brillat-Savarin, qui, l'un des premiers, a remarqué l'influence de ce qui entre dans la bouche sur les destinées humaines, aurait pu insister sur l'utilité d'élever sa statistique au rang qui lui est dû, en en faisant la base sur laquelle opéreraient de grands esprits. La statistique doit être le budget des choses; elle éclairerait les graves questions que soulèvent les excès modernes relativement à l'avenir des nations. (Balzac 1981, 326).

The effect of diet on populations was not the only subject in which Brillat-Savarin and Balzac had a common interest. Certain of Brillat-Savarin's remarks on physiology imply that he believed in vitalism, as Balzac did. According to this now discounted theory, vital forces regulate the body and can be depleted, leading to death, if equilibrium is not maintained. Both works contain multiple references to this idea. Brillat-Savarin's acceptance of this theory as fact is evidenced in his celebration of the work of Bichat (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 27), who was one of the key proponents of vitalism, and in the following statement:

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. (ibid, 70)

We can see similar sentiments in the *Traité des excitants modernes*, such as the view that living itself took some of this vital force: "pour l'homme social, vivre, c'est se dépenser plus

ou moins vite” (Balzac 1981, 307). Balzac also talks about “Providence” in a similar fashion to Brillat-Savarin, calling God “le grand faiseur d’horloges auquel nous devons cette ingénieuse plaisanterie appelée l’Humanité” (ibid, 323). Further, we can draw parallels between Brillat-Savarin’s “ressort” which helps maintain the body’s equilibrium and Balzac’s discussion on the “l’harmonie intérieure de notre machine” (ibid).

On digestion

Brillat-Savarin and Balzac employ a similar metaphor to describe the action of digestion, comparing it to soldiers on the battlefield, suggesting that Balzac mined the *Physiologie du goût* for inspiration. Here we have Brillat-Savarin’s description of the process:

[...] les sucs gastriques s’exaltent; les gaz intérieurs se déplacent avec bruit; la bouche se remplit de sucs; et toutes les puissances digestives sont sous les armes, comme des soldats qui n’attendent plus que le commandement pour agir. (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 71)

Let us compare it with Balzac’s description of coffee being absorbed in the gut, stimulating the brain and thus the production of ideas:

Ce café tombe dans votre estomac, qui, vous le savez par Brillat-Savarin, est un sac velouté à l’intérieur et tapissé de suçoirs et de papilles; il n’y trouve rien, il s’attaque à cette délicate et voluptueuse doublure [...] les plexus s’enflamment, ils flambent et font aller leurs étincelles jusqu’au cerveau. Dès lors, tout s’agite: les idées s’ébranlent comme les bataillons de la grande armée sur le terrain d’une bataille, et la bataille a lieu. (Balzac 1981, 318)

These descriptions are remarkable in their similarity, demonstrating yet again how much Balzac was influenced by Brillat-Savarin.

Balzac’s notes on Brillat-Savarin

Balzac mentions Brillat-Savarin nine times in the *Traité des excitants modernes* (not including the preamble), using statements such as “Comme l’a fort bien observé Brillat-Savarin [...]” (Balzac 1981, 315) or in describing Rossini as “un héros digne de Brillat-Savarin” (ibid, 319).

Balzac further augments his notes on Brillat-Savarin by mentioning, without attribution, the same anecdotes, ideas, studies or people as those that were referenced in the *Physiologie du goût*. For example, they both remark on Voltaire's coffee habit (Balzac 1981, 316; Brillat-Savarin 1839, 128), and warn of the dangers of coffee: Balzac notes that those who abuse it can die of burns (Balzac 1981, 310 and 316), while Brillat-Savarin declares that they can become imbeciles or die of consumption (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 129). Balzac's description of "un homme à Londres que l'usage immodéré du café a tordu comme ces vieux goutteux noués" (Balzac 1981, 316) clearly comes from the *Physiologie du goût*, where Brillat-Savarin writes: "J'ai vu à Londres, sur la place de Leicester, un homme que l'usage immodéré du café avait réduit en boule" (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 129).

Further, Brillat-Savarin includes an anecdote to illustrate how a diet rich in fish will cause more girls to be born, and this is backed up by the mention of a study by Doctor Bailly which shows that gender can be influenced by external circumstances (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 85-86). This passage helps explain the previously-discussed axiom by Balzac about a diet based on fish increasing the numbers of girls ("la marée donne les filles, la boucherie fait les garçons" (Balzac 1981, 309)), and his comments about how "il est maintenant acquis à la science que la diète ichthyophagique influe sur les produits de la generation" (ibid 327).

In summary, these examples show how closely Balzac had read the *Physiologie du goût* and the extent to which he integrated its ideas into his own work. However, he was not afraid to mark out his own ideas about stimulants' effect on the body.

The Mystery of the Manuscript

As my research on the *Traité des excitants modernes* progressed, two definitive questions emerged:

1. For what purpose did Balzac write the unpublished, undated manuscript titled “Sur Brillat-Savarin et de l’Alimentation dans la Génération”⁵⁹ which contains some of the same ideas and aphorisms as the *Traité des excitants modernes*? Was it destined to be the preface for the *Physiologie du goût*?
2. Why do so many different editions of the *Traité des excitants modernes* have variations in the text and, therefore, which version should I use for my translation?

Balzac’s correspondence with his publisher – which has been carefully compiled and published in chronological order by French scholars and publishers – allows us valuable insight into the development of the treatise, and helps us address these pressing questions. By following the trail, we can determine what Balzac’s publisher expected of him and how, or if, the author delivered upon those promises. One thing is clear, however: while Balzac was commissioned to write a preface for a new edition of the *Physiologie du goût*, he did not meet the brief in a straightforward fashion. This chapter lays out what we can ascertain from his correspondence.

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The unfinished manuscript on Brillat-Savarin and its role as a preface for the *Physiologie du goût*

Housed in the Institut de France, Balzac’s unfinished manuscript, “Sur Brillat-Savarin et de l’Alimentation dans la Génération,” has stimulated debate amongst French scholars. The manuscript sketches out Balzac’s proposed regime for obese women, his ideas on the art of dining, and his theories on the impact of diet on reproduction. Questions about this manuscript have centred on when Balzac wrote it and for what purpose. In her thoughtful

⁵⁹ Ms. Lov.A 166, folios 22-29, Institut de France.

essay, Rose Fortassier theorises that it was most likely written in 1832 or 1833, along with the *Traité de la vie élégante* and *Théorie de la démarche* (Fortassier 1968, 106-107, 109-110). Subsequent to Fortassier's publication of the manuscript, Jean Ducourneau located some of the missing pages – whose reverse side Balzac had re-used to correct a proof of his *Curé de village* – and reconstructed it (Ducourneau 1976, 586). He concurred with Fortassier only on her proposition that Balzac most likely wrote it as part of “Pathologie de la vie sociale” and he placed its development around the year of 1838, based on references to trips Balzac had made to Milan in 1837 and 1838, therefore making it contemporary to the *Traité des excitants modernes* (ibid, 587). Pierre-Georges Castex agreed with Ducourneau on the date but proposed that the manuscript was instead an early draft of the preface commissioned for the *Physiologie du goût* (Castex 1979, 13), for which Charpentier paid Balzac 500 francs (Balzac 1964, 365).

Castex's inference is that the preface and the treatise (then called *Tabacologie*) were two distinct projects, but that the preface was never delivered:

[...] dès le 25 novembre (date probable, selon R. Pierrot), il avait fait annoncer au même Charpentier le dépôt de la *Tabacologie*, chez l'imprimeur Éverat, en vue d'une “épreuve nouvelle,” demandée d'urgence. Donc Balzac, pour la seconde édition Charpentier de la *Physiologie du goût*, s'était donné, en novembre, deux tâches: celle d'une préface et celle d'un petit traité. La rédaction du traité l'a manifestement intéressé davantage que celle de la préface: elle allait même être développée au-delà de l'intention première, alors que la préface ne fut jamais livrée à l'éditeur. (Castex 1979, 9-10)

If it was indeed the preface, Balzac's correspondence suggests that it was the least of his worries at the time. He was under great pressure to write, having made a number of agreements with his publishers to deliver specific works towards the end of 1838, and his correspondence shows he was working furiously to pay off his debts ((Balzac 1964, 474, 476) . Correspondence from Armand Péréme to Balzac on the 9th of December 1838 also showed that the preface was hotly anticipated: “Votre préface oblige,” he wrote (Castex 1979, 10).

Castex suggests that the preface was abandoned in favour of a new work: the *Traité des excitants modernes*. Judging by the repetition of ideas in both works, we can speculate that,

in writing the preface, Balzac developed important ideas that seemed too pressing not to explore further, such as those that concern the effect of diet and stimulants on reproduction. It seems likely that this was the catalyst for Balzac to expand his “Tabacologie” into the *Traité des excitants modernes*. As a result, the original preface would have needed to be completely rewritten. However, instead of being abandoned as Castex suggests, I posit that Balzac instead wrote a brief and unapologetic promotion of his own work, which was not appropriate for Charpentier to publish at the head of the book, and was printed as a preamble before the *Traité des excitants modernes*. This theory seems to be backed up by a note in Charpentier’s letter to Balzac from the 28th of December 1838, which shows that by this date the publisher had received the preamble, and after which there appear to be no further demands for the preface. This note ends: “Votre titre de la *Pathologie* et les 30, etc., etc., c’est magnifiquement spirituel.” To understand the importance of this statement, we must remind ourselves of the full title of the proposed “Pathologie de la vie sociale” as stated in Balzac’s preamble, which was finally published alongside the *Physiologie du goût*. It is “Pathologie de la vie sociale, ou Méditations mathématiques, physiques, chimiques et transcendantes sur les manifestations de la pensée, prise sous toutes les formes que lui donne l’état social, soit par le vivre et le couvert, soit par la démarche et la parole, etc. (Supposez trente)” (Balzac 1839b, 446). It is this title that Charpentier was referring to in his letter. From this, we can deduce that the publisher had already received the preamble, although it was perhaps not the kind of preface that he had envisioned for the *Physiologie du goût*.

The preamble was finally printed as part of the appendix, along with the *Traité des excitants modernes*, and the existing preface by Richerand was reprinted at the head. This was very likely an editorial decision by the publisher, as Balzac’s preface, while mentioning Brillat-Savarin’s work, focuses more intently on his own works to come. It also makes sense for the editor to have placed the preamble and the *Traité des excitants modernes* after the *Physiologie du goût*, as if they were an additional, but very important, chapter of the larger work.

To sum up, under this hypothesis, Balzac originally wrote “Sur Brillat-Savarin et de l’alimentation dans la génération” as the preface for the *Physiologie du goût*, as requested by his publisher, but the ideas he developed in this essay became so important that they were recycled for the *Traité des excitants modernes*. He still, however, fulfilled his contract

to Charpentier to produce a preface of sorts, although it did not provide a suitable enough introduction into the *Physiologie du goût* and was instead printed as a preamble to the *Traité des excitants modernes*.

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Variations in text: different editions of the *Traité des excitants modernes*

As I studied the different editions of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, it became apparent that there were several variations within different editions of the text, including the addition of new sentences or word changes. By cross-referencing correspondence between Balzac and his publisher with a printer's proof of *Traité des excitants modernes* held at the Institut de France (Balzac 1839a), I was able to solve this mystery.

First, we must look at the following correspondence which provides us several important clues. On the 8th or 9th of April 1839, one month before the *Traité des excitants modernes* was officially published, Balzac wrote to Charpentier asking to make further amendments to the proof:

Vous seriez un grand misérable si vous ne m'envoyiez pas l'épreuve en page du *Traité des excitants* car il y a des fautes à la fin, et un ajouté important (sans quoi rien ne sera composé). (Balzac 1964, 587-588)

Charpentier responds to Balzac's request on the 9th of April 1839:

Demain mercredi vous recevrez une nouvelle composition du *Traité des excitants*, mais vous ne pourrez pas la garder plus de 24 heures; il faudra même me la retourner avant ce délai car nous attendons après pour faire la réimpression du *goût*. (ibid, 588)

The printer's proof on the other hand, which features Balzac's own handwritten corrections, is addressed to Balzac's publisher under the title "réimpression" and is marked as 1839 but the month is not given; nor is it clear whether the "réimpression" was added at the same time as the amendments or later. At first glance, we could assume that the proof had always been destined for the second reprint of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, particularly as the words "1839, 2^e édition, Charpentier" are handwritten at the end. However, my hypothesis is that these words were added after Balzac had missed his publisher's deadline. First, the correspondence above shows that Balzac had requested changes to the conclusion on the 9th

of April 1839 (“[...] il y a des fautes à la fin, et un ajouté important [...]”) which are consistent with what we see on the printer’s proof. Further, Balzac was given 24 hours to mark up the changes, as the editor was about to commence the printing of the book, and this exchange suggests that the marked-up version was intended to be printed as the first edition but Balzac missed the deadline.

Unfortunately for Balzac, the second, revised edition of the *Traité des excitants modernes* only appeared posthumously, in 1855, in the fifth volume of the first edition of *Paysans*, with *Voyage de Paris à Java*, which was published by Louis de Potter. All subsequent reprints are based either on the 1839 edition, or on the 1855 edition, and it is rare for publishers to state which version they used. Further, some publishers have made their own editorial changes, albeit minor, to update spellings (for example *excitans* is corrected to the modern spelling of *excitants*) or punctuation (for example, replacing exclamation marks with full-stops).

While Balzac’s own changes were relatively minor, they include several important modifications, such as changing “les exigences de l’amour” (Balzac 1839b, 467) to “le feu de l’amour” (Balzac 1981, 320); or the addition of new ideas, such as a reference to “forces néo-creatives” in describing how vital energy is reused or reconstituted (ibid, 307); the addition of “Ainsi de l’homme” to the final axiom in the essay (ibid, 328); and the addition of “le boulanger est le père de la pensée” to the end of the axiom, “La marée donne les filles, la boucherie fait les garçons” (ibid, 309). In regard to the latter, this important addition rarely appears in the various subsequent editions of the *Traité des excitants modernes*.

In order to assess which version was principally used by publishers, I analysed 15 editions of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, including the first edition, published between 1839 and 2013. I provide the full list on the following pages, ordered chronologically, along with notes on the version they printed.

Publisher	Title of book in which <i>Traité des excitants modernes</i> was published	Author	Publishing date	Version
Charpentier	<i>Physiologie du goût, ou méditations de gastronomie transcendante</i>	Brillat-Savarin, Jean Anthelme	1839	Original, first edition
L. de Potter	<i>Paysans</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	1855	Second edition. All of the changes that Balzac stipulated on the printer's proof have been made on this version (including placing the 7 th axiom at the beginning of <i>Traité des excitants modernes</i> as Balzac did on the proof)
P. Ollendorff	<i>Œuvres diverses</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	1902	Updated edition but does not have the story about the Great Watchmaker (89) or the story about the wife loving her husband from afar (92)
H. Kaeser	<i>Grimod de la Reynière: Variétés gourmandes suivies du Traité des excitants modernes, par H. de Balzac</i>	Grimod de la Reynière, Alexandre-Balthazar-Laurent	1951	First edition text, however, contains only one change that Balzac stipulated for the re-edition: to add "Ainsi de l'homme" to the conclusion (265)
Pandora	<i>Théorie de la démarche et Autres textes</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	1978	States that it is the first edition from 1833 (clearly an error) and is in fact the updated edition, with some additional changes, presumably by the publisher, which include the reference to the Great Watchmaker (118) and the deletion of the story about the woman who loved her husband only from afar (122)
Éditions Gallimard,	<i>La Comédie humaine</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	1981	Second edition text, using all the changes Balzac had stipulated

Publisher	Title of book in which <i>Traité des excitants modernes</i> was published	Author	Publishing date	Version
Bibliothèque de la Pléiade				
Le Castor Astral	<i>Traité des excitants modernes; suivi de Physiologie de la toilette; et de Physiologie gastronomique</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	1992	Uses the updated version, but has deleted the reference to the Great Watchmaker (53). Has also placed the 7 th axiom at the beginning of <i>Traité des excitants modernes</i> as Balzac did on the proof (21).
Actes sud	<i>Traité des excitants modernes</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	1994	Uses first edition text with four small updates that Balzac had requested on the printer's proof: changed "assimiler son estomac" to "soumettre son estomac" (28); "les exigences de l'amour" to "le feu de l'amour" (34); "frappe sur les muqueuses" to "atteint les muqueuses"(46); and has added "Ainsi de l'homme" (46)
Éditions mille et une nuits	<i>Traité des excitants modernes</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	1997	Uses first edition text with four small updates that Balzac had requested on the printer's proof: changed "assimiler son estomac" to "soumettre son estomac" (26); "les exigences de l'amour" to "le feu de l'amour" (33); "frappe sur les muqueuses" to "atteint les muqueuses"(47); and has added "Ainsi de l'homme" (48)
Le Grand Livre du Mois	<i>Z. Marcas suivi de Traité des excitants modernes</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	1999	Uses updated text but without the reference to the Great Watchmaker and the story about the woman who loves her husband only from afar
Arléa	<i>Traité des excitants modernes</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	2003	Uses the updated version, but no reference to the Great Watchmaker

Publisher	Title of book in which <i>Traité des excitants modernes</i> was published	Author	Publishing date	Version
Éditions Garnier	<i>La Comédie humaine, études analytiques</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	2009	Uses updated version including placing the 7 th axiom at the beginning of <i>Traité des excitants modernes</i> as Balzac did on the proof (628)
L’Herne	<i>Traité des excitants modernes</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	2009	Uses first edition text with four small updates that Balzac had requested on the printer’s proof: changed “assimiler son estomac” to “soumettre son estomac” (35); and “les exigences de l’amour” to “le feu de l’amour” (43); “frappe sur les muqueuses” to “atteint les muqueuses”(59); and has added “Ainsi de l’homme” (59)
Menu Fretin	<i>Traité des excitants modernes</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	2009	Uses first edition text with three small updates that Balzac had requested on the printer’s proof: to change “assimiler son estomac” to “soumettre son estomac” (49); “les exigences de l’amour” to “le feu de l’amour” (55); and “frappe sur les muqueuses” to “atteint les muqueuses” (72)
Babel/Actes sud	<i>Traité des excitants modernes</i>	Balzac, Honoré de	2013	Uses first edition text with four small updates that Balzac had requested on the printer’s proof: to change “assimiler son estomac” to “soumettre son estomac” (25); “les exigences de l’amour” to “le feu de l’amour” (31); “frappe sur les muqueuses” to “atteint les muqueuses” (43); and the addition of “Ainsi de l’homme” to the final axiom (43)

For my translation, I used the 1839 first edition and updated it with Balzac's subsequent changes, as stipulated on his proof to the publisher, because this is the version that is closest to what he had wanted. All of Balzac's modifications in my translation are clearly indicated in the footnotes.

In conclusion, Balzac made some important changes to enhance the treatise; publishers should be cognisant of these changes if they wish to provide their readers with the most up-to-date version of the work.

The Stimulants that Fuelled Balzac's Life and Work

The pleasures of the table were intrinsic to Balzac's gargantuan personality and his physique, and his descriptions of food and eating equally served to deepen his literary characterisation – evident in the rich references to cuisine throughout *La Comédie humaine*. One account suggests that his relationship with food was shaped by his experience at boarding school where he was deprived of the delectable treats sent to the other boarders by their parents, his own being far too preoccupied by their own lives to pay him much heed (Muhlstein 2010, 11-12). Far from being a consistent glutton, Balzac's diet oscillated between eating little while he was consumed with his work and devouring vast quantities when in periods of repose (Werdet 1859, 17). What is sure is that Balzac revelled in his moments of indulgence. Léon Gozlan offers up one of the most detailed descriptions of Balzac *à table*, trembling as he comes face to face with an array of sublime fruits:

S'il mangeait peu de viande, en revanche, il consommait des fruits en quantité. Ceux qu'on voyait sur sa table étonnaient par la beauté de leur choix et leur saveur. Ses lèvres palpaient, ses yeux s'allumaient de bonheur, ses mains frémissaient de joie à la vue d'une pyramide de poires ou de belles pêches. Il n'en restait pas une pour aller raconter la défaite des autres. Il dévorait tout. Il était superbe de pantagruélisme végétal, sa cravate ôtée, sa chemise ouverte, son couteau à fruits à la main, riant, buvant, tranchant dans la pulpe d'une poire de doyenné, je voudrais ajouter et causant; mais Balzac causait peu à table. (Gozlan 1886, 15-16)

Balzac applied the same gusto to the “modern” stimulants, which provided him with inspiration and supported his demanding writing schedule. This chapter discusses Balzac's intimate relationship with four principal stimulants: coffee, alcohol, tobacco and tea, those which are discussed at the greatest length in the *Traité des excitants modernes*.⁶⁰ It would appear that Balzac primarily focuses on these particular stimulants as he was able to draw upon his significant personal experience, as well as his own detailed observation of others who had gone to extremes in their use. It is perhaps for this reason that opium and hashish

⁶⁰ This chapter does not deal with sugar, given its minor role in the *Traité des excitants modernes*.

were not included in the *Traité des excitants modernes*. There was growing interest in opium and hashish amongst writers and artists in the early nineteenth century (Mickel 1969, 58) but they were not so widely used by society as sugar, coffee, alcohol, tobacco and tea. Nonetheless, both were prescribed as medicines for various ailments. As Balzac's health waned, he too was prescribed opium for inflammation of the brain and hashish for vertigo and intestinal pain (Appelboom 2013, 128-129). Balzac was interested in the cerebral effects of both opium and hashish, although wary of their potency. In *Voyage de Paris à Java*, which was first published in 1832, seven years before the *Traité des excitants modernes*, he states that:

Le vin, le café, le thé, l'opium, sont les quatre grands stimulants dont l'action réagit instantanément sur la puissance du cerveau par l'impulsion donnée à l'estomac, et qui compromettent singulièrement l'immatérialité de notre âme. (Balzac 1995, 27)

This passage acknowledges the influence of opium and suggests that Balzac had perhaps tried it. Balzac also explores his ideas about the drug in the article "L'Opium," which was published in *La Caricature* on the 11th of November 1830. McVicker, however, says that for Balzac, opium was a "purely vicarious" experience influenced by his reading of a translation of *The Confessions of an English Opium-eater* by Thomas de Quincey, titled *L'Anglais mangeur d'opium* (1969, 296).

There is also some evidence that Balzac dabbled in hashish, as did many other luminaries during his era. Charles Baudelaire wrote an account of seeing Balzac at a meeting of people who wanted to discover more about the effects of the drug:

Je l'ai vu, une fois, dans une réunion où il était question des effets prodigieux du haschisch. Il écoutait et questionnait avec une attention et une vivacité amusantes. Les personnes qui l'ont connu devinent qu'il devait être intéressé. Mais l'idée de penser malgré lui-même le choquait vivement [...] La lutte entre sa curiosité presque enfantine et sa répugnance pour l'abdication se trahissait sur son visage expressif d'une manière frappante. (Baudelaire 1860, 99-100)

This account does not confirm that Balzac tried it, rather that he was curious about its power to transport the mind but not initially brave enough to lose control. However, Balzac's letters to his lover, and eventually wife, the Polish countess Ewelina Hanska, bear witness to

his experience with the drug towards the end of his life. On the 23rd of December 1845, he wrote:

J'ai résisté au haschich et je n'ai pas éprouvé tous les phénomènes: mon cerveau est si fort qu'il fallait une dose plus forte que celle que j'ai prise. Néanmoins, j'ai entendu des voix célestes et j'ai vu des peintures divines. (Balzac 1990b, 134)

As with some of the other stimulants discussed in more detail in this chapter, Balzac leaves something of a mystery as to whether he became a regular user of hashish or largely abstained.

In general, however, there appears to be a contradiction between his principles on stimulant use and his practices. On a philosophical level, he believed the ill effects of stimulants were being multiplied on a large scale across society, leading to degeneration and decline, and he railed against them. However, in his personal life he largely succumbed to binges and indulgences, particularly where tobacco and alcohol were concerned, with coffee being the only staple in his daily ritual. McVicker sums it up more eloquently: “[for] all his sermonizing in the matter of drugs and *excitants*, Balzac seems to have paid little practical heed to the ill effects of over-indulgence, with its concomitant fleeting pleasures” (1969, 300).

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Alcohol: Balzac's drinking habits explored

Balzac's drinking habits primarily consisted of intermittent binges. By his own admission, he was a “coûteux convive” who could consume vast quantities of wine without getting drunk, which he attributes to being a “buveur d'eau,” having a long history with coffee, and his ample “capacité gastrique” (Balzac 1981, 311). Gozlan, one of Balzac's contemporaries, backs up these statements, noting that “on sait qu'il ne buvait de vin que par intermittence” (1886, 46). Watelet notes that Balzac had cirrhosis of the liver, which is normally a consequence of excessive drinking, but that his excessive coffee intake most likely acted as a “hépatoprotecteur” (ibid, 256).

Théophile Gauthier describes Balzac's enormous appetite for both food and drink, and his profound ability to deflect the effects of alcohol:

Balzac mangeait avec une joviale gourmandise qui inspirait l'appétit et il buvait d'une façon pantagruélique: quatre bouteilles de Vouvray, un des plus capiteux qu'on connaisse, n'altéraient en rien sa forte cervelle et ne faisaient que donner un péttillement plus vif à sa gaieté. (Watelet citing Gauthier 2007, 256)

A letter from Balzac to Madame Hanska, which refers to the passage that appears in both *Le Voyage de Paris à Java* and the *Traité des excitants modernes*, substantiates the claim that alcohol did not make him drunk, regardless of the quantity ingested:

Je n'ai jamais connu l'ivresse que par un cigare que E[ugène] Sue m'a fait fumer malgré moi, et c'est ce qui m'a donné les moyens de peindre *l'ivresse aux Italiens* que vous me reprochez dans [*Le Voyage de Paris à Java*]. (Balzac 1990a, 32)

The event that Balzac refers to was his first experience of being drunk, but he asserts that it was only because he was made to smoke two cigars, and not because of the 17 bottles of wine consumed (Balzac 1981, 312). Despite concluding that the experience of drunkenness was pleasurable, Balzac is disparaging about alcohol's general effects in the *Traité des excitants modernes*:

L'ivresse jette un voile sur la vie réelle, elle éteint la connaissance des peines et des chagrins, elle permet de déposer le fardeau de la pensée. L'on comprend alors comment de grands génies ont pu s'en servir, et pourquoi le peuple s'y adonne. Au lieu d'activer le cerveau, le vin l'hébète. Loin d'exciter les réactions de l'estomac vers les forces cérébrales, le vin, après la valeur d'une bouteille absorbée, a obscurci les papilles, les conduits sont saturés, le goût ne fonctionne plus, et il est impossible au buveur de distinguer la finesse des liquides servis. (Balzac 1981, 314)

This is just the beginning of his recriminations; Balzac is forthright in the *Traité des excitants modernes* about what he believes to be alcohol's effects on individuals and society. He notes that alcohol is the greatest scourge of all the commonly-consumed stimulants, stating that "son esprit est celui de tous aujourd'hui qui tue le plus de monde. On s'est effrayé du choléra. L'eau-de-vie⁶¹ est un bien autre fléau !" (Balzac 1981, 311).

⁶¹ While today we might think of *eau-de-vie* as a clear spirit distilled from fruit, or a synonym for brandy (Oxford Reference 2004, "eau-de-vie"), Balzac uses it interchangeably with alcohol and wine (see, for example, Balzac 1981, 306, 311-315).

Balzac also states that alcohol is an “excitant des classes inférieures” (Balzac 1981, 327). He expands further on this idea in the *Traité des excitants modernes* when describing the drunken and monstrous working class at the Grande Halle in Paris as a “tapisserie humaine” made up of dirty, tattered individuals twisted by alcohol abuse (Balzac 1981, 311). Further, he proposes that “nous devons à ces hommes ce frai ignoble qui dépérit ou qui produit l’effroyable gamin de Paris” (ibid), an idea that connects closely with the beliefs commonly held at the time that certain factors were leading the nation into degradation and decline. He uses the *Traité des excitants modernes* as a platform for the discussion of these ideas, noting that alcohol impacts directly on the functioning of the body, thus affecting future generations.⁶²

McVicker notes, “As for alcohol, Balzac is convinced that it is a social evil, but it should not be supposed from this that his ideas on the subject fit into the pattern of the Anglo-Saxon temperance movements of the period;” further, “He was a true connoisseur of wine, and loses no opportunity to praise the fine vintages of France” (McVicker 1969, 299). Balzac is clear about his view on alcohol consumption in this passage from *Voyage de Paris à Java*:

Laissons le vin aux indigents. Son ivresse grossière trouble l’organisme, sans payer par de grands plaisirs le dégât qu’il fait dans le logis. Cependant, pris modérément, cette imagination liquide a des effets qui ne manquent pas de charme; car il ne faut pas plus calomnier le vin que médire de son prochain. (Balzac 1995, 27)

In summary, Balzac was critical of the working classes’ excessive drinking habits, and the subsequent effect on society, but he believed that moderate consumption of fine wines was largely acceptable, especially, it seems, where he and his peers were concerned.

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Coffee: Balzac and his daily *breuvage*

Of all the “modern” stimulants, coffee had the greatest hold over Balzac. Drinking cup after cup, kept warm in a ceramic pot decorated with his initials, Balzac routinely worked late

⁶² See also the chapter below on nineteenth-century medicine, and the conclusion.

into the night, sleeping in snatches. Coffee helped him to sustain his rigorous writing schedule, and he maintained that it gave him inspiration and fired up his intellect.

Edmond Werdet, who painted a literary portrait of Balzac which was published less than a decade after his death, describes how, after dinner, Balzac prepared his infamous coffee, and then slept, before returning to work again at midnight:

Le dîner achevé, il s'occupait de la grave question du café, un café historique, avec lequel le café de Voltaire⁶³ ne saurait entrer en comparaison. Il le faisait lui-même religieusement [...]. Le café pris, vers huit heures, il remontait dans sa chambre à coucher et s'imposait, bon gré mal gré, un sommeil antinaturel jusqu'à minuit. Son domestique venait alors le réveiller, et il se remettait à son labeur acharné, à ce labeur incessant, qui l'a emporté avant l'âge. (Werdet 1859, 349)

To augment our understanding of the chapter on coffee in the *Traité des excitants modernes*, this section looks at Balzac's coffee rituals and how excess consumption impacted on his health.

Balzac's two lifelong loves: Madame Hanska and coffee

Kazuo Kiriū has dedicated more than two decades to digitising Balzac's *La Comédie humaine* and his correspondence, and sorting it by keyword. The corollary of his work, the *Vocabulaire de Balzac*, gives us an unparalleled ability to search Balzac's works for key themes, such as his references to coffee. The number of mentions of coffee reveals much about Balzac's enduring relationship with the beverage. In *La Comédie humaine*, there are 264 references to coffee, 50 of which can be found in the *Traité des excitants modernes*. Balzac's correspondence with friends and acquaintances contains 29 mentions of coffee, all somewhat pedestrian. However, his intimate correspondence with Madame Hanska reveals his innermost feelings towards his daily *breuvage*, which is mentioned 124 times over almost two decades of correspondence. At times euphoric about his drink of choice, Balzac was more often tormented by the knowledge that although it contributed to his ill-health, he could not write without it. "Hélas, je commence à reprendre du café; il le faut pour terminer

⁶³ Voltaire was supposedly an avid coffee-drinker (Brillat-Savarin 2009, 116).

mes manuscrits,” he writes to Madame Hanska on the 15th of June 1844 (Balzac 1990a, 862).

On the 5th of July 1847, Balzac reports on his gruelling writing schedule, and how much coffee he drank to sustain it:

Il est 2h ½ du matin; je me suis levé une heure plus tard que je ne le voulais. Hier, je suis resté toute la journée dans mon cabinet sans en sortir, et tout est dit, l’inspiration est venue, et avec elle l’énergie et la volonté de travailler. Mais à quel prix ce détachement horrible de tous les intérêts de cœur est-il obtenu, voilà une livre de café Moka de bue en 8 jours! (Balzac 1990b, 615).

Through his correspondence with Madame Hanska, we also see his many attempts to cut back, as well as his need for inspiration driving him to drink it again. “[J]e n’ai aucune force. Je n’ai pas encore retrouvé la puissance de travail; je n’ai ni inspiration ni rien de fécondateur,” he writes on the 1st of July 1835. “Cependant, la nécessité est extrême. Je vais me remettre au café” (Balzac 1990a, 260).

When writing, he worked intensively, following a gruelling routine punctuated by cups of strong coffee. These intense periods were followed by the need to sleep 15-16 hours per day because he felt like a “pauvre cheval fourbu sur le flanc” (Balzac 1964, 575). Watelet notes that he was “angoissé de ces problèmes hépatiques et pulmonaires” and, like some other prolific writers, on the path to “autodestruction,” a work ethic which equally “le conduira à sa perte, mais en fera un génie” (2007, 257).

Leading up to his death in 1850, at the age of 51, Balzac’s correspondence reveals his awareness of the impact that his schedule and coffee intake had had on his health. On the 23rd of January 1843, he writes to Madame Hanska: “Le café que je prends en doses démesurées m’a rendu mes affreuses douleurs d’estomac; mais il est impossible de travailler sans café” (Balzac 1990a, 640). Two months later, on the 19th of March 1843, he writes: “L’abus du café m’éteint de jour en jour” (Balzac 1990a, 655). The impact on his health was not a new phenomenon. A decade earlier, on the 27th of March 1836, he wrote:

Ma santé est en ce moment gravement altérée. M. Nacquart⁶⁴ a porté un arrêt auquel il faut obéir. Le café est supprimé. Tous les soirs on me met sur l'estomac un cataplasme de graine de lin, je suis à l'eau de poulet, je ne mange que des viandes blanches, je bois de l'eau de gomme, et on emploie les sédatifs intérieurs. Il faut suivre ce régime pendant 10 jours, et aller en Touraine, un mois, reprendre la vie et la santé. Toutes les muqueuses sont violemment enflammées, je ne digère pas sans d'horribles souffrances. (Balzac 1990a, 307)

Balzac's reference to a bland diet based on white meats and plenty of rest to manage the ill effects of coffee is similarly discussed in the *Traité des excitants modernes* (Balzac 1981, 318), demonstrating just how much he drew on his personal experience of the effects of coffee in writing the treatise. This episode, in March 1836, was not the only time he was told to refrain from coffee in order to restore his health. Appelboom recounts how, in the months before he died, his doctors recommended abstinence from coffee, tea and alcohol, and he indicates that Balzac may well have been diabetic (2013, 131-132).

Balzac had many theories about how coffee affected the body. In the *Traité des excitants modernes*, he proposes that tannin in coffee is the primary toxic element which damages the digestive system and, therefore, disrupts other bodily processes:

Quand les membranes de l'estomac sont *tannées*, ou quand l'action du tannin particulier au café les a hébétées par un usage trop fréquent, elles se refusent aux contractions violentes que les travailleurs recherchent. De là, des désordres graves si l'amateur continue. (Balzac 1981, 316)

Werdet, citing the historian Hippolyte-Adolphe Taine, suggests that Balzac died from overwork and abuse of coffee: "De Balzac, dit M. H. Taine, est mort à cinquante ans, le sang enflammé par le travail des nuits et par l'abus du café, auquel ses veilles forcées le condamnaient" (1859, 381).

⁶⁴ His family's doctor and a friend (Appelboom 2013, 9).

How much coffee did Balzac consume?

Despite his legendary coffee habit, there is a great paucity of research on how much Balzac actually consumed. Sources (including Taylor 2011, 255; and Cappelletti et al. 2015, 71) report that he drank up to 50 cups a day, but this figure appears to be purely anecdotal.

I conducted primary research to assess how much coffee he might have consumed on a daily basis by examining his correspondence, reading first-hand accounts from his friends and acquaintances, and reviewing some of his monthly bills, which are housed in the Lovenjoul collection at the Institut de France. These bills do not take into account any coffee that he might have drunk at cafés; only that which he purchased from his *épiciers*. However, we know from his correspondence with Madame Hanska that he primarily drank his coffee while writing.

A very initial estimate of his coffee consumption points to him consuming around 8 cups per day, rather than the mythical 50 cups. This is based on calculations for two periods for which there is reasonably rich information on his coffee purchases: January to May 1832, and the whole of 1839, the year in which the *Traité des excitants modernes* was published. In the latter period, coffee purchases are listed in accounts provided by Bouvier and Maynial, who state that Balzac spent 192 francs on coffee (1938, 308). Supposing that this figure represents the total of his coffee purchases, 192 francs would equate to a coffee budget of around 16 francs per month. If one pound of coffee cost around 2.6 francs,⁶⁵ as indicated in the accounts (“40 livres de café, 106 francs dûs pour huit mois” (ibid, 145)), the total sum would represent an average volume of 6.15 pounds, or 2.79 kilograms, of coffee per month. The coffee purchases on record in his accounts held at the Institut de France for 1832⁶⁶ suggest that Balzac purchased, on average, 6.25 pounds, or 2.83 kilograms, per month between January and May 1832, excluding April.⁶⁷ The average across these two periods is 2.81 kilograms per month.

⁶⁵ This is also consistent with the price he paid for it in 1832, which I sighted amongst his bills at the Institut de France, but it does not take into account that certain other coffee types cost more or less than this.

⁶⁶ Ms. Lov. 331. Comptes de Balzac. Fol. 43 et suivants. Factures diverses. 1826-1850.

⁶⁷ During which time he had an exceptionally low bill, suggesting he was either taking a hiatus from coffee that month or that he was not in Paris.

With this information about his coffee purchases, I was able to calculate how many coffees he might have prepared per pound of coffee. Trifet, writing in the same era as the treatise, says that 10-12 grams of coffee was required to make one good cup of coffee (1846, 24). Taking the median figure (11 grams), and assuming Balzac used a similar method for coffee preparation, and a cup of equivalent size (a demi-tasse rather than today's large mug), we can estimate that, Balzac may have consumed around 255 cups per month, or 8 cups per day.⁶⁸ However, this estimate would be even less if Balzac took his coffee stronger than the average person, as commonly claimed.

In summary, the average daily coffee intake I have estimated is far less than anecdotal accounts, but we do know that his daily dosage oscillated depending on intensive work schedules (when he drank more) versus his poor health (when he tried to significantly reduce his intake). Further research is needed to obtain a more accurate figure.

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Tobacco: supreme or contemptible stimulant?

Balzac devotes a considerable proportion of the *Traité des excitants modernes* to a discussion of tobacco – unsurprisingly, given that the essay was initially destined to be titled “Tabacologie” – in which he notes that he had not “gardé sans raison le tabac pour le dernier; d’abord cet excès est le dernier venu, puis il triomphe de tous les autres” (Balzac 1981, 320). This statement sums up how important and powerful he believed the stimulant to be, but, as he articulates later in the treatise, it has significant negative effects.

According to Balzac, smoking had not become general and excessive since peace was achieved in France (Balzac 1981, 307). While this might be true, tobacco was first introduced into France during the reign of Catherine de’ Medici in 1560, and its increasing popularity led to it incurring hefty taxes (Lotte 1963, 35). At the time the *Traité des excitants modernes* was written, tobacco was generally taken as snuff or smoked – in a pipe, as a cigar or in a hookah. By 1847, the French were consuming 7 million kilogrammes of snuff per year, 11 million kilogrammes of pipe tobacco, 1 million kilogrammes of cigars,

⁶⁸ Based on an average of 30.4 days per month in any given year.

and 100,000 kilogrammes of cigarettes, the latter of which had only been available since 1842 (ibid).

Balzac makes a case for tobacco stripping people of their energy, and perhaps even contributing to bringing peace in Germany (Balzac 1981, 326), but he declares that it has terrible effects on the individual who smokes, as well as populations in general:

Le fumeur a supprimé la salivation. S'il ne l'a pas supprimée, il en a changé les conditions, en la convertissant en une sorte d'excrétion plus épaisse. Enfin, s'il n'opère aucune espèce de sputation, il a engorgé les vaisseaux, il en a bouché ou anéanti les suçoirs, les déversoirs, papilles ingénieuses dont l'admirable mécanisme est dans le domaine du microscope de Raspail, et desquels j'attends la description, qui me semble d'une urgente utilité. (ibid, 323)

De toute manière, le fumeur gêne cette circulation, en supprimant son déversoir, en éteignant l'action des papilles, ou leur faisant absorber des sucs obturateurs. Aussi, pendant tout le temps que dure son travail, le fumeur est-il presque hébété. Les peuples fumeurs, comme les Hollandais, qui ont fumé les premiers en Europe, sont essentiellement apathiques et mous; la Hollande n'a aucun excédent de population. (ibid, 325)

The Turks too, he expounds, are victims of its negative effects: “Les Turcs, qui font un usage immodéré du tabac, tout en l'affaiblissant par des lessivages, sont épuisés de bonne heure” (ibid).

For all this, it is not clear whether Balzac was or was not a regular smoker or snuff-taker. Some accounts say that he hated smoking and smokers, which would be consistent with the ideas espoused in the *Traité des excitants modernes*. Others, however – and, in particular, those he knew less intimately – promulgate the idea that he was an avid smoker and snuff-taker. Alphonse de Lamartine, in his account of Balzac's life, noted that his teeth were “inégaies, noircies par la fumée du cigare” (Lotte citing Lamartine 1963, 34). An acquaintance, Dr. Tripier, went as far as to say that Balzac was “le priseur le plus outrancier et le plus gravéolent” he had ever met, and questioning whether he used tobacco as a disinfectant (Lotte citing Tripier 1963, 34).

We have some evidence that he was not a smoker in the 1820s or '30s. In the letter to Madame Hanska cited above, in March 1833, Balzac suggests that smoking was a rare event, and one that made him intoxicated, proof that his body was not accustomed to its toxic effect. The passage which he refers to in *Le Voyage à Java* also appears in the *Traité des excitants modernes*. There he notes that the event with Eugène Sue occurred in 1822. “Je n’avais jamais fumé,” he claims, “Sa future victoire fut assise sur ces autres prémices à offrir *diis ignotis*” (Balzac 1981, 312).

If he did not smoke at that point, the hookah would soon attract his attention, and perhaps it was that which claimed its future victory over him. Théophile Gauthier, a close friend, stated that, of all the ways to take tobacco, only the hookah piqued Balzac’s interest, but even then he only used it as a kind of “bibelot curieux” (Lotte citing Gauthier 1963, 34). This is consistent with what Balzac writes about tobacco in the *Traité des excitants modernes*, stating that “je n’admets que le houka de l’Inde, ou le narguilé de la Perse,” an exotic object which was first introduced to him by George Sand (1981, 322).

However, in a letter Balzac wrote to Madame Hanska on 24 February 1838, in which he describes his first experience with the hookah at the Chateau de Nohant where he was visiting Sand, we learn that it became a force almost as important as coffee, suggesting that at least for a time, he was a heavy user. “[E]lle m’a fait fumer un houka et du latakié,” he writes, “c’est devenu tout à coup un besoin pour moi. Cette transition me permettra de quitter le café, de varier les excitants dont j’ai besoin pour le travail [...]” (Lotte citing Balzac 1963, 40). Balzac does not expand on what these other *excitants* were.

If Balzac did indeed smoke a hookah, other portraits suggest that he reviled smoking in general. Werdet is emphatic about Balzac’s distaste for smoking:

Le repas terminé, on prenait le café, l’alcool; puis une heure ou deux étaient consacrées à la *fumerie*, au grand désespoir de Balzac, qui, détestant le *tabac* et les *fumeurs*, prétendait que rien de bon ne pouvait sortir du cerveau d’un homme adonné à cette funeste habitude; il disait cela au milieu d’un nuage de fumée provenant de six à huit cigares, entremêlé de bons ou de mauvais mots, après quoi on se mettait enfin résolûment à la besogne. (1859, 225-226)

Lotte, weighing up both sides of the argument, comes to the conclusion that “même en tenant compte de l’exagération et de l’ironie balzaciennes, Balzac exécrait le tabac [...] et

les fumeurs” (1963, 34). McVicker, however, believes the issue is more complex. He notes that even though Balzac fulminates against tobacco, “an attitude which he apparently wished to establish as his public image, there is ample reason to suppose that he himself was a frequent smoker and *priseur* of snuff” (McVicker 1969, 291-292), as discussed previously, and one should not accept all his claims to Madame Hanska as “he was an inveterate *poseur* in his letters to his Polish love” and they were “embroidered with fantasy or half-truths” (ibid, 292).

Balzac’s essay, “Physiologie du Cigare,” perhaps elucidates the subject. It appeared in the weekly periodical *La Caricature* on the 10th of November 1831, exactly one year after he published an article on opium in the same publication, signed respectively le Comte Alex. de B. and le Comte Alexandre de B. In the “Physiologie du Cigare,” Balzac does not take a strong position on smoking, rather he observes its use in France and comments on its custom in other countries. However, he does imply that the smell of smoke disturbs him, as it does women “qui préfèrent assez généralement l’odeur du musc à celle du tabac” (Balzac 1831, 428). Further, he notes that tobacco is a very personal vice that some adore and others abhor. Most telling, however, is his disclosure on when and why he smokes, if only occasionally:

Il est une circonstance, la seule où je fume, où l’emploi rare et modéré du cigare trouve un motif plausible, en ce qu’il procure une jouissance véritable, mais seulement à ceux qui ne sont point fumeurs de profession. C’est dans ces moments d’abattement moral, où l’esprit, engourdi, refuse toute activité à l’imagination et jette l’âme dans la mélancolie. Alors, il suffit de fumer un cigare pendant quelques instants, d’en avaler quelques gorgées, et aussitôt, comme par enchantement, la tête se débrouille, l’esprit s’éclaircit, une émotion tumultueuse vient remplacer l’insouciance des sens, et un pouvoir inconnu ranime toutes les facultés auparavant assoupies. C’est-à-dire que la fumée, qui produit le même effet que les vapeurs du vin, commence à opérer, et c’est le moment de cesser, sous peine de ressentir bientôt les inconvénients de l’ivresse (ibid, 428-429)

Given all the evidence, all we can say with any surety is that Balzac smoked a hookah – whether occasionally or often is not known – occasionally partook of cigar smoking, and that he nonetheless made a show of despising smokers. He also strongly believed tobacco had a negative effect on the health of individuals and populations.

Tea: Balzac's intermittent substitute for coffee

Tea receives barely a passing mention in the *Traité des excitants modernes*, so eager is Balzac to focus on what he sees as the three most important stimulants: coffee, alcohol and tobacco. Further, he is not entirely accurate in his historical references to tea's growing popularity in France, noting that it was only "connu depuis une cinquantaine d'années" (Balzac 1981, 307). Tea was in fact popular in the seventeenth century (Schofield 2014, 27), and we can even discover how it was brewed, or how it was believed to benefit health, in Philippe Sylvestre Dufour's 1668 *Traitez nouveaux et curieux du café, du thé et du chocolate* [sic]. As tea increasingly became seen as a beverage for the elite in France during the eighteenth century, it fell out of favour (Burns 2000, 8). However, borrowing from the English tradition of taking tea, its popularity increased again in France in the nineteenth century (Schofield 2014, 36), and it was perhaps this fact that gave Balzac the impression that this was its first wave of popularity.

In his only passage on tea in the *Traité des excitants modernes*, he reveals much about his associations with it, stating that it was responsible for making the English pale, back-biting hypocrites, with his criticism of English women tea-drinkers being even harsher:

Si l'expérience anglaise est vraie, il donnerait la morale anglaise, les miss aux teints blafards, les hypocrisies et les médisances anglaises; ce qui est certain, c'est qu'il ne gâte pas moins la femme au moral qu'au physique. Là où les femmes boivent du thé, l'amour est vicié dans son principe; elles sont pâles, malades, parleuses, ennuyeuses, prêcheuses. (Balzac 1981, 320)

Equally, Balzac notes that excess consumption of tea produces bouts of melancholy and dreaminess, as well as drying out the skin (ibid). Beyond this, he is silent on the subject of tea. Due to the lack of commentary, one might assume that Balzac did not drink tea. However, Léon Gozlan described the tea that Balzac made for his guests as sublime, even better than his coffee:

Le café de Balzac était donc, selon moi, la meilleure et la plus exquise des choses [...] après son thé toutefois.

Ce thé, fin comme du tabac de Latakiah, jaune comme de l'or vénitien, répondait sans doute aux éloges dont Balzac le parfumait avant de vous permettre d'y goûter;

mais véritablement il fallait subir une espèce d'initiation pour jouir de ce droit de dégustation. (Gozlan 1886, 17-18)

Tea also served Balzac as an alternative method for receiving his daily dose of caffeine, during those periods when his abuse of coffee caused him grave health problems. Writing to Madame Hanska on the 4th of March 1844, Balzac shares that, "je ne savais pas que le thé pouvait remplacer aussi bien le café qu'il le fait souvent, et cela repose mon pauvre appareil nerveux que le café démolit!" (Balzac 1990a, 824).

While tea might have been an alternative for coffee, it never became such an enduring passion and presence for Balzac, who depended on a strong dose of caffeine to bring him the inspiration to write.

Balzac, Witness to the French Medical Revolution and Public Health Reform

To understand the narrative about the physiological effects of stimulants in Balzac's *Traité des excitants modernes*, we must acquaint ourselves with the medical revolution that unfolded in the wake of the conflicts related to the 1789 French Revolution. In doing this, we will explore several key themes that underpinned medicine and the public health movement in France in that era, including some of the main theories about physiology promulgated by physician-scientists, the drive for physical and moral hygiene, and the growing anxiety about degeneration, depopulation and heredity. These key themes also form the basis of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, underlining Balzac's extraordinary role, not just as a writer of fiction but also as a historian who intelligently and astutely captured diverse aspects of nineteenth-century French society.

At the beginning of the medical revolution, medical practices like bloodletting – which involved cutting or the use of leeches – were still in common usage in France and illness was often explained using the Hippocratic principles of bodily humours (Appelboom 2013, 41, 56), while the internal workings of the body were largely a mystery (ibid, 9).

The Revolutionary Wars called for increasing numbers of practitioners (ibid, 45) and between 1794 and 1803 physicians and legislators overhauled medical institutions, reforms which created the foundation for modern medicine (Quinlan 2013, 4-5). The great wave of disease which swept Europe would have a lasting effect on medicine and public health programmes in France. During the Napoleonic Wars, 150,000 men out of the 4.5 million strong French army died in combat, and 2.5 million soldiers died of illnesses such as typhoid, typhus fever and malaria (Appelboom 2013, 71). War and changing demographics thus redrew the geopolitical map in France, while scientific and artistic developments created new schools of thought that were to reshape society, politics and public health (ibid, 9).

Honoré de Balzac was born in 1799, at the dawn of these massive socio-political changes. He was a perspicacious observer of people and society, and his works provide a window not

only into nineteenth-century French society, but also into the great changes taking place in medicine (Appelboom 2013, 12, 135-136).

The medical revolution was characterised by new ways of thinking about the body, the soul, and the pathology of illness, and it also saw the development of new medical practices. Some of these ideas had their roots in the eighteenth century, or even further back, while others were based on new discoveries about the body. Balzac was influential in disseminating some of these theories to the public through his literature, and often described illnesses and their symptoms in great detail (ibid).

Summing up Marta Hildreth's research, La Berge and Feingold note that during the medical revolution the Parisian physician-scientist came to be seen as a "Pasteurian hero who personified the contributions of science to medicine and society" (1994, 9). Balzac, along with many other nineteenth-century writers, such as Gustave Flaubert, Eugène Sue and Émile Zola, placed physicians as central characters in their books, helping to transmit "medical themes to popular and bourgeois audiences" and this "allowed a wider segment of society to participate in medical discourse" (ibid, 10).

However, despite the advent of new ideas, the descriptions of medicine in Balzac's books generally reflect an archaic profession deaf to the discoveries of researchers like René-Théophile-Hyacinthe Laennec (1781-1826), a physician-scientist who invented the stethoscope and advocated for better hospitals and better practices (Appelboom 2013, 97). Balzac was not alone in his focus on certain archaic practices. Many old ideas were still present in society in the first half of the nineteenth century (ibid, 26) and literature holds up a mirror to those ideas. Referring to the integration of new medical ideas into nineteenth-century society, Furst says that "literature affords vivid insights into the assimilation of, or resistances to, new modes of thought and new methods," and can reveal "how erratic progress was in practice" (2000, xi).

With regard to the different physiological theories proposed in the first half of the nineteenth century, it appears that Balzac was more attracted to those that supported the existence of a soul or the paranormal (Appelboom 2013, 37). For him, "il n'existe pas de barrière entre les sciences et l'occultisme" (ibid).

While Balzac avidly followed medical advancements, he used an old medical vocabulary – for example, he wrote about putrid and nervous fevers, and referred to the movement of

fluids or mucus in the body, suggesting he still believed in the presence of humours (ibid, 26). According to this now-discounted theory, which has its basis in Hippocratic medicine, the body is made up of four fundamental fluids, to each of which is attributed a “humour”: fire is linked to yellow bile, earth to black bile, water to phlegm, and air to blood. Their perfect harmony assures good health, while too much black bile causes sadness, and too much yellow bile causes anger (ibid, 41). This way of looking at the body is expressed in the *Traité des excitants modernes* through its distinctive references to fluids. For example:

Le mouvement des différentes mucosités, merveilleuse pulpe placée entre le sang et les nerfs, est l’une des circulations humaines les plus habilement composées par le grand faiseur d’horloges auquel nous devons cette ingénieuse plaisanterie appelée l’Humanité. Intermédiaires entre le sang et son produit quintessentiel, sur lequel repose l’avenir du genre humain, ces mucosités sont si essentielles à l’harmonie intérieure de notre machine, que, dans les violentes émotions, il s’en fait en nous un rappel violent pour soutenir leur choc à quelque centre inconnu. (Balzac 1981, 323)

Here Balzac is suggesting that the mucus system is vital to the workings of the body. Later in the *Traité des excitants modernes*, he goes as far as to say, “Tout excès qui atteint les muqueuses abrège la vie” (Balzac 1981, 327). He makes his case for the impact of stimulants on the body, and especially on the mucus system.

Like many of the practitioners of his time, Balzac believed that clinical ailments were the result of individual temperaments, a loss of equilibrium in the body, or the improper flow of bodily fluids into an organ (Appelboom 2013, 135-136). These ample references to mucus and vital forces in the *Traité des excitants modernes* suggest Balzac was particularly influenced by vitalism. Now discounted, vitalism developed around the idea that there is a principal vital energy or vital force that regulates the functions of the body, and serves as the link between the body and soul. The theory was developed by physicians at the school of medicine in Montpellier. Its proponents included Paul-Joseph Bartz (1734-1806) and Théophile de Bordeu (1722-1776). French physiologist Xavier Bichat (1771-1802), one of the forefathers of modern medicine, also promulgated the idea of vital forces that regulated the functions of each organ (Appelboom 2013, 25). There was a finite amount of vital force in each organism, Bichat said, which required equilibrium amongst all parts of the body or it would dissipate, resulting in disease or disorder (Quinlan 2013, 126-128).

Balzac expressed a similar sentiment in his *Traité des excitants modernes*:

L'homme n'a qu'une somme de force vitale; elle est répartie également entre la circulation sanguine, muqueuse et nerveuse; absorber l'une au profit des autres, c'est causer un tiers de mort. (Balzac 1981, 327)

In Balzac's era, "sensitivity" (the ability to respond to external and internal stimuli) was the "vital force that animated all living beings and gave them the power to feel and be sociable" (Quinlan 2013, 9). This was another important theme of the vitalists of the Montpellier medical school and others. Proponents believed that living beings had dynamic qualities that regulated physiological functions – from the senses to reflexes and reproduction. Sensibility, in this context, became the "key vital principle, if not the defining feature of life" (ibid, 10).

Brillat-Savarin, in his *Physiologie du goût*, refers to the way the soul guides the senses and helps create the ego, or the self:

[...] toutes ces sensations ayant pour centre commun l'âme, attribut spécial de l'espèce humaine, et cause toujours active de perfectibilité, elles y ont été réfléchies, comparées, jugées; et bientôt tous les sens ont été amenés au secours les uns des autres, pour l'utilité et le bien-être du *moi sensitif*, ou, ce qui est la même chose, de l'*individu*. (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 38)

In Balzac's *Traité des excitants modernes*, we learn more about the way vital forces might act on the sensory organs and their relationship to pleasure:

Une portion quelconque de la force humaine est appliquée à la satisfaction d'un besoin; il en résulte cette sensation, variable selon les tempéraments et selon les climats, que nous appelons *plaisir*. Nos organes sont les ministres de nos plaisirs.

Pour absorber, résorber, décomposer, s'assimiler, rendre ou recréer quelque substance que ce soit, opérations qui constituent le mécanisme de tout plaisir sans exception, l'homme envoie sa force ou une partie de sa force dans celui ou ceux des organes qui sont les ministres du plaisir affectonné. (Balzac 1981, 307-308)

The *Traité des excitants modernes* was not, of course, the only work in which Balzac wrote about medical and scientific theories. In *Le Lys dans la vallée*, he took the opportunity to develop his own theories on the link between body and mind, and thus on health

(Appelboom 2013, 95), and in *Ursule Mirouët*, he includes ample evidence of his belief in animal magnetism, which he says “[...] a fait d’immenses progrès, malgré les continuelles railleries de la science parisienne” (ibid, 38-39). Further, in *Le Médecin de campagne*, Balzac discusses the impact of environment, race and climate on health (ibid, 42).

Balzac also uses medicine, and especially illness, as a tool to build his characters and stories. His clinical descriptions often include a study of moral character (ibid, 12), which was closely linked to physical constitution at that time (Quinlan 2013, 9).

In his descriptions of the workings of the body in the *Traité des excitants modernes*, Balzac leans towards the literary, rather than the scientific, and his understanding of certain physiological processes, like digestion, reflects what was known about them at the time. For example, Balzac refers to the stomach as being like a velvet bag lined with suckers and *papillae*, and attempts to explain the effect of coffee on what we would today call the nervous system, using an analogy of sparks (ibid, 318).

Balzac frequented the hospital Hôtel-Dieu de Paris as part of his research for his novels; its presence is marked throughout *La Comédie humaine* (Appelboom 2013, 66); and he consulted many physicians, patients and academics. One of these physicians was Dr Jean-Baptiste Nacquart (1780-1854), a friend of the family to whom he dedicated *Le Lys de la vallée* (ibid 9), and his own doctor (ibid, 42). He also personally knew the celebrated physicians Guillaume Dupuytren (1777-1835), Jean-Baptiste Bouillaud (1796-1881), François Broussais (1772-1838), Georges Cuvier (1769-1832), Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1772-1844), and Franz Gall (1757-1828) (ibid, 10).

François Broussais was a physician-surgeon who died the year before the *Traité des excitants modernes* was published. He believed all illnesses arose from inflammation and gastro-enteritis, and he rejected many of the theories of his peers, especially those of Laennec, his “plus terrible ennemi” (Appelboom 2013, 27). Some of Broussais’ ideas about inflammation are picked up in the *Traité des excitants modernes*: “La médecine vous dira que les maladies les plus graves, les plus longues, les plus brutales à leur début, sont celles que produisent les inflammations des membranes muqueuses”(Balzac 1981, 324). Further, Balzac mentions Broussais outright, attributing his death to tobacco: “[...] Broussais, qui fumait beaucoup, était taillé en Hercule; il devait, sans excès de travail et de cigares, dépasser la centaine; il est mort dernièrement à la fleur de l’âge, relativement à sa

construction cyclopéenne” (ibid, 320-321). Balzac made ample mention of Broussais in other works too, including in *Louis Lambert* and the *Physiologie du mariage*, and under the guise of Dr Brisset in *Peau de chagrin* (Appelboom 2013, 27-29).

François Magendie (1783-1855), a pioneer physiologist, is also mentioned in the *Traité des excitants modernes*. Magendie believed in the importance of experimentation in medicine, and was an “apostle for scientific scepticism” (ibid, 31-32). An ardent vivisectionist, Magendie’s experiments on how diet affected dogs are documented in his *Précis élémentaire de physiologie*, which was first published in 1816 (Magendie 1884, 328-329). Balzac specifically mentions this research in the *Traité des excitants modernes*: “M. Magendie a nourri des chiens exclusivement de sucre; les affreux résultats de son expérience ont été publiés, ainsi que le genre de mort de ces intéressants amis de l’homme” (Balzac 1981, 310). Balzac does not use this example to draw any conclusions about how sugar affects the body – “mais ces résultats ne prouvent encore rien par rapport à nous,” he says (ibid, 311) – suggesting that the reference to Magendie’s experiments in the *Traité des excitants modernes* was simply to demonstrate to the reader the extent of his knowledge.

Georges Cuvier, whose work centred on comparative anatomy and the creation of species, also greatly influenced Balzac (Appelboom 2013, 19). In a letter to his lover Madame Hanska in 1844, Balzac wrote: “Quatre hommes auront eu une vie immense: Napoléon, Cuvier, O’Connell⁶⁹ et je veux être le quatrième” (ibid). Appelboom (20) sums up Balzac’s ambitions succinctly: “Balzac voulait décrire les espèces sociales comme Darwin les espèces animales.”

Alongside references to physiology, Balzac uses the *Traité des excitants modernes* to communicate his assessment of the cause of the nation’s decline. The idea of degeneracy and depopulation in France was widely discussed at the time, and ultimately drove public health reform (Quinlan 2013, 6). The moral decay occurring amongst the elite classes was said to be due to libertinism and changing gender roles (ibid, 13). Further, laziness and immorality were said to be the cause of poverty and disease – that is, the perceived physical decline was believed to have a moral basis (ibid, 187-189, 195). In 1834, lectures were given in Paris on the primary sources of typhoid fever, with nostalgia considered to be one

⁶⁹ Daniel O’Connell (1775-1847), an Irish Catholic politician known as ‘the Liberator’ who helped get the Act of Catholic Emancipation passed in 1829 (*World Encyclopedia* 2004, “O’Connell, Daniel”).

of the main causes, demonstrating just how much physicians and society resisted the idea of contagion theory (Furst 2000, 11), preferring instead to ascribe a moral foundation to illness.

The regeneration of the nation was underpinned by the concept of moral and physical hygiene, which physicians believed could transform mind and body, thus having a positive effect on society (ibid, 5). The idea of *le physique et le moral* summed up the importance of the mind-body connection, which was deemed to influence individual mental faculties as well as greater social phenomena like the arts and science (ibid, 8).

In Balzac's era, some of the recommendations to tackle degeneracy and depopulation involved promoting sobriety, domesticity, maternal breastfeeding (as opposed to the use of wet nurses), improved diet, sexual hygiene and dress reform; and authorities were especially concerned about anything that could affect fertility (Quinlan 2013, 13). Balzac discusses fertility numerous times in the *Traité des excitants modernes*, suggesting that the abuse of stimulants was the principal cause. He talks about two explorers, Combes and Tamisier, who "ont trouvé les Abyssiniens généralement impuissants," and he claims this could be attributed to "l'abus du café" (Balzac 1981, 319). Further, he proposes that "les Turcs, qui font un usage immodéré du tabac, tout en l'affaiblissant par des lessivages, sont épuisés de bonne heure" and that "on doit admettre que le tabac, l'opium et le café, trois agents d'excitation semblables, sont les causes capitales de la cessation des facultés génératives chez eux, où un homme de trente ans équivaut à un Européen de cinquante ans" (ibid, 325). In summary, Balzac asserts that stimulants affect the reproductive organs and thus the ability to reproduce.

Class was also the subject of great debate in Balzac's era. It was widely believed amongst the elite classes that the perceived degeneration was the fault of the lower classes, dubbed the "dangerous classes" (Quinlan 2013, 189), with some doctors and social economists saying that they were "losing the battle for existence" and that "working-class sloth and immorality caused poverty, disease and unrest" (ibid, 17). In the *Traité des excitants modernes*, Balzac expressed his dismay about the way the lower classes lived, calling them "êtres chétifs" (Balzac 1981, 311), and claiming that their alcohol abuse was to blame for degeneration.

This shared view about the working class came to the fore after the 1832 cholera epidemic raged across Europe, taking the lives of 18,000 Parisians, and it was one of several catalysts

for major policy reform (La Berge 1992, 4-5). The disease caused chaos in the city as officials and physicians tried to manage the sick and the dead, and close off areas that were thought to be infected. The working classes were not the only ones blamed: “Orientals” were accused of the initial infection, while others blamed reactionary aristocrats or liberal economists (Quinlan 2013, 177-180). Class and racial tensions were laid bare. Great effort was, however, made to determine the real cause of the cholera epidemic and look at how to prevent future epidemics. While some blamed immorality, others looked more closely at the facts (ibid, 186). Tasked with undertaking research into the causes, French doctor Charles-Francois Tacheron focused on a cross-section of people who died of cholera in four different *quartiers* of Paris (Tacheron 1832, 2). His research identified five groups of people affected by the disease: those who were already sickly and living in dire conditions, drunks and those with excessive lifestyles, people who already had significant catarrh before succumbing to cholera, those who already had acute gastritis or enteritis, and those who were generally healthy (ibid, 46-47). He surmised from his study that alcohol abuse and unhealthy diets were the key factors in determining who died of cholera, regardless of their class, but he acknowledged that the labouring classes were more likely to succumb to illness because of their living and working conditions (ibid, 60-61).

Some of these ideas about the impact of diet on health are echoed in Balzac’s *Traité des excitants modernes*. Of food, Balzac claims that, “Les destinées d’un peuple dépendent et de sa nourriture et de son régime” (Balzac 1981, 11). Further, in relation to stimulants, Balzac suggests that alcohol killed Native Americans, and tobacco brought down the Turks, the Dutch, and threatened to do the same in Germany (ibid, 12).

With fears about degeneration and depopulation forming the backdrop of thinking about France’s future, a basic health system emerged over the first 20 years of the nineteenth-century. It consisted of hospitals, medical schools and academies, associations, institutes, councils and bureaucratic agencies (Quinlan 2013, 152-153). Next came the public health movement, which was fostered in the new political and social context that developed out of the Bourbon Restoration (1814-1830) and the July Monarchy (1830-1848) (La Berge 1992, 1). The ideas emerging out of this new field of public health were disseminated to the people as part of a broader debate, and were communicated in layperson’s terms to enable them to understand the socio-political changes sweeping the nation (Quinlan 2013, 4-5). Of particular interest was the thinking of public hygienists like Louis-René Villermé (1782-

1863) and Alexandre Parent du Châtelet (1790-1836), who called for scientific, quantifiable investigation in all areas, and sought to have socio-statistical methods used as a tool in the new public health movement. Their research showed that socioeconomic factors affected mortality – with longer lives being attributed to affluence (La Berge 1992, 3). They challenged the theory of *miasmas*, where illness was carried by bad smells and, along with other hygienists, investigated and made recommendations on issues such as human and urban waste, water supply, prostitution, dissection amphitheatres, bathing establishments, eating and drinking houses and sexually-transmitted disease (ibid, 4-5). The 1829 *Annales d'hygiène publique et de médecine légale* built on the growing interest in probability calculations by applying a statistical approach to public health (Quinlan 2013, 168). Although vital records were not kept by the state until the 1830s, Paris authorities did keep them and they formed the basis of annual statistical research. National censuses started to be conducted regularly after the establishment of the national statistical bureau in 1833 (ibid, 169). These studies provided hygienists with useful data for their own research; however, Quinlan also notes that “despite these new mathematical influences, the new sanitarians still borrowed from the older traditions of philosophic medicine associated with the Montpellier vitalists [...], these hygienists used the older analytic categories found in the science of man, and focused on age, sexuality, class, race and habitat as crucial elements of human health and morality” (ibid).

The Academy of Medicine in Paris was the platform for a debate in 1837 on whether statistics should be included in medicine (La Berge and Feingold 1994, 3) and, only two years later, in his *Traité des excitants modernes*, Balzac called for statistical research into the impact of food and stimulants on French citizens, showing he was abreast of the statistics movement (Balzac 1981, 326).

One of the other key themes expressed in the *Traité des excitants modernes* is heredity. This reflects a wider debate occurring at the time about how physical and moral degradation could be inherited (Quinlan 2013, 195). While the word “hérédité” was previously used in France to describe the passing of titles down to the next generation, or the physical resemblances in families, by the first few decades of the nineteenth century the word was used by French physicians to denote an emerging biological concept (López-Beltrán 2004, 41-42). The concept of heredity and transmission at conception provided an explanation for chronic ailments passed down the family line, and even, in some cases, mental or

neurological abnormalities. However, the process was still not fully understood (ibid, 46). Balzac refers to the concept of heredity in the *Traité des excitants modernes* in a number of passages, proposing that the abuse of stimulants, particularly alcohol, tobacco, opium and coffee, can impact on reproductive faculties and therefore harm future generations. He is quite explicit in his statements on alcohol, declaring that “l’alcoolâtre [finit] par changer la nature de son sang,” which leads to impairment of reproductive facilities and the likelihood of having children with hydrocephalus (a neurological disorder) (Balzac 1981, 314-315). Balzac’s discussion on heredity goes even further with this warning:

[...] si les éligibles et les prolétaires qui lisent ces pages croient ne faire du mal qu’à eux en fumant comme des remorqueurs ou buvant comme des Alexandre, ils se trompent étrangement; ils adultèrent la race, abâtardissent la génération, d’où la ruine des pays. Une génération n’a pas le droit d’en amoindrir une autre. (ibid, 308)

He goes as far as to blame the degeneration of the nation on previous generations:

Voyez quelle différence dans la coloration, dans le galbe des grands hommes actuels et de ceux des siècles passés, lesquels résument toujours les générations et les mœurs de leur époque! Combien voyons-nous avorter aujourd’hui de talents en tout genre, lassés après une première œuvre malade? Nos pères sont les auteurs des volontés mesquines du temps actuel. (ibid, 309)

Balzac is quite clear in making a link between what we eat and our reproductive processes, as well as heredity, going on to postulate that there is a link between man’s progeny and substances that would affect the state of his vitality (ibid), and that would include stimulants (ibid, 327).

To sum up, Balzac’s meticulous descriptions of French society and, particularly, medicine and physiology, offer us rare insight into life in the nineteenth century, the germination of scientific ideas and changing medical practices. The *Traité des excitants modernes* is a particularly useful document for increasing our understanding of nineteenth-century medicine, as well as of the fears – both real and imagined – that swept France in Balzac’s era and laid the foundation for a public health system that subsequently became a model for many other countries (Quinlan 2013, 4-5).

The Physiology of Literary Translation, or Meditations on Transcending Cultural and Historical Barriers

The title of this chapter is inspired by Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du goût, ou méditations de gastronomie transcendante*. It is an appropriate dedication given the challenges encountered in translating the *Traité des excitants modernes* into an updated, annotated version titled "Treatise on Modern Stimulants." A particular philosophical mindset and a dissection of translation theories were required to transcend the cultural and historical barriers presented by the source text and to establish a workable translation methodology.

The key peculiarity of the *Traité des excitants modernes* is its focus on what are now outdated physiological theories, which Balzac linked to a broader discussion about degeneration and decline. Without background knowledge of this antecedent discourse, even a source language reader today may struggle to grasp the deeper messages in the text.

I did not find a single version of the source text that had accompanying commentary on the cultural and historical references to nineteenth-century theories of physiology or public health policies. Editors have largely ignored these references, preferring to focus on the work's literary and philosophical aspects, how it came to fruition, or its haphazard presentation of Balzac's ideas. This lack of focused supplementary research has perhaps led some editors to refer to the *Traité des excitants modernes* as "écrit à la diable, sans équilibre et sans cohérence" (Ory 2009, 8), or to note that it is "une fantaisie balzacienne de plus, une shadokerie" (Delcour 1997, 49). While the line between fact and fiction in the essay is indeed narrow and constantly shifting, targeted research into the key themes and context to the work arguably reveals far more about Balzac's intent and purpose than an intensive reading of the text alone in the source language.

In this chapter, I discuss in detail the key challenges that I encountered in translating the text, and the various mechanisms and approaches employed to overcome these.

The translator-researcher and the role of paratext

A translator should also be considered a researcher. Rainer Schulte notes the importance of research to “enter into a meaningful relationship with the text” and “open up avenues of thinking” (Schulte 1998, 32). Research that builds an invaluable understanding of the work necessitates exploring the “connotations and associations that words have in the source language” (ibid, 33). This is especially a challenge when the work is historical, and the source language has evolved. Antoine Berman notes that a translator without “historical consciousness is a crippled translator, a prisoner of his representation of translation and of those carried by the social discourses of the moment” (Berman, cited in Venuti 2012, 2).

Schulte argues that the translator must employ “situational thinking that informs all sensitive attempts at translating a text” and which “generates meaningful directions for research developments that should be considered essential to all literary and humanistic investigations” (Schulte 1998, 35). In the case of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, I applied myself to the task of reading and researching the many topics bound up in every chapter, and paying close heed to words that may have had a different signification in 1839. I relied closely on reference materials like the 1835 *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française*, which showed the extent to which the meaning of certain French words and expressions has changed since the *Traité des excitants modernes* was penned. For example, Balzac introduces the reader to the word *taper* to denote “make drunk,” which was then a neologism, but has fallen into disuse today.

My research also resulted in several discoveries that I expressed as paratext so as not to alter the source text but to complement it. In the context of this thesis, the primary paratexts in addition to the supporting chapters that provide the background to the work, are the footnotes appended to the translation.

The role of paratext in translated works has gained critical interest in recent years with scholars reflecting on how it can shape and influence the reader’s perspective on the work itself. Valerie Pellatt states that paratext “primes, explains, contextualises, justifies and through beautification, tempts” (2013, 3). Gérard Genette, whose seminal work *Paratexts* helped shape critical thinking on the subject, notes that paratext is “more than a boundary or a sealed border,” it is rather a “vestibule” that “offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back” and influences a “better reception for the text and a

more pertinent reading of it” (Genette 1997, 1-2). In a sense, paratext can be seen as a form of translation, through which Szu-wen Kung declares “translation players modify or mediate the source text by keeping in view the expectations and needs of the target system and reader” (2013, 55).

Suzanne De Jong notes that while “scholars are extremely divided on the extent to which translators ought to aid the reader’s comprehension by adding information” (2015, 24), there is largely consensus that the translator is “obligated to aid the target reader and bring the source text closer towards them, but without going too far and removing all sense of source text culture” (ibid, 26) and paratext helps to achieve this.

While I have attempted to preserve the idiosyncrasies of the source text, I acknowledge that the paratext will influence the reader’s understanding of it. However, this paratext is important to accomplish my aims for translating the work, which are to make the treatise accessible to English language readers and provide an authoritative translation through which academics and others can grasp the full import, history and context of the original.

It is worth noting how different it is to translate this text today, in an information-rich world, where references can be unearthed in a matter of seconds. Most of the critical discourse on the *Traité des excitants modernes* was written before 1980 by French academics, for whom research have been limited to the availability of materials in libraries and the sharing of information amongst peers. It is timely to revisit some of these commentaries on the *Traité des excitants modernes* to assess whether their reasoning is still valid. The internet has opened up a new method for conducting this research. It has evolved into an easily searchable, interconnected and international digital library that scholars can use to make connections faster than ever before. Further, the digitisation of older documents (such as those on BNF’s Gallica and Google Books) is becoming an invaluable tool for translators of historical texts. Many important discoveries in this thesis were made by following a digital trail that started with a keyword search. For example, Chenavard, the recently-deceased artist mentioned in the *Traité des excitants modernes*, was found to most likely be Claude-Aimé Chenavard (1798-1838), who died the year before the treatise was published.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ For example, see the entries on Chenavard in the Catalogue Général on the Bibliothèque Nationale de France website.

Despite improved connectivity through digital networks, physical copies of primary sources continue to be important, specifically rare books and manuscripts which have not yet been digitised. In the case of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, my research could not have been completed without my being in Paris where the majority of related documents are kept in institutions, such as the Institut de France, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Maison de Balzac and the Archives Nationales.

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Determining an appropriate translation strategy

Historical texts pose complex problems for translators. Not only is the author of the source text no longer available to be consulted about specific translation challenges, but the social, political and cultural landscape in which the work was written has also changed. Despite the breadth of historical works that have been translated over the ages, one of my greatest challenges was locating relevant translation methodologies for these kinds of texts. Much academic discourse is centred on translation studies history or the translation of history (see, for example Barnstone 1993, de Jong 2015, Marti 2012, Venuti 2008) rather than specifically on the translation of historical texts. I have summarised here the most useful discussions.

Friedrich Nietzsche notes that the way we translate historical texts has changed over time, stating that the Romans forcibly took hold “of everything good and lofty in Greek antiquity” and translated it into the Roman present:

They seem to ask us: “Should we not make new for ourselves what is old and find ourselves in it? Should we not have the right to breathe our own soul into this dead body? For it is dead after all; how ugly is everything dead!” They did not know the delights of the historical sense; what was past and alien was an embarrassment for them; and being Romans, they saw it as an incentive for a Roman conquest. Indeed, translation was a form of conquest. (Nietzsche 2004, 67)

Here translation could be seen as a political act: today the issue of misconstruing history should be a key consideration in the translation of historical texts. As Roberto Valdeón points out, “historians often rely on translations of foreign language texts to communicate history to their audience” (2011, 233). Some historians do their own translations, which can

be an issue if they do not have sufficient mastery of the source language given that the act of translation can readily mislead readers about history (McCullagh 2004, 19-20). These arguments underscore the importance of methodologies that are relevant to the translation of historical texts and which can be applied to literature or to non-fictional works. Translated literature by writers such as Balzac, Flaubert and Baudelaire is intensively studied from every angle, yet one can only imagine how certain words or ideas must at times be misconstrued or misunderstood due to decisions made by the translator.

Skopos theory and discourse on domestication versus foreignisation were invaluable in framing my methodology for the translation of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, but I also drew on observations made by Brillat-Savarin and philosophers like Willard Van Orman Quine.

Xiaoyan Du notes that Skopos theory involves using a combination of different strategies depending on the core purpose of the translation (Du 2012, 2190), which in my case is to allow Anglophones to discover this idiosyncratic and insightful text.

The nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher articulated that there are two ways to translate, a viewpoint summed up by André Lefevere (1977, 74) as: “Either the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him.” The former idea describes foreignisation as a translation strategy, whereby a translation closely follows the source text, irrespective of conventions in the target language; while the latter aptly sums up domestication as an approach which involves making the translation conform to the culture and norms of readers.

Lawrence Venuti argues that foreignisation reduces the inherent “violence” of the act of translation and is a “form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of democratic geopolitical relations” (Venuti 2008, 16).

By contrast, Eugene Nida argues that fluency is necessary for producing a “response similar to that of the original receptors” (Venuti citing Nida 2008, 17); that is, to allow translated-text readers to experience the same response to the text as the source-text readers might. This argument is extended to the idea that “the receptors of a translation should comprehend the translated text to such an extent that they can understand how the original receptors must have understood the text” (ibid). Is this argument relevant to the translation of historical

texts? In the case of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, the original audience in the early nineteenth century would most likely have been educated Parisians; and today, upon reading the text, many of the arguments will seem at odds with current public health policies and what we now know about the workings of the human body. In this context, Nida's vision is somewhat utopian and impractical.

L.P. Hartley perceptively noted that “the past is a foreign country” (1953, 9). While source language readers of historical texts might find them to be “foreign,” they are doubly foreign to those who read them in translation. Brillat-Savarin notes in the *Physiologie du goût* that language itself is not in fact the main barrier, but a language's evolution over time, meaning even source-language readers are likely to struggle to comprehend a historical text in their own tongue:

Toutes les langues ont eu leur naissance, leur apogée et leur déclin; et aucune de celles qui ont brillé, depuis Sésostris jusqu'à Philippe-Auguste, n'existe plus que dans les monuments. La langue française aura le même sort, et, en l'an 2825, on ne me lira qu'à l'aide d'un dictionnaire, si toutefois on me lit... (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 35)

Walter Benjamin also comments on a language's evolution over time and the temporal nature of any translation:

And even if one tried to turn an author's last stroke of pen into the *coup de grâce* of his work, this would not save that dead theory of translation. For just as the tenor and the significance of the great works of literature undergo a complete transformation over the centuries, the mother tongue of the translator is transformed as well. While a poet's words endure in his own language, even the greatest translation is destined to become part of the growth of its own language and eventually to be absorbed by its renewal. (Benjamin 2004, 78)

In this sense, any translation strategy for the *Traité des excitants modernes* must be pragmatic. Quine stresses that we should not expect each word or expression to have a perfect synonym (1989, 131), or that there can be one perfect translation of which we can be absolutely certain (Droit 2011, 148), given that language is learned through observation, imitation and practice (Quine 1989, 130) and that meaning is bound up within subjective

contexts and not captured like some specimen in a “museum of ideas, each labeled with the appropriate expression” (ibid).

In light of all the possible configurations and transmutations of the potential translation of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, I resolved that the best strategy to help today’s “receptors” understand the text – while preserving the cultural and historical differences – was to take a more expansive approach to translation by considering each aspect of the translated language independently. Venuti touches on this idea when referring to the theories espoused by translator Philip Lewis:

With Lewis [...] we can glimpse the possibility of an experimentalism in which the translator works with various aspects of the translating language, not only lexicon and syntax, but registers and dialects, styles and discourses. The resulting strategy might be called *resistancy*, not merely because it tries to avoid the narrow kinds of fluency that have long dominated English-language translation, but because it challenges the receiving culture even as it enacts its own ethnocentric violence on the foreign text. (Venuti 2008, 18)

While I do not classify my final translation strategy as *resistant*, some of Venuti’s propositions were useful. He states that a foreignising translation strategy need not abandon the idea of fluency, but rather that it would be “reinvented in innovative ways,” noting that “what constitutes fluent translating changes from one historical moment to another and from one cultural constituency to another, so that a translation that an eighteenth-century reader found easily readable is unlikely to be so for most readers today” (ibid 19).

The main purpose of my translation of the *Traité des excitants modernes* was to make it accessible to Anglophones; however, I was mindful of the significant cultural and historical lacunae that the reader must straddle to understand the text. While Venuti is adamant that domestication and foreignisation should not be seen as binary (ibid), it can be helpful to place the range of translation strategies devised by academics and translators on a spectrum, or at least to place them in such a way that we can mindfully choose the best approach for the text at hand. I felt this careful balance could be attempted by separately addressing the different elements in both languages – such as grammar, punctuation, syntax, lexicon, literary style, idioms, wordplay, register and jargon. To this end, I created a framework within which I could select a translation strategy for each language element, and therefore

better meet my goal of having a consistent, cohesive and fluent translated text that opened the door to Balzac’s world rather than attempted to recreate it. Shlomo Izre’el took a similar approach in his methodology for the translation of the Mesopotamian myth about Adapa, which was written in the Semitic Akkadian language. To preserve the “ancient flavor” of the story but make the text fluent and comprehensible, he chose to modernise the grammatical constructions that had become obsolete but retain the lexicon (Izre’el 1994, 27).

For my translation of Balzac’s treatise, I created the framework below to guide my decisions. I have marked with an X which strategy or device I would employ for each element. The range of strategies and devices available to translators is diverse and can be confusing, given that scholars cannot seem to agree on either technique or terminology for literary translation studies (de Jong 28-30). I have therefore provided more than one term in each column to accommodate a fuller range of devices to be expressed.

Further, allocating one device for each element sometimes proved problematic, such as for syntax which requires a degree of fluency and therefore a more fluid strategy depending on the original phraseology. In these cases, where more than one translation strategy applied to the element in question, I placed a line between the Xs to denote that the translation would be on a spectrum between the two, depending on the context.

	TRANSLATION STRATEGY				
	Foreignisation/ archaic/literal/ calque	Cultural borrowing /faithful	Balanced	Communicative/ use of paratext	Domestication/ equivalence/ modernisation
Grammar					X
Punctuation			X		
Syntax				X	X
Lexicon	X	X			
Literary style	X	X			
Idioms				X	X
Axioms			X		
Wordplay					X
Register		X			
Jargon			X	X	

As observable in the translation matrix above, I used a foreignising translation strategy for Balzac’s literary style and the nineteenth-century lexicon and register. This helped create a sense (or illusion) of “authenticity” for the reader, who would likely be familiar with other

translations of Balzac's various works and therefore have certain expectations of his style. I selected a balanced, communicative approach to my translation of the scientific and medical jargon, punctuation and axioms in order to retain some of the style of the original text while ensuring the reader can grasp the complex theories that Balzac was trying to communicate. Finally, I chose a domestication strategy for grammar, syntax, wordplay and idioms, as these elements, if translated in a literal way, would have hindered accessibility. I provide more discussion, and examples, of my translation approach to each of these elements in the sections below.

It should be noted that my translation framework is not an attempt at a perfect strategy that can neatly address all translation challenges. It is simply designed to provide a set of guiding principles for this translation of the *Traité des excitants modernes*. However, the framework does show that translation need not, and arguably cannot, wholly adhere to a domesticating or foreignising translation methodology. Literature is created using layer upon layer of meanings, thoughts, ideas, and images, making a translator's task all the more complex. In recognition of the complexity of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, a multi-layered methodology was necessarily adopted.

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Challenging translations: examples with rationale

Balzac's literary style cannot easily be rendered into English to fit current literary conventions; and this stylistic challenge is even more complicated in the case of his analytical works, which couple rich prose with strong political and philosophical messaging, pseudo-scientific discourse, anecdotes and satire.

At the most elementary level, Balzac's signature syntax is long, complicated, and includes multiple clauses. While his sentences are beautifully composed in nineteenth-century French, they do not always translate well today. One such example is this sentence:

Les haillons et les visages sont si bien en harmonie, ue vous ne savez où finit le haillon, où commence la chair, où est le bonnet, où se dresse le nez; la figure est souvent plus sale que le lambeau de linge que vous apercevez en analysant ces monstrueux personnages rabougris, creusés, étiolés, blanchis, bleuis, tordus par l'eau-de-vie. (Balzac 1981, 311)

There are several possible approaches to translating a sentence such as this. In the first instance, we can attempt to preserve its format and employ a vocabulary that retains visible traces of the era in which the work was written. However, in remaining too faithful to the original, the sentence structure would appear laboured and unnatural alongside contemporary literary conventions. To aid comprehensibility and the transfer of meaning, I chose to sparingly modernise some of the punctuation and to use transposition. Here I split the two main clauses into separate sentences and transposed the list of adjectives to the head of the second sentence. Here is the final translation:

Their tattered clothing and their faces are in such harmony that you cannot guess where their rags end, or where their flesh begins, where the hat is, or where to find the nose. Stunted, sunken, withered, washed out, bruised, and twisted by alcohol, the faces of these monstrous characters are often more grimy than the shabby attire.

There was some translation loss in this example; however, the original message and tone were retained, communicated in a vocabulary that speaks of the era while simultaneously upholding clear principles of comprehensibility (or fluency).

Axioms

Balzac's axioms pose more profound problems, as they are accorded great importance by the author yet contain many allusions that are not easily translatable. It was necessary to ponder whether these translations should attempt equivalence or have a more literal and exotic rendering. One such example is the axiom referred to above: "La marée donne des filles; la boucherie fait les garçons; le boulanger est le père de la pensée" (Balzac 1981, 309). After much reflection, I translated this as: "The fisherman's catch gives us girls, the butchery makes boys; the baker is the father of thought." Following this axiom, Balzac argues that a diet based on fish will cause an increase in the number of births of girls, while diets rich in meats increase the frequency of baby boys. *Marée* can be translated as *tide* or *catch* (of fish), the latter being the author's likely intended meaning. The addition of *fisherman* helped to clarify this idea in English and connect it closely with the rest of the axiom.

Perhaps the most difficult translation was this enigmatic axiom, "L'alimentation est la génération" (Balzac 1981, 309). The axiom appears in a section of the *Traité des excitants modernes* where Balzac makes a case for diet having an impact on the bodily processes of

the individual, which in turn affect progeny, and which in turn would impact on the nation. The word “génération” in French can denote reproduction as well as generations of people. Balzac appears to use it in multiple senses, with diet not just affecting reproduction but also future generations. In the *Physiologie du goût*, which precedes the *Traité des excitants modernes*, Brillat-Savarin coins this now well-known adage: “Dis-moi ce que tu manges: je te dirai ce que tu es” (Brillat-Savarin 1839, 11) – which is often translated to “Tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you what you are” (Brillat-Savarin 2009, 15) – an idea that Balzac also references in this section of the *Traité des excitants modernes*. I reflected on whether to translate Balzac’s axiom as “your offspring are what you eat,” which references Brillat-Savarin’s adage, but this translation could unfortunately be misinterpreted as a reference to cannibalism. I also considered “your food becomes your brood” which rhymes but does not fit with Balzac’s style. I also experimented with “to eat is to create,” which is simple and can equally be interpreted in several different and interlinked ways, and retains the assonance of the original axiom, but it is too abstract. Finally, I settled on “your alimentation alters the next generation.” While not a perfect translation, it captures the message in the ensuing text and retains some of the assonance of the original.

Idioms

There were several nineteenth-century expressions for which I had to decide whether equivalence or foreignisation should be used as the primary translation device.

Consider this sentence: “Vous tous, illustres chandelles humaines, qui vous consommez par la tête, approchez et écoutez l’Evangile de la veille et du travail intellectuel!” (Balzac 1981, 316). In this case, I domesticated the translation with equivalent expressions, using my translation framework as a guide. I considered using the expression “to burn the candle at both ends” but finally decided upon: “All of you leading lights, who burn the midnight oil, come close and listen to the gospel of alertness and intellectual effort!”

In one passage, Balzac introduces the reader to a colloquial expression he anticipates that they are perhaps not familiar with. He uses italicisation to denote its newness, and provides an explanation: “[...] l’air acheva de me *taper*, expression technique des ivrognes” (Balzac 1981, 312). He writes of an occasion where, drunk for the first time, he is in his carriage and opens the window to let the heat escape but the air instead rushes in. The word *taper* in this sense has two distinct meanings, the first, meaning to intoxicate in nineteenth-century slang;

the second, in its purer sense, with its primary definition of “to hit,” is the suggestion that the air from outside rushes in, hitting him. Émile Littré in his *Dictionnaire de la langue française* does not include the colloquial expression meaning to intoxicate in its 1835 edition, but it is present in the 1872-77 edition, where it is defined as, “Porter à la tête, en parlant d’un vin capiteux.” The two senses of the word make for a challenging translation. After much research into colloquial expressions of the time, I translated it as “the air *shot me in the neck*, a technical expression used by drunkards.” This 1830 English expression (Levine 1981, 1044-1045) captures the force of the air hitting his face and denotes drunkenness.

In another passage, I was thrown off course by the expression “un jour d’Italien” (Balzac 1981, 312). This was untraceable as a colloquial expression until I realised that it was related to the Théâtre-Italien, which is mentioned several times in the same passage. I was able to ascertain this fact by cross-referencing the same expression in *Le Père Goriot*, where there were five instances of it, and which all clarified the meaning as a day when there was an opera playing at the Théâtre-Italien (Balzac 1835, see pages 147, 156, 162, 178, 260, 292). The translation, therefore, became somewhat more explicit to denote its meaning: “[...] one evening in 1822, when an opera was being performed at the Théâtre-Italien [...]

Finally, in the introduction, Balzac refers to alcohol being invented to “réchauffer les glaces” of Louis XIV’s advancing age (ibid 306). Translation loss was inevitable in finding an English equivalent of this expression. I have attempted to compensate for this loss by using a similar metaphor that is also a known English expression. It was thus translated as: “Eau-de-vie or alcohol, the base of all liqueurs, [...] first appeared in the last years of the reign of Louis XIV and [...] was invented to warm his aging bones.”

Similes

Similes were notably difficult to translate, especially where there were cultural and historical references. Balzac notes that “les Orientaux” – which is already an outdated term but understood within the historical context – are observant “à la manière des crapauds” (Balzac 1981, 316). A close translation would render this as “observant in the same way as toads are,” while if we were to domesticate the expression we might choose “as watchful as a hawk.” Having found no evidence – either in the 1835 *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française* or on various search engines including Google and BNF’s Gallica – that the

original simile was a commonly-used French expression, I decided on the more exotic rendering of “as observant as a toad,” surmising that it may have fallen on Balzac’s contemporary readers’ ears in the same manner as it might for today’s reader.

Neologisms and the untranslatable

Other translation challenges included how to interpret Balzac’s neologisms, such as the words *alcoholâtre* or *tabacolâtre*. The Greek suffix – *lâtre*, used to denote *worshipper*, was used on multiple occasions by Balzac (*Trésor de la langue française informatisé* n.d.). As there is not an equivalent suffix using the same source word in English, I translated *tabacolâtre* to *tobaccophile*, using a suffix that originates from the Greek *phil(o)*, meaning ‘lover’ or ‘loving,’⁷¹ and I used the same convention for *alcoholâtre*, translating it to *alcoholophile*. There is some translation loss in this word choice as *worshipper* and *lover* are not necessarily synonyms, although in this case the termination *-phile* seemed the most appropriate given the lack of other equivalent suffixes.

Some words in the *Traité des excitants modernes* were left untranslated. For example, I left the word *flâneur* untranslated as there is no exact equivalent in the target language, and its meaning – “a man who saunters around observing people” according to the Oxford Dictionary of English (2010, “flâneur”) – is increasingly known today, particularly by readers of French nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. The adjective *flâneuse*, however, I translated to *sauntering*, as it is not commonly used in English.

The word *cafiot* was left untranslated as Balzac explains its meaning in the text – a very bad and watery coffee – and there is no English equivalent. Italian and Latin phrases, such as *tutti quanti* and *diis ignotis*, were also left untranslated and unexplained – aside from an annotation for *diis ignotis* which was a common refrain in Balzac’s work – as they were in the source text.

Humour and puns

The *Traité des excitants modernes* contains many instances of satire and humour, some easier to translate than others. For the most part, Balzac delivers his punchlines through sarcasm but in some instances he uses puns and innuendo, which add a layer of complexity.

⁷¹ See *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, www.oxfordreference.com.

In one anecdote, which describes his first experience of being drunk, Balzac makes use of the ambiguity of the word *sentir* to deliver a witty remark:

– Ce monsieur **sent** le vin, dit à voix basse une dame dont le chapeau effleurait souvent ma joue, et que, à mon insu, ma joue allait effleurer.

– Non, Madame, répondis-je, je **sens** la musique. (Balzac 1981, 312)

Here, *sentir* denotes “smells of” in the first instance, and “feeling” in the second instance. The English equivalent of *sentir*, to feel, could not be used in this double sense, so I had to find another solution, translating it thus:

‘This man is **drunk**,’ whispered a woman whose hat kept brushing my cheek, which unbeknownst to me, my cheek was brushing in turn.

‘No, Madame,’ I responded, ‘I am simply **drunk** on the music.’

In another instance, Balzac, suitably prudish, as befitted the era, uses innuendo and suggestion to communicate how a wife avoided her husband’s sexual advances, and that he was particularly demanding sexually:

Elle observa **les mouvements de l’amour**, et acquit la preuve qu’aux jours où, par les circonstances quelconques, son mari consommait moins de cigares, il était, comme disent les prudes, **plus empressé**. Elle continua ses observations, et trouva une corrélation positive entre **les silences de l’amour** et la consommation du tabac. Cinquante cigares ou cigarettes (il allait jusque-là) fumés, **lui valaient une tranquillité** d’autant plus recherchée que le marin appartenait à **la race perdue des chevaliers** de l’ancien régime. (Balzac 1981, 325-326)

The translation required the same dance around the bald facts of their sexual lives:

She observed **his advances** and gathered evidence that on the days he consumed fewer cigars for whatever reason, he was, as the prudes would say, **more attentive**. She continued her observations, and found a strong correlation between these **pauses in their romance** and the consumption of tobacco. Fifty cigars or cigarettes (that’s how much he might smoke) **brought her a sense of peace**, much needed as the sailor belonged to that **lost race of knight-riders** of the old regime.

Translating outdated theories and words

As discussed previously, the *Traité des excitants modernes* is replete with references to now outdated scientific theories. These references, which would also make difficult reading for a source language reader today, present more complex challenges for a translator. I had to consider whether to use domesticating expressions that a contemporary reader might easily grasp, employ communicative translation devices, or look to similar English texts from the nineteenth century for equivalent English terms. The following passage highlights the kinds of challenges faced, and the devices employed to convey meaning and intent:

La Nature veut que tous les organes participent à la vie dans des proportions égales; tandis que la Société développe chez les hommes une sorte de soif pour tel ou tel plaisir dont la satisfaction porte dans tel ou tel organe plus de force qu'il ne lui en est dû, et souvent toute la force, les affluents qui l'entretiennent désertent les organes sevrés en quantités équivalentes à celles que prennent les organes gourmands. De là les maladies, et, en définitif, l'abréviation de la vie. (Balzac 1981, 308)

The passage draws upon ideas from the now debunked theory of vitalism, where it is deemed that the body has a finite amount of energy that can be depleted, lost, or disproportionately distributed around the body. Across the Channel, the English referred to this energy as a “vital force.” I have employed the English term, as it denotes the theory, whereas “force” is primarily used to denote strength or power, and “energy” is too broad and ambiguous a concept. Additionally, readers of nineteenth-century works, whom I expect to be the primary audience, will be acquainted with the term “vital force” even if its full meaning eludes them.

Having undertaken research into the physiological concepts implied in the text, I was able to decipher the meaning of the passage, and translated it as follows:

Nature wants all sensory organs to participate in life in equal proportions, whereas society has cultivated in men a kind of thirst for certain pleasures that provide this or that organ with more vital force than it is due (and even all the vital force). The agents tasked with maintaining their function desert the starved sensory organs in equal proportion to the attentions that they provide to the gluttonous organs. From this comes sickness, and, ultimately, the abbreviation of life.

The *Traité des excitants modernes* contains a plethora of outdated words, particularly those related to medicine, such as “les plexus,” used in the following example: “Le café agit sur le diaphragme et les plexus de l’estomac” (Balzac 1981, 315). “Les plexus,” translated literally, equates to the plexuses, a reasonably meaningless term today without further context. However, the physical location of the plexuses described in the text (the stomach) suggests that Balzac was referring to the solar plexus, which itself consists of a bundle of plexuses, or nerve centres. The solar plexus is a fairly well-known term in English so this became my default translation for “les plexus.”

Balzac, like his peers across the Channel, referred to people of different cultures relative to their historic boundaries or geographic placement, or by the colonial terms. For example, he refers to Orientals, Abyssinians and Indians rather Asians, Ethiopians and Native Americans. I have retained the historic names as they help place the work in the nineteenth century as well as communicate the sense of otherness that Balzac and others employed when they emphasised their sense of superiority over other cultures.

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Summing up

To conclude, the *Traité des excitants modernes* is a rich and diverse historical work that requires a multi-layered translation strategy that can deal with its peculiarities. I aimed to maintain this by applying a framework that provides a consistent yet flexible methodology for the different aspects of the text, from grammar, punctuation, syntax and lexicon to literary style, idioms, wordplay, register and jargon.

Finally, given the obscurity of some aspects of the text – largely because of outdated physiological theories – I deemed it important to make use of paratext, in the form of footnotes, to make the work accessible to English language readers and help them grasp its full import, history and context.

Conclusion

The act of translating the *Traité des excitants modernes* has been both an arduous and an extraordinary journey; a rich process of discovery that has allowed me to step back in time to nineteenth-century Paris, into the world of Balzac and, almost, into his brilliant mind, brimming as it was with ideas about how humans lived and thrived or, instead, languished.

The *Traité des excitants modernes* is not a work that can be understood to any profound degree in just one reading. Through the process of translating this unique and complex work, many worlds and ideas must collide, with the translator-researcher having to string together history, language, culture, science and medicine, gastronomy, translation theory and politics in order to make sense of it. Further, this complex intersection of ideas has to be overlaid on what we know of Balzac, his life and daily rituals.

The research undertaken as part of the translation of the *Traité des excitants modernes* resulted in the translator learning about the emerging field of gastronomy and gastronomic literature, as well as how Balzac used coffee and other stimulants to spark his intellect and maintain his rigorous writing schedule. To fully understand his reliance on coffee, it also involved studying how Balzac brewed his coffee (he extols the virtues of cold fusion coffee (Balzac 1981, 317)), what beans he blended to attain the perfect brew (a combination of Bourbon, Martinique and Mocha (Gozlan 1886, 17-18)), and from which *épiceries* he bought them (Lobligeois and Bonnemains (Institut de France: Ms. Lov. 331)). Further, the political and cultural landscape in France in the nineteenth century which emerged out of the ashes of the Age of Enlightenment and the 1789 Revolution was examined. It was also invaluable, in translating the work, to discover how the workings of the body were viewed in the early nineteenth century and to what degree antecedent physiological theories were influenced by the Hippocratic system of humours or the Montpellier School of Vitalists.

In my research journey, I have also made some contribution to discussions by Fortassier, Castex and Ducourneau on the purpose of Balzac's unpublished manuscript, "Sur Brillat-Savarin et de l'alimentation dans la génération." By scrutinising Balzac's correspondence with his publisher, I hypothesise that it was indeed an early draft of the preface of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, as Castex suggests (1979, 13) but I dispute his suggestion that

Balzac failed his obligation to his publisher to deliver a preface, as he instead provides a preamble, which was finally more suitable as a preface for the *Traité des excitants modernes* than for the *Physiologie du goût*. Under my hypothesis, in writing the preface we know as “Sur Brillat-Savarin et de l’alimentation dans la génération,” Balzac developed a number of important ideas that he integrated into his own treatise, then titled “Tabacologie,” with the end result being the *Traité des excitants modernes*.

As part of my research, I also investigated why there are so many variances in the text between different editions of the *Traité des excitants modernes*, which led me to speculate that Balzac had tried to make last-minute amendments on the printer’s proof of the first edition but missed the deadline, a finding supported by his correspondence with his publisher and the proof held at the Institut de France.⁷² However, the changes he specified were not published until 1855 by Louis de Potter, five years after Balzac died. Publishers tend to use one of these two versions, sometimes picking up a few changes but rarely all.

Finally, my exploration into current and past translation theory found that there was limited discussion on detailed methodologies for the translation of historical texts. Du, Venuti, Nida, de Jong and Izre’el were able to provide some useful insights on Skopos theory, foreignisation and domestication, fluency, technique and methodology respectively, but I also had to turn to other philosophers and writers such as Quine, Brillat-Savarin, Benjamin, and Hartley for other ideas. This led to the development of my own methodology which consists of separately addressing the different elements of the text – such as grammar, punctuation, syntax, lexicon, literary style, idioms, wordplay, register and jargon. These elements are arranged on a framework where the translator can select which strategy or translation device they would employ for each, ensuring consistency across the translated work.

In summary, my background research has allowed me to prepare an annotated translation that is meaningful to today’s reader, highlighting the potency and potential influence of literary translation studies, not just as a means to transfer meaning from one language to another, but equally to transport the reader across time and through cultures. While we must always bear the weight of some translation loss, as literary translators we can enhance our readers’ understanding of literary works through our unique position as cultural ‘go-

⁷² Collection Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, Ms. Lov. A 225.

between.' At times these efforts are invisible to the reader; and at other times, especially in the case of historical works, the translator's hand is shown in paratext: footnotes, annotations, prefaces, and the like, which play an important role in facilitating the reader's understanding and in communicating the context.

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