

Diogenes

Johannes Willms
Balzac

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Johannes
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Balzac
Eine Biographie

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Praise

Balzac

»Balzac compared himself to Napoleon by writing the following words on the latter's statuette: ›That which he could not achieve by the sword, I will accomplish with the plume.« A true prophecy indeed! Balzac subjugated all of Europe – from the Seine to the Volga, all obeyed his magic quill.« – Egon Friedell

Balzac (born 1799 in Tours, died 1850 in Paris) was an incorrigible optimist. But his hope of marrying into money was repeatedly shattered, until he was finally able to marry the Polish Countess Eveline Hanska shortly before his death.

Balzac was renowned, and notorious, for his »on credit« lifestyle: mahogany furniture, oriental carpets, rare walking sticks, lemon kid gloves and a back exit to escape from his creditors. Legendary too was his passion for his work – garbed in a monk's habit and kept awake by black coffee, he created the most immense fictional work of all time, ›La Comédie Humaine«, an entire universe of 1300 characters and their stories.

Johannes Willms reveals Balzac's life before the reader's astonished eyes. He bases his biography on the most personal of documents, Balzac's letters, but differentiates between the shimmering veneer (that Balzac cultivated and lived) and the often more dramatic reality.

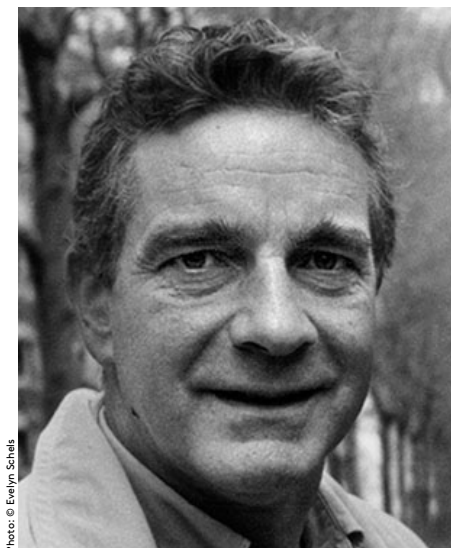


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Johannes Willms, born in 1948, was a historian and journalist. He was chief editor of the ZDF cultural programme *aspekte* and features editor of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, for which he later worked as a cultural correspondent in Paris. He published a large number of works on German and French history, the last of which was *Napoleon. The Myth – promise, exile, romanticisation*. Johannes Willms was regarded as »without doubt, one of the most fascinating historical journalists of this Republic« (*Die Zeit*, Hamburg). He passed away on 12 July 2022 in Munich.