



## Cesar Birotteau

*Honoré de Balzac , Robin Buss (Translator)*

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Honore de Balzac lived most of his life one step from his creditors; his house in Paris even had a special exit for avoiding them. No one knew more about money problems than Balzac, & this is his subject in *Rise and Fall of Cesar Birotteau*--one of Balzac's greatest novels.

It's the story of Cesar Birotteau, an honest perfumer who's lured into overextending himself. This luring is the work of the unsavory du Tillet, an employee Birotteau fired for embezzlement. The Embezzler works in secret to take revenge. Take it he does: Birotteau falls hard. But all is not lost--not yet. Anselme Popinot, a brilliant young marketer in love with Birotteau's daughter, works to help Birotteau recover. Perhaps together they can recover Birotteau's honor. Perhaps.

## Cesar Birotteau Details

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Author : Honoré de Balzac , Robin Buss (Translator)

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# From Reader Review Cesar Birotteau for online ebook

## Jonfaith says

During:

I'm on page 62 of 320 of Cesar Birotteau: Presently besieged with a massive head cold; found the sinuous digressions of Marias too much for such a debility. My hero Balzac hasn't let me down. I read for the better part of a hour at the pharmacy and the clerk asked about the novel as I was paying: oblivious is an apt description. I'm sensing there need to be more adaptations from B at the multiplex, perhaps ones with CGI wolves. —

In Conclusion:

It is a testament to Balzac's "minor" novel of speculation and jurisprudence, that while my side struggled and was ultimately defeated in the FA Cup today, I kept wavering in my attentions to return to the novel's final pages. There is a certain narrow or constricted view of Birotteau, but i believe that is the point. Excuse my brush into authorial intent, but I found Balzac's creation a proto-Babbit: a muddled middlebrow with pitch, a smile and a distorted sense of reality.

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## Ray Noyes says

OK if the reader has a good working knowledge of accounts. The technical twists and turns of the central character's indebtedness eventually led to me abandoning it. Pity, because initially it was a delight to read, as Balzac usually is. My paperback copy of the book was extremely old, in spite of being bought new. I assumed from its condition that it had been on the bookseller's shelves for many years, reflecting how little read it is. Now I know why!

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## Ali says

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[https://www.goodreads.com/author\\_blog...](https://www.goodreads.com/author_blog...)

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## Narendra Jussien says

Le r??cit s'ouvre, en d??cembre 1819, au fa??te de la gloire du personnage ??ponyme, parfumeur et adjoint au maire du deuxi??me arrondissement de Paris ; il se cl??t sur son d??c??s. Il ne faut pourtant pas faire fi des tribulations de ce Christ de boutique, martyris?? sur la croix. Cette d??coration inspire au futur Chevalier de la L??gion d'honneur les d??penses somptuaires d'un bal et lui donne un vertige d'ambition qui l'am??ne

?? risquer toute sa fortune. Ruin?? par Sarah Gobseck, le notaire Roguin flaire en Birotteau une dupe potentielle. Le notaire d??chu entra??ne son ami dans sa d??b??cle : il s'entremet aupr??s de lui dans une affaire de sp??culation immobili??re, s'empare de toutes les ??conomies du parfumeur qui ne lui avait pas demand?? de re??u, et fuit ?? l'??tranger. Du Tillet, ancien employ?? de C??sar cong??di?? pour vol, et maintenant admis dans les hautes sph??res de la Banque, est l'instigateur cach?? de cette escroquerie. M?? par un d??sir de vengeance, il ach??ve de perdre Birotteau en sapant son cr??dit aupr??s des banques avec l'aide desquelles le parfumeur aurait pu se tirer de ce mauvais pas. Cependant C??sar, soutenu par le d??vouement de son oncle Pillerault, de sa femme, de sa fille, de son commis Popinot qui, aid?? du g??nial vendeur qu'est Gaudissart, commercialise son huile c??phalique, aid?? enfin par les six mille francs qu'offre Louis XVIII ?? ce vieux et fid??le royaliste, rembourse tous ses cr??anciers, est r??habilit?? en 1823 et reprend sa L??gion d'honneur. Mais terrass?? par tant d'??motion, il meurt au jour de son triomphe. Cependant la probit?? de Birotteau est ??galement l'agent de sa mort anticip??e : il s'est tu?? ?? rembourser tous ses cr??anciers alors que ce n'est pas l'usage. C??sar Birotteau, c'est d'apr??s Balzac la b??tise de la vertu . En raison m??me de sa conception et des conditions de sa r??daction, C??sar Birotteau est un carrefour de rencontres pour bien des personnages de La Com??die humaine qui s'y retrouvent ou y pr??parent leur retour. Formidable, bien s??r !

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## Elizabeth (Alaska) says

Although this will not make my Balzac Favorite's List, I'm very glad to have read it. Balzac's purpose in his *Comedie Humaine* was to provide insight into all aspects of French society. I learned aspects of the merchant class in this, but especially one aspect of finance at the time. Balzac's own introduction of the novel includes this comment:

For six years I have kept a rough draft of Cesar Birotteau, despairing of ever being able to interest anyone in the character of a rather stupid, somewhat mediocre shopkeeper, whose misfortunes are commonplace, symbolising that world of the small Parisian tradesman which we so often ridicule...

My favorite parts were when he was describing a character (and *not* Birotteau:

Gifted with passionate energy, with a boldness that was almost military in requiring good as well a evil actions from those about him, and justifying such demands on the theory of personal interest, he despised men too much, believing them all corruptible, he was too unscrupulous in the choice of means, thinking all equally good, he was too thoroughly convinced that the success of money was the absolution of all moral mechanism, not to attain his ends sooner or later.

My least favorite was that Balzac found it necessary to explain parts of the financial system so that we would understand the story. It seems to me there should have been a way to incorporate the explanation, immediately and directly within the story itself.

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## Daniel says

I am pained to ponder that this foulest of years, during which consistent calamity has been the order of every week, may have something to do with my long overdue delving into the genius of Balzac, which began in

February with A Harlot High and Low and this afternoon reached the end of Cesar Birotteau. Am I seeking more agony to match my existence found beyond the pages? Or has my literary voyage in some fashion caused me to seek agony? Regardless I shall continue what I have begun, not to test my endurance or capacity for torment, but because from the first to the latest collision I have found Balzac elevated so clearly above any other wordsmith I have come across, other than Dostoyevsky. These two luminaries of outlining the human condition in various spheres, of various ages, have revealed themselves and confirmed line after line their wisdom and supreme ability to paint our accursed species as we are. Namely possessed with and led by on the whole cowardice, duplicity, spitefulness and greed. Cesar is no exception. In fact there is no exception in the 15 novels I have eagerly devoured. The vicious and weak prosper whilst the wholly good suffer endless torment.

I shan't offer any outline of the story, other than suggesting powerful, painful parallels which can be drawn with The Idiot...Instead, it seems of greater value to state how engrossed I became from the first page onwards and how my tear ducts loosened as I approached the finale.

Balzac was blessed with an exceptionally rare level of perception. He understood humanity and rather than adopt my own futile guise of offering a pip squeak of defiance and squeal for revolution, he embarked on a life long mission to embrace life and to express life as he found it in words. His characters are all too believable, the narratives reasonable, the plight of Good versus Evil slanted on the scales in such an imbalance that assuredly no reader, with a beating feeling heart, can emerge from the experience of reading his works anything less than injured, cynical, saddened yet also wondrously invigorated to find such an honest appraisal of the plight of the decent, and to know that as they suffer terrible agonies, they are the beacons of goodness in an otherwise dark world and to then strive to be one of those beacons. Or be near them always.

Usually I read authors who present a lively impact upon my own literary efforts, yet this is not the case at all with Honore. It is more a case of finding the truest depiction of the human condition, offered in many different, incredibly readable narratives. He never wrote to please an audience. This much is clear. He wrote life into words as verbatim to his heart and soul and wily intellect as was humanely possible. And for this I hold him in the highest regard. My reverence is eternal. Yet perhaps, I should take from his penmanship not just confirmation of the worst of my misanthropic tendencies, but the manner in which he embraced life, set aside his astoundingly cynical conclusion of humanity and sought adventure, romance, love, hope in a hopeless world.

What causes the most carnage of the soul is to accept that despite the best efforts of many an honourable man and courageous woman, humanity is no different in the Now to how it was 100 or 200 or 500 years ago. We may have become simply more ignorant, less spirited, as the effort required to survive and prosper has greatly lessened. Which leads to the absence of spirit, for spirit is forged through suffering, through finding yourself with the heel of society on your neck as you face down on the concrete. The dumbing down of society, in the name of Profit, is widespread everywhere absent of total corporate control, the seeds of which were been sewn even in Balzac's day.

Those who fall into line soil their souls. Those who maintain a steadfast integrity and loyalty to solid values are crushed, attacked, ridiculed and many perish before their time. Considering much of his finest offerings were delivered after experiencing the major movements of what we know as the last great revolution in Europe and the West as a whole, his work stands ever more solid and valuable, as a reckoning of humanity. For come revolution or monarchy or war, humanity remains the same. Through the ages. Generally vicious, cowardly, greedy and deceitful, yet within the ranks, there will always be found a Cesar Birotteau, a Jacques Collins, a Eugenie Grandet and those are the souls we must seek out or aspire to become, for they are the

beacons of light in a world of darkness.

Cesar Birotteau is highly recommended.

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### **Lisa says**

Definitely one of the best Balzac stories I've read! It's another tale of ambition and greed brought low, but with a difference - Balzac's sinner makes good in the end.

Cesar Birotteau is a successful middle-class merchant bedazzled by prospects of a good marriage for his only daughter Cesarine and the possibility of making a great deal of money by investing in a get-rich quick scheme. His wife Constance is appalled but he gets involved in the dodgy investment anyway. It is of course orchestrated by unscrupulous men: principally Ferdinand du Tillet, once a foundling now a banker; Roguin, a rogue in debt himself, but the Firm of Nucingen comes to play a part that shows once again Balzac's contempt for Parisian bankers.

There's a nice young man called Anselme Popinot, who has a club foot and no money. He's in love with Cesarine and she with him, but everything seems against it.

The story having the title that it does means that one reads the first half with a sense of impending doom and it's no surprise when things go horribly wrong. But Balzac is such a master of characterisation in this story that the interest lies in how Cesar copes, how he reconciles with his wife when he's too afraid to admit what's happened, and how hard he tries to avoid the inevitable. There's more about the intricacies of bankruptcy than you'd ever want to know, but apart from that the story held my interest to the end and I think that this one is my favourite story after Pere Goriot.

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### **Nicoleta says**

Era într-o edi?ie tip?rit? în Republica Moldova al?turi de Femeia la treizeci de ani.

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### **Lemon Man says**

So you have an uncle. He's overbearing, plump, and his head desperately needs the services of a hairdresser, or, if money's the matter (and it always is with him) at least a visit to a men's room. They don't even sweep the floor there, can you imagine the ordeal your poor uncle would have to go through (cause he doesn't, seeing how he never has his fucking hair cut) every time he went there, stepping over heaps of hair and what not

In any case, your uncle likes the occasional family get-together, and he may be the reason why they're more often than you'd prefer. Oh, ma cherie sister, I've missed you so much, and your loveliest children (he doesn't miss your father, his brother-in-law, that much, because HE SEES THROUGH HIS BULLSHIT), how about this Saturday? And it's always at your house, you're not even sure he even has a house, or an apartment, it's like he materializes out of thin air right before ringing your doorbell, and vanishes into the primordial soup promptly after bidding his leave. An eternal uncle.

He never shuts the fuck up. He never says anything about anything, just blabbers on and on, and mon Dieux, the variety of the exclamations he employs to signify his surprise, indignation or whatever at even the most

mundane occurrences he happens to hear about is, simply, staggering.

Though, I must say, you love the schmuck. And not just because he is your uncle.

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## **Sunrise says**

Balzac's portrait in realism is quite informative about financial transactions and its influence on social identity as Paris shifts into reformation. Birotteau's operatic descent into ruin is so meticulous, it's quite applicable and clear parallel to this decade's economic turmoils, so much so, that it's quite possible this work could inspire sympathies for those in business that may not completely understand its intricacies.

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## **Mazel says**

Adolphe, le plus fin des deux frères, un vrai loup-cervier, jeta sur Birotteau un regard q'il faut appeler le regard du banquier, et qui tient de celui des vautours et des avoués...

- Veuillez m'envoyer les actes sur lesquels repose l'affaire de la Madeleine, dit-il... Si l'affaire est bonne, nous pourrons, pour ne pas vous grever, nous contenter d'une part dans les bénéfices au lieu d'un escompte.

« Allons, se dit Birotteau..., je vois ce dont il s'agit. Comme le castor poursuivi, je dois me débarrasser d'une partie de ma peau. Il vaut mieux se laisser tondre que de mourir. »

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## **Aud says**

Alright, in the end I have to admit that this book was quite interesting. I found it quite stunning how someone can lose so much in so little time. Also it teaches you a lot about French trade, which wasn't that different back to Balzac's time. It is truly an amazing and dedicated work. The characters, especially Cesar, his wife and his daughter, are touching with their humanity and their goodness. Balzac has a critical look on Cesar, which is refreshing. We know where his faults and qualities are, and Balzac doesn't try to emphasise on said-qualities and reduce the flaws. Cesar is human, he does mistakes, but the point of the book is that he will fix these mistakes, no matter what.

However, there is a lot of descriptions and it was quite boring sometimes, especially at the beginning of the book where almost all the characters are described and it is then difficult to see why it is relevant.

Anyway I found myself really shaken near the end of the book and it surprised me.

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## **Gláucia Renata says**

A ideia desse romance surgiu em 1934 mas ficou engavetado por anos até que em 20 de novembro de 1937 um jornal ofereceu 20 mil francos por um romance a ser entregue até o dia 15 de dezembro. Balzac, sempre endividado, não tinha uma linha escrita mas cumpriu o prazo.

César Birotteau é um perfumista, casado com Constança e pai de Cesarina, comerciante honesto e até certo ponto ingênuo. Tudo vai bem até que ele passa a ter ambições sociais e para brilhar na sociedade parisiense

se envolve em dívidas enormes que o levam à falência. A narrativa se desenrola nos esforços empreendidos por César e seus amigos para salvar a situação de forma mais honrosa possível.

Gostei muito do livro, porém, o que me atrapalhou nele não é demérito do livro mas sim sua grandeza, foi a minuciosa e corretíssima descrição de todo o processo de falência envolvendo vários cargos e funções: proprietários e inquilinos, banqueiros e agiotas, tribunais do comércio, fornecedores e fabricantes.

Impressionante observar como Balzac conhece a fundo cada uma dessas partes, certamente por ter vivido um pouco do calvário de César em seus empreendimentos fracassados.

Histórico de leitura

01/07/2017

73% (222 de 304)

"- Especulação? Que comércio é esse? - É o comércio abstrato. Um comércio que permanecerá secreto durante uma dezena de anos ainda, e pelo qual um homem se apodera da totalidade dos algarismos, tira a nata dos rendimentos antes que existam. Uma concepção gigantesca, uma forma de explorar a esperança, enfim, uma nova cabala!"

01/07/2017

5% (15 de 304)

"Nas noites de inverno, o barulho cessa apenas um instante na Rue Saint-Honoré, pois os hortelãos que se dirigem para o mercado continuam o movimento dos que voltam do teatro ou dos bailes."

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**Zek says**

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**Garth says**

Balzac himself always speaks of his characters as of natural phenomena, and when he wants to describe his artistic intentions, he never speaks of his psychology, but always of his sociology, of his natural history of society and of the function of the individual in the life of the social body. He became, anyhow, the master of the social novel, if not as the 'doctor of the social sciences', as he described himself, yet as the founder of the new conception of man, according to which 'the individual exists only in relation to society.

His writings are wordy, descriptive, and not for those who are easily bored, suffering from narcolepsy, or driving long distances.

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