

## **Annemarie Kleinert discovers earliest writings by Honore de Balzac**

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(EDITORS NOTE: Prof. Kleinert is available at 452-3041. Home telephone is 483-4835. Her address in West Germany after April 1 is: Liebensteinstrasse 6, 1 Berlin 33. Tel: 30-831 2309)

### VISITING HISTORIAN DISCOVERS EARLIEST BALZAC WRITINGS

A visiting professor of French history at the University of California, San Diego has uncovered what may turn out to be a treasure of literary history--the earliest published writings of the great French novelist Honore de Balzac.

According to Annemarie Kleinert, who is visiting UCSD from the Free University of Berlin, there is evidence that between 1819 and 1822 Balzac wrote some fifty anonymous articles for a popular French women's magazine. She details her findings in an article prepared for publication in a professional journal.

Kleinert, who has written the first book on early French women's magazines, made her discovery while doing research in Paris on that magazine.

"When I was studying the paper, I suddenly noticed that for certain years, the articles were much better written than before," she said. "I got suspicious and I noticed that some of these articles were signed with a 'B.', some use pseudonyms or were simply anonymous. I thought to myself, 'Who was around in those days?' And I thought of Balzac, but at the time Balzac was very young."

Kleinert says that Balzac's parents had wanted him to become a lawyer, and when they moved away from Paris he remained behind to pursue a writing career.

"The articles appeared exactly the first three years when he was on his own in Paris. We have very little correspondence from him and very little is known about what he did during these three years," she said.

Some of the historians who have studied Balzac have questioned why he wrote so little in the very beginning of his career which, by the time he died at 50, included ninety novels and many short stories.

"I looked at the articles which I thought might have been written by Balzac, and I discovered very interesting things," Kleinert said.

"First of all, I saw that the content of the articles corresponded to what he lived through in those days. He writes about the difficulty a young writer faces in getting established, and expresses concerns that all of the great literature had already been written, and that all of the great story ideas had been used.

"He writes articles about marriage, and both of his sisters got married during those three years. In another case, he writes about discrepancies between lovers of different ages at the same time that he went home and had a relationship with a much older woman," she said.

Kleinert offers other evidence about the apparent connection of Balzac to the magazine articles. For example, the name of the magazine editor appears in other works Balzac has written.

His novel, "Lost Illusions," is set mainly during the period 1819-1822, and "scholars always thought he put a lot of his own experiences into that novel by describing how the press works," said Kleinert. "But, they did not know which journal he worked on, because he never named the journal in the book."

Balzac was born in Tours, France, in 1799, and died in Paris in 1850. He is credited with being the creator of realism in the novel. His masterwork is a collection of novels called "The Human Comedy."

Kleinert, a specialist on French cultural history, earned her Ph.D. in French literature at the Free University of Berlin in 1976.

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