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The Peregrinations of *Auld Robin Gray* and *Eugénie Grandet*

It is a commonplace of Balzac criticism that the sources of the *Comédie humaine* are multiple, complex and often revisited by the author. A poem/song, *Roben Gray* published by the Société des Études balzaciennes¹ and ostensibly in the hand of the young Balzac, may provide an indication of an early and hitherto unidentified inspirational source for *Eugénie Grandet*. The work in question is a translation into French of a Scots song, *Auld Robin Gray*, dating from the middle of the 18th century by Lady Anne Lindsay of Balcarres, Fife. This article will explore the source of Lady Anne's creation, the circumstances surrounding its translation into French, and finally, its links with Balzac.

Lady Anne Lindsay wrote only one song which was ever published and yet she appears firmly established in the Pantheon of Scottish female songwriters² (mostly aristocrats or members of leading families) whose work was received with great public acclaim in Scotland of the Enlightenment. At this time, Scotland was still coming to terms with loss of nationhood following the Act of Union of 1707. Enthusiasm for the Union among the mercantile and aristocratic classes was matched only by their eagerness to latch on to sentimental evocations of their national identity. For example, a partial restoration of the status of the Scots language through song set in train by the poet Allan Ramsay in 1724 with his *Tea Table Miscellany*³, went a great deal towards satisfying this desire. His anthology of traditional songs and contemporary compositions, helped upper class Scots, and those who looked up to their example, to fashion a self-image in which national «characteristics» «values» «qualities», etc., were celebrated in the limited (and safe) spheres of song and poetry significantly lacking in any political or social critique.

One compensatory factor in this rather sad spectacle of the recycling of a nation's self image, was the fact that the dividing

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1. De Balzac, Honoré, *Œuvres complètes*. 28 vol., Chambéry, La Société des études balzaciennes, 1962.

2. Cf. Tytler, Sarah and Watson, J.L. *The Songstresses of Scotland*, 2 vol., London, Strahan and Co., 1871.

3. Ramsay, Allan. *The Tea-Table Miscellany*. 4 vols. Edinburgh 1723–c. 1737.

4. What does emerge from study of some the material dating from the earlier part of the 18th century i.e. as in Ramsay's *Miscellany*, is that coarseness, especially of the sexual variety which was quite admissible across Scottish society, was distinctly less so towards the end of the century in Burns' time, although he kept a private record of any such material he came across (Cf. Burns, Robert. *The Merry Muses*. 1966 Luxor Press, London). Conversely, Burns was able to write and publish works which were highly critical of the Establishment, although other verse in favour of the French Revolution had to be tightly disguised or published anonymously.

5. Rogers, Charles, *The Modern Scottish Minstrel*, vol. 1, p. 58-62. Adam and Charles Black, Edinburgh, 1855. Lady Anne declared to Scott that the song had enjoyed too much popularity since it had been translated into several languages, was the subject of an opera and sung by the two opposing armies of the American War of Independence. This military association is reflected in the fact that it was adopted as the march past in slow time by the 99th Lanarkshire Regiment which became the Duke of Edinburgh's Regiment in 1874 and by the 2nd Battalion, the Wiltshire Regiment in 1881. It still survives as a regimental tune in the contemporary versions of these regiments. (Cf. Murray, David, *Music of the Scottish Regiments*, Pentland Press 1994, p 204-205). The Rev. William Leeves. This is now the standard tune which has found particular favour with Scottish fiddlers. Scott had long suspected that Lady Anne was the author but when she anonymously published a Second Part, Scott quoted it in his novel *The Pirate*

lines between Scotland's anonymous oral traditions in song making and story telling on the one hand and formal composition with its attributable sources on the other, were very often blurred. Form, above all in terms of language, and content, were very often the same in the two genres thanks to the considerable effort which was made by compilers of traditional song anthologies to «cleanse» the old songs of their socially unacceptable «coarseness» thereby drawing closer to the more genteel expressions of the national muse⁴.

Lady Anne's song affords an excellent example of a «national» song of the new era in that it is well and truly rooted in the folk, oral tradition, but it is also the bearer of a «higher» morality. Throughout most of her life she refused to identify herself as the author of the song and in doing so followed the example set by Lady Nairne who was also reluctant to seek public acclaim considering it to be unworthy of her aristocratic origins. When Lady Anne finally did admit to authorship it was to no less a personage than Sir Walter Scott, and this half a century after its composition⁵.

During a long lifetime, till within two years off her death, Lady Anne Barnard (née Lindsay) resisted every temptation to declare herself the author of the popular ballad, thus evincing her determination not to have the secret wrested from her till she chose to divulge it. [...] At length in her seventy-third year, and upwards of half a century after the period of its composition, the author voluntarily made avowal of the ballad and its sequel. She wrote to Sir Walter Scott, with whom she was acquainted, requesting him to inform his personal friend the author of the *Waverly*, that she was indeed the author. She enclosed a copy to Sir Walter written in her own hand; and with her consent, in the course of the following year, he printed *Auld Robin Gray* as a contribution to the Bannatyne Club.

The following is the text which she authorised Scott to publish through the Bannatyne Club stating that the popularity of the song had led to too many inferior versions:

*Auld Robin Gray*⁶

- 1 When the sheep are in the fauld, when the kye's a'
at hame
And a' the weary warld to rest are gane,
The woes o'my heart fa' in showers frae my e'e
Unkent by my gudeman, wha sleeps sound by me
- 2 Young Jamie lo'ed me weel, and sought me for his
bride

- But saving a crown he had naething else beside;
To mak the crown a pound my Jamie gaed to sea,
And the crown and the pound – they were baith for me.
- 3 He hadna been gane a twelvemonth and a day
When my father brake his arm, and the cow was stown away
My mother she fell sick – my Jamie was at sea –
And Auld Robin Gray came a-courting me.
- 4 My father couldna work, my mother couldna spin
I toiled day and night, but their bread I couldna win;
Auld Robin maintained them baith, and, wi' tears in
his e'e
Said «Jeanie, for their sakes, will ye no marry me?»
- 5 My heart it said na, and I looked for Jamie back,
But hard blew the winds, and his ship it was a wrack;
His ship was a wrack – why didna Jamie dee?
Or why am I spared to cry, Woe is me?
- 6 My father urged me sair – my mother didna speak,
But she looket in my face till me heart was like to break;
They gied him my hand – my heart was in the sea –
And so Robin Gray he was gudeman tae me.
- 7 I hadna been his wife a week but only four,
When, mournfu as I sat on the stane at my door
I saw my Jamie's ghaist, for I couldna think it he,
Till he said, «I'm come hame, love, to marry thee.»
- 8 Oh! Sair, sair, did we greet, and mickle say o' a'
I gi'ed him ae kiss and bade him gang awa'
I wish that I were dead, but I'm no like to dee,
For though my heart is broken, I'm young, woe's me!
- 9 I gang like a ghaist, and I carena to spin
I darena think on Jamie, for that would be a sin;
But I'll do my best a gude wife to be,
For oh! Robin Gray he is kind to me.

stating clearly in his appreciation of the fine work of the original that the author was Lady Anne Lindsay. Lady Anne, having been challenged publicly to refute or accept, chose the latter leading to the letter to Scott and the permission to publish.

6. Text from Tytler and Watson, *op. cit.*, p 101-103.

7. The Reverend William Lees.

8. «Stenhouse, William. *Illustrations of the Lyric Poetry and Music of Scotland*. William Blackwood, Edinburgh 1853.

She admitted to him that the original air of the song came from a folksong often sung to her by a lady's companion, of gentle birth but somewhat eccentric, in the Lindsay household at Balcarres, but that she was glad to say that a new and improved air had subsequently been set by an English clergyman⁷. On no occasion does she admit to any source of inspiration other than the tune.

Stenhouse, in his *Illustrations of the Lyric Poetry and Music of Scotland*⁸ gives an extensive commentary on the material

appearing in *The Scots Musical Museum*⁹ and identifies this tune :

The tune to which the verses were originally adapted is preserved in the Museum. It was formerly called *The Bridegroom greets when the Sun gangs down* which was, in all probability, a line of an old song now lost or forgotten. A friend informs me, that he has heard two lines of it.

*But, oh! Quo' he, it's come o'er soon,
The bridegroom grat when the sun gaed down*¹⁰.

And so the question of the lyrics would have remained had it not been for the indefatigable research¹¹ of Gavin Greig and the Reverend James Duncan in the North East of Scotland in the period covering the last decade of the 19th century to the outbreak of war in 1914. Both men uncovered variations of the original under the titles of Aul' Widow Greylocks, and Widow Greylock (all versions are in Aberdeenshire dialect).

*Widow Greylocks*¹²

- 1 Fin the lads are in their beds, and the lasses sleepin' soon;
An' ilka thing fu' silent and calm aboot the toon,
The Sorrows o' my heart fa's like showers frae my e'e
Fin' my auld wife lies snorin' by me.
- 2 Bonny Dally Still was the comfort o' my life
I loved her in thocht till I made her my wife
I was as blythe a lad, as only lad could be
For bonny Dally Still was fond o' me.
- 3 I had but little stock, my Dally she had less
But we houplit that in time our stock it might increase
I took a bit o' farm on the banks o' the Dee
An my farm and my lass they were pleasures to me.
- 4 I hadna been a farmer, a year but barely twa
Till my sheep took the pock and my horse was stown awa
My crap it gaed wrang and my nowt a' did dee
An aa' that at aince wis sair for me.
- 5 But auld widow Greylocks that lived ayont the meer
I kent she was rich an' had plenty o' gear,
I gaed to her fu' heavy wi' the tear I' my e'e
Says «O my honest widow, will ye pity me.»
- 6 The widow lookit kind – speer't whit wid do me gweed
I telt her a' my strait, and fu' muckle I wid need
She look't at me fu' blythe, wi a blink in her e'e
Said, «Ye'll never be in strait lad, gin ye'll marry me.»
- 7 My heart it grew great, an oh but I was wae

9. Johnson, James, Burns, Robert. *The Scots Musical Museum*. Edinburgh 1787-1803.

10. Stenhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

11. Now available in 8 vols., Shuldham-Shaw, Patrick and Lyle, Emily. B. *et al. The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*. Aberdeen University Press (vols. 1-4) Mercat Press (vols. 5-8). 1981.

12. *Op. cit.*, vol. 7, Song no. 1365, p. 158-161.

- I thocht on Dally Still, and I kent na what to say
 I cam awa' fu heavy, for I thocht it cou'dna be
 That sic an auld wife could speak sae tae me.
- 8 But what could I dee, or whare could I apply
 My Dally could na help me, an I hadna freens to try
 Sae I e'en gaed back again, as feel like to see
 If the widow wid but lend a sma thing tae me.
- 9 The widow kept her text And I hidna poor to speak
 My case was very hard and my heart wis like to break
 So I gave her my hand, oh why did I agree
 To mak auld Widow Greylocks a wife to me.
- 10 I hadna been wi her a fortnicht an' a day
 Till I met my Dally Still on the side o'yonder brae
 She stared in my face while greet wis in her e'e
 Says «O cruel man, ye hae slighted me»
- 11 Silly did I look, but little could I say
 She turn't on her heel, an' she flang herself away
 Alas! That I should live the unhappy day to see
 My bonny Dally Still rin awa frae me
- 12 I gang like a gaist and I carena for to work
 An' I'm scorn'd when I gae to the mill or the kirk
 The lasses they despise me – it canna ither be
 There never wis a lad sae wretched as me.
- 13 Fin I drink wi' my friends, they say I've been tae blame
 And Luckie she miska's me whenever I gang hame
 I lang sair for death but there's nane o's like tae deee
 And oh what will at last become o' me.
- 14 I do what I can to conceal my daily pine
 But I canna get my Dally Still awa frae my mind
 Sae I'll leave the country and gang across the sea
 Since auld widow Greylocks is wife to me.

Of the five versions to be found in the Greig Duncan Collection, only one has an air (version, A. song no. 1365), but it resembles closely the original tune of Lady Anne's song). The original air is to be found in the Scots Musical Museum, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 256. Both the original and the Leeves air are given in Graham, George Farquhar, *The Popular Songs of Scotland*. Pp 246-249, J. Muir Wood and Co. Glasgow 1896.

All of the versions follow the plot of B quoted in full above with the exception of version A which contains the following significant stanza:

- (4) My heart it grew great an oh dear I was wae
 I thought upon my Dally an I kent na fat tae say
 I turned me about wi' the teer in my ee
 But Auld Widow Greylocks was kind unto me.

This verse is important in that it echoes Lady Anne's

For oh! Robin Gray he is kind to me.

It should be noted that the hero of the folk version decides to «go to sea» albeit to get away from the widow and not to seek his fortune, but this may represent the germ of Lady Anne's «Jamie» going to sea.

Both Greig and Duncan were convinced that Lady Anne had borrowed more than the air from Aul' Widow Greylocks and were equally convinced that the original was a genuine folk song from the oral tradition pre-dating *Auld Robin Gray*¹³ as proven by the dates given by their informants. Apart from one verse in versions C and D of a more realistic nature, this song has all the properties retained and only slightly modified by Lady Anne, i.e. a marriage of convenience forced by harsh economic circumstances creates high tragedy when true love is thwarted. The pathos is further enhanced by the tragic resignation of the victim to the adoption of a high moral stance which in no way compensates for lost true love.

It is understandable that songs of this kind should be attractive to a broad public in 18th century Scotland since it served the purpose of confirming (some) national values and with the additional merit of being cast in the old tongue of independent Scotland, still spoken by all social classes, (but not written). The note of realism struck by the evocation of the economic precariousness experienced by the greater part of the population, plus the imperious nature of the social and moral pressure to honour one's word in spite of all, served to turn on its head the ribald old folk theme, much prevalent in Scotland, in which old men marry young girls with all the accompanying sexual comedy. It is obvious that with this song, «national song» as distinct from folk or traditional song, had arrived. Why then should such a work which seems so peculiar to Scotland find its way abroad and enjoy similar success?

The answer to this riddle may lie in the work of the French novelist Honoré de Balzac.

In the *Œuvres complètes*¹⁴, published by the *Société des études balzacienes*, there appears in vol. 28 (*Œuvres diverses*) under

13. Cf. *op. cit.*, notes, p. 511. Greig and Duncan's trawl of songs however produced only 2 one verse fragments of Lady Anne's version which illustrates very well a tendency for the holders of the oral tradition not to adopt or adapt published national songs. This balance is also evident in Burns songs, very few of which appear in the Greig-Duncan collection.

14. De Balzac, Honoré, *Œuvres complètes*, 28 vol., Chambéry, La Société des études balzacienes, 1962, *op. cit.*, vol. 28, *Œuvres diverses*, p. 274.

the title of «Autres ébauches poétiques de jeunesse» a poem of nine stanzas entitled *Roben Gray*¹⁵. Although the editors are unable to date the fragments of which this poem forms part they seem convinced that they date from Balzac's youth:

*Nous plaçons ici des fragments que nous n'avons pu dater, mais qui appartiennent très vraisemblablement aux années de jeunesse de Balzac*¹⁶.

FLORIAN

Le Vieux Robin Gray

BALZAC

Roben Gray

1. Quand les moutons sont dans la
bergerie,
Que le sommeil aux humains est si doux,
Je pleure, hélas! Les chagrins de ma vie,
Et près de moi dort mon bon vieux
époux.
2. Jame m'aimait – pour prix de sa
constance
Il eut mon cœur; mais Jame n'avait
rien;
Il s'embarqua dans la seule espérance
À tant d'amour de joindre un peu de
bien.
3. Après un an notre vache est volée –
Le bras cassé, mon père rentre un jour –
Ma mère était malade et désolée,
Et Robin Gray vint me faire la cour.
4. Le pain manquait dans ma pauvre
retraite,
Robin nourrit mes parents malheureux.
La larme à l'œil, le me disait, Jeannette,
Épouse-moi du moins pour l'amour
d'eux!»
5. Je disais, «Non, pour Jame je respire;»
Mais son vaisseau sur mer vint à périr;
Et j'ai vécu – je vis encore pour dire,
«Malheur à moi d'en avoir pu mourir!»
6. Mon père alors parla du mariage –
Sans en parler ma mère l'ordonna:
Mon pauvre cœur était mort du
naufnage,
Ma main restait – mon père la donna.
7. Un mois après, devant ma porte assise
Je revois Jame, et crus m'abuser.
«C'est moi,» dit-il pourquoi tant de sur-
prise?
Ma chère amour, je reviens t'épouser!»
8. Ah! Que de pleurs ensemble nous ver-
sâmes!
Un seul baiser, suivi d'un long soupir,
Fut notre adieu – tous deux nous
répétâmes,
«Malheur à moi de n'avoir pu mourir!»
1. Quand les moutons sont dans la bergerie,
Que le sommeil aux humains est si doux,
Je pleure, hélas les chagrins de ma vie
Et près de moi dort mon bon vieux
époux.
2. **James** m'aimait. Pour prix de sa
constance,
James eut mon cœur, mais James n'avait
rien.
Il s'embarqua dans la **douce** espérance
À tant d'amour se joindre un peu de bien.
3. **Un beau matin**, notre vache **envolée**,
Le bras cassé, mon père rentre un jour.
Ma mère était malade et désolée
Et Roben Gray me vint faire la cour.
4. Le pain manquait dans ma pauvre
chaumière,
Roben nourrit mes parents malheureux.
En les voyant, il me disait: «Ma chère,
Épouse-moi, du moins pour l'amour
d'eux...»
5. Je disais «Non, pour **James** je respire»
Mais son vaisseaux sur mer **vient** à périr:
Et j'ai vécu, je vis encore pour dire:
«Malheur à moi de n'avoir pu mourir!»
6. Mon père alors parla **de** mariage,
Par un regard ma mère l'ordonna,
Mon pauvre cœur était mort du
naufnage,
Ma main restait, mon père le donna.
7. Un mois après, devant ma porte assise,
Je revois **James** et je crus m'abuser.
«C'est moi,» dit-il, pourquoi tant de sur-
prise?
Mon tendre amour, je reviens
t'épouser.»
8. Ah! Que de pleurs ensemble nous ver-
sâmes!
Un seul baiser suivi d'un long soupir
Fut notre adieu. Tous deux nous
répétâmes:
«Malheur à moi de n'avoir pu mourir!»

15. *Idem.*

16. *Idem.*

9. Je ne ris plus, j'écarte de mon âme
Le souvenir d'un amant si chéri;
Je veux tâcher d'être une bonne femme,
Le vieux Robin est un si bon mari.

9. **Il ne vit plus. Je garde dans** mon âme
Le souvenir d'un amant si chéri.
Je veux tâcher d'être une bonne femme,
Le vieux **Ruben** est un si bon mari...

This is without doubt a translation of *Auld Robin Gray*, but it is not the first translation into French since another¹⁷, by the French fabulist, Florian 7 (1755-1794) is authenticated (but undated) in the official family history of the House of Lindsay.

From the extent of the variations between the versions it is possible to determine whether Balzac's version is an independent translation or not. (To aid comparison, Balzac's variants are highlighted.).

Florian's version, which preserves the metre of the original, is therefore meant to be sung to the air(s)¹⁸ of *Auld Robin Gray*. Balzac's version also retains this possibility. Stanza 2 provides good example of liberty with the original text in which the Lexis has been abandoned («couronne» and «livre» would have been difficult for the French listener to comprehend immediately) in favour simply of translating substance. Balzac follows Florian consistently in his solutions which indicates that the Balzac version is not an original translation but rather a copy of Florian with some interesting «improvements», the most arresting of which is to be found in stanza 9 when Balzac causes James to die albeit metaphorically. How exactly the young Balzac came to copy this text is open to conjecture. What is certain is that Florian had strong links with the French aristocracy and indeed was implicated in the Revolution, the same revolution that caused many French noblemen and women to seek refuge in London. Lady Anne Lindsay (now married to an English gentleman¹⁹ and styled Lady Anne Barnard) was famous for her London salon, which was frequented by the great and powerful including the Prince Regent. Lady Anne and her sisters, like many society women in London at that time held open house for the French refugees for whom they had great sympathy (Cf. *Lives of the Lindsays*), which could explain how the song travelled to France.

There is concrete evidence however that Balzac was aware of the existence of *Auld Robin Gray* thanks to another source. He was an avid admirer of the works of Sir Walter Scott and eagerly awaited their translation into French. An early work of

17. Reproduced by Lord Lindsay in *Lives of the Lindsays* (3 vols.) in appendix XLVII, p.467, London 1849.

18. Florian, Jean-Pierre Claris de (1755-1794). Grand-nephew of Voltaire. Creator of fables and noted for his high moralising themes especially concerning family life in which the «good» mother, father, etc. are featured in a sentimental way. He was connected with the French court and encountered severe difficulties during the Revolution.

19. In 1793 she married Andrew Barnard son of the Bishop of Limerick and afterwards secretary under Lord Macarteny to the colony of the Cape of Good Hope.

Scott, *The Pirate*²⁰, which he virtually re-wrote under a pseudonym as *Annette et le criminel*, contained a reference to Lady Anne Lindsay as the author of *Auld Robin Gray*.

Nae langer she wept, – her tears were a' spent, –
Despair it was come, and she thought it content;
She thought it content, but her cheek it grew pale,
And she drooped, like a lily broke down by the hail.
(Continuation of Auld Robin Gray)²¹

In a footnote to the above in a subsequent edition, Sir Walter states, «It is worthwhile saying, that this motto, and the ascription of the beautiful ballad from which it is taken to the Right Honourable Lady Anne Lindsay, occasioned the ingenious authoress's acknowledgement of the ballad, of which the Editor, by her permission, published a small impression, inscribed to the Bannatyne Club»²².

At this point it is appropriate to consider why Balzac should have been so enthusiastic about Scott's work. The exciting innovation of evoking his country's history through a portrayal of not just of the great and magnificent but also those of humble and poor plus accurate representations of new social categories and mentalities, produced a new realism which opened up boundless possibilities covering all the social classes from the high and mighty to the meek and lowly.

Balzac's admiration for his beloved «Valter» extended to the latter's skill in representing «ordinary» people, their psychology, their language and the circumstances surrounding their lives.

In his short autobiographical work *Une heure de ma vie* (1821), Balzac drew some vital conclusions on the originality and genius of Scott's work. Scott had been the first to reject the portrayal of history as a sterile recitation of events in favour of a teeming chronicle in which the whole of society and the circumstances affecting the people living within that society become worthy of documentation. Thus, on one occasion, in Paris, on observing hundreds of people flocking to the *Comédie-Française* in search of «drama» he points out that there was drama enough, albeit of a different but equally relevant kind in the life of the beggar veteran of the Napoleonic wars whom they were passing by on the pavement. Scott had demonstrated how the new sources of realism could be marshalled in the cause of the novel. It was this model of the broad canvas which

20. Scott's novel *The Pirate* (1821) was based on Defoe's *The Pirate Gow* (1725) and was translated into French in 1822.

Balzac's version *Annette et le criminel* appeared in 1824.

21. Scott, Walter, *The Pirate*, ch. 26, p. 249, T.C. and E.C. Jack, Edinburgh. Note the same coalescence of the popular and the «national» as symbolised by the creation of *Auld Robin Gray*.

22. *Idem*.

did so much to inspire Balzac with his vision of the *Comédie humaine*.

The drama of ordinary lives, provincial lives, country lives, which he found so exciting in Scott, was to feature in this ambitious and ground-breaking endeavour. Balzac, however went even further. It is true that his «rendering» of Scott's *Pirate* contained the same romantic melodrama of the original, but it lacked, as indeed did the original, that vital ingredient which was to take the novel out of post-18th century romantic drama into 19th century realism, the sober assessment of the inability of individuals to shape their destinies when confronted with money; the destructive, corruptive forces thus deployed create an effect of tragic submission. Critics of Balzac agree that *Eugénie Grandet* with its economy of style, lack of action and defeat of spiritual forces as delivering agencies produces for Balzac his first masterpiece.

Balzac's early reading of *Auld Robin Gray* could have begun to sow some fertile seeds in his creative subconscious. In *Eugénie Grandet* it is possible to detect an echo of that early fascination with the realism which appears without ceremony in folk culture.

Charles Grandet, in love with Eugénie, but penniless is forced to «go to sea» to seek the fortune he needs to marry her with honour. Jamie, in *Auld Robin Gray*, faced with the same problem, goes to sea²³. Jeanie, for financial moral and social reasons is forced into a marriage of convenience which she accepts as the ultimate gesture of filial duty. Jamie returns unexpectedly to find her already married and true love is thwarted. Although Charles Grandet does not return to the same set of circumstances, Eugénie's love for him is also thwarted because of the transformation which has taken place in Charles' character due to the dubious commercial ventures (including slave-trading) which he has undertaken. Charles also contracts a marriage of convenience for money reasons and social status. At this point it is worth mentioning the tableaux which are created by both authors. Both create distance (represented by the sea) between the loved ones (Jeanie thinks Jamie is drowned having been misinformed), Eugénie has no news of Charles over a long period of time. When the news finally arrives, Jeanie greets her Jamie seated on the stone outside her cottage. When Eugénie receives her news (via a letter) she is seated on the garden bench²⁴ where their

23. Balzac was particularly fond of the bench image since it was almost certainly a deeply significant item for him since it was on Madame de Berny's garden seat that she first accorded him the embrace which was to set his emotions on fire as a young man. His affair with Madame de Berny was also one of «*amour impossible*», since she was twice his age, had seven children and already had another lover.

24. De Balzac, Honoré, *Eugénie Grandet*, p. 214, Paris, Flammarion, 1964.

courtship had taken place before Charles' departure. Finally, Jeanie's sense of loyalty and duty to the old man (who was kind to her and did not deserve to be deserted) drives her inevitably to the condition of tragic heroine as she accepts, in a profound gesture of self-denial, that her love for Jamie can never be. Eugénie Grandet, when she accepts Charles' marriage of convenience, retires into a life of humble virtue and good works, in which romantic love will no longer play a part.

La main de cette femme panse les plaies secrètes de toutes les familles. Eugénie marche au ciel accompagnée d'un cortège de bienfaits. La grandeur de son âme amoindrit les petitesesses de son éducation et les coutumes de sa vie première. Telle est l'histoire de cette femme qui n'est pas du monde au milieu du monde, qui, faite pour être magnifiquement épouse et mère, n'a ni mari ni enfants, ni famille²⁵.

25. *Ibid.*