

**Compromising Relationships: A study of the family structures in Balzac's *La Comédie Humaine* and their on-screen adaptations**

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### **Abstract**

This study seeks to explore the concept of family structures and relationships both in Balzac's *La Comédie Humaine* and its modern film and cinematic adaptations. The theme of family is prominent throughout *La Comédie Humaine* in a wide variety of forms, but, easier to overlook, are the compromises on which these family structures rely. For the purpose of this study, I have selected three case-study novels which explore different aspects of family and analysed both the novels and a modern television or cinematic adaptation of each in order to consider both compromise in *La Comédie Humaine* and compromise in the context of adaptation. The case study novels I have analysed are *Le Père Goriot*, *Eugénie Grandet* and *La Duchesse de Langeais*. Chapter One on *Le Père Goriot* focuses on the concept of fatherhood undermined and the role of the son-in-law. Chapter Two on *Eugénie Grandet* continues an exploration of parent-child relationships in the context of a 'traditional' family unit. Finally, Chapter Three on *La Duchesse de Langeais* focuses on marriage, adultery and the representation of women.

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## Introduction

In this dissertation, I explore the ways in which modern directors, actors and producers have attempted to negotiate the daunting task of translating three of Balzac's nineteenth-century novels for the big and small screen for modern audiences to enjoy. The task of adapting a nineteenth-century novel is not simple and the relevance and importance of these kinds of adaptations for modern audiences are frequently questioned. Indeed, as Deborah Cartmell points out 'the jury is still out as to whether film adaptation, which arguably inflicts some costs on both literary and film studies...is, in fact, a price worth paying.'<sup>1</sup> Entertainment is obviously a key factor in any television show or film; however, the adaptations which I analyse in the following chapters not only entertain, but also mirror and reflect upon many social issues which have remained intrinsic to human life over the centuries. I have chosen three novels from *La Comédie Humaine* and a modern adaptation of each, as case studies for the three chapters: *Le Père Goriot*, *Eugénie Grandet* and *La Duchesse de Langeais*. Although these novels provide very different characters, settings and situations, the overriding theme which continues through all of them is that of family. It is true that much of Balzac's work draws on 'ideas of instability, erosion and transformation'<sup>2</sup> that originate from the time of change in which he was living, including the transformation of the pre-Revolution family unit. Society has continued on a path of rapid transformation since then, making Balzac's representations of the family as relevant today as they were in the nineteenth century. As society has continued to develop, compromises have been made in political, cultural and social terms which echo both the climate of change in which Balzac was living and the compromises involved in the process of adaptation. In the twenty-first century, Balzac continues to generate 'a powerful and emotional atmosphere'<sup>3</sup> among his readers, partly due

to the continued relevance of themes such as that of the family, making his novels perfect subjects for adaptation and, in turn, making these adaptations perfect subjects for analysis.

One of the most important aspects of Balzac's work is his interest in what some may consider the mundane, that is to say, the private lives of his characters. Balzac's 'fascination with private life'<sup>4</sup> means that he frequently makes use of the home as a main setting. This interest in the domestic also reflects the 'privileged place of the idea of the family in nineteenth-century ideology'.<sup>5</sup> Whilst the variety of family structures has developed over the years from the traditional family unit (comprising of a mother, a father and their children) Balzac proves that this variety has always been present. The variety of family structures was perhaps less recognised by nineteenth-century society; however, families of all kinds coexisted then as they do today. Balzac presents his readers with a whole host of characters whose family structures are, as far as possible, removed from the traditional family stereotype. Examples of this include: Ursule Mirouët, the orphan who is taken in by her uncle; Victorine Taillefer, whose father abandons her as illegitimate until the death of his son, then welcomes her home with open arms; Eugène de Rastignac who adopts a surrogate father figure in *Le Père Goriot*; Antoinette de Langeais, whose arranged marriage disintegrates with the absence of her husband resulting in her taking a lover to replace him. As Lucey notes, in *La Comédie Humaine*, 'numerous conflicting family forms exist in uneasy proximity to one another.'<sup>6</sup> The melange of family structures and the different relationships which occur within these structures exists today as it did in the nineteenth century and it is the empathy for characters and their situations which encourages the audience to relate to them. People have continued to make compromises for the sake of maintaining family ties and supporting their particular family structure over centuries. The families Balzac presents are not simply dysfunctional, as they clearly do function in both Balzac's novels and today's society. That

functionality, however, relies on the concept of compromise, in the same way that successful adaptations are based on a compromise between the original text and the director's artistic vision.

The concept of family life and the difference between what society perceives and what truly occurs behind closed doors is particularly clear in adaptations made for television and cinema in our age which is 'intensely visual, nourished on the museum and the media, and attuned to the enduring popular forms of fiction'.<sup>7</sup> In *Balzac, cinéaste*, Anne-Marie Baron notes that 'Balzac fait naître sous sa plume des tableaux animés, des fresques mouvants'.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps it is this movement in his writing, the intricate descriptions, and the narrative style which have rendered Balzac's work so highly suited to adaptation in visual media. This very visual style of writing undoubtedly would have suited the changing role of the novel and the way in which it was experienced in the nineteenth century. At the time in which Balzac was writing, the reading of novels was 'increasingly being experienced through solitary silent reading, not in the social groups in which reading aloud had formerly taken place'.<sup>9</sup> The role of television itself replicates the position that the novel was in. Unlike the cinema which is necessarily experienced in a public setting, watching television is, if not always experienced as a solitary activity, a more private means of enjoying films. The fact that these adaptations present a family setting is equally important as, through the medium of television, one family's private lives are projected into the private sphere of another family. A modern family may easily recognise and empathise with some of the issues of family compromise represented in a television adaptation of one of Balzac's novels. It is this which makes Balzac's novels so suited to adaptations for television, such as the Verhaeghe adaptations which I analyse in this dissertation. Balzac's fascination with the private is also mirrored in today's audience, who, hardened to the often 'degrading'<sup>10</sup> spectacle of reality TV may not be



content with ‘the momentary illusion that the world is accorded with human desire and intelligence’<sup>11</sup> provided by many forms of television which are based purely on fantasy as opposed to a fiction which seeks to replicate reality. As a realist author, Balzac adapts reality, making compromises to reconcile it with his vision as a writer. When the original text is adapted, the director adds another lens to this, filtering it through his/her vision before projecting it for the world to see. It is significant, however, that behind these lenses lies an original basis in reality. As a result, television and cinematic adaptations of Balzac bridge the gap between the somewhat coarse reality of reality TV and the unrealistic world of pure fiction. As such, they address the question of what happens behind closed doors (as in reality TV) but with the filters of at least two different artistic visions, as well as the temporal buffer of over a century. The themes and situations which could be uncomfortably close to a modern reality, such as the compromises made in family relationships, are made comfortable by the knowledge that they are set in the nineteenth century and they have been adapted from reality not once but twice. Yet the glimmer of truth in these adaptations responds to the modern preoccupation with the private lives of others and creates empathy for the characters and their compromising situations.

In reference to Zola’s work Kate Griffiths has noted that adaptations ‘are habitually approached as imperfect reproductions of a textual superior’.<sup>12</sup> It is, indeed, true that in much critical literature on the subject of adaptation ‘...‘fidelity’ becomes a negative yardstick with which to beat film’.<sup>13</sup> However, my belief is that the success of a heritage film adaptation lies in striking a balance between remaining faithful to the core text and creating an adaptation which appeals and is accessible to an audience, not only in a different medium, but in a different century. Ellis has suggested that it is due to the centrality of family as a theme within television that the problem of time may be resolved. Through the centrality of family as a

theme 'TV produces its effect of immediacy even within dramas of historically remote periods by reproducing the audience's view of itself within its fictions'.<sup>14</sup> However, alongside the questions of fidelity and relevance, it is important to remember that 'adaptations and appropriations are impacted upon by movements in, and readings produced by, the theoretical and intellectual arena',<sup>15</sup> they also involve the ideas of not one author, but many, and take influence from all those involved. Finally, adaptations are both limited and inspired by the media used to portray them. As such, they should not be viewed as inferior to the source text, but as both a development of it and a work in their own right. Adaptations should equally not be perceived as a mere collage of ideas but a much more intricate framework founded on the original text and developed by the influences of the people, events and ideologies of the time in which the adaptation is created. This dissertation treats each of the adaptations as a work in its own right and considers the reasons behind the compromises made by directors when deciding what to remove from, and what to add to, the original text. A large part of the decision regarding what to retain and what to remove relies not only on the balance between fidelity to the source novel and appealing to a modern audience, but also on the medium into which the novel is being adapted. Robert Stam highlights this, suggesting that 'the shift from a single-track verbal medium such as the novel to a multitrack medium like film, which can play not only with words (written and spoken) but also with music, sound effects, and moving photographic images, explains the unlikelihood, and I would suggest even the undesirability, of literal fidelity.'<sup>16</sup> Whilst certain aspects of Balzac's work, such as much of the omniscient narration, the intricate description and the short asides, may be lost in the translation from text to screen, these may be replaced by voiceovers, scenery, music, gestures or any one of the plethora of techniques uniquely available to filmmakers.

By studying multiple adaptations by Verhaeghe, I have aimed to cover a variety of adaptive techniques and to consider the way in which the theme of family in Balzac's original novels is foregrounded in his adaptations. The use of Rivette's cinematic adaptation provides an interesting counterpoint to the television adaptations and shows the different options available, as well as the limitations involved in adapting a novel into a cinematic format for a wider audience. Balzac's *Comédie Humaine* is renowned for its reappearing characters who 'bring with them a weight of significance gained from other contexts'.<sup>17</sup> It is true that some of this context is lost for the audiences of the adaptations who may not be aware of the comments which Antoinette de Langeais makes to, and about, Madame de Beauséant in *Le Père Goriot*, and may be oblivious to the fact that Henri de Marsay, Delphine de Nucingen's lover who leaves her just before she meets Rastignac, is actually one of Montriveau's friends and allies in his quest to kidnap the Duchess from the convent. This loss of context for these characters, whilst not replaced, is reflected in on-screen adaptations in the actors. For example, Dominique Labourier, who plays Madame Grandet in Verhaeghe's television adaptation, also plays the vicious spinster Mademoiselle Michonneau in *Le Père Goriot*. Similarly, Pierre Vernier who plays Monsieur des Grassins in the television adaptation of *Eugénie Grandet* reappears as the priest who speaks to the Duchess about religion, prompting her argument with Montriveau, in *La Duchesse de Langeais* and again as Poiret in *Le Père Goriot*. Whilst playing very different parts, in the same way that Balzac's characters cannot escape their context in the eyes of the reader, the actors, when recognised from their other films or from public appearances, bring with them a preconceived image of what their character will be. Vincendeau refers to this as their 'star persona',<sup>18</sup> 'how the perceived authentic individual informs the star's image'.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps the most interesting case of a recurring actor in the adaptations that I have studied is that of Edwige Feuillère who played

La Princesse Beaumont-Chauvry in Verhaeghe's television adaptation of *La Duchesse de Langeais*, but previously played Antoinette de Langeais opposite Pierre Richard-Willm in the 1942 adaptation of *La Duchesse de Langeais*. Having previously played Antoinette de Langeais, Feuillère brings a new depth to the Princesse's self-appointed role as Antoinette's mentor and advisor. The knowledge that she once played Antoinette informs her performance as the Princesse and adds another layer of meaning to her advice to Antoinette where she tells her 'je ne connais aucune Duchesse qui ait foulé les convenances comme tu viens de le faire', adding 'tu feras ce qui te plaira, non?...c'est ce que j'aurais fait à ton age'.<sup>20</sup> Knowing that Feuillère played the Duchesse before increases the credibility of the Princesse as an advisor to Antoinette as it allows the audience to believe that she may indeed have gone through a similar experience in her youth. Thus the compromise which actors face is double edged. On the one hand, their previous roles affect their star persona, and, as such, show their performance in a different light. This can be in the sense that it supports their role, as with Edwige Feuillère playing the Princesse, or that it undermines it, as with Dominique Labourier who, having played the sympathetic Madame Grandet may perhaps be viewed in a different light when playing the scheming Michonneau. On the other hand, actors must make each performance and every character distinct from their previous work. It is not necessarily simply the ghosts of their own performances which actors must be aware of, in attempting to strike this balance. When writing on Gerard Depardieu, Ginette Vincendeau noted that his 'dramatic star persona is that of the 'suffering macho', a figure of misogynistic virility who is simultaneously in crisis.'<sup>21</sup> This exact description could equally be applied to Guillaume Depardieu's role as Montriveau, particularly in the scenes during and after the kidnap of the Duchess. Thus the star persona has been passed from Father to Son. It is the compromise between the star persona and the need to play each role independently of these preconceptions

which creates each individual on-screen character, thus modifying and amplifying the character from the original text and going some way towards compensating for the fact that much of the context for certain characters in the novels becomes lost in the adaptation process.

This dissertation is divided into three chapters, each with a case study novel which explores a different aspect of compromise within the family and the way in which this is translated to either the big or small screen in a cinematic or television adaptation. Chapter One explores the wealth of family relationships and ties in *Le Père Goriot*, focussing particularly on the representation of the role of the father in both the novel and Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe's 2004 adaptation for television. Chapter One also begins to explore the role of women within family units and the ways in which extended family can be used as a means of transcending the social boundaries imposed by one's class and wealth. Through an examination of Rastignac, Goriot, Vautrin and those characters who surround them, I begin to explore the workings of the non-traditional family unit that is La Maison Vauquer. Whilst the residents are not related to each other, they become a family unit in the absence of their own families, be they absent through choice, such as Rastignac's decision to forge his future in Paris rather than staying at home in the countryside, through the imposed choice of others, such as Victorine and Goriot who are pushed out by their true families, or through circumstance such as Madame Vauquer whose husband is dead or Vautrin whose homosexuality leaves him with no possibility of having children of his own. This artificially constructed family unit and its members' relationships with their own distanced families constitute the wealth of family and surrogate relationships in *Le Père Goriot* and provide an excellent starting point from which to consider the compromises made within family units. Regardless of whether a family exists in the traditional sense or is constructed, the compromises made for each other by the individuals

within that unit retain their value, the bonds of family are no less real, and in some cases, such as Rastignac's sense of duty and empathy for Goriot, are more real than the bonds with blood relatives, such as Goriot's daughters.

Chapter Two consists of an analysis of the traditional family unit presented in *Eugénie Grandet* and the ways in which Balzac and Verhaeghe use melodrama and realism in the original novel as well as the 1993 adaptation for television. By analysing *Eugénie Grandet*, we have a counterpoint for the other chapters, a traditional family unit with which to compare the less traditional families which occur elsewhere in Balzac's fiction. The dysfunctionality of this traditional family, however, provides a certain proof that, in Balzac's eyes, the traditional family unit was equally as susceptible to the evils of society as any other, less traditional, family unit. *Eugénie Grandet* is proof of the balance which needs to be maintained within a family unit of any kind, including the traditional family. In the Grandet household, the balance is skewed by Grandet's greed and his obsession with money and power. Whilst the women around him are willing to compromise by doing exactly as he pleases, this balance is, if not happy, at least stable. It is only when Eugénie is made aware of the extent of her compromises by the arrival of her cousin from Paris that the balance of power within the Grandet household begins to shift. It is through questioning the compromises which she makes for her family that Eugénie begins to gain a certain amount of her own power. Ironically it is through making the greatest compromise of all in giving her money and her heart to her cousin that Eugénie breaks free from the constraints of her father. *Eugénie Grandet* also provides an opportunity to consider in more depth the role of the mother and the extent of the compromises which she makes in order to protect her family. Despite the representation of *Eugénie Grandet* as a standard traditional family unit, it is perhaps wise to question the extent to which it is truly standard. The divided loyalties within the household

which occur when Charles arrives recall the biblical saying, 'If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand'.<sup>22</sup> However it is not so much the house which cannot stand as Grandet's tyrannical reign over it. Once Eugénie's eyes are opened to the world around her and the possibilities which lie outside of her father's mercenary lifestyle, her loyalties no longer lie with her father but with her cousin. She is willing to compromise her relationship with her father in order to find true love with Charles. It is perhaps due to the constant necessity for compromise in her life that Eugénie is never truly able to find happiness. At the opposite end of the scale, however, Grandet's lack of compromise in all areas of his life in order to support his monomania for gold, ultimately leaves him alone and unloved at the end of his life with nothing but money and an unhappy, reluctant heiress to inherit his fortune and the misfortune that comes with it.

Chapter Three considers *La Duchesse de Langeais*, the only one of the three novels which does not focus on children but on the concepts of arranged marriage and adultery in the aristocracy during the Restoration. This chapter also considers a television adaptation directed by Verhaeghe (from 1994), alongside Jacques Rivette's more recent cinematic adaptation *Ne Touchez Pas la Hache* (2007). *La Duchesse de Langeais* presents a very different kind of family situation. Mainardi explains that 'in the propertied classes, marriages were arranged for the benefit of families, not of individuals. Because property, wealth and titles followed the chain of alliances and descent, the marriage contract was in essence a corporate contract uniting the futures of two families.'<sup>23</sup> Antoinette's character represents the problems which occur when this system is abused by one of the parties involved in the marriage. Her husband's neglect of his duties towards her, combined with other factors, triggers her desire for Montriveau and her coquettish behaviour. Initially she is uncompromising in regards to her relationship with Montriveau; like a cat with a mouse she plays with his loyalty, earns his

trust then pounces on a reason to push him further from her. Montriveau, on the other hand, compromises a great deal without necessarily realising it. Just as the process of adaptation involves a constant renegotiation of the source text, so the Duchesse's game of cat and mouse with Montriveau means a constant renegotiation of their relationship and his feelings towards her. Following the pivotal scene of Montriveau's kidnap of the Duchesse, their roles of cat and mouse shift dramatically. Suddenly the Duchesse is willing to compromise everything, her reputation, her marriage and her position, in order to be with Montriveau. This willingness to compromise with him is balanced by her unwavering refusal to compromise with herself. She gives Montriveau an ultimatum, and, whilst the ultimatum is left in his hands, it is equally an ultimatum for herself: if Montriveau does not love her, she must remove herself from the world as she knows it. It would be easy to find a compromise, to do the same as Madame de Beauséant and leave Parisian society to find happiness in the countryside; however she stands by her word and in doing so refuses to compromise her own beliefs and her own decision.

Through studying these case study novels and their adaptations this dissertation aims to analyse a sample of the variety of family structures which are clearly visible in *La Comédie Humaine* and the compromises which maintain these structures. At the same time, I aim to consider the compromises made in the process of adaptation and how this process seeks to create a representation which remains relevant to a modern audience. The family relationships and characters that I shall explore in the following chapters rely on compromise as much as the process of adaptation itself, and they represent what happens to family structures when this compromise becomes skewed, distorted, or undermined.



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- <sup>1</sup> Deborah Cartmell, **A Companion to Literature, Film and Adaptation** (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) p. 1.
- <sup>2</sup> Victor H Brombert, **The Hidden Reader** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 38.
- <sup>3</sup> Peter W Lock, **Balzac: Le Père Goriot** (Frome and London: Butler and Tenner, 1967) p. 8.
- <sup>4</sup> Andrew Watts, 'Balzac on the BBC: Serial Breaks and Adaptive Returns in *Père Goriot* (1968)', **Dix-Neuf: Journal of the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes**, Volume 18: Issue 2, (2014), pp. 180-192 (p. 183)
- <sup>5</sup> Christopher Prendergast, **Balzac: Fiction and Melodrama** (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 1978) p. 177.
- <sup>6</sup> Michael Lucey, **The Misfit of the Family: Balzac and the Social Forms of Sexuality**, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 4.
- <sup>7</sup> Peter Brooks, **Realist Vision** (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005) p. 18.
- <sup>8</sup> Anne-Marie Baron, **Balzac: Cinéaste** (Paris : Méridiens-Klincksieck, 1990) p. 126.
- <sup>9</sup> Patricia Mainardi **Husbands, Wives and Lovers: Marriage and its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France** (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2003) p. 216.
- <sup>10</sup> Brooks, **Realist Vision**, p. 216.
- <sup>11</sup> Brooks **Realist Vision**, p. 214.
- <sup>12</sup> Kate Griffiths, **Emile Zola and the Artistry of Adaptation** (Oxford: Legenda, 2009) p. 1.
- <sup>13</sup> Ginette Vincendeau, **Film/Literature/Heritage : A Sight and Sound Reader** (London: British Film Institute, 2001) p. xii.
- <sup>14</sup> John Ellis **Visible Fictions : Cinema : Television : Video** (London and New York: Routledge, 1982) p. 135.
- <sup>15</sup> Julie Sanders, **Adaptation and Appropriation**, (London: Routledge, 2005) p. 13.
- <sup>16</sup> Robert Stam, **Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic and the Art of Adaptation**, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) p. 4.
- <sup>17</sup> Peter Brooks, **The Melodramatic Imagination** (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995) p. 118 (original work printed 1976).
- <sup>18</sup> Ginette Vincendeau, **Stars and Stardom in French Cinema**, (London: Continuum, 2000) p. xi.
- <sup>19</sup> Vincendeau, **Stars and Stardom in French Cinema**, p. xi.
- <sup>20</sup> Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, (France : France 3, Institut National de l'Audiovisuel : Technisonor, 1995) [on DVD].
- <sup>21</sup> Vincendeau **Stars and Stardom in French Cinema**, p. 225.
- <sup>22</sup> The Bible, New International Version, **Mark 3.25**.
- <sup>23</sup> Mainardi, **Husbands, Wives and Lovers: Marriage and its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France**, p. 158.

**Fatherhood Undermined: An Exploration of the Role of the Father and Family  
Structures in *Le Père Goriot***

‘The mystery of *Le Père Goriot* is built around the question of fatherhood’.<sup>1</sup> In the same way, many different aspects of nineteenth-century life in France were permeated by the central question of the role of the father. This chapter aims to analyse this key question of the role of the father within the broader context of family structures. In Balzac’s work, family is not simply presented as the structure of a home: it is name, title and association. Traditionally the role of the Father was in managing this system in his position as the head of the household. With the waves of revolution which France experienced throughout the nineteenth century, however, the role of the Father was rapidly thrown into a state of instability, along with the structure of the traditional family unit as a whole. The Divorce laws of 1816, for example, threw a new light on the role of the Father as ‘all children born into a marriage were now entitled to equal inheritance, paternity investigations were outlawed, and there was no longer the possibility of either recognising or, except under extreme cases, repudiating adulterine children’.<sup>2</sup> This meant that the purpose and meaning behind the concept of inheritance, a key aspect of both family structure and the role of the Father as a provider, became precarious. This is just one example of the way in which the rewriting, or adaptation, of the Code Civil by different governments throughout the nineteenth century created an unstable position for the role of the Father in his own home and within society as a whole.

Other examples of unstable father figures in Balzac’s work are numerous and include Félix Grandet who believes that he is in a position of control at the head of his household while being secretly disobeyed by his wife and daughter and the Docteur Minoret who is obeyed by his ward but disregarded by his nieces and nephews. However, neither of these characters epitomises the concept of ‘fatherhood undermined’ to the same extent as Père Goriot. This

notion of the undermining of the father is often linked to the emergence of new, non-traditional family forms in the wake of the Revolution, such as that of Docteur Minoret and his ward, Ursule Mirouët or that of the substitute family created in the Madame Vauquer's boarding house. Goriot himself is part of an adapted family structure following the death of his wife. It is precisely this variety of family structures<sup>3</sup> presented in *Le Père Goriot* which provides a wealth of family ties, each different from the last, to examine. This chapter analyses the relationships between characters, real or imposed, legitimate or illegitimate, both as they are presented in *Le Père Goriot* and as they are translated for the screen for a modern audience in the 2004 film for television adapted by Jean-Claude Carrière and directed by Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe. The concept of television and the act of watching television constitute 'a profoundly domestic phenomenon'<sup>4</sup> and as such, provide an adaptive space which correlates directly with the domesticity of the family crisis represented in *Le Père Goriot*. The private feel to the experience of watching television allows Carrière and Verhaeghe the opportunity to project the private themes of family and the role of the father figure into the private setting of the family home, thus doubling the intensity and importance of the theme of family. This chapter specifically discusses the concepts of relationships between fathers (or father figures) and their children, family as a source of reputation and a means of self-promotion, willed, artificial, kinship relations<sup>5</sup> and the role of marriage in relation to that of the father. By considering these themes in relation to both the novel and the television adaptation, it will allow us to explore further Balzac's fascination with them and the reasons behind their adaptation.

The very format of a novel means that Balzac was free to describe his characters and their relationships with each other as he wished. In the process of adaptation from a written medium to the screen, many of the subtleties of characters' relationships with each other,

achieved through Balzac's omniscient narrator, are lost. It becomes, therefore, essential to create an on-screen image which can translate and develop characters' relationships with each other, replacing the description of their relationships which is lost in translation from the novel. One way of resolving this which has received little critical attention in the debate over fidelity is through the *mise-en-scène*. In Verhaeghe's adaptation this is achieved specifically through the physical positioning of characters compared to each other which is, at times, a visual representation of their relationships. There is a clear correlation in both the novel and television adaptation between Goriot's ever decreasing funds and his movement from a good room on the first floor of the pension to the cold, bare attic. Whilst Goriot's position in society becomes progressively lower, his physical position in the boarding house gets higher, culminating in his move to the attic, the highest room in the house. Following his death, he is buried at Père Lachaise, a cemetery so high that there is a view over all of Paris. His physical ascent, whilst directly opposite to his descent through the ranks of society, can perhaps be seen to emulate the continually increasing level of martyrdom to which he will push himself in order to support his daughters. Images of high and low appear throughout the novel and film in different guises: the Comtesse de Beauséant's comment that Delphine de Nucingen 'laperait-elle toute la boue qu'il y a entre la rue Saint-Lazare et la rue de Grenelle pour entrer dans mon salon.';<sup>6</sup> the final image of Rastignac gazing over Paris from his heightened position at Père Lachaise. In each situation the image of height implies power: the Comtesse de Beauséant's power over Delphine de Nucingen, and Rastignac's belief in his power to conquer Paris. This is perhaps best demonstrated through the use of stairs in the television adaptation. We see Delphine ask for Goriot and wait for him on the stairs; she goes ahead of him and, therefore, both socially, in her position of Baronne, and visually, she appears to the audience higher than her father. However, when Goriot has given her the money, he comes

down the staircase, still following her, but this time, he is higher than Delphine. The glow of genuine paternal pride, compared to her false show of affection (a brief kiss on the cheek) combined with his position (still standing a few steps up the staircase) where she goes back to in order to kiss him perhaps denote the power shift that has occurred when he gave his money to Delphine. By giving her the money that she came for, Goriot has literally bought some temporary power over Delphine's affection for him, even if the affection will only last for as long as he can continue to give her money. His height on the staircase may also reflect the possibility that he now has, from his perspective, the moral high-ground. Goriot's main preoccupation is that he has not done enough for his daughters and he tries to give them everything he can. In giving Delphine the money she asked for, he has not only bought himself her false affection, but also a brief repose and a soothed conscience. Although Goriot's paternal role is being undermined by his daughter's selfish demands for money, he is presented as higher than her. By giving her the money, Goriot is fulfilling his role as her father, providing for her to a much greater extent than he is obliged to and, therefore, is presented as being better, or morally higher, than Delphine. By contrast, the use of costume and props allows the audience to see only too well the compromises he makes to maintain this moral position and the fact that, whilst his morals remain intact, he is undermined in every other way possible by his children's greed.

The way in which stairs are used in the *mise-en-scène* of the television adaptation is equally useful in analysing the relationship between Rastignac, his absent family and Goriot, his father-figure. As Rastignac helps Goriot move his belongings to the loft, Goriot is higher up the stairs, denoting his moral superiority. Moments later, Rastignac admits that his sisters have offered him everything they have to maintain his extravagant life in Paris.<sup>7</sup> This *mise en scène* underscores the painfully close comparison between Rastignac's situation and that of

Goriot's daughters: Goriot was placed higher than Delphine because of his moral superiority; similarly he is higher than Rastignac who is willing to deprive his mother and sisters in order to succeed. The staircase is a symbol of moral power through the different physical heights it accords to characters. It is also a symbol of transition, in this case, Goriot's physical transition from one part of the guesthouse to another and his metaphorical transition from one level of self-sacrifice to the next. In another example, the scene outside the gambling hall, both Rastignac and Delphine stand together on a staircase. Rastignac is higher than Delphine, thus implying that he has the moral high ground of the situation: by going to the gambling hall, he is trying to help her. This scene equally demonstrates the way in which Verhaeghe uses the staircase as a space of metaphorical transition. Whilst standing above Delphine on this staircase, Rastignac's whole position changes, his purpose in Delphine's life is adapted from merely being allowed to pay court to her to truly becoming her confidant. Similarly, Rastignac's observation of Goriot breaking up his silver and Vautrin returning drunk with another man occurs on the staircase outside his room in the boarding house. This is perhaps the biggest transition of all for Rastignac as it represents the moment which marks his first real glimpse into the duplicitous nature of Parisian society and his transition from an innocent country boy to one who is aware of what goes on behind closed doors.

In the same way that staircases are used to symbolise power and transition, mirrors are used throughout the film in different situations to show characters' inconsistency between what they say and what they are feeling. For example, in the scene outside the gambling hall, there are mirrors on either side of the staircase. These mirrors perhaps show Delphine's duplicitous nature as she denounces her father for having given them too much. It is possible that she believes what she says to Rastignac; it is however equally possible that she knows that what she says will be repeated to Goriot and the effect that it will have on him. The *mise-en-scène*

is therefore clearly used to represent the relationships between characters, replacing some of the omniscient narration which is less suited to the visual medium of film. It is used to foreground not only Goriot's compromises in his relationships with his daughters but also the processes of transition and compromise which occur in other relationships within the adaptation.

The use of flashback in the scene where Goriot watches his daughters shopping and riding in their carriages equally foregrounds the compromises Goriot has made. It also highlights a theme of observation. This theme of observation is prominent in both the novel and Verhaeghe's television film. As the observer of his daughters' lives, Goriot is on the outside but this gives him a certain power; he can watch without being seen and therefore without allowing himself to hope for any kind of acknowledgement from them. This is foregrounded by the camera shots which alternate between the daughters as Goriot sees them and close-ups of Goriot himself as he watches with a dazed, dreamlike expression. When writing on *La Bête Humaine*, Monica Filimon has noted that 'power relations are dominated by one's capacity to see without being seen'.<sup>8</sup> Here, therefore, by watching his daughters from afar, Goriot retains a certain level of power over his relationship with them. The capacity to watch his daughters reinforces his feelings of pride and closeness to them which their elevated position in the social hierarchy and the distance which they impose on him would otherwise have greatly reduced. By taking this into his own hands, Goriot redefines his role so that, rather than being rejected by Delphine and Anastasie, he can still feel involved in their lives, even if his role is reduced to that of observer. It is parallel to the way that the audiences of television, films and books feel involved in the lives of the characters. Goriot is equally clinging to the belief that he is still useful to his daughters in some way and through his observations of them, he reinforces his own feeling of usefulness; by watching them shopping and out in their

carriages, he can literally see where the money he gives them goes. With regard to inheritance Petrey has argued that, in Balzac, particularly in *Le Père Goriot*, 'the father is 'real' only if he transmits money to his child'.<sup>9</sup> Goriot, however, is treated by his daughters and sons-in-law as if he were already dead: they refuse to acknowledge him publicly as a relative. As a result, he must begin the process of transmitting money to his daughters immediately in order to remain a 'real' father. One example which supports this theory occurs in the television adaptation through this flashback scene: Goriot gains both pleasure and power from funding his daughters' lavish lifestyles: he knows that they will visit him again when they want more money, thus making him the master of a situation in which he would otherwise be subject to their will, prevented from seeing them, allegedly by their husbands but in reality by the daughters themselves. His role as a father is only limited by the amount of cash he has readily available. The irony of this situation is that, in validating his role as a 'real' father through money whilst he is alive, he is incapable of leaving them any inheritance, thus undermining the validity of his claim to being a 'real' father. It is equally important to examine the pleasure that Goriot gains from watching his daughters spend his money. The act of watching them spend becomes a legitimate substitute for genuine paternal closeness or affection because it is *his* money. Without his involvement, the daughters would not be able to go shopping or ride in their carriages with little lapdogs. The sacrifices Goriot makes for his daughters, the suffering to which he voluntarily subjects himself, makes him more invested in the money which he gives, increasing his pleasure at watching them spend it and making him more attached to the things they buy. Equally, it is this process of living vicariously through his daughters which sustains him in the cold attic room as he progressively limits his own expenditures on the most basic necessities such as food and coffee, stating that 'Je n'ai point froid si elles ont chaud, je ne m'ennuie jamais si elles rient. Je n'ai de chagrins que les



leurs.’<sup>10</sup> This emotional investment in his daughters’ spending gives him the sense of control over his own relationship with them, making him so defensive of this relationship when it is criticised ‘ ‘Eh bien, elles ne viennent donc plus vous voir, vos filles?’ en mettant en doute sa paternité, le père Goriot tressaillit comme si son hôtesse l’eût piqué avec un fer. -Elles viennent quelquefois, répondit-il d’une voix émue.’<sup>11</sup> Despite his own knowledge that they reject him as a father in every way except financially, Goriot must justify his role as their father and continue to fund their extravagant lifestyles because, without doing so he ceases to function in the only role he has left. Goriot’s observation of his daughters is therefore a symptom of the sacrifices and compromises which occur on a daily basis on his part to fund their lifestyles of excess.

The theme of observation in the television adaptation is also highlighted through Rastignac who observes many relationships, thereby giving the viewer the opportunity to do so from his perspective. In one short scene Rastignac stands on the staircase outside his room and spies on Goriot through a gap in the boards which make up the wall, breaking up his silver in order to sell it to fund his daughters. Almost immediately afterwards, looking through the hatch which leads to his bedroom, he sees Vautrin coming in drunk with a young man. By juxtaposing these two incidents, it highlights the fact that both relationships are unusual: homosexuality in Balzac’s work is a topic which has already received much critical attention. Here, however, it is only necessary to note that ‘Balzacian ‘realism’, especially in connection with sexual themes, was frequently more than the average middle-class reader could accept with equanimity.’<sup>12</sup>, a concept which is best illustrated by Poiret’s exclamation in the television adaptation ‘ça existe donc...’.<sup>13</sup> The concept of a father bankrupting himself in order to support his fully-grown, married daughters would perhaps be perceived as equally shocking, especially within the context of the cruelty with which they treat him in return. Placing the

incidents that Rastignac witnesses one after the other highlights the unconventional nature of the relationships demonstrated and maintained by these acts. The fact that it is the middle of the night also underlines the secrecy with which both of these relationships are maintained: there is a certain shame associated with both of them and Goriot and Vautrin would prefer that their respective vices remain undetected by the other boarders. The way in which this scene is filmed, through the eyes of Rastignac, gives the audience an insight into exactly what he sees and, because of the way in which the shots are angled (filming through the gap in the boards and over the edge of the hatch) the audience is cast in the role of voyeur. The impression that we are witnessing personal secrets, encouraged through the style of camera shots and the *mise-en-scène*, reflects the Balzacian preoccupation with the private and personal which has always allowed readers access to his characters' private lives. It also reflects the intimacy of television as a medium: 'the smaller size of the screen, as opposed to the dominating, large image of cinema, pulls the viewer into a closer relationship, a smaller shared space with the television character'<sup>14</sup> thus achieving through the medium of television the same sense of intimacy and access to private lives that Balzac achieved through his detailed description of characters and their surroundings and his use of the omniscient narrator. The sensation of a certain proximity to the characters and their private lives is perhaps also indicative of the modern preoccupation with the private lives of others. According to Brooks 'we have a thirst for the reality of others which may be paired with boredom or pain in our own'.<sup>15</sup> This can be equally applied to both the novel and the television adaptation; to the original readers of Balzac, who had survived multiple changes of regime, and to the modern audience of television adaptations for whom television is a tool used to 'foreground 'family life' in all its complexities'<sup>16</sup> thus helping them to manage their own family relationships.

Money defines Goriot's relationship with his daughters, as demonstrated by his secret nocturnal act of breaking up his most valued possessions in order to provide for them. In the television adaptation, Goriot claims to have given them 'tout ce qu'un père peut donner'<sup>17</sup> by providing them with the money which allowed them to choose their husbands. By limiting his role and affection to the realms of money, Goriot sets himself up for failure. There is a scene in the television adaptation where we see Delphine and Rastignac outside the gambling hall where he wins her money to pay off her debts to De Marsay. Delphine accuses Goriot of being negligent in his role as a father because he gave them everything they could want and, in doing so, encouraged expectations of a lavish lifestyle where they merely need to ask and it will be given. The initial reaction that this scene seeks to provoke is that she is ungrateful, petulant and may always want the opposite of what she had. However, there is an echo of truth in what she says: had Goriot been more controlling of his daughters' fortunes and kept his own intact, they would perhaps have been more affectionate with him (as he suggests in his deathbed-speech) therefore solving the problem of his own unreturned affection and perhaps choosing better husbands for his daughters in the process.

The defining role that money plays in the relationship between Goriot and his daughters is undoubtedly the main example of the role of money in *Le Père Goriot*, but there are many other relationships which are also negotiated around money. Firstly, there is Taillefer's rejection of Victorine because he wants to leave his ill-gotten fortune entirely to his son and questions his paternity of Victorine. This kind of rejection of a child was disallowed by the Code Civil and morally frowned upon but clearly occurred regardless. Delphine's split with De Marsay puts her in a difficult position because of the money she still owes him and this is why she needs Rastignac's help in winning back his money at the gambling hall for fear that if she tried to take it from her husband, he would find out about their affair. Both daughters'

relationships with their husbands also revolve around money and their husbands' refusal to give them what they believe is rightfully theirs due both to their position in society and the lives which they have become used to living. It is their supposed lack of funds from their husbands which makes both daughters so reliant on Goriot for their money, thus maintaining the financial dependency of their childhood into their adult lives rather than developing to become solely dependent on their husbands, their dowries and, in due course, their inheritance. Money therefore maintains Goriot's relationships with his daughters in multiple ways. It is a scapegoat for his lack of parenting. By giving them money, he believes that he resolves all of his daughters' problems and is a good father. It also means that his daughters will continue to see him and finally by continuing to finance their spending into their adult lives, he undermines their husbands' rule over the household finances in the same way that they undermine his fatherly role by banishing him from their homes.

It is not only the role that money plays within their relationships which makes marriage in *Le Père Goriot* worthy of further examination. Interestingly, in Verhaeghe's adaptation, there is almost a complete absence of husbands. We never see the Comte de Restaud or the Comte de Beauséant, both of whom feature in the novel, and the Baron de Nucingen makes only a fleeting appearance. More screen-time is, in fact, accorded to the women's lovers, particularly the marquis d'Ajuda Pinto, than to their husbands. Perhaps this is a reflection of the tight budgetary constraints and time allowance allocated to television adaptations. These aspects make removing scenes involving these characters doubly beneficial as it allows more time to develop the key scenes and does not require any more actors than strictly necessary. It is perhaps also telling of the audience. In the nineteenth century, 'received wisdom believed that love matches were based on fleeting superficial attractions that could never endure; only parents could choose an appropriate spouse for their children.'<sup>18</sup> Marriage was, therefore,

often a financial agreement between families, hence affairs were commonplace. Frequently, husbands were aware of these affairs and tolerated them, as we see the Baron de Nucingen do in *La Maison Nucingen*. ‘A l’époque... tous les hommes avaient des maitresses et toutes les femmes avaient des amants.’<sup>19</sup> It was often accepted by both parties that affairs were an inevitable part of marriage. By removing the husbands from the majority of the adaptation, Verhaeghe has taken into account the way in which the view of marriage and extramarital affairs has changed since the nineteenth century and created a more sympathetic setting for the women in the adaptation. Instead of witnessing the fall of a woman who knows how to manipulate almost every situation to her own ends, we watch a jilted Comtesse de Beauséant cry over her lost lover with more sympathy. We watch Rastignac’s affair with Delphine de Nucingen in the same way that Rastignac carries it out: with little thought for her husband. The Baron, when he does briefly appear, is portrayed through the eyes of Rastignac: at best, a nuisance hindering Delphine and Rastignac’s relationship; at worst, the brute that Delphine would want the audience to believe he is. The invisibility of the husband in the television adaptation perhaps equally recognises the importance of women in Balzac’s novels as the true masters of Parisian society; the Comtesse de Beauséant suggests finding a *woman* to train Rastignac in the ways of society, not a man. The manipulation by the women renders the husbands almost insignificant to their behaviour, except within their own marriages which, as the reported actions of the Comte de Restaud and the Baron de Nucingen demonstrate, are subject to blackmail and corruption. The absence of husbands also creates the impression that the women have more freedom than in the novel and that their freedom to do as they please is not reliant on their husbands’ wills.

The absence of husbands in the television adaptation also necessarily implies the absence of Goriot’s sons-in-law. Through their absence, they are portrayed as neglectful of Goriot. The

question of the son-in-law in Balzac is an interesting one which is highlighted a lot more in the novel than in the film. The Duchesse de Langeais, who is also absent from the film, states:

Un gendre est un homme pour qui nous élèverons, vous ou moi, une chère petite créature à laquelle nous tiendrons par mille liens, qui sera pendant dix-sept ans la joie de la famille... Quand cette homme nous l'aura prise, il commencera par saisir son amour comme une hache, afin de couper dans le cœur et au vif de cet ange tous les sentiments par lesquels elle s'attachait à sa famille.<sup>20</sup>

As with Theodore de Sommervieux in *La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote*, the role of the son-in-law is here presented as that of a destroyer of the family rather than a new addition to it. This is reinforced by the behaviour of Goriot's sons-in-law towards their wives. We do see an alternative view of a son-in-law elsewhere in *La Comédie Humaine*, in the form of Paul de Manerville in *Le Contrat de mariage*. The manipulations of Manerville's wife and mother-in-law see him destitute at the end of the novel, on a ship headed to the Indies in an attempt to pay off the debts into which these two women have led him. The role of the son-in-law therefore fits into the same class as that of the father in Balzac's work: he must either take a commanding role over his wife or, as with Manerville, risk falling victim to the manipulations of those, frequently those *women*, around him. The absence of the son-in-law in the television adaptation therefore serves to confirm his guilt and his role as an oppressor of the women while in fact, as we see in *Gobseck*, the Comte de Restaud is the opposite: he simply attempts to protect his own interests and those of his son against those of his wife who, when he dies, is willing to tear apart his room looking for the will before his body is even cold. The film assumes little to no previous knowledge of Balzac's characters, so for the Comte de Restaud to be assumed guilty in his absence is understandable and in keeping with the source novel. The audience can clearly see therefore that the sons-in-law are not simply presented as

neglectful of their wives and father-in-law, but also provide valuable scapegoats for Goriot and his daughters: both can pretend that if it were not for their husbands, Goriot would see his daughters as often as he wanted to.

Another key issue in the role of fatherhood, linked strongly to the character of the Comte de Restaud, is that of illegitimate children. As a result of the function of marriage as a business deal and the numerous affairs which this attitude encouraged, illegitimate children were commonplace in the nineteenth century, and indeed in Balzac's work. Lucey explains how the Code dealt with the question of illegitimate children: the husband was legally bound to recognise them as his own in terms of inheritance.<sup>21</sup> As is clear from the dispute between the Restauds over which children are truly the Comte's biological children, and the example of Victorine, this part of the Code was often overlooked by those whom it advantaged to do so. 'Victorine Taillefer's story is, in fact, an inversion of Goriot's'<sup>22</sup> with one exception: Taillefer believes that she is not biologically his daughter. This difference is crucial, as he is intent that his legitimate son should be his sole heir. Interestingly, however, it is never questioned by any of the characters that once his legitimate son is dead, Taillefer should accept Victorine as his daughter: it is clearly better to have an illegitimate heir than none at all. Lucey also noted that Vautrin's support of this reflects his 'promotion of willed kinship relations'.<sup>23</sup> Because his sexuality prevents him from becoming a father by blood, Vautrin attempts to fill this void through willed paternal relationships with Rastignac and Lucien de Rubempré and his subsequent support of Victorine's right to be recognised by her father is a logical extension of his belief in willed kinship. However, it is important to note that in supporting Victorine, Vautrin is equally attempting to facilitate his own future plans: he has her brother killed with a view to Rastignac giving him some of her money when they marry. This would enable him to escape and fulfil his dream of living in America. It is equally arguable that Vautrin is

simply showing support for the directions of the Code on how illegitimate children should be treated. If nothing else, Victorine is entitled to an inheritance from her mother, but we do not know how much her mother had when she married, therefore we cannot speculate on how much Taillefer owes his daughter in this respect. The irony of this situation is that Victorine is not interested in the money which her father owes her, but would simply be happy to be recognised as his daughter. This refusal to recognise Victorine is tantamount to disowning her. It is impossible not to compare Goriot's situation to that of Victorine: she does not care about the money, all she wants is her father's affection, whereas Delphine and Anastasie do not care about the affection, they only want the money. Rastignac's relationship with Victorine and his consideration of Vautrin's proposal does not escalate in the television adaptation as it does in the novel. In the novel, Rastignac seriously considers Vautrin's suggestion that he should marry Victorine for her money. In the film, it is portrayed more as a real affection for Victorine which he accidentally demonstrates with an affectionate glance at the ball, rather than a financially calculated attempt to court her. This is underlined by the scene at the ball where their eyes meet across the room and Rastignac smiles to see her surrounded by suitors and she smiles back at him. The affection from Rastignac in the adaptation appears genuine as opposed to contrived. Equally it seems that he cares for Victorine less as a lover and more as a sister figure. Perhaps in the sacrifices she is forced to make for her brother's inheritance, he sees some of his own sisters' sacrifices for him. The shift in their relationship between the novel and the film serves to simplify Rastignac's character for the television audience. When his role in Vautrin's plan is minimised, he is not guilty of anything other than being tempted by it; at no point is the audience encouraged to believe that he will actually participate in the plan. This therefore presents a very different, more sympathetic, Rastignac to the one in the novel.



An important, defined difference between the Rastignac of Balzac's novel and the Rastignac of Verhaeghe's adaptation is the role of his biological father in his relationships with his mother and sisters. In the novel, Rastignac's father is a presence looming in the background of these family relationships: Rastignac does not want his father to know that he is being sent money because he fears his disapproval and the reprisals that this may cause for himself as well as his mother and sisters. In the television adaptation, Rastignac's father is not mentioned at all. This absence can be seen to reflect the fact that, in relation to the role of the father, nineteenth-century literature tends to 'ultimately undermine his status, his authority, and his power as lawgiver and regulator of family, social and narrative codes.'<sup>24</sup> By omitting any mention of the father from the adaptation, Verhaeghe is perhaps recognising this tendency: the father is removed as the head of the family and replaced by the mother who, as Vautrin so aptly tells Rastignac: 's'est saignée, maintenant vous pouvez faire des forces dans le monde.'<sup>25</sup> Replacing the father as the head of the family with a mother who will give anything to see her child progress can equally be seen to echo what happened to Goriot when his wife died: he assumed a nurturing role, a softer compliance with his daughters' wishes rather than retaining his position as a firm, level-headed, head of the household. The knowledge that Rastignac's father is omitted also puts into sharper focus the other father-child relationships in the television adaptation. The idea that the father is undermined is further demonstrated through Goriot, Taillefer and, in certain respects, even Vautrin. Goriot's daughters undermine him in every possible way through their false affection and manipulation. In some ways, Rastignac's brief consideration of Vautrin's plan can also be perceived as an undermining of Goriot's paternal role. As Rastignac's father figure, Goriot encourages Rastignac and Delphine's relationship at substantial personal investment, both monetary and emotional. Rastignac's lack of consideration for this in the face of Vautrin's plan to marry him to

Victorine is evident and undermines the authority that Goriot should be entitled to in this self-imposed family hierarchy in which Goriot has become Rastignac's 'father-not-quite-in-law'.<sup>26</sup> However, the fact that Rastignac chooses Goriot's plan rather than Vautrin's is evidence that in this role as Rastignac's father-figure, Goriot holds more power than in his more 'authentic' role as a father to Delphine and Anastasie. This power can perhaps be attributed to the affection that Rastignac feels for him, an affection which is lacking in his daughters. Taillefer is undermined, not by his daughter but by Vautrin. There is, however, a different feeling in regard to Taillefer being undermined compared to Goriot. Taillefer's decision to favour his son over Victorine is presented as morally wrong and condemned by all characters except Victorine herself who forgives him unconditionally. It is this unconditional love and forgiveness that she has for Taillefer which makes his disowning her all the more abominable in the eyes of the other characters as well as the audience. Despite the dubious origins of Taillefer's fortune, to specifically construct a plan for his money which leaves his daughter financially destitute seems more morally repugnant than Vautrin's plan to murder her brother which redresses, ultimately, the balance of the financial recognition which is due to Victorine.

Goriot, as a father, is the embodiment of nostalgia for a time in which he had control over his daughters' lives. Nostalgia is a central concept of Balzac's work and a theme which is subtly maintained in the television adaptation through the choice of Charles Aznavour to play Goriot. Carrière has stated that Aznavour was 'né pour le rôle'<sup>27</sup> of Goriot and it is clear that Aznavour was the central figure in the process of adaptation: 'Tout est parti de Charles Aznavour. Les producteurs ont eu la vision d'Aznavor en Goriot, Jean-Claude Carrière a écrit pour lui, Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe a voulu le mettre en scène'.<sup>28</sup> Aznavour himself admits that he empathises with Goriot in terms of his own relationship with his children: 'J'ai deux filles et je serais plutôt...balzacien de ce point de vue-là, parce que très souvent je m'inquiète

pour l'après moi. Je m'inquiète pour mes filles, pas pour mes garçons, c'est très curieux...et c'est pour ça que le personnage n'est pas très éloigné de mes pensées.'<sup>29</sup> This same preoccupation is apparent in the role of Goriot who becomes both Father and Mother to his daughters and whose obsession with them is founded on wanting them to be happy. By embracing this nurturing role, Goriot adapts his grief and he rewrites his role within the family, absorbing into his personality the nostalgia he feels for when his wife was alive. The same ideas of gentleness and caring which are present in Goriot's mothering role can also be found in Aznavour's music: many of his songs are nostalgic, show him as being somehow deprived or victimised, and often highlight a tension between his feelings and how he appears to the outside world<sup>30</sup>. The idea of nostalgia is most apparent in *Non, je n'ai rien oublié* where Aznavour sings that 'C'est doux de revenir aux sources du passé'.<sup>31</sup> The 'sources' to which he is referring link with the metaphor of a 'bain d'adolescence'<sup>32</sup> yet the double meaning of the word 'source' here is important. Goriot holds a strong sense of nostalgia for his own past, the source from which he has grown; however, at the same time he is a source for his daughters, both in the sense of having created them and in the sense that he continues to provide for them. In the context of adaptation, the idea of returning to 'sources du passé' also describes what it is to adapt a nineteenth-century novel; without 'sources du passé' adaptation could not exist. In this way, Aznavour's song lyrics echo the situation of Goriot's character. The melody of Aznavour's music is also nostalgic. His friendship with Edith Piaf and the influence that this had on his music is reflected in the melodies of his songs and, in this way, they are reminiscent of the music halls of a bygone era. Aznavour, like Balzac's characters, has lasted through the ages; where other singers have known fleeting success, he has remained and continued to progress. Aznavour's star persona correlates strikingly with Goriot's character, a similarity which is reinforced by Aznavour's personal experience of fatherhood. It is also

clear that Aznavour's other work reflects elements of nostalgia which strike a chord with Goriot's nostalgia for his family past and for a time when his wife was alive and his daughters loved and respected him.

Lucey argues that a similar 'nostalgia for a pre-Revolutionary family, a putative locus of natural human sentiment'<sup>33</sup> can be found in Rastignac's relationship with his mother and sisters. Whilst, to a certain extent, it is true that Rastignac's family provides a counterpoint to the superficial, and frequently artificial, relationships forged in post-Revolutionary Paris, it is equally not a 'natural' relationship any more than that of Goriot and his daughters. In order to move to Paris, Rastignac has had to put his own needs above those of his family and, whilst he is acutely aware of the sacrifices which they will have to make for him and sending letters asking them for money does deeply upset him, the result is the same. Whilst the emotional torment he undergoes in asking his family for money may perhaps place Rastignac morally higher than Delphine and Anastasie, who take thoughtlessly and coldly, the result remains the same. He proceeds to take their money, just as Delphine and Anastasie do with Goriot.

Interestingly, in *La Comédie Humaine* it is often the feminine characters who make sacrifices for the sake of their family, as we will see in the next chapter on *Eugénie Grandet*. In the novel '[Rastignac] écrivait à chacune de ses sœurs en leur demandant leurs économies, et, pour les leur arracher sans qu'elles parlissent en famille du sacrifice qu'elles ne manqueraient pas de lui faire avec bonheur, il intéressa leur délicatesse en attaquant les cordes d'honneur qui sont si bien tendues et résonnant dans de jeunes cœurs.'<sup>34</sup> In the television adaptation, however, there is a fleeting mention in the conversation with Goriot that his sisters offered to make him handkerchiefs and shirts. There is slightly more focus on his mother's role in finding money to send him, but even this is reduced to short, pointed comments from Vautrin. By attempting to better himself through society rather than through study, Rastignac deceives

the women who sacrifice so much for him to stay in Paris. In the television adaptation, it is, in fact, easy to forget that Rastignac is even a student as there are only a handful of references to his studies to remind us of the fact. The outright deception of his mother and sisters in order to make his way in the world is much easier for the audience of the television adaptation to accept than for a reader of the novel, as they are less frequently reminded of it. The fact that we never see the letters from them makes us emotionally detached and unaware of the extent of their sacrifices compared to the novel where we read Mme de Rastignac's letter: 'Mon Eugène, aime bien ta tante, je ne te dirai ce qu'elle a fait pour toi que quand tu auras réussi; autrement, son argent te brûlerait les doigts.'<sup>35</sup> followed quickly by an astute realisation from Rastignac himself 'Ta mère a tordu ses bijoux ! se disait-il. Ta tante a pleuré sans doute en vendant quelques-unes de ses reliques ! De quel droit maudirais-tu Anastasie ? Tu viens d'imiter pour l'égoïsme de ton avenir ce qu'elle a fait pour son amant ! Qui, d'elle ou de toi vaut mieux?'<sup>36</sup> This well-known quotation takes on a new relevance in light of the fact that it is mostly the women who make the sacrifices for their families: Goriot, having taken on the role of both mother and father to his daughters, is therefore further feminised by the sacrifices that he makes for his daughters. Not only is he undermined as a father, but also as a man. By mostly removing Rastignac's mother, sisters and aunt from the story, the film ignores this feminisation of sacrifice which is so apparent in the original novel. In doing so, it restores some of Goriot's masculinity but necessarily ignores the sacrifices of Rastignac's mother and sisters.

Family is not only essential from a financial perspective but also in terms of making a name for oneself. This is demonstrated through Rastignac's relationship with the Comtesse de Beauséant. In both the film and the novel, the Comtesse de Beauséant recognises Rastignac as her cousin simply by deigning to receive him. However, in the novel, Rastignac and the

reader both fear he may have offended the Comtesse by referring to her as ‘ma cousine’: ‘- Hein? Fit la vicomtesse en lui jetant un regard dont l’impertinence glaça l’étudiant. Eugène comprit ce hein. Depuis trois heures il avait appris tant de choses qu’il s’était mis sur le qui-vive’.<sup>37</sup> In the film, however, it is the Comtesse who, after a brief introduction asks ‘Que puisse-je pour vous mon cher cousin ?’<sup>38</sup> This subtle difference removes any fear in Rastignac’s mind, or in that of the audience that she will choose not to recognise him as her cousin. This is a crucial aspect of Rastignac’s quest to conquer Paris because ‘his position is no less real for depending not on the descriptive accuracy of *cousin* but on the constative authority of *recognized*’.<sup>39</sup> the family tie means nothing if it is not recognised by the more powerful member in the relationship, just as in Victorine’s relationship with Taillefer, while he refuses to accept her as his daughter, she is nothing to him or the society in which he lives. The concept of family ties is linked inextricably with mythology through a metaphor presented by the Comtesse when speaking with Rastignac in the novel: ‘Vous saurez alors ce qu’est le monde, une réunion de dupes et de fripons. Ne soyez ni parmi les uns ni parmi les autres. Je vous donne mon nom comme un fil d’Ariane pour entrer dans ce labyrinthe.’<sup>40</sup> Kate Griffiths has discussed the use of mythology in adaptations of Zola.<sup>41</sup> Through the Comtesse de Beauséant’s comment, the question of mythology can equally be applied to the relationship between Rastignac and the Comtesse de Beauséant. By recognising Rastignac as her cousin, she is extending their family tie into an Ariadne’s thread to lead him safely through the labyrinth of Parisian society. If the Comtesse de Beauséant sees herself as Ariadne, that puts Rastignac in the role of Theseus and the negative effects of Parisian society as the Labyrinth. In the myth, Theseus saves the other victims of the Labyrinth; this is demonstrated later in Rastignac’s life in *La Maison Nucingen* where he has saved his sisters from the poverty of the provinces and brought them through the labyrinth of Parisian society with him, to the good

marriages and high society that wait as the prize at the end of the maze. In some versions of the myth, Ariadne is left sleeping on an island; perhaps the Comtesse unwittingly predicts her own fall from grace and her subsequent retreat to the quiet isolation of the provinces. Whilst the direct quotation is omitted from the television adaptation, it can nonetheless be seen in the process of adaptation itself. The many characters, plots and subplots in Balzac's work as well as audience expectations, are all threads picked up by the adaptors who, in trying to remain faithful to the novel, follow as many of them as possible. Whilst it is impossible to follow all of them (hence the omission of some characters), and some tail off, leading to nothing (like the diluted role of the Baron de Nucingen), the main threads hold firm. When pulled together, these threads lead to an adaptation of the original novel complete with its own emphasis on the original themes of the source text. It is in the process of selection of which threads to follow and which to let go that adaptations become an individual work in their own right. The thread that is the relationship between the Comtesse de Beauséant and Rastignac is altered for the adaptation, but for the most part holds true to the novel. The instant recognition of Rastignac as her cousin and the removal of the Duchesse de Langeais as a mediator between them ultimately presents the audience with a closer relationship and a more sympathetic Comtesse who, as Rastignac's sole benefactress is more directly involved in his Paris education. It also serves to highlight the importance of this particular kind of family relationship in Paris at this time as being, in Balzac's eyes, the only real way to become recognised and make one's fortune, not just within bourgeois society but amongst the aristocracy.

The role of the father is fraught with tensions and complications in *Le Père Goriot*, especially as so many of the 'family' relationships are formed by choice rather than by blood. In terms of father-son relationships, Rastignac has a well-recognised, clear choice between two

substitute father figures: Goriot and Vautrin. Whilst this choice in the novel has received much critical attention, the way in which it has been adapted has not. The ways in which Rastignac's choice is presented are very different in the television adaptation and much of the complexity of it is removed: Goriot is presented as the better, more moral choice for Rastignac in both cases, but this is exaggerated in the film. However, one aspect of this relationship which is frequently overlooked is Goriot's own reasons for playing a father figure to Rastignac: 'Like a hidden god or an omnipotent narrator, he [Goriot] wants to append Rastignac to his daughter's life, and so revise her story...In addition, Rastignac is to be appropriated as a son ideally destined to fulfil Goriot's paternity and to rectify his daughters' failure to do so.'<sup>42</sup> The idea that Goriot wishes, in some way, to rewrite or adapt his daughter's life and his own role in it through Rastignac is, in many ways, evocative of the role directors and screenwriters have in adapting from novel to film: they adapt and rewrite the story another person has written just as Goriot attempts to rewrite the choices he allowed Delphine to make for herself. Ironically it is through the process of adaptation from novel to film that many of Goriot's own reasons for assuming the role of a father-figure for Rastignac are erased from view. It is obvious that Goriot stands to gain from Rastignac's relationship with Delphine. He believes that, because of Rastignac's comparative respect for him, he will be able to see his daughter more often than her husband normally allows. By choosing Rastignac for her and thus taking her away from her husband, Goriot is also attempting to atone for the accusations that Delphine makes about his inadequate parenting. Having allowed his daughters too much freedom in choosing their husbands, Goriot chooses Rastignac as a lover for Delphine, thus attempting to demonstrate a certain amount of control over her life and become the parent that Delphine claimed she wants. However, what Goriot does not realise is that, in fact, the Comtesse de Beauséant already chose Delphine for Rastignac. She



chose her, as the Marquis d'Ajuda Pinto points out in the novel, at exactly the right moment.

<sup>43</sup> This thereby makes Goriot's role in their relationship considerably less significant, perhaps another example of the father being undermined by the social hierarchy from which he is excluded. The fact that both Goriot and Vautrin have a plan for Rastignac which is also self-serving highlights another aspect of Balzacian parent-child relationships. As two possible candidates for father figures, they demonstrate the concept (seen also in *Eugénie Grandet*, *Le Contrat de Mariage*, *Illusions Perdues* and many other works in *La Comédie Humaine*) that parent-child relationships are actually as much subject to the laws of compromise as any other relationship in this society. The parents do something for their children only if they receive something in return, like Grandet who gives Eugénie money every year, but only temporarily, until he wishes to use it himself. This is even visible in Goriot's own self-sacrificing relationship with his daughters. It is doubtful that Goriot would continue to give them the small amount of money he has left were it not for the small, albeit false, shows of affection he receives in return. Similarly, Vautrin's plan, which would better Rastignac by giving him a fortune through marrying Victorine, helps Vautrin himself in providing him with a means of escape to America where he could live out his dream. This demonstrates the suggestion that 'the numerous ways of conceiving of the interests embedded in family structures might be taken as making finally untenable a reading of *any* family structures as pre-social, natural, human, disinterested'. <sup>44</sup> Even in artificial family structures where characters choose who they wish to fulfil certain family roles, there is an ulterior agenda. The question of whether this agenda is the driving force of these relationships is, however, another matter. It would appear that Rastignac's sympathetic respect for Goriot's morality combined with the immorality of Vautrin's plan is enough to sway his support entirely to Goriot. Equally, whilst financing Delphine's apartment obviously has advantages for Goriot (he can leave the boarding house

and he can see her every day) there was no real need to include Rastignac in the plan: he could have given the apartment to Delphine to use as she pleased and lived there himself as well. This suggests that perhaps, despite the existence of ulterior motives, Goriot's paternal affection for Rastignac is not entirely based on the access it gives him to Delphine. In the television adaptation, Rastignac's choice between Goriot and Vautrin is more clear-cut. This is perhaps, in part, due to the fact that Vautrin does not lend Rastignac money. The role of money in *La Comédie Humaine* is complex: it serves to divide or unite characters; there are those who, by pretending to have money, manage to survive in high society and those who manage to save vast sums by pretending to be poor. In this instance, by lending Rastignac money, Vautrin ensures that Rastignac is indebted to him, thus attempting to secure Rastignac's key role in the plan to restore Victorine's fortune. This money is the cement which holds Vautrin in his position as a paternal figure: as we have already seen, fathers in *La Comédie Humaine* are only true fathers when they pass money on to their children. By removing this transaction from the television adaptation, Vautrin's role as a father figure is somewhat diluted and his relationship with Rastignac becomes a lot more one-sided: Rastignac's dilemma becomes less complex because he is free to choose between Vautrin's plan for him and Goriot's with no monetary bond tying him to Vautrin.

To conclude, it is clear that the television adaptation retains many of Balzac's original ideas with regard to the construction of family and the ways in which the individual characters fit into this construction. The adaptation particularly draws on artificial or socially contrived forms of family which is perhaps unsurprising considering that a modern audience comprises people from all kinds of family units. These are compromises which make the television adaptation more accessible for a modern viewer. They also reflect some of the similarities between the nineteenth century presented to us by Balzac and the twenty-first century in

which we live. The women in the novel may not have been presented as such free characters as those in the television adaptation; however, they did still have a certain freedom within their own circles and relationships through the power of their social status. The role of the father is also clearly a central theme to both the novel and the adaptation; however, the absence of any mention of Rastignac's father in the adaptation serves to highlight the general undermining of the father which we see in nineteenth-century literature, as well as perhaps reflecting the diminished role of the father in modern society: he is no longer the head of the household, the authoritarian figure that he once was. Carrière suggests that, by introducing a short dialogue between Goriot and Vautrin, he increases their rivalry in the television adaptation;<sup>45</sup> however, as we have seen, the omission of Vautrin's loan to Rastignac diminishes his claim as a father-figure for Rastignac rather than increasing it. The scene between Goriot and Vautrin does, however, serve the purpose of both increasing Goriot's position as Rastignac's father-figure and increasing the audience's esteem for him as perhaps a stronger character than we see elsewhere in the television adaptation. The fact that he is willing to stand up for Rastignac in this way shows a certain tenacity which, though visible in the novel, is faint compared to that shown in the film adaptation. Whilst the adaptation necessarily eliminates many elements of *Le Père Goriot*, both on screen and during filming, due to budgetary constraints and the time limitations associated with the medium of television adaptations, it clearly adds as much as it detracts to the ideas of family which it presents. Through the slight alterations made, the television adaptation manages to strike a balance between fidelity to the original novel and appeal to a modern audience, whilst presenting us with the same wealth of family roles as in the original novel.

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Prendergast, **Balzac: Fiction and Melodrama** (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 1978) p. 178.

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- <sup>2</sup> Patricia Mainardi, **Husbands, Wives and Lovers: Marriage and its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France** (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003) p. 19.
- <sup>3</sup> Michael Lucey, **The Misfit of the Family: Balzac and the Social Forms of Sexuality** (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003) p. 4.
- <sup>4</sup> John Ellis, **Visible Fictions : Cinema : Television : Video**, (London and New York: Routledge, 1982) p. 113.
- <sup>5</sup> Lucey, **The Misfit of the Family: Balzac and the Social Forms of Sexuality**, p. 23.
- <sup>6</sup> Honoré de Balzac, **La Comédie Humaine : Volume III Études de Mœurs : Le Père Goriot** (Paris : Gallimard-Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1977) p. 116.
- <sup>7</sup> Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe, **Le Père Goriot** (France : Editions Montparnasse and CNDP, 2004) [on DVD].
- <sup>8</sup> Monica Filimon, 'The eye behind the writing hand', in Anna Gural-Migdal and Robert Singer: **Zola and Film, Essays in the art of adaptation** (North Carolina: McFarland & Co, 2005) pp. 69-88 (p. 82).
- <sup>9</sup> Sandy Petrey (1988), **Realism and Revolution** (Ithaca: Cornell University press) p. 99.
- <sup>10</sup> Balzac, **Le Père Goriot**, p. 160.
- <sup>11</sup> Balzac, **Le Père Goriot**, pp. 72-73.
- <sup>12</sup> Prendergast, **Balzac : Fiction and Melodrama**, p. 31.
- <sup>13</sup> Verhaeghe, **Le Père Goriot**
- <sup>14</sup> Kate Griffiths, 'Chez Maupassant: the (In)visible space of television adaptation' in Kate Griffiths and Andrew Watts, **Adapting Nineteenth-Century France: Literature in Film, Theatre, Television, Radio and Print**, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013) p. 149.
- <sup>15</sup> Peter Brooks, **Realist Vision** (New Haven and London: Yale University Press) p. 1.
- <sup>16</sup> Ellis, **Visible Fictions : Cinema : Television : Video**, p. 228.
- <sup>17</sup> Verhaeghe, **Le Père Goriot**.
- <sup>18</sup> Mainardi, **Husbands, Wives and Lovers: Marriage and its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France**, p. 48.
- <sup>19</sup> Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe, **Le Père Goriot (Secrets de Fabrication)**, (France : Editions Montparnasse and CNDP, 2004) [on DVD].
- <sup>20</sup> Balzac, **Le Père Goriot**, p. 113.
- <sup>21</sup> Lucey, **The Misfit of the Family: Balzac and the Social Forms of Sexuality**, p. 22.
- <sup>22</sup> Janet L Beizer, **Family Plots: Balzac's Narrative Generations** (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986) p. 128.
- <sup>23</sup> Lucey, **The Misfit of the Family: Balzac and the Social Forms of Sexuality**, p. 23.
- <sup>24</sup> Beizer, **Family Plots: Balzac's Narrative Generations**, p. 4.
- <sup>25</sup> Verhaeghe, **Le Père Goriot**.
- <sup>26</sup> Lucey, **The Misfit of the Family: Balzac and the Social Forms of Sexuality**, p. 20.
- <sup>27</sup> Verhaeghe, **Le Père Goriot**.
- <sup>28</sup> Henri Parent and Brigitte Bouvier, **Livret d'accompagnement du DVD Le Père Goriot**, (Editions Montparnasse and SCÉRÉN-CNDP, 2005) p. 10.
- <sup>29</sup> Verhaeghe, **Le Père Goriot**.
- <sup>30</sup> For example : Il Faut Savoir; Non, je n'ai rien oublié; Hier Encore
- <sup>31</sup> Charles Aznavour and Georges Garvarentz, 'Non, je n'ai rien oublié' (Barclay, 1972).
- <sup>32</sup> Aznavour and Garvarentz, 'Non, je n'ai rien oublié'.
- <sup>33</sup> Lucey, **The Misfit of the Family: Balzac and the Social Forms of Sexuality** p. 18.
- <sup>34</sup> Balzac, **Le Père Goriot**, p. 121.
- <sup>35</sup> Balzac, **Le Père Goriot**, p. 127.
- <sup>36</sup> Balzac, **Le Père Goriot**, pp. 127-8.
- <sup>37</sup> Balzac, **Le Père Goriot**, p. 108.
- <sup>38</sup> Verhaeghe, **Le Père Goriot**, (DVD, 2004).
- <sup>39</sup> Petrey, **Realism and Revolution**, p. 95.
- <sup>40</sup> Balzac, **Le Père Goriot**, p. 117.
- <sup>41</sup> Griffiths, **Adapting Nineteenth-Century France: Literature in Film, Theatre, Television, Radio and Print**, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, p. 32.
- <sup>42</sup> Beizer, **Family Plots: Balzac's Narrative Generations**, pp. 125-126.
- <sup>43</sup> Balzac, **Le Père Goriot**, p. 157.
- <sup>44</sup> Lucey, **The Misfit of the Family: Balzac and the Social Forms of Sexuality**, p. 19.

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<sup>45</sup> Verhaeghe, **Le Père Goriot** (DVD, 2004).

### **Family Melodramas: *Eugénie Grandet* and the TV Film**

This chapter will focus on the tension between melodrama and realism in television adaptations of Balzac by analysing the 1993 film for television of *Eugénie Grandet* directed by Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe. Verhaeghe has directed many films for television and has a long history of creating literary adaptations for the small screen including Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1997), as well as other novels from *La Comédie Humaine* such as *La Duchesse de Langeais* (1994), and *Le Père Goriot* (2004). Before analysing the tension between melodrama and realism, it is first necessary to consider the definitions of these broad terms which we will be using, as they are terms that have been defined and redefined by critics over the generations in which they have been recognised as literary and dramatic styles. The question of defining melodrama is one which has concerned critics since it first emerged as a dramatic style. Melodrama, for a long time after its emergence, was the subject of derision. Considered a lesser art form than other types of theatre, melodrama was 'usually a derogatory term' for 'popular, machine-made entertainments'.<sup>1</sup> However, as literary and theatrical criticism developed in the 1960s and 1970s, melodrama began to be recognised as a style worthy of analysis and criticism.<sup>2</sup> The parallel between melodrama and adaptation is clear to see, in that adaptations have equally been disregarded by critics as 'imperfect reproductions of a textually superior original.'<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this parallel could partially account for the choice of melodrama as a style to adapt in a modern age.

Family provides the perfect setting for melodrama to function because melodrama is rooted in the disruption of a harmonious setting by an invader of some kind. Brooks describes this as a conflict between 'virtue' and the invader as 'a threat to virtue'<sup>4</sup> which is an accurate description; however it is impossible for this virtue to be threatened without repercussions for the harmony which exists before the invader arrives. The effects of the 'threat to virtue' are

more far reaching than to affect only the virtue itself (often presented as a young woman) and thus create disruption for most, if not all, of the characters who were there before.

Realism is no easier to define than melodrama. Despite the fact that, overall, it has enjoyed a higher level of respect and credibility as an art form, realism has nonetheless been redefined through the ages. Realism can be defined as ‘an artistic or literary movement or style characterized by the representation of people or things as they actually are.’<sup>5</sup> The issue with an adaptation is that reality is being doubly filtered under the influence of not one but multiple authors. In the case of the television adaptation of *Eugénie Grandet*, we have the initial author, Balzac, Pierre Moustiers, who wrote the screenplay, and the director Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe as well as the individual actors’ interpretations to consider. In the finished adaptation, it is not only a question of presenting the realities of the nineteenth century, but of the extent to which the adaptation is faithful to Balzac’s perception of this, as it is presented in the original novel, and how this is achieved. Realism is also ‘the attitude or practice of accepting a situation as it is and being prepared to deal with it accordingly’<sup>6</sup> and this double meaning is particularly interesting when applied to some of the characters in *Eugénie Grandet*. Melodrama and realism appear throughout *Eugénie Grandet* through many different situations and characters. This chapter focuses specifically on the role of the provincial family setting in facilitating the use of melodrama and how and why the use of melodrama is increased for the film adaptation. It analyses the role of the female characters in creating on-screen melodrama and the tension between M and Mme Grandet as the tension between realism and melodrama. It also raises the question of who, or what, represents the invader which breaks up the quotidian monotony of the Grandet household and considers the endings of the film and the novel which both subvert the traditional melodramatic ending of happiness being restored, but leave Eugénie portrayed in a different light.

When considering the role of the family in melodrama, the domestic setting of the family home is a natural place to begin. There are several melodramatic spaces in the Grandet household which are used to full effect throughout the film and novel, but none stands out as clearly as that of the garden. Brooks noted that, within melodrama, ‘remarkably prevalent is the setting of the enclosed garden, the space of innocence, surrounded by walls’ and that ‘into this space, a villain, the troubler of innocence, will come to insinuate himself, either under the mask of friendship (or courtship) or simply as an intruder.’<sup>7</sup> The most obvious application of this to *Eugénie Grandet* is the appearance of Charles as the villain or intruder, Eugénie as the innocent and the garden as the enclosed setting into which Charles manages to introduce himself. However, this is perhaps the first example within the novel, and the television film, of the subversion of melodrama. Charles is neither there to seduce Eugénie nor to kidnap her as many melodramatic villains do. He is sent by his father, not knowing why he has been sent there, and Eugénie falls in love with him. Charles becomes a villain only when he betrays her love and her trust by returning from the Indies betrothed to another woman, a moment which, in the novel, reminds us of the garden as a melodramatic space:

— Mademoiselle, une lettre! Elle la donna à sa maîtresse en lui disant:— C’est-y celle que vous attendez? Ces mots retentirent aussi fortement au cœur d’Eugénie qu’ils retentirent réellement entre les murailles de la cour et du jardin.<sup>8</sup>

The simile linking Eugénie’s heart with the garden is important as it reinforces the concept that both are spaces of virtue and innocence at precisely the moment where Charles truly does become the villain in the story, breaking her heart and tarnishing the innocent memories of the garden space in which their love blossomed.



The garden is still very much used as a melodramatic space in the television adaptation, providing the setting for many of the key moments of the story; it is where Charles learns of his father's death, where Eugénie and Charles speak of their love and run to the shed to share their first kiss, where Grandet learns of Eugénie's ability to disinherit him of his wife's fortune if he does not make peace with her before her mother's death. The walls and archway in the television adaptation provide interesting camera angles but are equally symbolic. When Charles tells Eugénie that he is leaving for the Indies, she runs through the archway, returning to the garden space of virtue and innocence. The conflict of her feelings for Charles and the knowledge that they should not act on them because he is leaving and because her father forbids it become apparent when, about to kiss Charles, she glimpses over the wall (outside the safe space of the garden) and sees her father through the window, gasping 'Mon père!' before running from the garden (out of the space of virtue and innocence) to the shed, where they finally share their first kiss. This is not Verhaeghe's only Balzac adaptation in which the garden provides the backdrop as a melodramatic space. In *Le Père Goriot*, Vautrin points a pistol at Rastignac and takes him out to the garden where he unveils his plan to take Taillefer's money. The enclosed garden provides a perfect melodramatic space because, despite the supposed privacy it allows the occupants, there are still ways of them being observed through windows and archways: the walls conceal as much from those inside them as from those outside them, preventing the occupants of the enclosed space from realising that they are being observed. This is underlined by the camera angles over the wall or through the archway which allow the audience to intrude on the supposed privacy of the garden. Whilst the garden may represent virtue, it is also made abundantly clear to the audience how easily this virtue can be corrupted: Rastignac considers Vautrin's plan and Eugénie runs from the garden to kiss Charles. When Charles learns of his father's death,

Grandet takes him into the garden, through the archway into the space of innocence and tells him first that his father is gravely ill, then bluntly admits that he is, in fact, already dead ‘Il s’est brulé la cervelle’.<sup>9</sup> The young Parisian who has already lost his mother now loses his father and his innocence, realising that he is left alone in the world without his parents. Grandet tells him that worse still, he is bankrupt. Having never had to worry about money in his life, Charles cares only about the death of his father and storms out of the garden, leaving the space of innocence and virtue behind him. In this scene, the villain has changed; it is not Charles or even Grandet himself but money, the need for it and the obsession with it, which break apart Charles’ innocence. His father killed himself over money, leaving Charles alone in the world and destitute without any funds to look after himself. Grandet’s obsession with money prevents him from helping Charles, even though, as Eugénie points out later, he certainly has the means to do so. Taking this analysis into account, we can examine further Charles’ marriage to another woman: whilst Charles is away in the Indies he becomes as obsessed with fortune as Grandet was: ‘Il porta dans les affaires une activité qui ne lui laissait aucun moment de libre. Il était dominé par l’idée de reparaître à Paris dans tout l’éclat d’une haute fortune, et de ressaisir une position plus brillante encore que celle d’où il était tombé’<sup>10</sup> For both men, it is their lack of fortune which drives them to obsess over money. Grandet himself started out with little but worked hard and married well, just as Charles does. It is for money and a title, not for love, that he marries the Comtesse d’Aubrion : ‘Cette fortune me permet de m’unir à la famille d’Aubrion, dont l’héritière, jeune personne de dix-neuf ans, m’apporte en mariage son nom, un titre, la place de gentilhomme honoraire de la chambre de sa Majesté, et une position des plus brillantes’.<sup>11</sup> The poetic justice and irony of this is, of course, that Eugénie’s fortune far outweighs that of the family he marries into, despite her indifference to money. It is clear therefore that here, Balzac has once again strayed from the

traditional melodramatic style. Whilst he does include ‘exaltation of virtue and ultimate poetic justice’,<sup>12</sup> there is no happy ending for Eugénie and familial harmony is not restored. Equally, the villain of the melodrama is not a person who invades the relative safety of the home and garden, but the pervasive obsession with money which infiltrates its way into the lives of those around her.

Despite the prominent role of Grandet, Eugénie and Charles in the construction of melodrama in both the novel and the television adaptation, it is nonetheless necessary to recognise the ways in which the other women contribute to the dramatic tension and melodrama. In the film adaptation, Madame Grandet and Nanon both act, for the audience, as a means of measuring Grandet’s mood and anticipating his reactions to certain events. Their reactions and pre-emptive behaviour often incite the audience to feel or think in the same way that they do. The first example of this occurs near the beginning of the adaptation: when the Cruchots and Des Grassins arrive, they hurry to hide the food and the cassis, presumably for fear of what Grandet would do should their guests want some. This scene is recalled when Charles comes down for breakfast and they have given him sugar for his coffee and fruit compared to Grandet’s own sparing breakfast of yesterday’s bread. The scene is prefaced by the women preparing everything for his breakfast and the audience is led to expect a dramatic scene following Eugénie’s question to her mother ‘Si Papa voit tout ça?’ to which Madame Grandet replies ‘Sois tranquille, je prendrai tout sur moi’.<sup>13</sup> When they hear Grandet approaching, once again, the women scurry around quickly to hide everything, Nanon even takes back the eggs she had given Charles and hides them behind her back. The repetition of the rapid clearing of the table, combined with the dialogue between Madame Grandet and Eugénie encourages the audience to anticipate an angry, dramatic, violent reaction from Grandet. Instead, he is simply sarcastic : ‘Ah, je vois que vous avez fait la fête à votre neveu,

c'est bien ça'.<sup>14</sup> This creates a certain anti-climax following the display of fear from the women and retains the dramatic tension which their behaviour has created. This makes the climax of Grandet's anger all the more powerful and dramatic when, later, he learns that Eugénie's gold is gone. Again, there is a scene beforehand to build anticipation of Grandet's anger, where Madame Grandet and Eugénie discuss the violent reaction that they expect from Grandet: Madame Grandet nervously asks Eugénie 'que diras tu à ton père le matin de ton anniversaire quand il voudra voir ton or?' after which there is a pause before she replies 'la vérité', the anticipation is then finalised by Madame Grandet crossing herself and saying 'seigneur dieu protegez-nous'.<sup>15</sup> The scene is then set for the suspense which is created around the dinner table as Grandet comments on their lack of appetite; even the ticking clock which is so loud in other scenes, in this scene remains silent, apparently waiting for Grandet's reaction. Not a sound can be heard in the background as he says 'va me chercher ton petit trésor, je veux le voir'. The climax of all of this suspense is reached in the moment at which Grandet reacts to Eugénie's confession that her money is gone. Madame Grandet becomes faint and has to leave the room and for the first and only time in the adaptation, Grandet loses his temper, allowing some of the malice which underlies his daily manipulations of others to rise to the surface and spill out in a shouted stream of accusations. It is at this point that it becomes clear that it is indeed his avarice which is the true villain of the story as he banishes Eugénie to her room to live on only bread and water. It is also at this point that the melodrama comes to its first real climax: Madame Grandet is faint and gets taken upstairs by Nanon and Grandet continues to shout at Eugénie, who remains unmoved in her refusal to tell him where her gold has gone. Brooks suggests that frequently in melodrama 'virtue, expelled, eclipsed, apparently fallen, cannot effectively articulate the cause of the right. Its tongue is in fact often tied by the structure of familial relationships: virtue cannot call into question the judgements

and the actions of a father or an uncle or a guardian, for to do so would be to violate its nature as innocence.’<sup>16</sup> Here again, we can see a subversion of melodrama in the fact that it is not her father whose loyalty Eugénie finds herself unable to betray but Charles’. Were it not for the fact that Grandet is so unreasonable (having given her the gold as a gift, not a loan) the audience may have been inclined to agree with him. It is Charles who Eugénie protects by holding her tongue and it is her innocent love for him which causes her to ignore her father’s wishes in giving Charles the money, thus subverting the traditional loyalties and structures of this aspect of melodrama. Interestingly, however, the film slightly changes this scene compared to the novel. In the novel, Grandet actually wishes to borrow Eugénie’s gold having sold all of his for a good price and finding himself now lacking. This perhaps would detract slightly from the melodramatic outburst of anger we see in the television adaptation, his need for the gold making Grandet’s anger, whilst not reasonable, at least more understandable. Equally interesting is the fact that, whilst Balzac subverts Eugénie’s loyalties from the traditional melodramatic structure with regards to the gold, her virtue in accepting her father’s punishment for her is true to the traditional structure as she does so without questioning his judgement or actions in the least. This combination of subverting and following the traditional melodramatic structure balanced with aspects of realism serves to increase the effect of melodrama when it is used, rather than maintaining a consistently melodramatic atmosphere for the audience in which the shock and excitement may quickly come to be expected.

There is an increased use of melodrama in the television adaptation compared to the novel. As Brooks noted, ‘Reality is for Balzac both the scene of drama and the mask of the true drama that lies behind’.<sup>17</sup> Whilst some of the ‘true drama’ can be retained in an adaptation, for example through the use of interior monologues, such as when Grandet is reading his brother’s letter, much of what is expressed through the narrative voice becomes

lost behind the mask of the action. The most obvious example of this is Madame Grandet's illness and subsequent death. Although she repeatedly blames her husband's anger and its effect on her nerves for the sudden and dramatic illness to which she succumbs, Balzac provides a very different reason for this in the novel: 'La pauvre mère subissait de tels troubles depuis deux mois que les manches de laine dont elle avait besoin pour son hiver n'étaient pas encore finies. Ce fait domestique, minime en apparence, eut de tristes résultats pour elle. Faute de manches, le froid la saisit d'une façon fâcheuse au milieu d'une sueur causée par une épouvantable colère de son mari.'<sup>18</sup> Whilst, in this explanation, Grandet's anger is still the indirect cause of her illness, the lack of sleeves is the direct and logical cause. This underlines the importance which Balzac places on realism in the form of simple domestic problems which hide behind the 'mask' of the dramatic action, but it also counteracts some of the melodramatic element of Madame Grandet's illness through providing a logical explanation for it rather than relying on her own account which, coloured by her religion, blames Grandet's anger at Eugénie, and perhaps also blames her own decision to lie to her husband in order to protect her daughter's secret. As the rift in the family draws to a climax, so does her illness which- when unexplained in the film adaptation- makes her own link of cause and effect between Grandet's anger and her decline in health appear to be the only reason for her illness. This is illogical but increases the drama of the situation because no alternative explanation is offered. The fact that this explanation is excluded from the film is one example of the difficulty of translating a text into a visual medium. Melodrama was originally and is principally a style of theatre. Television and films are to a modern audience, what theatre was to the nineteenth-century audience. That is to say that they are the visual medium for popular culture in the modern age and as such reproduce the melodrama of the

theatre in a modern context. It is therefore unsurprising that the television adaptation is more melodramatic than the novel.

The increased use of melodrama, may, however, also be linked to some of the theatrical texts which Balzac drew on for inspiration when writing *Eugénie Grandet*. Linzy Dickinson has written extensively on the influence of the theatre on Balzac's work in her book *Theatre in Balzac's 'La Comédie Humaine'*, and noted that he often referenced works by Molière, including *L'Avare*.<sup>19</sup> She also mentions a dramatic adaptation of *Eugénie Grandet*, 'by Bayard and Duport first performed... in January 1835'<sup>20</sup> which is entitled *La Fille de l'avare*. This renaming of the theatre adaptation could be perceived as a means of highlighting the similarities between the plot of *Eugénie Grandet* and that of *L'Avare*. By removing Eugénie's name from the title, it defines her through her father rather than as a character in her own right, drawing parallels between herself and Élise. The use of 'l'avare' in the title also clearly draws parallels between Grandet and Molière's Harpagon who are both referred to simply as 'L'avare' in the two titles. The main difference between these two characters is their intelligence; whilst Harpagon is a bumbling miser who allows his obsession with money to overwhelm all other aspects of his life, leading to misunderstandings (such as when Valère refers to having taken his most precious thing, meaning his daughter, and Harpagon believes that he is referring to his money) Grandet's obsession is perhaps more menacing because it is this obsession which seems to focus his mind and his actions on the manipulation of all those around him. Harpagon is a very comical character and Grandet's character does retain some of his inability to comprehend love for anything except money, such as his attempt at telling Charles his father has died and that he is bankrupt, after which he proclaims 'ce jeune homme n'est bon à rien, il s'occupe plus des morts que de l'argent.'<sup>21</sup> The difference between the two, however is that Grandet's behaviour is anything but comical. He

is equally as miserly and, through his treatment of Eugénie on finding that her gold is gone he proves, as does Harpagon in his confused discussion with Valère,<sup>22</sup> that his gold is of more value to him than his daughter. This is only reinforced by the fact that the reason Grandet makes peace with his daughter is because he realises that she could easily take away his income from his wife's estate after her death. In *l'Avare*, Harpagon's confusion of situations, the ability of others to trick him, the general dislike of him by all characters and the happy ending to the play come together to create a miser at whom everyone, characters and audience alike, can laugh. Grandet, however is a miser who is capable of calculating almost any situation and turning it to his own advantage; his cunning commands respect and fear rather than dislike and mockery, 'Personne ne le voyait passer sans éprouver un sentiment d'admiration mélangé de respect et de terreur.';<sup>23</sup> any attempts to go behind his back are foiled and quashed, as with the breakfast which the women make for Charles. Grandet therefore is a miser who is to be feared and respected due to the combination of his large fortune and sharp intelligence. When the two texts are stripped of characterisation and subplots, the roles of Grandet and Harpagon are essentially the same; that of a character typically found in melodramas 'the old father, who... set up the conflict between the heroine's love and duty around which the piece revolved.'<sup>24</sup> Both works involve a daughter who wants to marry for love and a miserly father who refuses to allow her to do so because of money. This basic plot sets up the 'preconceived polarities of good and evil'<sup>25</sup> (the pure young love representing the 'good' and the miserly obsession representing the 'evil') which are necessary for a melodrama to function. However, the removal of comedy from the role of the father in *Eugénie Grandet* completely changes the tone of the melodrama, increasing the pathos '(i.e. the elicitation of a powerful feeling of pity) [which] is, of course, a common element of melodrama'<sup>26</sup> and the tension of the conflict between daughter and father. By removing the



comedy from the drama and creating an ending where, instead of everyone being happy, no one, least of all the heroine, gets what they want, Balzac also creates a more realistic version of events. When Grandet dies, evil is punished in accordance with melodramatic rules, and virtue does prevail; however, he does so at a good, old age, having done well in life whilst Eugénie remains unhappy and unfulfilled. It is in this way that Balzac blends the melodrama of the theatre with realism and, whilst a return to a visual medium (of television) increases the possibilities of the use of melodrama, this blend of melodrama and realism is carefully retained.

The tension between melodrama and realism is almost personified in two of the main characters in *Eugénie Grandet*: Monsieur and Madame Grandet. When considering the non-literary definition of realism, ‘the attitude or practice of accepting a situation as it is and being prepared to deal with it accordingly’,<sup>27</sup> it is clear that Grandet is a realist. He quickly accepts and analyses situations and deals with them in a way which suits his own means, as with deciding who should go to Paris on his behalf to liquidate his brother’s debts. The only exception to this is his reaction to Eugénie’s decision to give Charles her gold, highlighting the fact that it is only with concern for his money that Grandet allows his façade of cool calculation be overtaken by his monomania. By contrast, Madame Grandet relies heavily on religion, is prone to fainting and panic and becomes easily flustered when faced with any situation that is outside of her normal routine, as we have seen above. Anne-Marie Baron has suggested that ‘l’épouse et la mère ont un statut privilégié dans l’univers balzacien, où elles incarnent la solidité et la stabilité de la famille’;<sup>28</sup> however, this generalisation can only partly be applied to Madame Grandet. Physically, she is described as strong at the beginning of the novel (and appears strong in the film): ‘La mère et la fille entretenait tout le linge de la maison, et employait si consciencieusement leurs journées à ce véritable labeur d’ouvrière’<sup>29</sup>.

Yet, mentally she appears more like a child than a mother and is certainly controlled by Grandet without the respect which many of the wives in *La Comédie Humaine* are accorded by their husbands. She is considered by the narrator to be ‘une de ces femmes qui semblent faites pour être tyrannisées’,<sup>30</sup> a woman who has ‘Une douceur angélique, une résignation d’insecte tourmenté par des enfants.’<sup>31</sup> It is interesting that her main redeeming quality in her meek attitude is her ‘douceur angélique’, given her use of religion as a crutch to help her bear the brunt of her unhappy marriage. The suggestion that she was made to be tyrannised is also essential in the analysis of the Grandet’s relationship as this removes much of the blame from Monsieur Grandet. It does not suggest that it is Madame Grandet’s fault that she is treated in the way that she is, but instead puts the blame on an unidentified force or creator, perhaps even the same God on whom she relies for support. When viewed in this way, this paradox mirrors Eugénie’s relationship with her father to a certain extent: her father is her ‘creator’, but is also the cause of her unhappiness; however, rather than turning to him for help in the same way that her mother turns to her religion, Eugénie discovers and recognises his flaws and attempts to make her own happiness with Charles outside of Grandet’s control. The irony of this is that neither the path of conformity nor that of rebellion leads these women to happiness, only to misery and death. Brooks has stated that melodrama refers ‘to a mode of high emotionalism and stark ethical conflict that is neither comic or tragic’.<sup>32</sup> When this description is applied to Madame Grandet’s character rather than to *Eugénie Grandet* as a whole piece, it fits perfectly. She is a highly emotional character who, as we have seen, reacts dramatically in situations of conflict (such as fainting during Eugénie’s argument with her father). Equally, there is a stark internal ethical conflict involved for Madame Grandet: by keeping secret the fact that Eugénie gave the money to Charles in exchange for the gold chest, and thus helping her daughter and companion, she is betraying both her husband and her

religion which instructs her not to lie. This situation and Madame Grandet's subsequent death are neither comic nor tragic in the true sense of a tragedy: there is little sense that fate intervenes in her death or that it is premeditated or preordained in either the television adaptation or the novel. The novel explains her death as being due to her lack of sleeves, whilst the television adaptation allows the audience to believe that it is due to her husband's behaviour, increasing the melodrama of the scene. Thus, Madame Grandet, as a character, can be seen almost as a personification of melodrama. At the opposite end of the scale we have Monsieur Félix Grandet, whose first name, meaning 'lucky' could be considered both apt and ironic when applied to his business life and family life, respectively. He represents 'realism as the ugly' which 'stands close to realism as the shocking, that which transgresses the bounds of the acceptable and the representable.'<sup>33</sup> Grandet frequently profits from the misery of others and his violent temperament towards Eugénie and her mother, as well as his scrimping on daily essentials such as food and light for his family makes for uneasy reading or, in the case of the adaptation, watching. It is this obsession with money and the extent to which Grandet manipulates and deprives his family in order to feed this obsession which makes his character representative of 'realism as the ugly'. Whilst his behaviour certainly 'transgresses the bounds of the acceptable', it remains representable in both small gestures such as his agreement to fix the broken step 'puisque c'est la naissance d'Eugénie'<sup>34</sup> and larger acts such as underpaying Charles for his jewellery and undercutting the market for gold in Angers. Félix Grandet therefore represents the ugly truth in contrast to his wife's representation of melodrama. Now that their representation of these two opposing styles has been established, it is possible to consider their marriage on a different level: they do not merely represent realism and melodrama, but the marriage of the two within the novel and the television adaptation.

The balance of melodrama and realism that is present throughout the novel and the television adaptation is shown through the Grandet's marriage so it may be reasonable to assume that the melodramatic aspect of the film for television would die with the character who personifies it, Madame Grandet. On the contrary, however, it is during her deathbed scene that the balance of melodrama and realism is most visible. The melodramatic aspect comes from the climax of Eugénie's argument with her father, whilst the realism becomes apparent in both the death itself and the scenes of banality which follow. In the television adaptation, following the argument between Eugénie and her father, Eugénie goes to the window to close the shutters and we hear only the sound of Madame Grandet's laboured breathing. As the shutters close and the room is in darkness, Madame Grandet's last breath comes as a gasp, then we hear only Eugénie's cry of 'Maman!' in the darkness before the scene cuts to Eugénie, her father and Monsieur Cruchot organising her mother's will. For a woman who, in life, was so very melodramatic, this understated, realist death is somehow anti-climactic. The fact that in both the film adaptation, and in the novel, the audience and reader are excluded from her funeral, a very public event, yet are privy to the organisation of her estate, a very private event, serves further to highlight Balzac's preoccupation with, and the true reality of, the private lives and dramas which go on behind closed doors. The omission of her funeral foregrounds how, for Balzac, the public is less important than the realism of the private, what goes on behind the mask of the action shown to the world. The passing of Madame Grandet happens with no real drama, and is totally eclipsed by the scene before it in which Eugénie threatens to stab herself for every cut that her father makes into the gold box left in her keeping by Charles. Equally, we then watch Grandet disinherit his own daughter of her mother's estate in perfect calmness and calculation and with no drama at all. The death of Madame Grandet and the actual act of Eugénie giving away her inheritance, two of the most

dramatic events in *Eugénie Grandet*, and certainly in the life of the heroine, occur without any real melodrama. This contrast between the enormity of the event and the lack of drama, compared to the melodrama which surrounds smaller events, such as the women making breakfast for Charles without asking Grandet's permission, creates a paradoxical situation in which daily events become dramatic and life-changing events are treated as mundane. This is another subversion of melodrama, which usually plays on the heightened emotions caused by big changes and events, and again, it points to the fact that, for Balzac, it is quite possible for the ordinary to be more dramatic than the extraordinary and the normal events in people's lives (or the disruption of them) to cause much more drama and emotion than the big events.

According to Brooks, 'windows are always important in realist fiction'.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, given the balance of realism and melodrama present in the novel, it is perhaps unsurprising that windows feature prominently in the television adaptation of *Eugénie Grandet*. As with *Le Père Goriot*, and perhaps even to a greater extent, Verhaeghe uses camera shots through windows and archways to elicit a feeling that the audience of the adaptation is almost spying on the private lives of the characters. This is very much in line with Balzac's interest in private lives and the drama which exists under the surface of the typical family home. Furthermore, windows are used in *Eugénie Grandet* by the characters, along with the bannister of the staircase and the wall surrounding the garden, as a means of, usually inadvertently, spying on the other characters. As we saw in relation to *Le Père Goriot* in chapter one, the ability to watch others without their knowledge implies a certain kind of power over them,<sup>36</sup> but in the case of Eugénie, it also implies disillusionment and her coming-of-age. It is through watching her father when he is unaware of it that she begins to notice his obsession with money. In the television adaptation, we watch Eugénie as she observes him over the bannister, moving his gold to take to Angers in the dead of night.

Equally, it is through her observation of Charles, unbeknownst to him, that she begins to realise that she has fallen in love with him. When Charles arrives, she goes to the window to see who is at the gate, turning her back on the guests in the room and focussing entirely on Charles and her father without their realising. Following Charles' unexpected arrival, Madame Grandet and Nanon go to make a bed up for him. Eugénie then excuses herself to go and help them, and, on leaving the room, watches Charles for a moment through the crack in the door, unobserved by Charles, her father or any of their guests. The use of close-ups on Eugénie at these moments intensifies both the secrecy of her observation and, through her expression, the emotions which this inspires in her. The lighting is particularly interesting as, in both shots, her face is both in shadow and slightly, partially illuminated by the light of the candle. In the first scene, that of Charles' arrival, the shot is of Eugénie in the window, from the outside, followed by a view of what she is seeing. The audience therefore is allowed, not only to see Eugénie's face, which no other characters at this moment can see, but also exactly what she sees from her viewpoint in the window. The illicit nature of her peering through the window at Grandet and Charles is underlined by the fact that he sends his wife back inside when she comes out to see who has arrived. The combination of shadows and light could be seen as a reference to the secrecy of her observations which, by necessity of not being seen, are mostly conducted in the shadows. It could also be symbolic of the fact that a new chapter of her life is dawning, one where she steps out of the shadows of her ignorant childhood, into the light of a lucid adulthood where she is forced to confront first her father, then her own disappointment at Charles' betrayal. This is mirrored in the lighting in the scene where she tells Grandet that her gold is gone; their living room is no longer in darkness, but very bright, reflecting Eugénie's completed transformation into an adult. Finally, after proposing to Cruchot, Eugénie runs to the window, crying 'on étouffe ici'<sup>37</sup>. The room is, once again, very

bright and this action is mirrored by the final scene of the film where we see Eugénie, alone, leaning from a window. This contrast from the darkness of the Grandet's home at the beginning of the film to the brightness at the end can be perceived as Eugénie's disillusionment, moving from the shadows of ignorance, fear and uncertainty to the clarity of facing ugly truths such as her father's obsession with money and Charles' marriage to another woman.

Just as windows play an important role in the television adaptation, so do other objects: 'Everything in the real - the facades, furniture, clothing, posture, gesture - must become a sign'.<sup>38</sup> To a great extent this is replicated in the television adaptation through the *mise-en-scène*. In Eugénie's bedroom as she looks at herself in the mirror lamenting that she is not beautiful enough for Charles, there is a birdcage in the corner of the opening shot, next to the window. This juxtaposition of images of confinement and freedom highlights the compromise that Eugénie must make, choosing between obeying her father's rules, remaining confined to his will and his home forever, and making her own decisions, and mistakes, in a bid for freedom. The juxtaposition of the birdcage and the window can also be seen as a representation of the position Eugénie is in at this point in the film: she is beginning to become aware of her own appearance and her love for Charles (hence the window, representing freedom) but she feels helpless to act upon it, trapped. This is just one example of how the *mise-en-scène* mirrors the dialogue and emotions of the characters. Mirrors are used to a similar effect.

If windows allow characters to observe the truth in others, mirrors reflect this gaze inwards, allowing the character and the audience to see what they really feel. The mirror in Eugénie's room is mostly clear and she looks into it declaring that she is not beautiful enough for Charles; however, the mirror behind her as the Abbé Cruchot encourages her to marry is so

tarnished that it reflects nothing. This is perhaps a metaphor for the way that the tarnishing of her hopes of a relationship with Charles makes Eugénie less open: she is no longer able to admit her true feelings even to herself. In the scene where she is talking to herself in the mirror in her room, when her love for Charles is still young, innocent and hesitant, she is the image of freedom: she is naked with her hair hanging loose over her shoulders, reflected clearly in the mirror. When we see her in the mirror as she is talking with the Abbé, she is dressed in black with a high collar and her hair tight in a bun. The contrast between the two scenes demonstrates how Eugénie has changed; reflected slightly in a tarnished mirror, she is capable of hiding her feelings now, controlling them enough to marry another man and to negotiate a marriage contract which suits her will. The result of these small but significant details which can be seen in various places throughout the film is to increase the overall significance and the representative power of each scene. Just as certain Balzacian characters have become 'more significant than the merely real, since they sum up and represent more fully certain choices of ways of being'<sup>39</sup> so the mise-en-scene of this television adaptation is more significant than a merely realist approach would allow. The combination of these details with melodrama, which itself is an amplified version of reality, creates an adaptation which, while in a different medium, retains much of the multiple layers of significance that are present in the novel.

There is, throughout the novel and the television adaptation, a fine balance of realism and melodrama used to portray the Grandet family and their relationships with the other characters. Whilst *Eugénie Grandet* is not a melodrama in the pure sense of the word, the subversion of the traditional melodramatic form plays a large part in the characterisation and plot. Perhaps the best example of this subversion is the ending: Balzac subverts the traditional family ending in which happiness and harmony is restored, leaving our heroine widowed and



alone except for her faithful companion, Nanon. Whilst the film ends in a similar way, it is interesting that Eugénie, having proposed to Cruchot, cries, whereas in the film, she expresses the feeling of being stifled (exclaiming 'on étouffe ici!'). Both the novel and the television adaptation subvert the melodrama, both maintain the same ending (she marries Cruchot and is quickly widowed) but each gives Eugénie a slightly different attitude. She is not a broken woman: in the novel she does a lot for local people and charity, whereas in the film it is impossible to portray this as succinctly as in writing. Therefore, rather than leaving us with the image of a miserable widow, we are left with the image of Eugénie gazing out of her window, perhaps contemplating the freedom which she now has but no longer wants. The use of realism provides a contrast and acts as a point of comparison for the melodrama of certain scenes and characters. In her decision to marry Cruchot, Eugénie reflects her father's realist attitude in the sense that she feels she should marry someone and Cruchot is perhaps the best choice for her since she knows that she cannot marry Charles. She reflects Grandet's blunt attitude in telling Cruchot to stand when he is kneeling at her feet and explaining in practical terms how the marriage must work and the conditions that he must fulfil in order to marry her. However, the outburst of 'on étouffe ici!' and the choice to send him to Charles with the box and pay off Charles' creditors in Paris certainly reflects some of her mother's melodrama. If the Grandets' marriage represents the balance of melodrama and realism in the novel and television adaptation, Eugénie as their child personifies this balance once she has become an adult and taken over their roles, becoming both master and mistress of her household. The melodramatic aspects of the text are certainly more prevalent in the television adaptation than the realist aspects; however, given melodrama's origins as a theatrical style and the influence of Molière's *L'Avare* which is present in *Eugénie Grandet*, this is unsurprising. Although Brooks has commented that 'Melodramatic acting is almost inconceivable to us today',<sup>40</sup> I am

more inclined to believe that ‘melodrama...corresponds to reality, not least modern reality, more closely than Naturalism’<sup>41</sup> or realism possibly could as melodrama is an exaggerated perception which stems from reality, much as modern society stems from our history. It is the balance of melodrama and realism which makes the novel and the television adaptation so recognisable to a modern audience: realism as the concept of the real cannot function without some melodrama because melodrama is very much a part of the real for any family or society. Equally, melodrama without realism is nothing because it has no point of comparison to ground it. The family setting of *Eugénie Grandet* is the perfect setting for demonstrating the interdependency of these two styles, both in terms of literature and formal features, and the family melodramas which ensue when their balance is tipped.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Bechtold Heilman, **Tragedy and Melodrama** (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1968) p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Ben Singer, **Melodrama and Modernity** (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Kate Griffiths, **Emile Zola and the Artistry of Adaptation** (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2009) p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Brooks, **The Melodramatic Imagination** (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995) pp. 28-29 (original work printed 1976).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/realism> [accessed 24.9.2014].

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/realism> [accessed 24.9.2014].

<sup>7</sup> Brooks, **The Melodramatic Imagination**, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Honoré de Balzac, **La Comédie Humaine : Volume III Études de Mœurs : Eugénie Grandet**, (Paris : Gallimard-Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1977) p. 1185.

<sup>9</sup> Balzac, **Eugénie Grandet**, p. 1093.

<sup>10</sup> Balzac, **Eugénie Grandet**, p. 1181.

<sup>11</sup> Balzac, **Eugénie Grandet**, p. 1187.

<sup>12</sup> Singer, **Melodrama and Modernity**, p. 135.

<sup>13</sup> Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe, **Eugénie Grandet** (France : Arte and Koba Films, 1994) [on DVD].

<sup>14</sup> Verhaeghe, **Eugénie Grandet**.

<sup>15</sup> Verhaeghe, **Eugénie Grandet**.

<sup>16</sup> Brooks, **The Melodramatic Imagination** p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Brooks, **The Melodramatic Imagination**, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Balzac, **Eugénie Grandet**, p. 1148.

<sup>19</sup> Linzy Erika Dickinson, **Theatre in Balzac's La Comédie Humaine** (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000) p. 179.

<sup>20</sup> Linzy Erika Dickinson, **Theatre in Balzac's La Comédie Humaine**, p. 42.

<sup>21</sup> Balzac, **Eugénie Grandet**, p. 1093.

<sup>22</sup> Molière, **L'Avare** Act V Scene3, (Paris : Hachette Livre, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> Balzac, **Eugénie Grandet**, p. 1033.

<sup>24</sup> David Grimsted, **Melodrama Unveiled: American Theater and Culture 1800-1850** (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press, 1987) p. 181 (original work printed 1968, Chicago).

<sup>25</sup> Christopher Prendergast, **Balzac: Fiction and Melodrama** (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd, 1978) p. 7.

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- <sup>26</sup> Singer, **Melodrama and Modernity**, p. 44.
- <sup>27</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/realism>
- <sup>28</sup> Anne Marie Baron, **Balzac et la Bible: une herméneutique du romanesque**, (Paris : H Champion, 2007) p. 104.
- <sup>29</sup> Balzac, **Eugénie Grandet**, p. 1041.
- <sup>30</sup> Balzac, **Eugénie Grandet**, p. 1046.
- <sup>31</sup> Balzac, **Eugénie Grandet**, p. 1046.
- <sup>32</sup> Brooks, **The Melodramatic Imagination**, p. 12.
- <sup>33</sup> Peter Brooks, **Realist Vision** (New Haven and London : Yale University Press, 2005) p. 8.
- <sup>34</sup> Balzac, **Eugénie Grandet**, p. 1047.
- <sup>35</sup> Brooks, **Realist vision**, p. 56.
- <sup>36</sup> Monica Filimon, 'The eye behind the writing hand', in Anna Gural-Migdal and Robert Singer: **Zola and Film, Essays in the art of adaptation** (North Carolina: McFarland & Co, 2005) pp. 69-88 (p. 82).
- <sup>37</sup> Verhaeghe, **Eugénie Grandet**.
- <sup>38</sup> Peter Brooks, **The Melodramatic Imagination**, p. 125.
- <sup>39</sup> Brooks, **Realist Vision**, p. 5.
- <sup>40</sup> Brooks, **The Melodramatic Imagination**, p. 47.
- <sup>41</sup> Eric Bentley, **The Life of the Drama** (London: Methuen, 1965) pp. 215-216.

### **Business and Affairs: Marriage and Adultery in *La Duchesse de Langeais***

Marriage in the nineteenth century, as an institution, is something which is greatly criticised in Balzac's work and its modern film and television adaptations. Just as, in the nineteenth century 'the idea of marriage based on romantic love instead of familial ambition... was new in France, for the courtly love tradition had always regarded love and marriage as mutually exclusive',<sup>1</sup> in the modern western world the idea of marriages without love, based entirely on 'familial ambition', is, for most people, a foreign concept. This perhaps accounts for some of the fascination surrounding the idea of an open marriage of convenience, such as that portrayed in *La Duchesse de Langeais*, as in many other Balzac novels, as a topic for adaptation. While we have already touched on this in regard to *Le Père Goriot*, there are few Balzac novels which explore the concepts of marriage, adultery and coquetry in nineteenth-century France in as much depth as *La Duchesse de Langeais*. Part two of the trilogy *L'Histoire des treize*, *La Duchesse de Langeais* was originally entitled *Ne Touchez pas la Hache*, a name which was used as the title for Rivette's cinematic adaptation. By changing his original title, Balzac shifted the focus from the warning Montriveau gives to the Duchesse where he tells her that she has already touched the axe, onto the Duchesse herself. Through the change in title, Balzac places the focus much more firmly on her behaviour and the evolution of her character throughout the novel rather than on the one specific, pivotal, event of her kidnapping. She becomes the subject, rather than the object, of the novel. This chapter aims to analyse some of the many conflicting systems and structures which surround the Duchesse in the novel: love, marriage, adultery and coquetry. I will consider the ways in which they are presented in the novel itself as well as in two different adaptations; firstly the 1995 film for television directed by Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe; and secondly the 2007 cinematic adaptation *Ne Touchez pas la Hache*, directed by Jacques Rivette. By considering the

representation of these themes in both a cinematic adaptation and a film for television, it is possible to see the differences in their representation on the big screen compared to the small screen and analyse the reasons behind this.

While absent husbands exist in other Balzac novels, for example, in *Le Père Goriot*, they nonetheless manage to make their presence felt. Although the reader rarely catches a glimpse of them, they spend most of their time under the same roof as their wives and, although they often turn a blind eye to their infidelities, they are generally there to oversee their wives' activities. In some cases they use this to manipulate their wives to their advantage, as does the Baron de Nucingen in *La Maison Nucingen*. By contrast, 'Le duc de Langeais...se livra méthodiquement à ses goûts, à ses plaisirs, et laissa sa femme libre de suivre les siens'.<sup>2</sup> The Duc and Duchesse 'vivaient donc entièrement séparés, de fait et de cœur, à l'insu du monde'.<sup>3</sup> This utter separation is markedly different from the absent husbands in *Le Père Goriot* in that the Duc's absence is so complete; his influence is so discreet, that it is almost unrecognisable throughout the novel, save for the few rare moments when it suits the Duchesse to remember that she is married. By leaving Antoinette so completely to her own devices, the Duke is both implicitly trusting her with his reputation as well as highlighting to her the fact that theirs is nothing more than a marriage of convenience. It was in the year 1816, the year that the narrator highlights as the year when the 'Restauration fut consommée',<sup>4</sup> when Antoinette has been married for four years, that the laws regarding divorce came into effect. Following the implementation of these laws, it became almost impossible for a woman to file for divorce, regardless of her reasons. Patricia Mainardi highlights one example of this which applies specifically to the situation of the Duchesse: 'Since the Civil Code specified that a wife was obligated to live with her husband wherever he chose (article 214), it was virtually impossible to prove that she had been abandoned. Even

if he had moved out of their conjugal home, this merely signified that their communal dwelling was elsewhere, namely wherever he now resided.<sup>5</sup> Thus the Duke's neglect of his wife and his husbandly duties to her are legally permitted and, were she to question them, it would undoubtedly be proven that the Duchesse herself is in the wrong. It is the neglect of husbandly duties, with no means for her to question them, which leaves Antoinette 'offensée gravement',<sup>6</sup> therefore liberating her conscience, to a certain extent, from some of her wifely fidelity, allowing her to behave in the way she does. It is clear therefore that the context of the new divorce laws, which would not have been lost on Balzac's contemporaries but may easily be overlooked by a modern reader, provide the Duke with the opportunity of becoming an absent husband with no repercussions. The context of the new divorce laws coming into effect not only serves to show the effect of political changes on the individual, it also legitimises the Duke's absence in the fact that it is an absence condoned on a national scale.

The absence of the Duc de Langeais is further underlined by the token reminders of his existence, for example, Antoinette's use of him as a convenient excuse to keep Armand at a safe distance. In this way, the role of the absent husband proves to be somewhat useful to Antoinette. It allows her to push Montriveau away and slow down their relationship in order to protect her own emotions as well as her reputation, appearing to do so on behalf of the absent force which is her husband, rather than admitting her true motives. In this sense, the Duc de Langeais achieves a kind of 'present absence'<sup>7</sup> in the novel and in the awareness of the reader. Antoinette's behaviour is an example of the idea that 'for wives, their own adulterous liaison, in addition to whatever personal happiness it brought them, could represent individual freedom and self-determination, since a woman could choose a lover but not a husband'.<sup>8</sup> Not only was she given no choice in her husband but she is left entirely abandoned by him in their home and marriage. Therefore her assertion of her individual

freedom becomes more aggressive than simply taking a lover; Antoinette's lack of control in her marriage is counterbalanced by the extreme manipulation and control she exercises over Montriveau. The small amount of control which the Duc de Langeais still exercises over their marriage can be perceived in the reaction of their relatives, who, on hearing that the Duchesse's carriage has been seen waiting outside Montriveau's home, descend to offer their unwanted advice and wisdom. It is at this point in the novel that the Duke's uncle, the Duc de Grandlieu speaks frankly to her and highlights both the unfortunate situation to which an affair with Montriveau could lead and, simultaneously, the problematic discrepancy between the *Code Civil* and the tendency towards loveless arranged marriages: 'si vous tenez à faire un éclat...il [de Langeais] se séparera de vous, gardera votre fortune, vous laissera pauvre, et conséquemment sans considération...et vous serez liée, garrottée par les lois, obligée de dire amen à ces arrangements-là.'<sup>9</sup> While these words appear harsh to a modern reader, they are an accurate, realistic representation of the situation facing married women who had affairs, and the lack of options with which this left them.

The concepts of adultery and coquetry are intricately intertwined within *La Duchesse de Langeais* and the impossibility of divorce, while initially used as a tool to distance Montriveau, becomes an obstacle when, following her kidnap, the Duchesse wants to draw him closer to her. Balzac also highlights a darker side to the divorce laws which prevent women from separating from their husbands when Armand offers to have the Duc de Langeais murdered in order for them to be together. This offer serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it serves to highlight the lengths to which desperate women trapped in loveless marriages may be pushed under the new divorce laws. Secondly, it foregrounds Montriveau's dangerous, passionate nature acting both as a precursor to the kidnapping and a reminder of his somewhat mysterious background. Thirdly, and perhaps most subtly, it subverts a section

of the laws on divorce which further favours the husband over the wife: 'The Penal Code also established for the first time a new privilege for husbands. Its article 324 stated: 'Murder committed by the husband of his wife, as well as of her accomplice, at the moment when he catches them *in flagrante delicto* in their conjugal dwelling is excusable.''<sup>10</sup> As Antoinette tells him: 'Si la manière dont je vis avec monsieur de Langeais me laisse la disposition de mon cœur, les lois, les convenances m'ont ôté le droit de disposer de ma personne.'<sup>11</sup> By offering to have her husband murdered for his abandonment of her (which has left her freer but not free enough to be with Montriveau), Armand is simultaneously protecting their future relationship and reversing the roles attributed by law: it is the husband's right to kill the lover in a moment of passion, not the lover's to kill the husband. Armand's suggestion that he could take on what is actually the right of a husband raises another interesting question in Antoinette's treatment of him. In Verhaeghe's television adaptation, we see him confide in his friend that 'je suis pour elle un époux secret'.<sup>12</sup> This quotation summarises the fact that Montriveau does indeed come to take the place of a husband rather than a lover. She refuses to consummate their affair, using her reputation and her marriage as excuses, but, in fact, few of the absent husbands in other novels are accorded their husbandly rights in the bedroom as most of the women have lovers who take their place, in the same way that the husbands have mistresses who replace their wives. Montriveau, however takes the place of de Langeais in every way except this one. He is the Duchesse's constant companion and is at her command. He is, in many ways, as much at her mercy until he kidnaps her, as she is at the mercy of the laws of the land and her husband's command. By usurping the role of Antoinette's husband, Montriveau places himself in the role of a husband rather than that of a lover in a society which does not believe in love within marriage. It is only by breaking this link through the drastic act of kidnapping her, that he manages to convince Antoinette to fall in love with him,



by which time, he has become so disgusted with her behaviour and the society which he perceives as its root cause, that he, in turn, tries to repel her. By not taking the traditional role of a lover, but instead that of a husband, Armand actually distances himself from the Duchesse. Similarly, in neglecting and abandoning her following the kidnap, he imitates the behaviour of her absent husband, thus encouraging her desperate attempts to restore his faith in her.

The links between religion and marriage, even at a time when marriage within the aristocracy was almost exclusively for business rather than pleasure, remained strong and religion clearly served to reinforce the social structures and expectations of the time. The church, in the nineteenth century, represented more than any other social structure ‘the agent of moral transaction’.<sup>13</sup> As Nicholas White notes, the church plays an important part, not only in the structure of the nineteenth century, but in the structure of its novels too: ‘classic plots are supposed to end with marriages or deaths. This is not simply because such endings are exciting, nor merely that they offer moments of tension or drama. For in both emotional and financial terms, both marriages and deaths restructure the shape of the family.’<sup>14</sup> What is particularly interesting in *La Duchesse de Langeais* is that, while the plot does indeed end in her death, it does not end with a church burial; she is transported from the Carmelite convent by Montriveau and his companions. Ultimately, however, the reader is left with Ronquerolles’ suggestion that they should throw her body into the ocean and Montriveau should endeavour to forget her because ‘c’était une femme, maintenant ce n’est rien’.<sup>15</sup> Equally, the Duchesse’s marriage is not at the end of the novel, but at the beginning, and occurs outside of the main narrative. This results in a type of love triangle which, before the nineteenth century was much less common in novels, a love triangle which Mainardi refers to as the ‘relatively new trope of husband, wife and lover.’ It is clear therefore that, in *La Duchesse de Langeais*,

Balzac rewrites the traditional role of the church within a novel. It is perhaps significant that the convent, 'that great burial ground for hearts'<sup>16</sup> was often a punishment inflicted on women by their families if they did not marry, or could not be trusted. It is therefore another action which breaks with the traditional role of the church, on the part of the Duchesse, when she takes herself to the convent of her own free will. It is the closest that she could come to a divorce at the time and subverts the role of her religion and the church from one which provides an entrance into (and a support of) marriage, to that of providing an escape from it.

While the role of religion is somewhat subverted from its traditional role, it nonetheless retains its importance at the heart of the plot. The presence of the priest who visits Antoinette is quite brief; however, religion remains important not only in terms of its influence on the rest of the story, as it sparks a passionate argument between the Duchesse and Montriveau, but also in terms of the discussion between the Duchesse and the priest which occurs prior to their quarrel. When Montriveau interrupts the Duchesse and her confessor, she is outlining her view on the role of religion within society. In the novel, this is written as reported speech, allowing the narrator to give his own view on what the Duchesse is saying. It seems that, here, the Duchesse's strong beliefs in religion and the way that its structure is intertwined with that of society are in line with those of Balzac who claimed that 'J'écris à la lueur de deux Vérités éternelles: la Religion, la Monarchie.'<sup>17</sup> He uses the reported speech to underline that he shares her views on the purpose of religion within society, stating that 'Elle exprimait mieux que ne le faisait l'abbé pourquoi l'Eglise devait être un pouvoir à la fois temporel et spirituel'.<sup>18</sup> In the film adaptations, the capacity for reported speech is somewhat limited through the nature of the medium of film which is designed to show an audience something rather than telling a reader. Instead of this reported speech from an omniscient narrator, we are presented with two very different adaptations of this scene, not

in terms of setting or character but in terms of how the reported speech in the novel is adapted for the screen. Verhaeghe presents us with a Duchesse who simply agrees with the Abbé when *he* says that ‘la religion doit être restauré dans tout son ancien splendeur’.<sup>19</sup> She is smiling, her eyes glazed over as she nods and seconds his opinions. This almost trance-like agreement is prefaced by her narration that, due to her confusion over her relationship with Montriveau ‘je cherchais le secours de la religion’.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, in *Ne Touchez pas la Hache*, Rivette presents us with a Duchesse much more in keeping with the intelligent, eloquent lady from the novel. The priest himself tells her ‘Vous exprimez mieux ces choses que je ne saurai le faire moi-même’.<sup>21</sup> Instead of the priest lecturing the Duchesse, as in Verhaeghe’s adaptation, the Duchesse is reinstated in the original position she holds in the novel, that of a woman whose intellectual opinions are valued by the priest as much as his own. The priest also leaves her with something to think about before he begins: ‘N’est-il pas étrange ma fille, que les hommes se battent si volontiers pour [L’église] et vivent si peu volontiers selon ses règles.’<sup>22</sup> This small comment made by the priest is neither in the novel nor the Verhaeghe television adaptation; however, in Rivette’s cinematic adaptation, it could be perceived as the underpinning of her decision to go into the convent. No one lives more by the rule of the church than nuns and it is perhaps her motivation not only to show an interest in the role of religion within society, but to apply this to her own life. The result of this scene is that the Duchesse we see in the Rivette version is presented as more intelligent, and perhaps therefore more calculating and less sympathetic. However, Rivette also deftly fills a small but significant void in both the novel and Verhaeghe’s television adaptation. He gives a logical basis from which her sudden decision to run away to a convent stems. Both adaptations, therefore maintain the importance of religion within the plot; however, just as Balzac subverts

the traditional role of the church within the novel, so they alter Balzac's use of religion and his representation of the priest better to suit the media of television and cinema.

The Duchesse must strike a fine balance to protect her reputation and her marriage as well as attempting to maintain her relationship with Montriveau. One clear example of this is the fact that she accepts Montriveau as her lover but refuses to allow herself to fall in love with him in return. The main turning point for their relationship is when Armand takes a stand with her through the violent means of kidnap and threatens to brand her for all to see, a gesture which is as strong as it is symbolic, and which I will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter. Firstly, however, it is important to consider the symbolism in the way in which the Duchesse responds. The reason that this act is so remarkable is not simply for the act itself but for the effect that it produces on the Duchesse. After the kidnap, there is a total shift in both her behaviour towards Montriveau and the balance of power within their relationship. Suddenly, Montriveau is in control. This recalls the narrator's comment from the beginning of the novel that 'Les peuples, comme les femmes, aiment la force en quiconque les gouverne, et leur amour ne va pas sans le respect; ils n'accordent point leur obéissance à qui ne l'impose pas.'<sup>23</sup> However, there are also other ways in which this statement can be applied as a metaphor to *La Duchesse de Langeais*. If the Duchesse is, within her society, perceived to be a leader, her power over her lover, her husband and her followers is dependent on her forcefully demanding respect from them. Having already lost her husband to his own pursuit of pleasure, she is left with her lover and her followers. This perhaps explains her need for power in her relationship with Montriveau and the correlation between the power shift in their relationship and her withdrawal from Parisian society. She is no longer a leader because she no longer exerts her power, but rather obeys Montriveau, thus, following her kidnap, she fails to maintain the precarious balance between her relationship and her social position. Given that

‘the values and behaviour inculcated in the home were considered crucial to the formation and maintenance of the national identity’<sup>24</sup> in nineteenth-century France, it is possible to extend this further and consider it a metaphor for the fate of French society in the nineteenth century. ‘Le faubourg Saint-Germain est le microcosme de la société’,<sup>25</sup> specifically the upper-class Parisian society in which this novel is set, and so is the Duchesse’s love triangle. It is possible to perceive the Duchesse as representative of Parisian society, her husband (being a member of the old aristocracy and in a position of governance over her), can be seen to represent the monarchy, and finally Montriveau, a soldier who fought under Napoleon, is clearly representative of the Napoleonic empire and ideology. In this context, the fine balance which the Duchesse must try to sustain between her loyalties to her husband and her love for Montriveau mirrors the ebb and flow of popular opinion within nineteenth-century France which led to its unstable political changes and multiple revolutions. This is, in some ways, a warning to the French people, and to the monarchy. The Duchesse, at the end of the novel, has isolated herself in the convent and has withered away through years of attempting both to withdraw from the precarious situation she was in and atone for having put herself in that situation in the first place. If her husband represents the monarchy, her untimely death is certainly a metaphor for what Balzac suggests should happen if the monarchy ignores the way in which its subjects behave and does not demand their loyalty and obedience. In short, the microcosm of Parisian society which is the love triangle between the Duchesse, her lover and her husband is not simply a political metaphor but a premonition of the death of French society as its contemporary readers knew it.

Having considered the idea of the Duchesse maintaining, or rather failing to maintain, a balance between her husband, her lover and her own free will, it is now possible further to examine the theme of balance in *La Duchesse de Langeais*. An important aspect of this

balance is a sense of duty to her husband, to her religion and to her own wishes and desires with regard to her relationship with Montriveau. As we have seen, the Duchesse's duty to her religion is alluded to throughout the novel and both adaptations, not just once she has joined the convent. From the discussion with the priest and her subsequent argument with Montriveau regarding the sanctity of the confessional to the narrator's ironic comments on her religious 'phase' (referring to it as 'l'époque religieuse' of their 'guerre sentimentale') the novel provides its readers with consistent indications of her religious background. This is further foregrounded in the television adaptation where the majority of the action takes place as a flashback (as it does in the novel and Rivette's cinematic adaptation) with the difference that the Duchesse herself is the narrator, recounting her tale in a confession to the mother superior at the convent. The effect of these constant reminders of her religious nature, while at times making her appear hypocritical, serve as proof to the audience that this is one aspect of her life to which the Duchesse feels truly duty bound and which she has to juggle alongside the rest of her, already precariously balanced, existence. They also give a consistent context for her decision to flee society, only to find comfort within the cold stone walls of a convent. Her duty to her husband is expressed in more overt terms: his uncle outlines, in no uncertain terms, her position as an adulteress in the eyes of the law and the Duchesse herself uses her marriage to distance Montriveau. In one of these episodes, her duty to her husband is being dictated to her, in the other, she is using this duty to her advantage. However, there is one point in the novel at which her true sense of duty to her husband shows itself. When Armand suggests that he could arrange for her husband to be killed, she could easily have accepted, she could have used her religion as her reason to refuse, she could simply have said no. Instead, she issues him with an ultimatum : 'sachez-le bien: s'il arrivait par votre faute, quelque malheur à monsieur de Langeais, je ne serais jamais à vous.'<sup>26</sup> Both the cinematic and

television adaptations highlight this scene in different ways. In Rivette's version, the ticking clock in the background of the scene cuts through the otherwise silent room, ticking even over the dialogue, as if it is the timer on a bomb, counting down the seconds to the impact of her ultimatum. This is then immediately followed by a black screen with narrative from the novel, referring to the scene as 'l'époque civile de cette guerre sentimentale'<sup>27</sup> further highlighting the ultimatum that she has just made. Verhaeghe's adaptation is less dramatic, but the impact is the same; when issuing her ultimatum, the Duchesse physically removes herself from Montriveau's embrace and backs away from him, the physical divide mirroring the divide between them which his suggestion of killing her husband has caused. Unlike Rivette's cinematic adaptation where the Duchesse does not look at Armand once during her ultimatum and remains seated with back to him the whole time, Verhaeghe has her standing facing him, softly spoken and maintaining eye contact throughout the entire conversation. The effect of this is that her ultimatum carries more weight; she is at the same level as Montriveau and as such, recognises her power over him in making the threat. Again, in Verhaeghe's version, this scene is followed with narration, but this time, from the Duchesse herself; rather than starkly cutting from the scene, her voiceover presents a sympathetic reasoning behind her behaviour. Despite the differences in techniques, it is clear that both directors have sought to foreground the Duchesse's first ultimatum to Montriveau. This underlines the importance of the differentiation between the duties she resentfully fulfils towards her husband and the genuine sense of duty she has towards him for the position he has given her and the fact that he is her husband, despite his neglect of her. The final duty that the Duchesse has is to herself, both in terms of her reputation and the fulfilment of her wishes. These two aspects of her life are clearly divided by her kidnap: before her kidnap, the priority is her reputation; after, she does everything that she can in order to achieve her own desires which she has neglected in order

to maintain her duties to the other aspects of her life. Her first act of duty to herself is when she uses the Saint Germain grapevine of gossip to her own advantages encouraging all of Paris to be aware of her love for Montriveau by sending her carriage to wait outside his house. When told that she could harm her family reputation, she justifies her behaviour by stating that ‘ma famille, en me sacrifiant à des intérêts, m’a, sans le vouloir, condamnée à d’irréparables malheurs.’<sup>28</sup> The second way in which she completes her duty to herself is in her determination, expressed in the novel, that ‘Je ne veux pas faire une seconde édition de Madame de Beauséant’<sup>29</sup> and, instead of allowing Montriveau to string her along, she takes control of her own rejection. In refusing to allow herself to become ‘une seconde édition’ Antoinette also picks up on the general belief that a sequel or adaptation is perhaps a reflection of the critical belief shared by many that an adaptation does not hold the same value as the original. By setting Montriveau a second ultimatum, she regains control of her own future, and ensures that she will not live a variation of Mme de Beauséant’s story but live a story of her own. When he does not meet the conditions of that ultimatum, she removes herself, not just from Paris but from France and mainstream society. Although she does not ever truly achieve balance in her various duties, she manages to address each of them in turn and it is the weight of the duty to herself which is the ultimate factor in tipping the scales of her decision to withdraw from the world.

Throughout this chapter, I have touched on the most powerful, pivotal scene in the novel and both of the adaptations, that is, Montriveau’s kidnap of the Duchesse. Montriveau’s decision to kidnap and brand the Duchesse for all to see is the axis on which the power balance in their relationship turns. This makes the act of kidnapping her interesting in its own right, but perhaps more interesting are the motives behind it (seemingly unrequited love rarely ends in kidnap) and the reasons why her attitude changes both dramatically and abruptly



following this kidnap. According to Elisabeth Gerwin, ‘The primary objective of kidnapping is as much psychological as physical, in that it seeks to bring its victim from a public into a private space, and thus into direct confrontation with the intimate thoughts of the kidnapper.’<sup>30</sup> It is possible to counteract this argument with the fact that Armand and Antoinette often find themselves in a private space at her home; however, this space is not private. Although there are several instances where Armand makes his private thoughts abundantly clear to her, such as his warning that ‘Quand je voudrai sérieusement ce dont nous parlions tout à l’heure, je l’aurai’,<sup>31</sup> these instances are rare as they are never really accorded any level of privacy; there are servants whose loyalty is to both her and her husband and the priest visits her there, as does her family. As Moira Donald notes, ‘Most social contact, and much business interaction, would have occurred within the domestic space.’<sup>32</sup> This lack of privacy is underlined in *Ne Touchez pas la Hache* by the bells which the Duchess rings to call her servants. It appears that she almost choreographs her conversations so that, at the precise moment at which she says something inappropriate to Montriveau, something which highlights her manipulation of him, she is within arm’s reach of one of the many bells which cause her servant to come running. The fact that there is another person present to witness whatever Montriveau’s response may be acts both as a means of ensuring that, should his response be inappropriate, she has some protection and that he feels unable to respond in any inappropriate manner because there is someone else there. This also means that, in her home, she can manipulate him as she wishes with no room for him to express articulately his own feelings to her. This total lack of privacy is summarised in Montriveau’s declaration that ‘Quand vous vous tortillez sur votre divan, dans votre boudoir, je ne trouve pas de mots pour mes idées. Puis chez vous, à la moindre pensée qui vous déplaît, vous tirez le cordon de votre sonnette, vous criez bien fort et mettez votre amant à la porte comme s’il était le dernier des

misérables. Ici, j'ai l'esprit libre. Ici, personne ne peut me jeter à la porte.<sup>33</sup> It is when she is at the convent that, once again, Montriveau is prevented from expressing his true feelings for her and shown the door, this time by the nuns, but once again on her command:

— Ma mère, cria la sœur Thérèse en espagnol, je vous ai menti, cet homme est mon amant!

Aussitôt le rideau tomba. Le général, demeuré stupide, entendit à peine les portes intérieures se fermant avec violence.<sup>34</sup>

This time, it is not only the door that closes but the curtain that separates them too, and the doors are so far inside the convent that he can barely even hear them closing. It is no coincidence that both of the times that Montriveau attempts to kidnap the Duchesse, it is due to not being allowed to articulate his feelings and being shut out. From these examples, it is clear that the scene in which the Duchesse is kidnapped is not only the only time that Montriveau is with her in true privacy, but also it is the only time that the audience or readers can see them isolated from external influences. Montriveau's impulse to kidnap stems from his own transformative experience of being kidnapped, in which he was 'displaced from his presumed colonial identity by becoming a European slave in Africa, and traumatized to the point of being severed from his past by amnesia'.<sup>35</sup> His kidnap of the Duchesse may be a symbol of his desire to displace her from her surroundings and sever her from her past but it is also a comment on the process of adaptation. The process of adaptation necessarily removes a text from its original context and displaces its original identity so that the adaptor can impose their own ideologies and techniques onto the text. Montriveau's kidnap of her is an attempt to adapt the Duchesse, imposing his own mark on her both mentally and physically. Gerwin also suggests that Montriveau's intention to brand her reflects 'the impulse to mark the body of the

Duchesse as the site of desire's failure'.<sup>36</sup> I would offer the more simple explanation that this would bring their relationship from the private sphere into the public. The fact that she could hide it from no one would make her treatment of Montriveau visible to all and would replicate the humiliation which he feels in his awareness that others can see how she has power over him.

The question of privacy, or rather the lack of it, is a preoccupation in many of Balzac's novels and is reflected in the role of the novelist himself. Balzac actively sought to infiltrate the private lives of his characters and observe the acts which occurred behind closed doors. One of the ways in which privacy from other characters may be maintained is through letters. As we have seen in *Eugénie Grandet*, privacy can be destroyed by the reading of these letters by those who were not intended to see them, for example when Eugénie reads Charles' letter to Annette. It is perhaps significant that, following her kidnap, the Duchesse uses a series of letters to Montriveau to pour out her true feelings for him, as if these feelings which emerged in private can only be truly conveyed by a private medium. Even sending her carriage to Montriveau's home is not meant so much as a statement to him, but rather to the whole of Paris. It does not expose her feelings so much as her reputation and her marriage. With regard to these, and her final letter to Montriveau, the adaptations take a slightly different perspective to that of the novel. In Verhaeghe's adaptation, it is the fault of Montriveau's servant and a stopped clock which mean that he does not get her letter in time. Rivette's version is closer to the original novel as he is delayed by friends; however, in both, he receives the letter too late to act on it. In the novel, however, he receives the letter in good time but does not act on it immediately: 'Armand, lui, pendant ce temps, avait médité la lettre'; as in each of the adaptations, there are other factors, his friends keep him too long and his clock is slow. However, the lapse in time between reading the letter and acting on it does somewhat limit the

reader's sympathy for Montriveau. He does not, as in the Verhaeghe adaptation, run from his apartment in an attempt to find her but merely leaves with enough time to arrive by eight o'clock. This removal of blame in the film and cinematic adaptation serves to make Montriveau's character more sympathetic to the audience. The decision to make Montriveau's character more sympathetic may be explained by the fact that, in simplifying his character, the loss of the omniscient narrator and other narrative techniques which are difficult to portray in a visual medium becomes less important. It is therefore not only the intimate privacy of the written word in terms of the Duchesse's letters to Montriveau which we lose in the translation from novel to screen, but also the emotional and contextual insight of the omniscient narrator who, throughout the novel guides us through both Montriveau and the Duchesse's thoughts and feelings. In the television adaptation, which the Duchesse herself narrates, it is perhaps essential to simplify Montriveau's character in order to preserve the audience's sympathy for him. This is due to the fact that Verhaeghe presents the audience with an unreliable narrator in the form of the Duchesse who, necessarily, only knows her side of the story, not Montriveau's. As a result, Montriveau's role and character are greatly diminished as any speculation on his behaviour or feelings is from the point of view of the Duchesse. The irony of Verhaeghe's use of the Duchesse as a narrator is clear from the argument that she has with Montriveau regarding the sanctity of her confession, where she asks 'vous ne prétendez pas, je pense, pénétrer les secrets de ma confession?'<sup>37</sup> Whilst Montriveau is denied the knowledge of what she confesses to her priest, the entire film is a narrated flashback as related in a confession to one of the nuns at the convent. While 'Balzac displays a marked respect for the confessional in *La Comédie Humaine*'<sup>38</sup> and 'it is one of those places from which the Narrator is held back',<sup>39</sup> Verhaeghe shows no such reservations in his adaptation. This perhaps reflects the fact that nowadays, 'we do appear to live in a culture where we want to

make everything visible',<sup>40</sup> including those private acts of faith which, at one time were considered sacred.

Clocks and images of time play a key part in both the television and the film adaptation, acting as a reminder of the fact that the relationship between the Duchesse and Montriveau must, at some point, run out of time. Just as in Verhaeghe's adaptation of *Eugénie Grandet*, the ticking clock in the background of key scenes may be seen to represent the time limit on the innocent love affair of Eugénie and Charles, the clocks in the adaptations of *La Duchesse de Langeais* appear to be counting down the seconds that she has left in her affair with Montriveau to the fateful moment when the clock strikes eight and she removes herself from the world. Verhaeghe uses the ticking sound from the clocks from the moment when the Vidame returns to the Duchesse and states that Montriveau has the letter. This ticking can be heard over their dialogue and the music which plays as a transition from this scene to the next, then in Montriveau's apartment, from the moment he realises the letters are missing, there is a ticking in the *background* of the scene, and as he reads the Duchesse's letter, there is a clock in the corner of the shot behind his head, showing the audience that time is almost up for their relationship. Clocks are used to greater effect in Rivette's version, ticking in the background of many of the key scenes. His use of clocks ties in with his use of the bells in the Duchesse's apartment. Just as the clocks count the seconds that the Duchesse and Montriveau spend together, the bells which she rings to call her servants signal the end, if not of their meeting altogether, of the conversation which they are having. The effect of both of these signals for the audience is to reinforce what we see being played out on screen. While it is true that neither film can begin to attempt to replicate Balzac's omniscient narrator on screen, these small, seemingly insignificant, touches which are repeated throughout the film are used to a similar effect. In the same way that the priest's comment to the Duchesse can be perceived as

a precursor to her decision to run away to a convent, when the Duchesse visits Montriveau's home, where we see Montriveau's servant wind up a stopped clock, it is a signal to the audience of the possible complications which this may cause later in the film. All of this adds to the overall impression of their limited time together; conversations are cut short by the Duchesse ringing the bell for her servants, just as her ultimatum cuts short any chance of a relationship between them. It is not the Duchess ringing the bells in her home, but the bells of a church clock-tower striking eight which toll the end of their relationship. The film cuts abruptly from a close-up of the Duchesse listening to these bells to Montriveau sitting silently while his friends talk inane around him and a clock can distinctly be heard in the background, ticking down the seconds until she slips away from him into the night.

Verhaeghe's version uses clocks less frequently throughout the adaptation; however they are used to great effect in the final scenes. The Duchesse's ticking clock chimes as the scene opens, at which the Duchesse exclaims 'Il est sept heures passées'<sup>41</sup> drawing the audience's attention to the background ticking noise of the clock as well as the rapidly decreasing time until her ultimatum will be completed. This is reinforced when she asks the man outside Montriveau's home for the time and he responds 'bientôt huit heures'.<sup>42</sup> Again, as soon as the scene cuts to Montriveau, it is possible to hear his clock ticking in the background of the scene, the limited time is further increased by the view of the clock which is clearly in shot, behind his head, as he reads the Duchesse's letter. All of these images of time running out mirror both the limit that exists on their relationship and the fact that for the Duchesse, time is literally running out as, during the flashback while Montriveau is planning his second kidnap of her, this time from the Carmelite convent, the Duchesse is slowly approaching her death. Unlike the Duchesse and Montriveau, the audience are already well aware of how her ultimatum ends. Since the film opens with the Duchesse in a convent, it is only too clear that

the ending of the flashback will not be happy. However, at this stage in the film, it has not yet become clear that the Duchesse, who we have seen in the convent will in fact, ultimately die rather than be taken by Montriveau. In Verhaeghe's version, the story of her affair with Montriveau forms her last confession. It is important to note that the Nun to whom she is confessing does not speak French and tells her not to tire herself as she does not understand. This is perhaps a reflection on how society viewed their relationship; they did not understand Montriveau when he chose to bow to the Duchesse's demands but equally, when the Duchesse fell in love with him, they did not understand her rash behaviour. In Rivette's adaptation, we see nothing further of the Duchess in the adaptation's present after the curtain falls on her before the flashback. This is more faithful to the original novel and the idea that time is running out for her still appears as a theme. We see not one but three different Duchesses in the novel and both adaptations: the coquette, the changed woman and the nun. For every transition that she makes, she becomes progressively weaker in both in her character and physically. She begins as a strong, independent woman then becomes reliant on Montriveau desperate to earn his love for her, and finally she becomes a nun, so entirely dependent solely on her religion that she compromises her health and ultimately withers away. This process can be seen as a warning to those in an unhappy marriage who choose to take a lover. Her final transition is into death where she goes from having been a woman to a shadow of her former self to the 'rien'<sup>43</sup> which Ronquerolles tells Montriveau to forget, or rather to think of her only 'comme nous pensons à un livre lu pendant notre enfance'.<sup>44</sup> This comment completes the Duchesse's final transition which takes her from being a subject, the namesake of the novel, and an independent woman free to do as she pleases, to being an object, used by her husband, kidnapped and neglected by her lover, then disposed of accordingly. It is at this point that the audience may realise that the omnipresent clocks were

not only counting down the time left for the Duchesse's relationship with Montriveau, but also the Duchesse's time left on this earth.

Elisabeth Gerwin identifies in the Duchess a flaw which occurs frequently in Balzacian characters: hoarding. According to Gerwin, however, unlike Gobseck or Grandet whose focus is on the material, hers is on something more abstract: 'what she consciously gathers and refuses to give out is love.'<sup>45</sup> There is a certain irony that a woman with a tendency to hoard should end up as a Carmelite, yet, if we take this idea to its fullest extent, she reaches the peak of her hoarding, not when she is in the elite society of Saint Germain, but when living as a poor nun. I would argue, however, that it is less love which she hoards than attention and admiration as, when Montriveau ignores her, she is willing to give him her love in return for him simply acknowledging her. It is the starvation of his attention which causes her to issue him with the ultimatum and if it were love she was seeking, she would not send her carriage to his home when he was out rather than at home. The act of sending the carriage ensures that all of Saint Germain will hear of this very public display of affection, with the aim of inciting a response from Montriveau. It is, to a certain extent, a testament to her love that she is willing to see her reputation ruined in her pursuit of Montriveau's attention and the restoration of his approval of her; however, it is also a means of feeding her need for attention. Whether or not she captures the attention and heart of Montriveau, this act certainly puts her firmly at the centre of attention for the rest of the local aristocracy. Equally, prior to this, during her kidnap, she seems to revel in the attention from Montriveau, not in the same way as the coquette she was before, but on a more basic, honest level. When she pleads with Montriveau to brand her crying 'marque, marque vite!',<sup>46</sup> she explains her reasoning that 'Quand tu auras ainsi désigné une femme pour la tienne, quand tu auras une âme serve qui portera ton chiffre rouge, eh! Bien, tu ne pourras jamais l'abandonner, tu seras à jamais à moi.



En m'isolant sur la terre, tu seras chargé de mon bonheur, sous peine d'être un lâche, et je te sais noble, grand'.<sup>47</sup> What the Duchesse fears is not that he will no longer love her, she fears that he will abandon her, ignore her and deprive her of the attention on which she thrives. She immediately recognises that, by branding her, Armand would leave himself no option but to risk his honour or look after her, giving her the attention she craves for the rest of her life. When he does not respond to her ultimatum, the Duchesse has no way of knowing for certain that Montriveau will search for her until he finds her. No way that is, except as she says in the previous quotation, she knows Montriveau and can therefore perhaps conclude that, having outcast her from society, 'En m'isolant sur la terre'<sup>48</sup> by forcing her to follow her own ultimatum, he remains bound by his chivalrous attitude to make amends. While Armand is searching for her, his love and the attention he gives to her increasing along with every mile that he travels, the Duchesse is in the convent, giving her love and attention solely to God, and thus keeping watch over her hoard of love and self-importance until Montriveau finally returns only to prove to her that she has never ceased to have his attention in the whole time that they have been apart. In this sense, the Duchesse is one of many of Balzac's characters who 'through passion, the will to power, or poetry try to live beyond what is normally allotted to man'<sup>49</sup> The result is often the same: just as Grandet dies realising he could not take his money with him and Raphaël becomes a victim of the *peau de chagrin* and his own greed, the Duchesse leaves not only the world of the Parisian elite but the world of the living. She is either overwhelmed by the flood of attention which leads to Montriveau's final kidnap attempt, or she has been so desperately trying to hoard the attention and love she has been given that, following her years of seclusion, she cannot bear to love Montriveau and give him genuine attention and affection in return. Whatever the reason, her fate as a hoarder is sealed and she dies before Montriveau can bestow his final act of heroic attention upon her. This

desperate need for attention from her substitute-husband can perhaps be linked back to the lack of attention, the neglect and the lack of interest with which her husband treats her.

Strongly linked with the concepts of hoarding and kidnap is the concept of violence. Heathcote has written on the role of violence as ‘an important and persistent theme in Balzac’<sup>50</sup> and it is another theme which, in *La Duchesse de Langeais* sheds a different light on the Duchesse’s marriage and her affair with Montriveau. In his study of violence in Balzac’s work, Heathcote suggests that ‘violence spreads not just through time but across space. By moving, for example, from father to brothers’,<sup>51</sup> this recalls, for example, the tradition of duelling to protect family honour and suggests a kind of inherited violence associated with this family bond and pride. However, the violence displayed in *La Duchesse de Langeais*, rather than being inherited within a family, seems to work its way in a chain through the characters of husband, wife and lover. The seed of violence is planted, along with the root of her obsessive hoarding, by the Duke’s neglect and lack of interest in Antoinette. The breakdown of their marriage is all the more distressing as it occurs behind closed doors in order to maintain appearances and their respective reputations. The narrator in the novel warns the reader that she will never ‘pardonner une offense quand toutes ses vanités de femme, quand son amour-propre, ses vertus peut-être, avaient été méconnus, blessés occultement’,<sup>52</sup> signalling the violence in her temperament that will follow. Unable to react to her absent husband, Antoinette instead allows this seed of violence to manifest itself in her behaviour towards her substitute-husband, Montriveau. By drawing him in, then attempting to repel him, the Duchesse repeatedly replicates the offence that her husband caused her in marrying her, then abandoning her. This is an act of violence, in the sense that it is an abuse of her power over Montriveau and a release for her frustration and anger as well as an act of provocation. She is aware of the feelings that her husband’s abandonment caused her, and in

replicating them, she is attempting to find proof of Montriveau's affection for her in a reaction to her behaviour which replicates the violence of her feelings towards her husband. What she could not predict is that the strength of his feelings for her would result in an extremely violent reaction in the form of kidnap. Following her kidnap, the violence of Montriveau's actions does in fact return to the Duchesse; however, instead of manifesting itself in the form of anger, it takes the form of a passion for Montriveau which is so intense that it puts all other concerns of reputation, family and stability out of her mind. Interestingly, Heathcote identifies violence as being associated with the feminine, suggesting that violence often occurs in spaces which 'are themselves sexed or gendered female.'<sup>53</sup> I would argue, however, that in *La Duchesse de Langeais*, the most violent space is that of Montriveau's mysterious apartment with the threat of the masked men and the brand ever-present, looming in the background. The Duchesse's home, by contrast appears less as a space of violence than a space of frustration. It is firstly the site of Montriveau's frustration in terms of his unrequited love and lust and secondly the site of the Duchesse's frustrated desire for attention from her former lover. The concept of violence being passed from one character to another can perhaps be seen to reflect the process of adaptation itself. In adaptation, although the key themes of the source text are retained, 'any novel can generate any number of adaptations'.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, any seed of violence can multiply into hundreds of unpredictable potential manifestations which may adapt the way in which the violence is demonstrated. This is proven by the way in which we see violence in *La Duchesse de Langeais* transferred from one character to another in what should arguably be amicable, if not loving, relationships, with each act of violence progressively becoming more extreme, culminating in the Duchesse's withdrawal from the world to a convent, and ultimately her death. This final act of violence shows the extent to

which violence, once embedded in a marriage, can grow and the destructive effect that it has on all involved.

In order better to understand the question of violence within the relationship between the Duchesse, the Duke and Montriveau, it is perhaps helpful to consider the way in which this violence relates to the concepts of masculinity presented within the novel. Heathcote suggests that ‘if men congregate in violent fraternities [*such as that of the Treize, of which Montriveau is a member*] it is, at least partly, because masculinity itself tends to be created and maintained through violence.’<sup>55</sup> I would argue that it is not specifically masculinity, but the power over women, perceived as the weaker sex, which is maintained through violence. In the violent act of physically separating himself from the Duchesse, the Duc de Langeais asserts the power of his masculinity, and the state-given rights with which that endows him, over the Duchesse’s comparatively weak feminine position. The link between the creation of masculinity and violence is particularly interesting in relation to the characters of the Duchesse and Montriveau and the chain of increasingly violent acts in which they both participate throughout the novel. Nigel Harkness has commented on masculinity in Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* stating that ‘of all the characters in the novel, Emma comes closest to embodying the characteristics of manliness-she is more active and determined, more ambitious and driven than any of the men around her.’<sup>56</sup> In the same way that Emma Bovary can be perceived to embody masculinity in her drive and ambition, the Duchesse, despite her feminine coquetry, is masculine in her calculated affair with Montriveau. She maintains this masculinity until the point of her kidnap. It is necessary at this point to remember that ‘masculinity is not a self-sufficient and self-defining term placed at the centre as a source of origin and meaning; instead it is locked in a relative binary in which it is defined at once against and by the feminine.’<sup>57</sup> Therefore, in asserting her masculinity over Montriveau, the

Duchesse devalues his masculinity. This is exemplified when Ronquerolles challenges him: 'Monte chez elle, essaie de demander, de vouloir impérieusement ce que l'on te refuse'.<sup>58</sup> The fact that the Duchesse refuses to obey Montriveau by submitting to his sexual desire is a threat to his masculinity, metaphorically castrating him and placing him outside the realm of masculinity along with other men 'whose masculinities are troped as deficient, if not feminine (in the nineteenth century, impotent, androgynous, and homosexual men in particular fell into this category)'.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps the most pertinent question to ask is why the Duchesse would want to assert her masculinity. I propose that the answer to that lies in her lack of control over her own life compared to that of the men around her. Her role in her own marriage is removed by her husband, male family members instruct her on how to behave, compared to the Princesse de Blamont-Chauvry who encourages her to do as she wishes but to go about it in a different manner. By asserting her masculinity over Montriveau through her violently controlling behaviour, the Duchesse is in full control of at least one relationship in her life. Following her kidnap, she is again reduced to the same level of frustration as when her husband abandoned her, denied Montriveau's attention and affection, so her final attempt to assert her power and masculinity occurs in the ultimatum that she gives Montriveau and her withdrawal from Parisian society. It is therefore clear that, due to her lack of control within her marriage, the Duchesse attempts to salvage her happiness through taking on a more masculine role in her relationship with Montriveau. Neither is willing to compromise their masculinity as each of them struggles to assert and maintain it through increasingly violent means throughout the novel. Perhaps this struggle should end when the Duchesse completes the most violent act of all: death. Instead, Montriveau continues to protect his masculinity through one final act of violence: kidnapping her corpse. The constant struggle of these two characters to assert their masculinity can equally be linked to adaptation. The process of

negotiation involved in adaptation represents a struggle between the source text and the artistic values of the adaptors and the time in which the adaptation occurs.

I have made reference to two different adaptations of *La Duchesse de Langeais*, the 1995 film for television directed by Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe and the 2007 cinematic adaptation *Ne Touchez pas la Hache*, directed by Jacques Rivette, touching on several key differences between the two adaptations. ‘Filmic adaptations of novels invariably superimpose a double set of generic conventions, one drawn from the generic intertext of the source itself, and the other consisting of those genres engaged by the translating medium of film’.<sup>60</sup> However, some of the conventions which apply to television adaptations obviously differ from those which apply to cinematic adaptations. Equally, the audience expectation of a television film is different from that of a cinematic film as is the way in which they experience it: watching a film on television is a much more private experience than watching a film at the cinema. This perhaps accounts for Verhaeghe’s decision to make the Duchesse a first-person narrator compared to Rivette’s written incorporation of quotations from the original novel. The more personal experience of hearing the Duchesse tell her story reflects the more personal setting in which it is intended to be experienced. Another main difference between the cinematic adaptation and the film for television is the production value. In cinematic heritage films, ‘the accent is high on production values, a *mise-en-scène* which stresses beautiful landscape (*Jean de Florette*), décor and costumes (*Cyrano de Bergerac*), music (*Tous les matins du monde*) and the French language. Heritage films foreground French culture and history for a mainstream audience’.<sup>61</sup> All of this is clearly visible in Rivette’s adaptation *Ne Touchez pas la Hache*: there is the stunning landscape around the convent, the décor and costumes are lavish and the difference in production value between this and the television adaptation of *La Duchesse de Langeais*, as well as the other television adaptations we have seen is clear. The

television adaptations take advantage of the private environment which fascinated Balzac, using rooms of the house as the setting for most of the action, and limiting the number of rooms which are visible to the audience, thus keeping costs of scenery and shooting on location to a minimum. For example, Rivette's adaptation shows us the servants' pantry, the Duchesse's quarters, and the hall as well as Montriveau's room on the island and multiple shots of the area surrounding the convent. In the Verhaeghe adaptation, we see fewer rooms in the Duchesse's home, the inside of the convent and no scenery. While this does not detract from either adaptation, it does play to the audience expectations of each kind of adaptation and reflect the production values accorded to them.

To conclude, it is clear that, although the Duc de Langeais is an absent husband in the extreme, it is his absence and neglect which triggers the Duchesse's resentment, thus indirectly causing her mistreatment of Montriveau, her ultimate withdrawal from society and her death. Through the example of their marriage, Balzac raises the issue of the situation of women in the nineteenth century who were forced into marriages of convenience to further family aspirations and the effect that the divorce laws which came into effect in 1816 had on these marriages. While this nuance may be lost on a modern audience, and is therefore not explicitly drawn upon in either of the film adaptations we have seen, it is still possible for a modern audience to sympathise with the idea of a person who is forced against their will into a situation where they have little control over the possible consequences of their actions. The power struggle between Montriveau and the Duchesse reflects issues of the time, such as the power struggles of the French Revolution or the struggle for women's independence in a patriarchal society where their rights were negligible; it also reflects the adaptive process and the struggle for authorial power. Antoinette introduces Montriveau to the ways of Parisian society and to love, rewriting his social and emotional positions. Equally, Montriveau kidnaps

the Duchesse, claiming authorial power over her, reclaiming his masculinity and adapting her from a coquette to a humble, devoted admirer. The Duchesse's balance of duties within her marriage also reflects the adaptive process, the question of duty to the original text balanced with duty to represent one's own ideologies and impose one's own ideas onto the text, branding it as one's own. By analysing the themes of marriage and adultery in *La Duchesse de Langeais*, I have considered a different kind of familial compromise, not only the compromise between parent and child, but the compromises that were necessary within marriage and extramarital relationships in nineteenth-century Paris. The fact that the relationship between Antoinette and Montriveau, and indeed the relationship between her and the Duke, are subverted from expectations of what a lover is or what a husband is is significant, but the essential power struggles which these relationships represent are more important than the actual relationships themselves. Stam commented, in relation to realist fiction, that 'spectators see nothing but their own flickering ideologies in the naturalistic images on the screen'.<sup>62</sup> In the same way, the cinematic and television adaptations of *La Duchesse de Langeais* present spectators with three characters whose power struggles are easy for a modern audience to relate to and sympathise with, despite the fact that they are not the same as those of a modern era.

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Mainardi, **Husbands, Wives and Lovers: Marriage and its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France** (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003) p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Honoré de Balzac, **La Comédie Humaine : Volume V Études de Mœurs : La Duchesse de Langeais** (Paris : Gallimard-Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1977) p. 937.

<sup>3</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 937.

<sup>4</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p.936.

<sup>5</sup> Mainardi, **Husbands, Wives and Lovers: Marriage and its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France**, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 937.

<sup>7</sup> Kate Griffiths, **Emile Zola and the Artistry of Adaptation** (London: Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2009) p. 111.

<sup>8</sup> Mainardi, **Husbands, Wives and Lovers: Marriage and its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France**, p. 219.

<sup>9</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 936.

<sup>10</sup> Mainardi, **Husbands, Wives and Lovers: Marriage and its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France**, p. 117.

<sup>11</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 961.



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- <sup>12</sup> Jean-Daniel Verhaeghe, **La Duchesse de Langeais** (France : France 3 : Institut National de l'Audiovisuel : Technisonor, 1995) [on DVD].
- <sup>13</sup> Nicholas White, 'Green eyes and purple prose: Late nineteenth-century divorce literature: a proposal for research' in Rachael Langford, **Depicting Desire: Gender, Sexuality and the Family in Nineteenth Century Europe: Literary and Artistic Perspectives**, (Bern, Peter Lang AG European Academic Publishers, 2005) pp. 239-254 (p. 252).
- <sup>14</sup> White, 'Green eyes and purple prose: Late nineteenth-century divorce literature: a proposal for research', pp. 239-254 (p. 252).
- <sup>15</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 1037.
- <sup>16</sup> Mainardi, **Husbands, Wives and Lovers: Marriage and its Discontents in Nineteenth-Century France**, p. 1.
- <sup>17</sup> Honoré de Balzac, **La Comédie Humaine : Avant-Propos**, (Paris : Gallimard-Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1976)
- <sup>18</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 968.
- <sup>19</sup> Verhaeghe, **La Duchesse de Langeais**.
- <sup>20</sup> Verhaeghe, **La Duchesse de Langeais**.
- <sup>21</sup> Jacques Rivette, **Ne Touchez pas la Hache** (France : Pierre Grise Productions with Cinemaundici and Arte France Cinéma (co-production), 2007) [on DVD].
- <sup>22</sup> Rivette, **Ne Touchez pas la Hache** (DVD, 2007).
- <sup>23</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, pp. 926-927.
- <sup>24</sup> Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd, **Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior** (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) p. 2.
- <sup>25</sup> Anne-Marie Baron, 'Balzac au cinéma: La Duchesse de Langeais de Balzac à Rivette', **l'Année Balzacienne** (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 2007) pp. 523-527 (p 525).
- <sup>26</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, pp. 964-965.
- <sup>27</sup> Rivette, **Ne Touchez pas la Hache**.
- <sup>28</sup> Verhaeghe, **La Duchesse de Langeais**.
- <sup>29</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 977.
- <sup>30</sup> Elisabeth Gerwin (2012), 'Un enlèvement peut en cacher un autre: Kidnapping the Past in La Duchesse de Langeais', **Nineteenth-Century French Studies**, Volume 41, Number 1 & 2, Fall-Winter, pp. 25-47 (p. 25).
- <sup>31</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 985.
- <sup>32</sup> Bryden and Floyd **Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior**, p. 105.
- <sup>33</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 992.
- <sup>34</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 923.
- <sup>35</sup> Gerwin, 'Un enlèvement peut en cacher un autre: Kidnapping the Past in La Duchesse de Langeais', p. 34.
- <sup>36</sup> Gerwin, 'Un enlèvement peut en cacher un autre: Kidnapping the Past in La Duchesse de Langeais', p. 34.
- <sup>37</sup> Verhaeghe, **La Duchesse de Langeais**.
- <sup>38</sup> James C. Madden, **Weaving Balzac's Web :Spinning Tales and Creating the Whole of La Comédie Humaine**, (Birmingham, Alabama: Summa Publications, 2003) p. 25.
- <sup>39</sup> Madden **Weaving Balzac's Web :Spinning Tales and Creating the Whole of La Comédie Humaine**, p. 25.
- <sup>40</sup> Peter Brooks, **Realist Vision**, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005) p 217.
- <sup>41</sup> Verhaeghe, **La Duchesse de Langeais**.
- <sup>42</sup> Verhaeghe, **La Duchesse de Langeais**.
- <sup>43</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 1047.
- <sup>44</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 1047.
- <sup>45</sup> Gerwin, 'Un enlèvement peut en cacher un autre: Kidnapping the Past in La Duchesse de Langeais', p. 28.
- <sup>46</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 998.
- <sup>47</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 998.
- <sup>48</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 998.
- <sup>49</sup> Peter Brooks, **The Melodramatic Imagination**, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995) p. 114 (original edition 1976).
- <sup>50</sup> Owen Heathcote, **Balzac and Violence: Representing History, Space, Sexuality and Death in La Comédie Humaine**, (Bern: Peter Lang AG European Academic Publishers, 2009) p. 265.
- <sup>51</sup> Owen Heathcote, **Balzac and Violence: Representing History, Space, Sexuality and Death in La Comédie Humaine**, p. 36.

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<sup>52</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 937.

<sup>53</sup> Heathcote **Balzac and Violence: Representing History, Space, Sexuality and Death in *La Comédie Humaine***, p. 23.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Stam, **Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic and the Art of Adaptation** (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> Note: My Italics

<sup>56</sup> Nigel Harkness, **Men of their Words: The Poetics of Masculinity in George Sand's Fiction** (London: Legenda, 2007) p. 27.

<sup>57</sup> Harkness, **Men of their Words: The Poetics of Masculinity in George Sand's Fiction**, p. 20.

<sup>58</sup> Balzac, **La Duchesse de Langeais**, p. 982.

<sup>59</sup> Harkness, **Men of their Words: The Poetics of Masculinity in George Sand's Fiction**, p. 34.

<sup>60</sup> Stam, **Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic and the Art of Adaptation**, p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> Ginette Vincendeau, **Stars and Stardom in French Cinema** (London and New York: Continuum, 2000) p. 231.

<sup>62</sup> Stam, **Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic and the Art of Adaptation**, p. 140.

## Conclusion

‘Transiger est la clef de tout’<sup>1</sup>. These words, spoken by Derville in Angelo’s 1994 adaptation of *Le Colonel Chabert*, refer initially to the approach which they must take in order to reach a settlement with his wife, yet they also reflect Chabert’s need to adapt to the new society in which he has found himself. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the necessity of compromise faced here by Chabert is much the same as that which producers and directors face during the adaptation process. Adapting a novel into a film involves renegotiating the text, making compromises and transforming it into a new medium which comes with its own artistic possibilities and technical constraints. The very meaning of the verb ‘adapt’ is based in the Latin *adaptare* meaning to fit. Adaptors must fit the original text to a new medium, a new audience and a new age. In the same way that adaptations of Balzac’s work rely on the innate compromise involved in the adaptation process, so too did his original narratives. The source novels present readers with another system which can only function through compromise, that of the family unit. Through examining the three different case study novels and their adaptations in this dissertation we have been able to consider in depth the multiple family structures which exist in *La Comédie Humaine* and how these structures, and the compromises we see within them, relate to a modern audience through the process of adaptation. This dissertation has served to highlight the central role of compromise in Balzac’s work with regard to creating and maintaining family ties and the way in which the process of adaptation both retains and extends this key concept of compromise.

Just as ‘the realist novels of writers such as Balzac...brought intensely individualized, seriously conceived characters into typical contemporary social situations’<sup>2</sup> adaptations of these novels must bring both these characters and their situations into the present day, making them relevant to a modern audience. The question of compromise in adaptation occurs in the

balance between this modernisation and the limitations and opportunities produced by translating a text into the medium of film. This fine line of equilibrium is further complicated by the question of fidelity to the source text. Just as Balzac adapted reality in such a way that many of his characters have ‘taken on an imaginative reality’ which is ‘more significant than the merely real, since they sum up and represent more fully certain choices of ways of being’,<sup>3</sup> so adaptations of Balzac’s work amplify the characters and situations by adding a further perspective to them. Susan Hayward summarises this compromise, stating that ‘film adaptations are both more and less than the original’,<sup>4</sup> Stam expands on this, explaining that ‘a fiction film, for example, is produced in one constellation of times and spaces, it represents still another (diegetic) constellation of times and places, and is received in still another time and space (theater, home, classroom)’.<sup>5</sup> When adapting a text, a further time and space is added to this dimension, that of the original source text. In order to maintain a balance between all of these dimensions and represent each one proportionally, they all must be subject to a certain level of compromise.

With regard to the time and space which is occupied by the novel and the adaptation, one aspect which is all too frequently overlooked is the main similarity between novel and film. Essentially the novel shares the capacity of cinema to conjure images and it too ‘makes present the absent’.<sup>6</sup> Ellis argues that ‘this is the irreducible separation that cinema maintains (and attempts to abolish), the fact that objects and people are conjured up yet known not to be present.’<sup>7</sup> Cinema achieves this through the use of image and sound. Unlike Ellis, who believes that this power belongs uniquely to the cinema, it is my belief that the novel equally achieves this through description, narration, dialogue and the effects that all of these have on the human imagination. While much of *La Comédie Humaine* is set in a period which occurred during Balzac’s lifetime, a period which he observed first hand, it is nonetheless

written with the benefit of hindsight. It is based on events which had already occurred and characters that were fictitious. By writing on the events of the past and characters who themselves are not real, Balzac brings something which is representative of a past reality into the present in the imagination of his audience, according them a sense of present reality and significance. This can be equally applied to his contemporaries who could also remember that past and for whom reading about these events drew on memories of this time and for a modern readership who rely on Balzac's description to bring this era to life in their imagination. In much the same way, modern directors and producers in their turn bring his characters from a fictional, imaginative space, and from the moment in which they are set, into a concrete present day representation as characters on the screen. In this sense, adaptation is not 'a form of artistic reproduction rather than production',<sup>8</sup> nor is it simply a question of compromise or development. It is an extension of Balzac's original work, extending the ability of the original novel to make present the absent and further amplifying the significance of the characters and of the plot for a modern audience.

The three case study novels analysed in this dissertation have allowed us to consider some of the different ways in which the concept of compromise features in *La Comédie Humaine*. *Le Père Goriot* highlights not only the compromises involved in a parent-child relationship but those involved in artificial kinship relations, such as the father-figures Rastignac finds in Vautrin and Goriot. Watts has written that 'through its own adaptive returns, *Père Goriot* illustrates that adaptation is an open-ended, recurring process which can enrich earlier works of art rather than lock them in a cycle of repetition and artistic mediocrity.'<sup>9</sup> I would extend this further and suggest that, even at the level of characters, specifically Vautrin's character, *Le Père Goriot* reflects the ability of adaptation to generate a representation that is, while different, of equal artistic value to the original. Vautrin's many

disguises, exposed when he is unveiled as ‘Trompe la mort’, are themselves a form of adapting his personality and character. No disguise is lesser than the others because his fundamental characteristics and his own personal system of justice remain at the base of every disguise he inhabits. Vautrin’s character personifies the concepts of compromise and adaptation. He makes the decision to disguise himself, altering his appearance and compromising his perceived identity, but retains the essential aspects of his character in every role he inhabits regardless of his outward appearance. Similarly, Goriot compromises almost every aspect of his life to focus on his sole purpose of being a father, Rastignac compromises his morals to succeed in society and Madame de Beauséant compromises her social status in a flawed attempt to follow her heart. The compromises made by these characters for family reasons and for selfishness all reflect the choices made in the adaptation process, the parts which are perceived by the adaptor to be less important are compromised to make way for the aspects which are perceived to be crucial.

Chapter two focused on Verhaeghe’s adaptation of *Eugénie Grandet* and the compromise between melodrama and realism as well as those compromises made within the Grandets’ more traditional family unit. The balance of melodrama and realism is personified in the Grandets’ marriage with Monsieur Grandet representing the realist and Madame Grandet representing the melodramatic. Following their deaths the balance between these two extremes of character is continued in Eugénie, who retains enough of her father’s realism and cunning that she ‘charts a third course’<sup>10</sup> for herself in order to get what she wants from her marriage to Cruchot. Yet she equally retains the melodrama of her mother’s character in her dramatic behaviour following her proposal to Cruchot, amplified for the television adaptation, and in fulfilling the ‘guiding maxim’<sup>11</sup> of her mother’s dying words ‘il n’y a de bonheur que dans le ciel, tu le sauras un jour’.<sup>12</sup> Eugénie’s relationship with her father is less focused on

compromise, more on the central theme of money. In contrast to Goriot's daughters, Eugénie's only interest in the money that her father gives to her is how she can use it to help Charles. Grandet, however, places a higher value than she does on the act of possessing money. It is the discrepancy in these points of view which causes the rift between them: Eugénie sees money as useful for what it can buy and gives it to her cousin in the hope that it will solve his financial problems, allowing them to be together, perhaps even buying his loyalty and affection. For Grandet, however, it is not only what it can buy, such as his purchase of Froidfond, but rather the physical proximity and possession of the money itself which is of greatest value to him.

Julie Sanders has written on the adaptable nature of fairy tales, commenting that 'their stories and characters seem to transgress established social, cultural, geographical and temporal boundaries. They are eminently adaptable into new circumstances and contexts'.<sup>13</sup> This makes them ideal for the process of adaptation. It would appear that Balzac drew on one particular fairy tale character for the characterisation of Grandet: 'Sur le manuscrit d'*Eugénie Grandet*, le père Grandet est comparé à la Barbe-bleue du conte'.<sup>14</sup> By drawing on a fairy tale as inspiration for Grandet, Balzac exploited the capacity of fairy tale characters to cross that temporal boundary, making sure that his character was somewhat familiar to his contemporary audience and unknowingly making Grandet's character more relevant for future readers and audiences. Unlike Bluebeard, who tells his wife that she may help herself to his treasure, but not go into the one room secret room in their house (where he has concealed the dead bodies of his previous wives) Grandet's personal vice lies in his obsession with gold and it is the room where his stash of gold is kept that is forbidden to his wife and daughter. The similarity in the two characters perhaps then lies in their vast fortunes and volatile temperaments as well as the secrecy of their private rooms. Grandet also, albeit indirectly,

contributes to his wife's death by agitating her in her already fragile state. The comparison between Grandet and Bluebeard serves to illustrate Grandet's role as a ruthless, calculating character who maintains his position as head of the household by quashing those who disobey him. He is not respected in his own home, only disobeyed and feared. Finally Eugénie's relationship with Charles, the 'faux prince charmant'<sup>15</sup> of this 'anti-contes de fées',<sup>16</sup> illustrates the result of combining realism with melodrama. The expected ending in which the couple overcome the obstacles and live happily ever after is subverted to an ending in which Charles' greed for money increases culminating in his marrying someone else and Eugénie being left widowed and alone. It is clear therefore that the compromises between realism and melodrama in *Eugénie Grandet* can be found not only in the plot but also in the characters' interactions and the compromises that they make with regard to each other.

*La Duchesse de Langeais* presents completely different types of relationships to the parental relationships which occupied the central focus in the previous chapters, instead focussing on the concepts of marriage and adultery. The foundation of the relationship between Antoinette de Langeais and Montriveau is almost entirely composed of compromises, yet one character must always compromise more than the other. Either Montriveau compromises his masculinity and reputation to remain unrecognised by Antoinette as her lover or she sacrifices her reputation, status and marriage in order openly to be with him. The constant power struggle between these two strong characters is reflected in the process of adaptation which is itself 'symptomatic of interesting power struggles'<sup>17</sup> between the source text and the adaptor. In this analogy, the Duchesse represents the source text and Montriveau the adaptor who changes her, rewriting her story through the act of kidnap. Chapter three also allowed for a comparison between the Verhaeghe television adaptation of *La Duchesse de Langeais* and Rivette's cinematic adaptation entitled *Ne*



*Touchez pas la Hache*. Although cinematic adaptation in general has been widely recognised in the critical arena, much less attention has been given to the question of television adaptation. This is perhaps a reflection of TV's 'frequently stripped-back, inconspicuous aesthetic and its habitual depiction as a collective commercial enterprise.'<sup>18</sup> The lack of critical attention may equally be attributed to the way in which television is often perceived by the spectators themselves. As Ellis states, unlike cinema television constitutes 'something of a last resort ('What's on TV tonight, then?') rather than a special event'<sup>19</sup> This perception of television undoubtedly accounts for the discrepancy in production values between the two adaptations, and therefore can be used to explain some of the differences between the television adaptation of *La Duchesse de Langeais* and Rivette's *Ne Touchez pas la Hache*. One way in which the discrepancy in the production values of the two adaptations is visible is in the use of a wider variety of scenes and settings in Rivette's cinematic adaptation, compared to the rather more domestic settings in Verhaeghe's television adaptation. The question of compromise is therefore as important in socially unacceptable relationships, such as Antoinette's affair with Montriveau, as in the more socially accepted relationships of parent and child or husband and wife.

Just as the role of the father is represented as being undermined, many believe that the artistic role of the adaptor is diminished in heritage adaptations. It is true to a certain extent that 'heritage films have a potential lack of authorship that allows the authorship of the novel to dominate the adaptation's identity'.<sup>20</sup> When making a heritage film, certain decisions regarding the time in which it is set or the approximate décor and costumes are already made by the choice of this specific genre of adaptation. However what this analysis overlooks is the process of choice for the adaptor. Whilst Balzac provides ample description of costume and surroundings when setting the scene for his reader, it is impossible for directors and producers

to take all of their cues from this description. There are multiple choices which the adaptors must make with regard to their specific script, décor, dialogue and gesture in order to represent any one scene. Cinema and television with their stream of images represent in moments what would take pages to describe in writing and adaptors frequently make use of this in order to invest further meaning in certain objects, creating symbols which were not present in the novel. Examples of this include the use of ticking clocks in both adaptations of *La Duchesse de Langeais*, or the juxtaposition of the birdcage and the window in *Eugénie Grandet*. The main aim of a heritage film is to produce a faithful representation which retains its value and relevance for a modern audience. Through some of the subtle techniques of filmmaking (the use of symbolic objects such as mirrors and windows, flashback, voiceover amongst others) the adaptations studied in this dissertation have amplified specific themes and ideas present in Balzac's work to give them a new meaning in the context of this amplified medium of television.

‘The centring of all kinds of broadcast TV drama upon the family...produces a sense of intimacy, a bond between the viewers’ conception of themselves (or how they ought to be) and the programme’s central concerns.’<sup>21</sup> Taking this assessment of the role of the family in television, it is clear that family and the compromises which it represents is a central point, not only for Balzac's fiction, but also for the medium of television as a whole. The tendency for viewers to identify in some way with the characters through the representation of family bridges the gap between the time in which the novel is set and the time in which the adaptation is watched and allows them to relate to Balzac's characters and the compromises which they make. Compromise will always be a central aspect of family life and of human interaction on a broader scale. Characters who refuse to compromise, such as Grandet, Antoinette de Langeais or Goriot's daughters serve as examples of the negative consequences

of choosing this way of being. The small scale representation of family compromises in *La Comédie Humaine* was perhaps a nod to the need for compromise on a larger scale in a society that was plagued by waves of revolution and reformation. Television and film adaptations both deal with the theme of compromise present in Balzac's original text and embody the concept of compromise which is central to the process of adaptation itself. By highlighting compromise within the context of the family, they respond to the modern fascination with the private lives of others and illustrate the ever present role of compromise in society today. This returns us to the sweeping statement 'Transiger est la clef de tout'<sup>22</sup>. This quotation did not appear in the novel of *Le Colonel Chabert*. Angelo added it into his cinematic adaptation, both illustrating and recognising the importance of the process of compromise involved in adaptation. I would suggest that the compromise denoted by the verb 'transiger' is indeed, as far as both the representation of family and the process of adaptation are concerned, the key to everything.

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<sup>1</sup> Yves Angelo, *Le Colonel Chabert*, (France: Canal+, 1994) [on DVD].

<sup>2</sup> Robert Stam, *Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic and the Art of Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies : The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000) p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Stam, *Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic and the Art of Adaptation*, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> John Ellis, *Visible Fictions : Cinema : Television : Video* (London and New York: Routledge, 1982) p. 58.

<sup>7</sup> Ellis, *Visible Fictions : Cinema : Television : Video*, p. 58.

<sup>8</sup> Shelley Cobb, 'Film Authorship and Adaptation' in Deborah Cartmell, *A Companion to Literature, Film and Adaptation* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) pp. 105-121 (p. 108)

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Watts, 'Balzac on the BBC: Serial Breaks and Adaptive Returns in *Père Goriot* (1968)', *Dix-Neuf: Journal of the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes*, Volume 18: Issue 2, (2014), p. 190.

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