

## *The Young Honoré de Balzac. Philosopher – writer – publicist*

### SUMMARY

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The interest on Balzac’s earliest works goes as far as the 1830s when it was often used in order to disparage even his later work by some critics. The serious critic on this subject begun to really develop in the interwar period, thanks to, amongst others, the publication of Albert Prioult’s *Balzac avant La Comédie humaine (1818-1829). Contribution à l’étude de la genèse de son œuvre*. Despite certain differences as to how to judge this early period, the most excellent critics agree on its capital role in later aesthetics, expressed mainly in *La Comédie humaine*. This study is focused above all on the pre 1829 period, when Balzac was still an anonymous author, before signing his first official novel, *Les Chouans*, in 1829. This decade can be divided into three subperiods, in which are comprised three elements mentioned in the title: philosophy, literature, journalism. During this decade, Balzac experimented practically with all literary genres. Young Balzac’s philosophy is discussed mainly in the first part, alongside his takes on French Rationalism and Enlightenment. The first part focuses also on the influence that French classicism had on Balzac’s aesthetics when the young author did not know that he would become famous for his novels. During his period of drafts and literary experimentation, Balzac positions himself with respect to new tendencies in literature, that he welcomes with enthusiasm, and Romanticism, noticeable in his later novels from the 1822-1825 period. In the following part, Balzac’s experiences as an author of merchant literature are discussed. They will be mentioned in a quasi-biographical note attached to the 1836 edition of his early works. In 1824, Balzac, disappointed by his literary unsuccess, turns to journalism and also partakes in a collective authorship of several *Codes*, half satirical, half serious, very well received by the public. It is also the time where the young writer experiences a grave moral crisis during which his views on power and wealth continue to evolve. Between 1824 and 1828 Balzac participates in the debate on the historical novel and its role in the depiction of national customs and the expression of a new vision of history, a subject taken with great seriousness by the literary milieu in Paris at that time. In general, the novel, as a genre, is one of Balzac’s central interests during the whole decade before 1829. He demonstrates that this secondary genre, as it was considered, is one of the most essential discoveries of modern times, because it comprises all other forms, which facilitates the reflection on world’s complexities. Those considerations will be of major importance in Balzac’s later aesthetical thought.