




# THE PHYSIOLOGY OF TASTE

OR, MEDITATIONS ON  
TRANSCENDENTAL GASTRONOMY

JEAN ANTHELME  
BRILLAT-SAVARIN


A K N O P F  B O O K



# THE PHYSIOLOGY OF TASTE

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JEAN ANTHELME  
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A KNOPF  BOOK

EVERYMAN,

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I WILL GO WITH THEE,  
AND BE THY GUIDE,  
IN THY MOST NEED  
TO GO BY THY SIDE

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BRILLAT-SAVARIN

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THE  
PHYSIOLOGY  
OF TASTE

OR, MEDITATIONS  
ON TRANSCENDENTAL  
GASTRONOMY

TRANSLATED AND EDITED  
BY M.F.K. FISHER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY BILL BUFORD



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## INTRODUCTION

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### *More than Its Parts*

The title is a mouthful – *The Physiology of Taste; or, Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy* – but each ponderously arcane word is calculatedly deliberate. The subtitle is almost as revealing (*A Theoretical, Historical, and Contemporary Work, Dedicated to the Gastronomes of Paris, by a Professor, a Member of Several Literary and Scholarly Societies*), but viewed by most as ironic and self-deprecating, was never used again. Usually the title was ignored, too. An 1859 edition was published as *A Handbook of Dining*. By 1884, the handbook had been elevated to one of *Gastronomy*. The grander 1889 edition was *Gastronomy as a Fine Art*. For nearly a century, versions appeared about every five years – some with modest spines, more pamphlet than book; some, translated with baffling abandon. The troublesome second clause, *Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*, rarely survived, except as an implicit instruction that something else should be there in its place – as *Corpulency and Leanness* (1864), for instance, or *Science of Good Living* (1879). In Britain you can still find the 1970 Penguin Classic, *The Philosopher in the Kitchen*. It doesn't take a philosopher to know that the pages inside have been less protected than the cover, and we should be grateful that the book's first publisher, Sautetet, in Paris, treated them with contemptible indifference. In 1825, the Professor submitted a manuscript for consideration – a labor of three decades, drawn from a “secret journal.” It was rejected. Undeterred, he paid for the printing, five hundred copies, asked that his name not be attached, and managed to survive publication by a mere two months, just long enough to see the success of his work. On 21 January 1826, tempting fate and the scorn of history, he attended the thirty-third anniversary of the execution of the Louis XVI, contracted pneumonia in the damp cathedral of Saint-Denis, and died two weeks later.

The book is – what? Does anyone know? Intermittently it is an autobiography, but told principally in dinner anecdotes (except one, which is about a breakfast, but so protracted that it, too, becomes dinner). It is not a cookbook, although the next time you are bestowed with a turbot the size and awkwardness of a small bicycle you will know how to cook it (too big to fit in the oven, the sea creature is effectively steamed in the tub). The difficulty is compounded by the book's opening, which invites us to think of it as something it never becomes. In the first two pages, we learn that a meal without cheese is as incomplete as a woman without an eye, a startling comparison to contemplate. We also learn that a dinner is never boring – at least for the first hour; that a new dish matters more to human happiness than the discovery of a star; that if, at the end of a meal, you are satiated and slurring, you do not know how to eat and drink; and, most famously, that you are what you eat, a succinct expression of food and identity repeated so relentlessly that it is now a modern advertising banality. These “Aphorisms of the Professor” (“to serve as a preamble to his work and as a lasting foundation for the science of gastronomy”) represent

a lifetime of one-liners, the stuff that, revised, scribbled into a notebook, rehearsed and repeated over a fortified beverage, kept the bachelor scholar from ever having to dine alone. But after the first couple of pages the aphorisms disappear. Instead, there is history. Should we trust it? The Professor is not an historian. Or is he? There is science, more science than history, actually a lot of science. Do we dismiss it because we know better? Do we? Who is this guy anyway?

Neither a chemist nor an historian. Not a professor either, it turns out. Having once been mistaken for one, he found he liked the sound of the title and perpetuated its use: a telling if confusing, vanity. Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin was a lawyer and a magistrate. He wrote his culinary *Physiology* while an appellate judge, often during the hours when he was behind the bench, presiding at court. (He was known to go everywhere with his manuscript, losing it once.) His father, born Marc Anthelme Brillat, had also been a lawyer and a court prosecutor; Savarin was an aunt's name, incorporated via a hyphen into his own as a condition of her inheritance. We know little of the author's childhood – no mention of a mother, no grandmother dishes – or where his interest in food came from. He was born, in 1755, in Belley, the provincial capital of Bugey, in the eastern part of the country, on a Roman road between Lyon and Geneva, still known for its Alpine cheeses, then also famous for its wines (since decimated by the phylloxera blight). Brillat, as Honoré de Balzac correctly refers to him in the only profile written when people actually knew the man, had been a previously published author, but his writings are a motley list – an archeology of the mountains of his childhood, two papers on judicial theory, an essay on political economy and another on duelling (some pornographic stories remained unpublished) – and betray nothing of the long hours he was otherwise devoting to the contemplation of his dinner. He was a student of feminine beauty – his appreciation is evident throughout the *Physiology* – but never married.

On the good side of the Revolution, Brillat was elected to the Estates General in 1789 and continued to serve in the National Assembly in Versailles and Paris, where, to the enduring consternation of his posthumous fans, he argued against abolishing the death penalty and against admitting juries into the courts. In 1791 he returned to Belley, and a year later was elected mayor, but in 1793, finding himself on the wrong side of the Revolution and pre-empting a summons before its court, he fled via Alpine trails into Switzerland, later traveling through Germany to Holland whence he set sail for New York City in July 1794. Here he made a living as a French-language teacher and a member of a theater orchestra on John Street (the first violinist). He met Thomas Jefferson. He hunted wild turkeys. In 1796 he returned to France. Fortunately for him, his family had cunningly managed to hang on to much of his confiscated estate (though Brillat was never able to secure the return of one of his vineyards from the peasant to whom it had been sold). Briefly restored to his position on the bench, he lost it again following the republican coup of 18 Fructidor but rode out the storm, finding a job as a bureaucrat in the army. Within a year he had been appointed to the prestigious position of State Prosecutor at Versailles.

It was, famously, a time of political upheaval and reinvention. It was, perhaps less famously, a time of culinary upheaval and reinvention. Brillat's life spans both. He was witness to what France no longer is and what it was about to become – especially in the way it thought about food. In his life, its preparation passed from the private kitchen

(where dining was an overhead expense incurred by the household or estate that could afford it) to the public (dining as a retail purchase). Antoine Beauvilliers, widely seen as the inventor of the restaurant, was born in 1754, the year before Brillat's birth. In 1833, six years after Brillat's death, Antonin Carême, the new globally famous chef, began publishing the five-volume *L'Art de la cuisine française* that articulated the modern national kitchen. In between these two figures – and the origins of the menu, the *plat du jour*, the caterer, the codifying of the *pot-au-feu*, the checkered table-cloth, 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.”

“The Physiology of Taste” – the beauty is in its near-ugliness. “Physiology” was, and remains, a nonsense word, effective for its scientific associations and a vague but irresistible mental static engendered by its almost-inappropriateness. It is a metaphysical conceit. Physiology is the study of an organism's moving parts. Can “taste” (goût) – and all the obvious senses concentrated into the word – be the subject of physiology? Well, yes, that is, maybe; in fact, no. It is the science of a non-science, an eternally appealing combination, with a venerable intellectual history: the philosophic consolations of the sixteenth century, the melancholic anatomies of the seventeenth, discourses of the heart, the botanies of desire. (Balzac, too, was infected, and published his own *Physiology of Marriage* in 1826, a year after Brillat's book.) And yet there *is*, manifestly, a science at work in cooking – chemistry rather than physiology; botany, maybe; physics, occasionally; and a kitchen *is* a laboratory where elements are tested, combined, subjected to extreme temperatures, and studied.

“Maître la Planche,” Brillat says, summoning his cook after he had prepared a pale flabby sole with no more color than a soiled undergarment, “This misfortune happened because you have neglected the theory of frying, whose importance you do not recognize. You are somewhat opinionated, and I have had a little trouble in making you understand that the phenomena which occur in your laboratory are nothing more than the execution of the eternal laws of nature, and that certain things which you do inattentively, and only because you have seen others do them, are nonetheless based on the highest and most abstruse scientific principles.” The meditation, for all its self-parody, gets to the heart of how people think about food today: we cook imitating others, without pausing to see the principles of science at work (or, sometimes, not at work) in what we are doing. Herve This cites the passage in his introduction to *Molecular Gastronomy: Exploring the Science of Flavor*. Harold McGee uses it on the opening page of his seminal *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen*. No one had made such a statement before; no one has bettered it. In the actual science that informs Brillat's book, there is, no surprise, much that he gets wrong. Does anyone use the term “osmazome,” for instance, or believe that it gives a broth its flavor (or a gravy or drippings from a roasting joint)? Even so, we know enough to recognize the elegance of Brillat's effort, especially today, in our era of heightened gastronomical self-examination: after all, why do we make a broth in the way we do

slower than a simmer, a vaporous steam coming off the surface, never a boil, without the use of meat, but with a mysteriously pellucid meaty flavor? (In effect, Brillat asks the question; McGee answers it, more than a century and a half later.) Good science begins in doubt: it asks why. It proceeds as a scrutiny done in tranquillity. Brillat, with no modern training, understands how to be a scientist in the kitchen. He gets it.

He also gets how many other qualities – many, many other qualities – are at work as well. Could they possibly be “transcendental,” the second important term in his title? These qualities include history: Brillat’s account of sugar is so unusual because it is written from a vantage place we’ve long abandoned – of seeing it as a new ingredient that hasn’t persuasively justified its place in the pantry. They include diet: was the Professor plagiarized by our modern low-carb practitioners? They include erotics (how many grapplings have been effected by an aromatic tuber found only by a trained pig?), the then new newness of new-world ingredients, the intimate company of the table, the anonymous company of the restaurant, the philosophies of excess (more than three hundred and eighty-four oysters *before* dinner—*really?*), the philosophy of authenticity (a game bird eaten uncooked and whole, feathers, innards, beak intact): everything. Even rare personal revelations – the travails of Brillat’s exile, for instance – are told in the context of food: the meal that strangers share with him when he is hungry and destitute (in the mountains, at an inn, huddled around a fire, unable to determine if he is with friend or foe); the more formal dinner endured to secure a crossing into Switzerland (unable to determine if he is with friend or foe). Everywhere the same message: food is more than itself. It is not everything, but it is touched by almost everything: memory, weather, dirt, hunger, chemistry, the universe.

This transcendence, the idea and practice of it, infects M. F. K. Fisher’s translation just as Brillat’s title once entered Balzac’s brain: not the text of the translation, which, both unabridged and unadorned, rates among Fisher’s best writings; but the complex apparatus of footnotes surrounding it. What? Why? How now? These are rarely footnotes in the conventional sense of illuminating an obscurity. They are not disquisitions. They are like phone calls or postcards, dispatches to her subject, a bachelor with whom (a little embarrassingly) our translator has fallen in love. They are sometimes savvy, often baffling, occasionally irrelevant, always revealing, and inspired, clearly, by Brillat himself. (The effect allows you to read Brillat in four histories at once – his, Fisher’s pre-war France, her post-war America, and ours – and an effect that Brillat himself would certainly have endorsed.) They are not on the level of the writing they gloss; they are, instead, inspired by it, willy-nilly: symptoms of being its reader and of being suitably, transcendently transported. Brillat makes us feel smarter, Balzac observed. The bigger picture is in reach. Brillat (“Botany, zoology, chemistry, agriculture, anatomy, medicine, hygiene, political economy – Brillat tastes of them all”) makes his readers think they are learned. But, Balzac also suggests, not without a certain reservation: a hesitation.

Balzac found the hesitation in the author’s anonymity: such musings, he believes Brillat must have thought, are not quite sufficiently dignified and would be inappropriate coming from a judge. Roland Barthes, in his introduction to a 1970 French edition, had an apposite observation – that Brillat seems always to be at a remove from his material: the tongue-in-cheek “Professor,” the irony, the self-parody of pomp. He doesn’t want us to take him too



seriously. But I wonder: is it possible that Brillat's thesis aspires to a more complex condition than either Balzac or Barthes quite appreciates? I sometimes think of this condition as the charisma of food, its capacity to be everything. It is identity, and culture, and history. It is science, and nature, and botany. It is the earth. It is our family, our philosophy, our past. It is the most important matter in our lives. It is more than its ingredients. It is transcendent. Brillat understood this. But it is also just dinner. It means nothing. And Brillat understood that, too. It is serious, and not.

Bill Buford

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# CHRONOLOGY

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**DATE:** 1746

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Menon: *La Cuisinière bourgeoise*.

**DATE:** 1747

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Voltaire: *Zadig*.

Hannah Glasse: *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*.

**DATE:** 1748

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Montesquieu: *De l'Esprit des lois*.

Toussaint: *Les Moeurs*. Diderot: *Les Bijoux indiscrets*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle ends War of Austrian Succession. Louis XV's decision to restore French conquests (the southern Netherlands) to Austria, while praised abroad, proves unpopular at home.

**DATE:** 1749

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Buffon: *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* (to 1778).

Diderot: *Lettres sur les aveugles*.

Menon: *La Science du maître d'hôtel cuisinier*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** In order to finance huge budget deficit, Machault introduces a single tax of one twentieth (the *vingtième*), payable by all classes; meets with protests and non-compliance from nobles and clergy, traditionally exempt from taxation.

**DATE:** 1751

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** First volume of the *Encyclopédie* appears (35 vols, to 1776).

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Failure of Machault's reforms. *Parlements* continue successfully to thwart any attempt at financial reform until the early 1770s.

**DATE:** 1752

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Voltaire: *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*.

Hume : *Political Discourses*.

**DATE:** 1753

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Grand Remonstrance: Paris *parlement* refuses to register royal edict supporting pope's authority over church in France. Exile of *parlement* (to 1754).

**DATE:** 1754

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Condillac: *Traité des sensations*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Birth of Antoine Beauvilliers, widely regarded as the world's first restaurateur.

**DATE:** 1755

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin born on 2 April in Belley, capital of Bugey, a remote, rugged, semi-Alpine province incorporated into France only in 1601, having been ruled formerly by the dukes of Savoy. His father, Marc Anthelme, is a lawyer, holding the post of *procureur royal*; his mother, Claudine Aurore Récamier, a lawyer's daughter. The family enjoy both wealth and local status. JA is the eldest of eight children.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Morellet: *Code de la nature*.

Rousseau: *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Lisbon earthquake. British attacks on French ships off Newfoundland.

**DATE:** 1756

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Mirabeau (elder): *Ami des hommes au trait de la population*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** *Renversement des alliances*: Agreement of Westminster between Prussia and Great Britain; France and Austria conclude Treaty of Versailles. Outbreak of Seven Years' War, fought in both Europe and the colonies.

**DATE:** 1757

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Hume: *Four Dissertations*.

Haller: *Elementia Physiologiae Corporis Humani* (to 1766).

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Defeat of Soubise by Frederick II at Rossbach. Assassination attempt on Louis XV.

**DATE:** 1758

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Helvétius: *De L'Esprit*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** French army evacuates Hanover. Choiseul chief minister (to 1770).

**DATE:** 1759

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Voltaire: *Candide*.

Sterne: *Tristram Shandy* (to 1767).

Johnson: *Rasselas*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** French defeated at Minden. Loss of Quebec, Martinique and Guadaloupe. French naval defeats at Lagos and Quiberon.

**DATE:** 1760

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** A tutor is engaged for JA around this time. Throughout his childhood the family live in their town house during the legal terms and on their estate at Vieu in nearby Valromey during the holidays.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Diderot: *La Religieuse*.

Mirabeau (elder)/Quesnay:

*Théorie de l'impôt*.

Voltaire: *Tancrède*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Treaty of Turin between France and Savoy finally resolves border disputes in BS's native region. Rebuilding of the tortuous mountain roads of Bugey begins.

Rameau: *Les Paladins*.

**DATE:** 1761

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Rousseau: *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.

Diderot: *Le Neveu de Rameau*.

Marmontel: *Contes moraux*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Greuze paints *The Village Betrothal*.

**DATE:** 1762

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Rousseau: *Le Contrat social*;

Emile.

Macpherson: *Ossian*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Family Compact between France and Spain. Torture and execution of Calas and later of La Barre (1765) fuels anti-clerical campaign.

Dombes, a small principality adjacent to Bugey, is suppressed and incorporated into Bresse. Its tiny *parlement* at Trévoux is abolished in 1771.

**DATE:** 1763

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Crébillon fils: *Le Hasard du coin du feu*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Treaty of Paris ends Seven Years' War and refines colonial interests of belligerents in favour of Great Britain. France humiliated by loss of Canada and India. Choiseul sets about rebuilding French army and navy.

Petit Trianon built at Versailles (to 1768) by Gabriel in the neoclassical style for the use of Madame de Pompadour; Louis XVI presents it to Queen Marie Antoinette in 1774.

**DATE:** 1764

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Around this time JA enters the prestigious Collège de Belley as a boarder. Though staff are largely clerical, the curriculum is broad. He is impressed by the Latin poets but also reads the works of Lavater, Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, Montesquieu and Rabelais, and his lifelong favourites – Voltaire, Rousseau, Fénelon and Buffon.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Voltaire: *Dictionnaire philosophique*.

Chamfort: *La Jeune Indienne*.

Beccaria: *On Crimes and Penalties*.

Winckelmann: *History of the Art of Antiquity*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Jesuit order suppressed in France – a victory for the Jansenist *parlements*.

Boulangier's soup-kitchen in Paris advertises its *restaurants divins* ("restaurant" being a meat broth, thought to restore energy) and, radically, begins to expand its menu. His first dish, mutton trotters à la sauce poulette, brings Boulangier before the Paris *parlement* for serving a *ragoût* (privilege of the *traiteurs* who had a monopoly of supplying food for public consumption).

Winning his case, he goes on to introduce more dishes, and by 1771 the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* lists the word “restaurant” with its modern meaning.

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Death of Madame de Pompadour and Rameau. Soufflot begins the building of the Panthéon.

**DATE:** 1765

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** *Ephémérides du citoyen* (journal of the Physiocrats, to 1772).

Sedaine: *Philosophe sans le savoir*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Death of the Dauphin. Boucher becomes court painter to Louis XV. Grenville’s Stamp Act antagonizes American colonists.

**DATE:** 1766

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Turgot: *Réflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses*.

Smollett: *Travels through France and Italy*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Lorraine incorporated into France. Provincial *parlements*, lead by Brittany, challenge royal authority; Louis XV repudiates their claims in a *lit de justice*. *Commission des réguliers* established to enquire into abuses of the monastic world.

Bougainville’s voyage round the world (to 1769). Catherine the Great’s “Instruction”, inspired by the philosophy of the French Enlightenment. Cavendish isolates hydrogen.

**DATE:** 1767

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Holbach: *Le Christianisme dévoilé*.

Voltaire: *L’Ingénu*.

Marmontel: *Bélisaire*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Fragonard paints *The Swing*, regarded as a masterpiece of the rococo era.

**DATE:** 1768

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Crébillon fils: *Lettres de la duchesse de \*\*\**.

Sterne: *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** France buys Corsica from Genoa. Cook’s first voyage to the South Pacific.

**DATE:** 1770

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Holbach: *Système de la nature*.

Galiani: *Dialogue sur le commerce des blés* (attacks Physiocrat doctrines).

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Marriage of the future Louis XVI to Marie Antoinette, daughter of the Habsburg empress Maria Theresa. Fall of Choiseul. Ministry of Maupeou and Terray. High grain prices following poor harvest lead to government intervention, but provoke accusations from *parlements* that the king is speculating in grain while his people starve (the mythical *pacte de famine*).

Popular disturbances suppressed.

**DATE:** Early 1770s

**AUTHOR’S LIFE:** Growing up in a small cathedral city, JA encounters numerous gourmandizing clerics who share

their culinary secrets with him. He studies the violin, becoming an accomplished player, and also develops an interest in archaeology.

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**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Maupeou and Terray bring Louis XV for the first time in his reign to face and defy resistance to reform. With opposition of *parlements* eliminated (see 1771 below) Terray is able to overhaul financial system by reforming the collection of both the *vingtième*, and the *capitation* (head tax) of Paris.

**DATE:** 1771

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Witnesses the death of his 93-year-old great aunt, Christine Brillat, to whom he has been close, and is much affected by her calm resignation and lack of religious belief. He himself will abandon the Catholic church in later life.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Sixth and final edition of the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* (begun by Jesuits under the aegis of the duc de Maine, 1704).

Goldoni: *Le Bourru bienfaisant*.

Crébillon fils: *Lettres athéniennes*.

Mackenzie: *The Man of Feeling*.

Smollett: *Humphrey Clinker*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** *Parlement* of Paris exiled by Maupeou and replaced by six new courts with salaried magistrates nominated by the king; venal offices abolished.

Remonstrating provincial *parlements* similarly remodelled. Furious outcry from nobles, provincial estates and Paris bourgeoisie (Voltaire, however, sees the sense of it.) Further judicial and administrative reforms initiated.

Grétry: *Zémir et Azor* (Fontainebleau).

**DATE:** 1772/3

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** A fragment of a story, "Ma première chute", written years later, suggests JA had his first *liaison amoureuse* at this time.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** 1772 Susannah Carter: *The Frugal Housewife*.

Cazotte: *Le Diable amoureux*.

Guibert: *Essai général de tactique*.

1773 Diderot: *Jacques le fataliste*.

Marat: *Philosophical Essay on Man*.

Goldsmith: *She Stoops to Conquer*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Boston Tea Party (1773).

**DATE:** 1774

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Takes lodgings in Dijon where he studies law at the university and adds an aristocratic "de" to his name.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Goethe: *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.

Marat: *The Chains of Slavery*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Death of Louis XV (10 May). Accession of his grandson as Louis XVI. Maurepas acquires chief influence in government. *Parlementaires* organize demonstrations in Paris, exploiting the legend of a *pacte de famine*. Recall of *parlements*. Turgot Controller-General.

Gluck: *Iphigénie en Aulide* produced in Paris: celebrated Gluck-Piccinni feud engineered by supporters of the two

Paris-based composers. Priestley discovers oxygen.

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**DATE:** 1775

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Beaumarchais: *Le Barbier de Séville*.

Restif de la Bretonne: *Le Paysan perversi*.

Lavater: *Fragments of Physiognomy* (to 1778).

Mirabeau (younger): *Essai sur le despotisme*.

Johnson: *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** The poor harvest of 1774 leads to riots in the spring (*Guerre des farines*), beginning in the provinces (including Dijon, where BS is studying) and spreading to Paris. Turgot carries out programme of economic and administrative reform, antagonizing powerful vested interests. Saint-Germain becomes Minister of War and sets about reforming the army on Prussian lines (to 1777).

**DATE:** 1776

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Romantic attachment to Louise, possibly the daughter of a counsellor at the Dijon *parlement*. Apparently suffering from some kind of eating disorder, she dies in his arms at the age of 18.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Haller: *Bibliothecae Practicae* (medical bibliography, to 1788).

Klinger: *Sturm und Drang*.

Gibbon: *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (to 1788).

Smith: *The Wealth of Nations*.

Paine: *Common Sense*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** American Declaration of Independence.

Turgot's six edicts opposed by *parlements* as an attack on privilege (especially the proposed abolition of the *corvée*). Fall of Turgot. Necker in charge of French finances (to 1781).

Jenner discovers principle of vaccination. Marquis de Jouffroy d'Abbans develops a 3-metre steamship, the *Palmipède*, and sails it successfully on the river Doubs.

**DATE:** 1777

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Attends public lectures on chemistry given by Louis Bernard Guyton de Morveau. His interest in science continues throughout his years in Dijon, where he adds some extracurricular medical studies to his law course.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Robertson: *The History of America*.

Sheridan: *The School for Scandal*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Lafayette leads a group of French volunteers to fight with the Americans. Gluck's *Armide* (Paris). Lavoisier's work on combustion. Marie Grosholtz (later Madame Tussaud) creates her first waxwork figure (of Voltaire).

**DATE:** 1778

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Receives his degree. Travels by boat to Lyon to acquire licence to practise at the Belley bar. Returns to Belley to embark on his career, taking his place in a privileged legal coterie.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Death of Voltaire and Rousseau.

Burney: *Evelina*.



Menon: *Les Soupers de la cour*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** France officially enters American War of Independence on the side of colonists. Necker finances the war by heavy borrowing.

Mozart's "Paris" Symphony. Piccinni: *Roland*.

**DATE:** 1779

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Restif de la Bretonne: *La Vie de mon père*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Necker abolishes *mainmorte*, last relic of serfdom, on the royal domain. Unsuccessful siege of Gibraltar by French and Spanish troops (to 1782).

Triumph of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride* in Paris.

**DATE:** 1780s

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Leads the comfortable life of a provincial lawyer, enlivening his ample leisure time with hunting, shooting and dining. Revives an informal band of musicians he had formed in the 1770s to play concerts on request.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Penal reforms introduced: torture of accused persons to obtain a confession abolished (1780), torture of convicted criminals before execution to name their accomplices abolished (1788); attempt made to prevent the most serious abuses connected with the issue of *lettres de cachet* (1784)

**DATE:** 1780

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Marat: *Plan de législation criminelle*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Death of Maria Theresa: Joseph II, co-ruler since 1765, in sole control of Habsburg territories. Initiates a series of wide-ranging reforms (1781–5).

Jean-Joseph Clause, cook to the governor of Alsace, opens a shop to sell his creation *pâté à la Contades*, resulting in the first production centre of Alsatian foie gras.

**DATE:** 1781

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Becomes *lieutenant civil du bailliage*, a magistrate with special powers to deal with civil cases (also gaining him exemption from the hated *taille*, a tax levied on all French subjects except noblemen).

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Schiller: *The Robbers*.

Mercier: *Le Tableau de Paris* (to 1788).

Brissot: *Théorie des lois criminelles*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Cornwallis capitulates to Franco-American force at Yorktown. Necker publishes his *Compte-rendu*, demonstrating how the royal accounts have balanced. In fact the Crown is in debt at excessive rates of interest.

Having antagonized Maurepas, Necker is dismissed.

**DATE:** 1782

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Enjoys a memorable feast with the Cistercians (20 August).

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Laclos: *Les Liaisons dangereuses*.

Rousseau: *Les Confessions* (and 1789); *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*.

Mirabeau (younger): *Des Lettres de Cachet et des prisons d'état*.

Le Grand d'Aussy: *Histoire de la vie privé des français*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Antoine Beauvilliers opens a restaurant – La Grande Taverne de Londres – in the rue de Richelieu, Paris, first formal dining-out venue for the elite, praised by BS for its “elegant dining-room, handsome well-trained waiters, a fine cellar, and a superior kitchen”.

Defeat of de Grasse at the battle of Saintes in the West Indies.

**DATE:** 1783

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Birth of Stendhal.

Death of D'Alembert.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Treaty of Versailles ends American War of Independence. French gains are minimal. Calonne appointed Controller-General and succeeds temporarily in restoring confidence in royal finances.

Cavendish determines the composition of water. First manned flight in a hot air balloon (France). David: *The Oath of the Horatii*. Society portrait painter Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun appointed to the French Royal Academy with the support of Marie Antoinette; her rival, Adelaide Labille-Guiard, is accepted on the same day.

**DATE:** 1784

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Beaumarchais: *Le Mariage de Figaro*.

Sade writes *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* (to 1785).

Necker: *Traité de l'administration des finances de France*.

Death of Diderot.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** The fashionable Café de Chartres opens in the Palais Royal, Paris. After the revolution it becomes a luxurious restaurant frequented by Napoleon as well as BS and fellow gastronome Grimod de La Reynière. Acquired by Jean Véfour in 1820, and renamed Véfour (afterwards the Grand Véfour), it has remained to this day a favourite haunt of politicians, writers and artists.

Grétry: *Richard Coeur de Lion*.

**DATE:** 1785

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Queen Marie Antoinette is publicly discredited by the affair of the diamond necklace.

**DATE:** 1786

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Restif de la Bretonne: *Les Nuits de Paris* (to 1793).

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Vergennes negotiates free trade treaty with Britain.

Barthélémy, Maneille and Simon open Les Trois Frères Provençaux at the Palais Royal, introducing Provençal cuisine to Paris for the first time.

Mozart: *Le nozze di Figaro* (from Beaumarchais).

**DATE:** 1787

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** For the Bugey region the 1780s are a time of deep economic crisis, compounded by the erosion of local liberties by the central government. BS's first visit to the court in Versailles this year may have had some connection with this.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: *Paul et Virginie*.

Louvet: *Les Amours du chevalier de Faublas* (to 1789).

Schiller: *Don Carlos*.

Blake: *Songs of Innocence*.

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Adams: *A Defence of the Constitution of the United States of America*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Calonne's proposal for new land tax rejected by newly summoned Assembly of Notables. Fall of Calonne and his replacement by Brienne. Dissolution of Notables. *Parlement* of Paris exiled to Troyes (August–November) until it agrees to further royal loans. Government bombarded with protests and remonstrances from all the *parlements* (November to May 1785). Edict of Toleration grants Protestants civil rights.

US constitution written.

**DATE:** 1788

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Legal reforms affect the status of the court at Belley which loses many cases to the newly elevated court of Bourg-en-Bresse. BS and fellow officers of the court refuse to obey the royal edict until ratified by the exiled Dijon *parlement*.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** First publication of the memoirs of the duc de Saint-Simon (1675-1755).

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Lamoignon, Keeper of the Seals, masterminds royal edict (8 May), suspending the *parlements* and replacing them with 47 new courts. Provokes riots in Grenoble, capital of Dauphiné (7 June); less violent (and less successful) resistance in other provinces. In Dijon (BS's regional *parlement*) protesting members are exiled to their country estates by *lettres de cachet*. Resignation of Brienne. Louis XVI forced to summon the Estates General, for the first time since 1614 (2 August). Necker returns to office. Recall of *parlements* (September).

Royal council approves decree doubling Third Estate (December).

Austrian Netherlands rebel against centralizing policies of Joseph II, forming the United States of Belgium (imperial authority reimposed by Leopold II in 1790).

Salieri: *Tarare* (Paris).

**DATE:** 1789

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Elections to the Estates General.

Belley is ordered to send one deputy for the nobility, one for the clergy and two for the Third Estate. BS is elected as one of the latter (26 March). They are briefed to demand equality of taxation, regular meetings of the Estates and a fixed constitution.

They would also press for protection from the loathed *lettres de cachet* and restoration of the sovereignty of the Belley court. At loggerheads on many issues (at one point the Third Estate threatened to burn down the bishop's palace), all three estates determine to win back self-administration for their region. BS arrives in Versailles in April. Present at the opening of the Estates General, he is irritated by having to wear the inferior dress of the Third Estate. Absent (unaccountably) when the Tennis-Court Oath is sworn.

Returns to Belley to report in August; successfully resists an attempt to stop him practising at the bar while he is a deputy at Versailles, and clears his name after being accused by his fellow deputy Delilia of conspiring to increase local taxation. Back at Versailles in time to attend debate on the Rights of Man. Moves to Paris with the Assembly (October). During a debate on administrative reform, makes an impassioned plea for the future of Bugey as an independent province, his first major speech. He is unsuccessful, and Bugey is absorbed into the "Département de l'Ain," its capital Bourg. In December he may have joined the Jacobin Club.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Lavoisier: *Traité élémentaire de chimie*.

Mme de Staël: *Lettres sur Rousseau*.

Marat launches radical newspaper *L'Ami du peuple* (to 1792).

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Revolt at Rennes (January). Bread riots throughout France in the spring, following disastrous harvest of 1788; allegations of a *pacte de famine* renewed. Bloody riots in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine against an employer thought to be planning to lower salaries; 300 killed and more than a 1000 injured (April). As a prelude to the elections, all estates are bidden to produce an account of their grievances in a *cahier de doléance*.

Meeting of Estates General (May). Unable to secure royal consent to a united assembly (in which it would form the majority), Third Estate adopts title of National Assembly (17 June); Tennis-Court Oath (20 June). Royal Session (23 June); king allies himself with privileged orders, offering minimal reforms, then reversing his policy (27 June) when he commands all three estates to meet together – all against a background of social breakdown and build-up of royal troops in Versailles and Paris. Dismissal of Necker and his replacement by Breteuil (11 July).

Paris mob storms the Bastille (14 July). Revolutionaries seize control of municipal government of Paris, setting up Paris Comune; this is repeated throughout France and sanctioned by the Law of Municipalities in December. National Guard established under Lafayette to maintain order and defend the Third Estate.

The *Grand peur* (to mid-August): news of fall of Bastille causes turmoil throughout the provinces, exacerbated by rumours of foreign troops being brought in to destroy the Third Estate. Castles and monasteries stormed (including the Abbey of Saint-Sulpice where BS had enjoyed a musical day in 1782). Decree abolishing feudal rights and privileges rushed through the Assembly in an attempt to deal with rural disorder (4–11 August). Assembly issues Declaration of Rights (26 August).

Women's march on Versailles, demanding bread. Queen's apartment at Versailles entered. A crowd of 20,000 Parisians call on royal family to accompany them to the city, where they become effectively prisoners of the Assembly and the Paris mob (5–6 October).

November, December: secularization of church lands to raise money to pay off national debt; issue of *assignats* (paper money) – successful for two years. France divided into 83 administrative *départements*.

Lifting of censorship brings more than 350 journals into existence in Paris. George Washington first US president (to 1797).

**DATE:** 1790

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Death of BS's father. He comes into his inheritance, including the family estate at Vieux. Constantly lobbied about local issues. In the Assembly contributes to key debates on the reorganization of French law and society. Speaks against introduction of English-style juries and, when he opposes public prosecution, crosses swords for the first time with Robespierre. Chosen as honorary colonel of Belley's National Guard (October). Strongly built, and with a powerful voice, he is in November one of a deputation of 12 sent to prevent a mob from sacking the duc de Castries' town house following a duel with a fellow member of the Assembly.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Burke: *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

Hébert publishes the extreme radical newspaper *Le Père Duchesne* (to 1794).

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** The Assembly spends this year ironing out a new constitution. Religious orders suppressed (February); civil constitution of the clergy (July) meets with resistance especially when finally condemned by the Vatican in March 1791. Civic fête celebrating Bastille day (July). Mutiny at Nancy (August). Resignation of Necker (September).

Proliferation of revolutionary clubs in Paris, the left-wing Breton Club (later to become the Jacobins) being the most influential, backed by a growing network of affiliated clubs in the provinces.

Véry opens restaurant in the Palais Royal which proves vastly popular.

He soon opens a second branch on the esplanade des Tuileries, the first building ever conceived as a restaurant – but

demolished during Napoleon's civic reconstruction.

## Death of Emperor Joseph II.

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**DATE:** 1791

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** BS scores a small triumph when he ensures that the departmental seminary and the seat of the Bishop of Ain remain in Belley. On 31 May he speaks in a major debate on the death penalty (he is in favour – Robespierre, ironically, is against).

A constitutional monarchist, he strongly supports the Assembly's decision not to act against the king after his attempted flight, telling the citizens of Belley that "the essential point [is] that we are not at the start of a new revolution, but in the process of completing the old one". On 23 July BS speaks in support of introducing martial law and punishing the instigators of the Champs de Mars riot, once more incurring the wrath of Robespierre. In September he is one of 60 deputies who present the Constitutional Act to the king. On 30 September, the Assembly is disbanded and BS returns home, to dancing in the streets, and is made president of the civil tribunal of Belley. Becomes a judge at the civil court in Bourg (where he lives for a time) and a substitute judge on the new national appeal court (*Tribunal de cassation*). Resumes his old life of hunting, wining, dining and flirting.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Paine: *Rights of Man* (and 1792).

Boswell: *Life of Samuel Johnson*.

Louvet: *Emilie de Varmont*.

De Sade: *Justine ou les Malheurs de la vertu*.

Brissot: *Nouveau Voyage dans les États-Unis de l'Amérique septentrionale*.

Franklin: *Mémoires de la vie privée de Benjamin Franklin*.

Olympe de Gouges: *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*.

Mme Dacier: *Antiquitates Culinariae*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Mirabeau condemns "barbaric" measures against suspected *émigrés*, fearing the beginning of a police state (February). Death of Mirabeau (April).

Escape of royal family and their recapture at Varennes (June). Assembly decrees that the king cannot be indicted, but republican support is increasing. Danton's Cordeliers Club organizes Champ de Mars petition (17 July); National Guard fires on the crowd when it refuses to disperse.

Declaration of Pilnitz (August): Emperor Leopold and Frederick II of Prussia undertake to support Louis XVI – but only in the unlikely event of other European monarchs joining them. Nevertheless, fear of armed foreign intervention spreads among revolutionaries. France annexes Avignon and Venaissin, papal territories within her borders (September).

Assembly passes Constitutional Act, endorsed by the king (September). Dissolution of Constituent Assembly (30 September). Its members had voted to disqualify themselves from standing for re-election – a measure proposed by Robespierre which effectively eliminates many moderates from government.

New Legislative Assembly meets (October). Inflation caused by the *assignats*, revolutionary paper money. Led by Brissot, the Brissotin (or Girondist) faction successfully agitates for war against Austria, hoping to rally popular passion behind it to the benefit of the left wing.

Méot, former *officier de bouche* of the prince de Condé, opens a restaurant which soon comes to rival that of Beauvilliers. Unrestrainedly luxurious, it also provides girls to attend to customers' every need and – it was rumoured – a silver bath in which a gentleman might relax in champagne. It was a great favourite with revolutionaries such as Danton and Desmoulins and it is said that the Constitution of 1791 was largely drafted at Méot's.

US Congress meets in Philadelphia.

**DATE:** 1792

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Supports the war against anti-French coalition. His mother makes over to him all the family property in the town of Belley. Loses his job when Danton requires judges to stand for election (August). Elected mayor of Belley (December).

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Chénier: *Sur les Suisses révoltés du régiment de Châteaueux*.

Marat launches newspaper *Journal de la république française*.

Wollstonecraft: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

Young: *Travels in France*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Girondists form ministry (March); war declared on Austria (April) and Prussia (July). Her army ill-prepared, France faces military disaster. Fall of *assignat* provokes food crisis, grain riots and demands for price controls.

Counter-revolutionary activity in the provinces – notably in Marseilles and Provence – crushed by local Jacobins. Denouncing court and aristocratic plots, the Girondists summon provincial National Guard (*fédérés*) to defend the Revolution in Paris. Louis XVI dismisses Girondist minister, Roland (June). Popular demonstrations in Paris (20 June) in which royal apartments again entered. Parisian municipal government by now permeated by revolutionaries, particularly the 48 Sections, local constituency divisions of the Commune, declared permanent on 25 July. Legislative Assembly takes on emergency powers – “La patrie en danger”. Duke of Brunswick, Allied general, threatens Parisians with violent reprisals if French royal family are harmed. Robespierre defines aim of calling an election for a new National Convention based on universal suffrage (speech at Jacobin Club, 29 July).

Radical Section leaders form break-away revolutionary Commune (9 August). *Fédérés* lead attack on the Tuileries (10 August) which turns into a massacre. Louis XVI deposed and imprisoned with his family in the Temple (13 August). Girondists obliged to summon a democratic National Convention and to allow Danton into the Ministry of Justice. Lafayette flees abroad (19 August). Verdun surrenders to Prussian army; panic in Paris leads mob to storm prisons and massacre inmates (2–10 September).

Dumouriez wins unexpected victory against the Duke of Brunswick at Valmy (20 September). French occupation of Nice and Savoy (the latter is annexed in October). Custine crosses the Rhine (October); Dumouriez invades Austrian Netherlands, taking Brussels (November). Decree of Convention promising help to all peoples desirous of recovering their liberty (19 November).

First meeting of National Convention (only 7.5 per cent of those now eligible to vote in the elections had done so) which proceeds to abolish the monarchy (22 September). Girondists, strongly supported in the provinces, retain considerable influence. The Jacobin deputation from Paris (known as the *Montagne*) with Robespierre as their chief spokesman, press for an indictment of the king. Discovery of a secret *armoire de fer* containing royal correspondence with Austria makes the king's trial inevitable; it takes place on 10 and 11 December.

Divorce legalized. Slave rebellion in West Indies causes sugar shortage in France.

**DATE:** 1793

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** By this time BS has allied himself with the Girondists, presiding over the *Société des amis de la Liberté et de l'Égalité* in Belley. (BS's mayoral speeches stress the importance of liberty but refute the idea that equality applies to equality of wealth.) They are split over the question of the king's indictment (BS's views are unknown) but all support a limited federalism as a counterbalance to the power of the Paris mob (which supports the more radical Jacobins). He chairs several meetings in which speeches are made in support of the reaction in Lyons, Marseilles and Bordeaux to the fall of the Gironde, one by his own cousin. However, ordered by the Convention to raise men to suppress revolt of the federalists in Lyons, BS prudently complies. Personally leads another group of volunteers to the assistance of neighbouring Chambéry, threatened by Sardinian troops (August).

Unimpressed by this show of patriotism, local Jacobins led by café-owner Antoine Bonnet campaign successfully for his removal (13 October). BS fights back, gaining time, a useful passport, and a temporary reinstatement as mayor. But learning that a representative of the Convention has been dispatched to Belley to investigate his case, he quickly leaves the town (10/11 December). In his absence he is denounced as a federalist and traitor. His goods and papers are sequestered.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Paine: *The Age of Reason* (and 1794).

Kant: *Religion within the Boundaries of Reason*.

Desmoulins (ed.): *Le Vieux Cordelier* (to 1794).

Mirabeau (younger): *Les Lettres à Sophie*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Louis XVI having been found guilty of treason, a vote on the death penalty is taken in the Convention, and agreed by a small majority. Sentence carried out on 21 January.

France declares war on Great Britain and Holland (February) and Spain (March). Inflation leads to food riots in Paris led by *enragés* Roux and Varlet (February–March). Revolt of the Vendée. Revolutionary Tribunal set up to institutionalize revolutionary justice; decree condemning to summary execution all criminals taken in the act (the latter claiming even more victims than the former). Watch committees set up in every commune (March). Defeat of Girondist General Dumouriez in the Netherlands and his defection to the Austrians. Committee of Public Safety established where middle-men Danton and Barère try to mediate between warring factions in the Convention (April).

Huge mob, probably stirred up by the *Montagne*, surrounds the Convention (2 June); leading Girondists arrested. Many moderate members leave Paris, leaving Jacobins in control. Constitution of 1793 voted but never implemented as country in state of war. New Committee of Public Safety re-elected, including Robespierre (July).

Marat murdered (13 July). Revolts in Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux and other southern towns (May).

Girondist army formed in Marseilles, but city falls to troops of the Republic (August). *Leveé en masse* declared by Convention; general conscription of bachelors aged 18 to 25. Royalist rebels in Toulon hand the city to the British (August). Sardinian forces enter France in support of rebels but are driven back (September). Responding to pressure from Sections, Convention declares that “La terreur à l’ordre du jour”; revolutionary armies established, Law of Suspects passed and wage and price controls (the *maximum*) put in place (September). Revolutionary calendar renames months, introduces ten-day week and dates the Year 1 from 22 September 1792.

Adoption of metric system. Lyons falls to republicans and revolt ruthlessly suppressed (October). Execution of Marie Antoinette. Execution of Brissot and 30 Girondists (October); others, including Roland, Condorcet, and Pétion, commit suicide. Women’s political societies banned. Government led by Committee of Public Safety, Robespierre, Collot d’Herbois, Barère and Saint-Just among the most prominent members. Dechristianization campaign by Paris extremists including Jacques Hébert. By the end of the year, Vendéan revolt crushed, though the region remains in a state of civil war until 1796. Toulon retaken for the Republic by the young Bonaparte (December). Law on local government of 14 frimaire (4 December): Committee of Public Safety moves to control provinces by assuming direct rule; national agents placed in each district, to report every ten days to the government. David’s *Death of Marat*.

**DATE:** 1794

**AUTHOR’S LIFE:** BS had ridden across the border to Switzerland, making his way to Lausanne where he had arranged to meet an *émigré* friend, Jean-Antoine de Rostaing. Spends time with his maternal grandparents in Moudon. Deciding to go the United States, the two men travel up through Germany to Holland, setting sail from Rotterdam on 12 July. They arrive in New York on 30 September. BS earns a living by teaching French – styling himself *Professeur*, a title by which he humorously refers to himself for the rest of his life – and by playing principal violin at the city’s only theatre, a ramshackle building in John Street.

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Mme Merigot: *La Cuisinière Républicaine*.

Restif de la Bretonne: *Monsieur Nicolas* (to 1797).

Mrs Radcliffe: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

Coleridge and Southey: *The Fall of Robespierre*.

Execution of Chénier and Lavoisier.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Robespierre eliminates enemies to both left and right, sending Hébert and his followers to the guillotine in March and Danton, Desmoulins and friends, who had been campaigning for a relaxation of the Terror, in April. Grandiose pageants organized to promote new regime, e.g. Fête of the Supreme Being (June) and the anniversary of revolution of 10 August.

Unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Collot d'Herbois and suspected attempt on life of Robespierre prompt law of 22 prairial (10 June) reorganizing Revolutionary Tribunal. Intensification of the Terror, which is no longer justified by military situation after French victory at Fleurus (26 June) and reoccupation of Belgium. Robespierre denounces his enemies at the Convention and is in turn denounced and arrested (9 thermidor: 27 July); Paris Commune fails to rally to him and he and his associates are guillotined (28 July). 71 of his supporters in the Commune are executed the following day.

“Thermidorean Reaction”: White Terror begins in Paris where so-called *jeunesse dorée* carry out revenge attacks on Jacobins. Jacobin Club closed (November). Terror spreads to provinces, particularly Lyons and the south where massacres carried out by the *Compagnies de jéhu* continue until mid-1795. Price controls abandoned (December).

**DATE:** 1795

**AUTHOR'S LIFE:** Enjoys the food and the company, male and female, in New York, and, in the autumn, Boston, where the theatre is evacuated during a yellow-fever epidemic. En route, BS shoots wild turkey outside Hartford, Connecticut. His family in France do their best to delay or circumvent the sale of his property and goods and his mother obtains an order suspending him from the list of *émigrés* in Bourg-en-Bresse (October). With the fall of the Jacobins, his return home becomes a possibility and he petitions the Directory to allow it (November).

**LITERARY CONTEXT:** Condorcet (d. 1794): *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*.

Chamfort (d. 1794): *Maximes et pensées, caractères et anecdotes*.

Sade: *Aline et Valcour; La Philosophie dans le boudoir*.

Goethe: *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*.

**HISTORICAL EVENTS:** Prussia, Holland and Spain make peace this year; Austria and Great Britain continue the War of the First Coalition.

Peace of Jaunaye temporarily ends royalist revolt in Vendée (January). Day of 12 germinal (1 April): popular demonstration calls for “Bread and the Constitution of 1793;” arrest and deportation of prominent terrorists Collot d'Herbois, Billaud-Varenne and Barère. Day of 1 prairial (20–23 May): insurrection in Paris put down by National Guard. Dictatorship of Committee of Public Safety ended; revolutionary committees in provinces suppressed; Paris Commune dismantled. Death of young king Louis XVII in the Temple prison (June). Defeat of *émigré* expedition at Quiberon in Brittany (July).

Constitution of the year III (August) brings in indirect elections and franchise restricted to propertied classes; executive power to be exercised by a committee of five with a bicameral legislature. Royalist rising of 13 vendémiaire put down by troops commanded by Bonaparte. Dissolution of Convention (October); Directory comes to power (November). Massive inflation.

Reappearance of salons in Paris, notably those of Mme Récamier, Josephine de Beauharnais, Mme Tallien and – for intellectual society – Mme de Staël. Exaggerated fashions of the *incroyables* and the *merveilleuses*.

In order to keep French forces fed, government offers 12,000 francs to anyone able to provide effective means of



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