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Introduction

Transplanting any foreign masterpiece into a different language and cultural context presents many challenges for the translator and for the reader. Both have to negotiate meaning; among the many issues that a translator has to solve, foremost is the choice of whether to "transplant" the text, making it belong to the "new" culture and thus lose its foreignness, or on the contrary, to keep the the translation as close to the source text as as possible by preserving its original linguistic and syntactic structure, and thus inevitably making it "foreign" to the reader in the target language. There are also many factors in the new literature and culture that impact both the translator's work and the readers' perception, such as linguistic proximity of the source to the target language, the cultural similarity, historical context, shared cognitive concepts, ethical values, and beliefs.[1] At the same time, one of the most important factors that influences the quality and the subsequent fate of the translated work is the translator's individual literary style and talent.

Throughout the history of Russian literature, many great authors also undertook translating projects and left a remarkable legacy of literary translations in poetry and prose. Most famous among these projects are Vasily Zhukovsky's *Ludmila* (1808) and *Svetlana* (1813), free translations of ballads by Gottfried August Burger that subsequently became far more known than their German originals, and Mikhail Lermontov's free translations of Heine and Goethe. Twentieth-century examples include the celebrated translations of Shakespeare by Boris Pasternak and Vladimir Nabokov's numerous body of works as a translator (his Russian translation of *Alice in Wonderland* and his English translation of *Eugene Onegin* are just some of the more known examples), as well as his experience of self-translation in

1 For more on the factors influencing text translatability see Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2006).

the three versions of his autobiography. Young Dostoevsky's translation of *Eugénie Grandet* is also part of this tradition.

The translation legacy of these great authors demonstrates convincingly that a good literary translator always has a dynamic and creative relationship with the original text, and a certain degree of translator's freedom is necessary. It is permissible to deviate from the letter of the original in order to bring out its spirit. By working actively with the text, the translator brings the reader closer to an understanding and appreciation of the original work: "we are led . . . back to the source text: the circle within which the approximation of the foreign and the familiar, the known and the unknown constantly move, is finally complete."[2]

At the same time, the translators cannot disregard the existing reading tradition and cultural expectation of their compatriots, so that the newly translated work continues in some ways the existing literary canon and adds to the already established literary legacy of a specific country. In his essay "Russkaia literatura na frantsuzskom iazyke" Yuri Lotman noted that after reforms of Peter the Great, Russian culture was "developing under the sign of Europeanization," and since the eighteenth century, French language and culture became for Russians the ideal symbol of Europe.[3] This was certainly true for young Dostoevsky, who was an avid reader of many French authors, and especially Honoré de Balzac, whose books he admired and continued to read throughout his life. Our analysis of Dostoevsky's translation will demonstrate that the young Dostoevsky was influenced, on the one hand, by French ideas, and on the other hand, by the Russian Orthodox values and beliefs that were crucial for his own intellectual development, and this was reflected in the way he chose to approach *Eugénie Grandet* while translating it for Russian readers. Thus, Dostoevsky's free translation can be seen as an amalgam of French ideas and cultural notions transplanted into Russian soil and viewed through the lense of Dostoevsky's Christian Orthodox philosophy and Russian cultural tradition.

In his multi-volume biography of Dostoevsky, Joseph Frank wrote: "No predecessor in the European novel was more important for Dostoevsky than Balzac, and such works as *Eugénie Grandet* and *Le Père Goriot* were

2 Lawrence Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), 66.

3 "Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the French language was the bridge for the movement of ideas and cultural values from Europe into Russia." Iurii Lotman, *Izbrannye stat'i*, vol. 2 (Tallinn, Estonia: Aleksandra, 1992), 368.

to serve as trail-blazers clearing the path for his own productions."[4] In August of 1838, having read almost all of Balzac's works, Dostoevsky wrote to his brother Mikhail: "Бальзак велик! Его характеры—произведения ума вселенной. Не дух времени, но целые тысячелетия приготовили борением своим такую развязку в душе человека"[5] (Balzac is great! His characters are the creation of the mind of the universe. Not just the spirit of the time but whole millennia prepared by their struggle this outcome of the human soul). In the 1840s, Dostoevsky asked his friend and fellow writer Dmitry Grigorovich to send him some books by Balzac, "I would like to reread *César Birotteau* and *Mercadet*." Many years after completing the translation, in 1880, Dostoevsky answered the question of his young friend, the writer and memoirist Vera Mikulich, "Ну, а кого вы ставите выше, Бальзака или себя?" (Whom do you consider higher, Balzac or yourself?), with "Каждый из нас дорог только в той мере, в которой он принес в литературу что-нибудь свое, что-нибудь оригинальное. В этом все. А сравнивать нас я не могу. Думаю, что у каждого есть свои заслуги"[6] (Each of us is valuable only to the degree that he brought into literature something uniquely his own, something original. That is all. I cannot compare us. I believe that we each have our own merit). In her memoir, Mikulich also remembers that Dostoevsky recommended that she read *Le Père Goriot* shortly before he died. Balzac remained a very strong influence for Dostoevsky throughout his life.

Balzac's work was quite popular in Russia and his arrival in Russia was widely anticipated. Pushkin's sister Maria wrote to her husband already in 1836: "à propos, nous attendons Balzac; on prétend qu'il est déjà a Kiev"[7] (By the way, we are expecting Balzac; they say he is already in Kiev). In 1838, a fictitious article "Balzac dans la province de Kherson" appeared in a major Saint Petersburg literary journal *Sovremennik* (The contemporary) describing Balzac's visit to Kherson in Ukraine, even though he never visited there. The article claimed that Balzac had a huge success with the local ladies who could name all his works in chronological order, knew all the characters in *La Comédie humaine*, and could even recite the best pages

4 Joseph Frank, *The Seeds of Revolt: 1821–1849* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1979), 106.
5 Leonid Grossman, *Dostoevskii. Put'. Poetika. Tvorchestvo* (Moscow, Russia: Sovremennye problemy, 1928), 234.
6 Vera Mikulich, *Vstrechi c pisateliami* (Leningrad: Izdatel′stvo pisatelei, 1929), 155.
7 Leonid Grossman, *Balzac en Russie* (Paris, France: Presse française et étrangère, 1946), 35.

by heart: "Les dames de la province de Kherson sont folles de Balzac. Vous n'avez qu'à prononcer le nom du nouvelist français pour voir à quelle point les dames de l'aristocratie se passionnent pour lui"[8] (The ladies of Kherson are crazy about Balzac. You only have to mention the name of French novelist to see how passionately the ladies of the aristocracy feel about him). This episode illustrates to what degree the name of Balzac was already known and popular among the Russian audience not just in the capital, but in the regions as well.

The leading Russian literary magazines were interested in providing Russian translations of Balzac's novels for their audience. At the same time, the fairly large percent of the educated reading public of Russia who spoke French fluently had the opportunity to acquaint themselves with Balzac's novels almost as soon as they appeared in France, thanks to the French-language literary magazine that was published in Russia, *Revue étrangere de littérature, des sciences et des arts*. Balzac's novels were highly regarded by many Russian authors, including Ivan Turgenev, Ivan Goncharov, and later Maxim Gorky. Leo Tolstoy expressed great admiration for *La Comédie humaine*, and Ivan Goncharov wrote that he decided to become a writer after reading and rereading *La Peau de Chagrin* and *Eugénie Grandet*. Balzac's enormous, enduring popularity in Russia is evoked much later in Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, where Chebutykin reads in the old newspaper that "Balzac was married in Berdichev."

Balzac had plans to visit Russia for quite some time because of his long romantic attachment to Evelyne Hanska, who permanently resided in her great Ukrainian estate Wierzchownia but was a frequent visitor to Saint Petersburg. In 1842, Balzac received news that Madame Hanska's husband had died, and he decided to travel to Saint Petersburg so that he could obtain permission to marry her and possibly move to Russia himself. In addition, Balzac's own interests in Saint Petersburg, which he viewed as the cultural and political center of northern Europe, and his multiple projects regarding diplomacy and commerce, all influenced his desire to travel to Russia. As Leonid Grossman in his study *Balzac en Russie* explains about Balzac's desire to visit Russia: "Il [Balzac] rêvait de créer en Russie une litérature, une théatre et une presse du type européen. Il se rendait compte qu'il était populaire dans les pays du Nord"[9] ("He dreamed of creating in

8 Ibid., 68.
9 Ibid., 28.

Russia the European-style literature, theater and press. He realized that he was popular in the northern countries.")[10]

Going to Russia, Balzac hoped to resolve his material difficulties, and to forget his disappointment with the French political regime of the period. But most importantly, he envisioned for himself an active role as a figure of political importance and cultural influence. Balzac spent ten weeks in Saint Petersburg in the fall of 1843, the same year young Dostoevsky began working on the first Russian translation of *Eugénie Grandet*. Unfortunately, while Balzac was at the center of Russian literary life, none of his commercial or political hopes materialized, and he was received coldly by Russian official circles. Later Balzac said that he received a slap in the face intended for the Marquis de Custine, for discussing Russian hostility to the French in general after the Marquis de Custine published his famous book *La Russie en 1839*, which was sharply critical of Nikolas I's Russia that he saw during his travels.

Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* was hailed as a masterpiece even before it was translated into Russian. *Severnaya pchela* (The Northern bee), one of the most influential Russian literary magazines of that time, wrote: "От всей души сознаёмся, что видим в нем одного из лучших романистов нашего века. *Eugénie Grandet*, *Histoire des Treize* и множество других романов доставили автору неувядаемый венок"[11] (We admit wholeheartedly that we see in him one of the best novelists of our century. *Eugénie Grandet*, *Histoire des Treize* and many other novels brought to the author eternal laurels). Senkovsky, the editor of another influential literary magazine, *Biblioteka dlya chteniya* (Library for reading), called *Eugénie Grandet* Balzac's best novel.

The popularity of Balzac in Russia, and the general excitement surrounding that particular novel, explained why young Dostoevsky received a higher than usual honorarium for his work as its translator. His translation of *Evgenia Grande* was published in the summer of 1844 in two volumes of the literary magazine *Repertuar i panteon*, volumes 6 and 7, without the name of a translator but with the following introductory note from the editor: "Это один из первых, и бесспорно, из лучших романов плодовитого Бальзака, который в последнее время заметно исписался. Сколько нам известно, роман этот в русском переводе

10 Translation mine.

11 Leonid Grossman, *Dostoevskii* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1965), 235.

напечатан не был, а поэтому мы надеемся угодить многим из наших читателей, поместив его в 'Репертуар и Пантеон'" (This is one of the first and undoubtedly the best novels of prolific Balzac, who as of late has noticeably written himself out. As far as we know, this novel has not been translated into Russian, and therefore we hope to please many of our readers by publishing it in *Repertuar i panteon*).[12] By that time, there existed three book editions of the novel in French (1834, 1839, and 1843). In the first edition, the text was divided into chapters, each of which had a separate title: 1. "Physiognomies bourgeoises," 2. "Le Cousin de Paris," 3. "Amours de Province," 4. "Promesses d'avare, serments d'amour," 5. "Chagrins de famille," 6. "Aussi va le monde," and 7. "Conclusion." In the revised 1839 edition, Balzac eliminated the chapter divisions, supposedly for conserving space. In subsequent editions, the division was not restored, and the last chapter got considerably shorter. Since Dostoevsky was working with the first edition of 1834, he kept the initial chapter division. There is one other difference between the first edition and the subsequent versions of *Eugénie Grandet*: at the end of the novel, there is discussion of a Greek statue, which is completely omitted starting from the edition of 1839. It is kept but shortened in Dostoevsky's translation. Finally, in the 1843 edition, when *Eugénie Grandet* was published among the other novels of *La Comédie humaine*, it was made part of a series called *Scènes de la vie de province*. No indication of that is found in the Russian translation.

The translation of *Eugénie Grandet* in 1844 was Dostoevsky's first published work. While living in Saint Petersburg after graduation from the Military Engineering Academy, young Dostoevsky initially took up translating as a supplemental source of income in addition to his modest salary as an engineer. He and his brother Mikhail made ambitious plans to translate and publish works of popular French and German authors. They selected the novels based on their personal preference and the potential interest for Russian readers. It was thought that Mikhail will do translations from German, and Dostoevsky would do French. One of the first novels that Dostoevsky proposed to Mikhail for translation and publication in Russia through their joint translation enterprise was Eugene Sue's novel *Mathilde*. Eugene Sue was widely read in Russia, and young Dostoevsky was an avid reader of Sue's novels. Sue's technique of *roman-feuilleton* with a cliffhanger ending of the episode at the most climactic moments, as well

12 Translation mine.

as his eloquent descriptions of cities and portrayals of extreme poverty and richness, was incorporated by Dostoevsky in his own writing. Echoes of the *Mathilde*'s plot about the friendship between a poor girl and her rich friend is echoed in *Netochka Nezvanova* (1849), Dostoevsky's first unfinished novel about an orphan who is taken in by a rich relative. Dostoevsky began translating Sue's novel but soon abandoned the project because of lack of funds.

In 1844, Dostoevsky began to work on a translation of George Sand's novel *La Dernière Aldini*, a complicated love story between an aristocrat and a fisherman set in Venice during the time of Italy's unification. The novels of George Sand were beloved by Russian readers, and Dostoevsky hoped for the translation's quick commercial success. Unfortunately, once he finished his translation, he discovered to his great disappointment that this novel had already been translated into Russian, so it was not possible to publish his translation. Dostoevsky also had the idea of translating the complete works of Schiller and publishing them in Russia. Mikhail would be the translator and he the publisher. Mikhail translated *The Robbers* and *Don Carlos* and published the dramas in the Russian journals, but the plan for publication of the complete works of Schiller never came to fruition. Thus, *Evgenia Grande* was Dostoevsky's only successful venture in his career as a translator.

However, the experience of translating literary texts remained an important milestone for Dostoevsky. Brian Baer mentions that Dostoevsky even made a theme of literary translation appear in his novels.[13] For example, thirty years later, Verkhovensky, one of Dostoevsky's characters in *The Demons* (1872), recalls the same experience of translating George Sand when he was young. Similarly, in *Crime and Punishment* (1866) Razumikhin knows three European languages and works as a freelance translator. He even offers Raskolnikov a job translating from German, which Raskolnikov declines. When Razumikhin describes his work on translations to Raskolnikov, he says that he does not have sufficient knowledge of German and frequently has to make things up as he goes along, but he "takes the only comfort in thinking that it improves the text"[14] ("только

13 Brian Baer, *Translation and the Making of the Modern Russian Literature* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 91–92.

14 Translation mine.

тем и утешаюсь, что от этого еще лучше выходит").[15] Razumikhin's speech is clearly intended as a parody on what a good translation should be because immediately after that he proceeds to describe the unscrupulous publisher Kheruvimov who makes money by quickly responding to what the general Russian readers are currently interested in. For example, the German treatise that Razumikhin offers Raskolnikov discusses "whether a woman can be considered a human being"[16] and relates to "women's rights question"; similarly, future plans of translation from Kheruvimov involve offering the Russian public a pastiche of "most boring gossips" from *Confessions* by Rousseau. Translation in *Crime and Punishment* is clearly presented as a parody of the original, and that is why, perhaps, Raskolnikov turns it down, saying "I don't need translation."

Dostoevsky started to work on the translation of *Eugénie Grandet* at the end of 1843, inspired by Balzac's recent visit to Saint Petersburg earlier that year. He completed the translation very quickly and wrote enthusiastically to his brother Mikhail in the beginning of 1844: "Нужно тебе знать, что на праздниках я перевел 'Евгению Grandet' Бальзака (чудо! чудо!) перевод бесподобный" (You should know that over the holidays I translated *Evgenia Grandet* [*sic*] by Balzac [a marvel! a marvel!] the translation is superb).[17]

In order to better understand the significance of Dostoevsky's translation, it may be helpful to look briefly at the further history and evolution of the Russian translations of *Eugénie Grandet* (predominantly known in Russia as *Evgenia Grande*). Currently there are three known versions of *Eugénie Grandet* in Russian: Fyodor Dostoevsky's translation was published in 1844, Isaya Mandelshtam's, in 1927, and Yuri Verkhovsky's, in 1935. The latter is still considered the canonical version.[18] Dostoevsky's first translation reflects the nineteenth-century notion of the Romantic period where the ideal translation aimed at bringing a foreign text to the reader, "domesticating" it; thus, the translator was seen also as a commentator and co-creator. If one looks at Alexander Pushkin's or Mikhail Lermontov's translations of French and German poets, one sees that their free translations are

15 Fedor Dostoevskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v 15 tomakh* (Leningrad, Russia: Nauka, 1989–1996), vol. 5, 49.

16 Ibid.

17 Translation mine.

18 For more see Aleksandra Leshnevskaia, "Tri 'Grande,'" *Inostrannaia literatura* 4 (2008), http://magazines.russ.ru/inostran/2008/4/le5.html.

essentially new and beautiful poems that stand alongside the original and can be read independently. Dostoevsky approached Balzac's masterpiece with a similar creative freedom.

When young Dostoevsky began his work on the translation, his aim was to make Balzac's original text, which was densely populated with uniquely French details, completely understandable for Russian readers unfamiliar with French realia. In terms of today's translation theory, Dostoevsky was using the approach that Lawrence Venuti defined as "bringing the text to the reader."[19] In keeping with this theoretical premise, Dostoevsky even Russified the first name of Balzac's protagonist, changing it from Eugénie to the Russian Evgenia. Working with the aim to make the text accessible to the Russian general public, Dostoevsky eliminated some obscure names of textiles, some descriptions of wine-making terms and barrel-making techniques, as well as other words and concepts that were difficult to understand for Russian readers without extensive commentary and explanatory notes (such as *noblesse de cloche*—lit. "nobility of the bell," or municipal nobility, conferred to the mayor and other municipal officials of certain historically important French towns; *poinçon de vin*—a wine glass holding 250 milliliters; *halleboteur*—"grape-gleaner"; *une truisse*—a regional word meaning "tree hedge," and so forth). The main characters also received Russian names, and began to use diminutive suffixes, again part of the attempt to make the translation read like a Russian novel. For example, in Dostoevsky's translation, Old Grandet calls his daughter *жизнёночек мой* (lit. "my little life"), while in Balzac's text Grandet calls her *ma fifille*. The Russian word is unusual and is taken from Dostoevsky's father's letters to his wife, while the French is fully standard meaning "my little girl." Notwithstanding his idiosyncratic choices, Dostoevsky's conscious strategy of substituting French idioms by Russian ones made the text more understandable for the Russian reader.

The result of his creative work was a free translation that many critics faulted as being too free and taking too many liberties with the original—hence not a true translation but a retelling of the story. After the initial publication in the Saint Petersburg literary journal *Repertuar i panteon* in 1844, Dostoevsky's translation was forgotten until 2014, when a new edition of his translation appeared in Saint Petersburg.

19 Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 49.

In the late 1920s in Russia, the opposite view of maximally precise translation being the best became dominant, and a new movement of *bukvalizm* (literalness), taking its name from the Russian word for letter, *bukva*, was born. Following one of its main theorists, translator Evgeny Lann, the new movement prized the literal precision of translation at the expense of its readability and advocated keeping the original "foreign " terms. Dostoevsky's translation of Balzac was widely rebuked, and a new translation of the novel by Isaya Mandelshtam was published in 1927.[20] Following the new trend, even the name of the titular character was approximated to French pronunciation and transcribed in Cyrillic as Ezheni Grande (Эжени Гранде). While Dostoevsky in his translation of the novel strove to Russify the text by giving many Russian diminutive suffixes and realia, Isaya Mandelshtam, under the influence of *bukvalizm*, deliberately included in his translation a lot of French borrowings, thus choosing to highlight the French origin of the novel.

Soon after that, the *bukvalist* movement was supplanted by the new school of translation that aimed to harmoniously connect the two opposing views: readability on the one hand, and on the other, respect for the foreign realia present in the original. The last Russian translation of *Eugénie Grandet* by Yuri Verkhovsky in 1935 reflects this approach. This last translation remains canonical for the Russian readers and has been reprinted numerous times.

One should note that many textual changes that occurred to the Russian versions of *Eugénie Grandet* are not the only such case of a foreign classical novel with several Russian translations. Marina Kostomarova in her article "Charles Dickens in Nineteenth-Century Russia" similarly highlights significant transformations of *The Pickwick Papers* throughout different Russian versions.[21] In her study of Dickens's reception in Russia, Kostomarova demonstrates that this dynamic process of shaping and reshaping the source text through translation also forms the literary reputation of the author in the target culture. At the same time, the historical and cultural context in which the translation first appeared is also very influential, as we have seen with the three Russian versions of *Eugénie Grandet*.

20 For more about this period, see Andrei Azov, *Poverzhennye bykvalisty* (Moscow, Russia: Izdatel′skii dom Vysshei Shkoly Ekonomiki, 2013).

21 Brian Baer and Susanna Witt, eds., *Translation in Russian Contexts* (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), 110–125.

Susan Bassnett in her 1998 work *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, written with André Lefevere, argues for translator-centered texts and discusses the shift of emphasis from original to translation and the degree of the visibility of the translator in the text. Similarly, Emily Apter in *Translation Zone* points out the inherent tension between textual and cultural translation, and notes that texts that are more culturally loaded present more challenges to translators, making the role of the translator paramount in negotiating meaning.

Dostoevsky's translation clearly belongs to translator-centered texts. If one looks closely at his work, one can immediately see that Dostoevsky consciously changed the original in many ways to make it maximally accessible to the Russian readers. This study analyzes specific textual changes and conscious departures from the original that Dostoevsky made to accomplish his task, as well as investigates the reasons behind his choices and the difference that they make in the experience of reading Balzac's novel in Russian versus the original French.

While several studies exist on the translation of Dostoevsky's novels into different languages, there is almost nothing written about his work as a translator. He first took up translating as a source of income, but for his projects he only chose those authors for whom he felt a deep admiration and affinity, such as Honoré de Balzac and George Sand. Young Dostoevsky's choice is not surprising, since he named Balzac as one of his favorite authors while he was still in high school. Both Balzac and George Sand were deeply interested in the psychological and emotional development of their characters, as well as the effects of society and wealth on the individual, social issues, and love as a force that transcends the obstacles of convention and social class. These major themes later became very important for Dostoevsky's own writings.

Consequently, this book also analyzes Dostoevsky's first literary publication as a crucible for his own literary style. Judith Woodsworth points out that "writers have always regarded translation as an exercise, as a prelude to and preparation for original work, in short, as *pre-text*. Alternatively, they have seen it as *pretext* for something else, as a way of paying tribute to an admired foreign writer, as an infusion of elements of foreign culture into their own culture, or as a mechanism for strengthening personal or

collective identity."[22] In my view, it is valuable to study Dostoevsky's translation from this perspective, focusing specifically on how it accomplishes both of the objectives identified by Woodsworth—it functions as a *pretext* for Dostoevsky's subsequent development as a writer, and at the same time it weaves Balzac's themes into Russian cultural context, giving them new dimensions.

Dostoevsky's work on Balzac's original text had a profound impact on his own writing. This comparative study aims to trace the connections between Balzac's techniques of creating his characters and the fictional spaces of his novels and the ways in which they are echoed in Dostoevsky's later novels, sometimes explicitly referencing Balzac's style and in other instances subconsciously. We can see the beginnings of Dostoevsky's own literary style and poetics in the ways that he approached the translation of Balzac.

In this first publication of young Dostoevsky, one can already observe some antecedents of his future poetics. For example, Dostoevsky approached Balzac's long descriptions with great freedom, and he frequently changed the syntactic structure of the sentences by eliminating or adding words or by substituting the epithets in Balzac's original with several Russian adjectives. At the same time, he amplified the emotional tension in the novel and focused his attention fully on the theme of self-sacrifice, love, and faith. In his translation, one can see the brilliant treatment of dialogue and a very active narrative voice. These would later become distinguishing stylistic features of Dostoevsky's own novels.

Balzac's view of the role of the writer is also relevant to Dostoevsky's own beliefs. In his foreword to *La Comédie humaine*, Balzac describes the role of the author as a "secretary" who is transcribing the history of society: "La société française allait être l'historien, je ne devais être que le secrétaire" (The French society was going to be the historian; I was supposed to be nothing but a secretry).[23] This point resembles Dostoevsky's own position when he referred to the writer as a "stenographer" ("The Meek One"). The author draws the readers' attention to his creative method in the Introduction to "The Meek One": "Вот это предположение о записавшем всё стенографе (после которого я обделал бы записанное) и есть то, что я называю в

22 Judith Woodsworth, *Telling the Story of Translation: Writers who Translate* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 5–6.

23 Honoré de Balzac, "L'Avant-propos de 'La Comédie humaine,'" in his *Oeuvres completes* (Paris, France: Les Bibliophiles de l'origine, 1965), 14.

этом рассказе фантастическим" (This assumption about a stenographer, whose record I then would have polished, is what I call in this story fantastic). Dostoevsky published "The Meek One" in his *Diary of a Writer*, where he also recorded his own observations of Saint Petersburg life and chronicles from daily newspapers that provided factual material for his stories and polemical essays. This creative method of drawing ideas for his stories and novels from the current events in Saint Petersburg life also connects Dostoevsky and Balzac, who, in Zweig's words, was an "observer of the pageant of life"[24] and used his exceptional power of observation to recreate the fictional world of *La Comédie humaine*.

Young Dostoevsky's intensive work on Balzac's novel provided some of the paradigms through which he would affirm his own talent as a writer later. One can look at the main characters in *Evgenia Grande* as the prototypes of Dostoevsky's later novels, specifically the self-sacrificing and loving Evgenia and her despotic father, driven by his singular mania of avarice to unnatural cruelty towards his daughter. The motif of a "quiet" family drama where all family relationships are broken would reappear repeatedly in Dostoevsky's novels. Balzac's intense interest in the physical environment of his characters and its direct connection to their inner world is another device that later Dostoevsky would also employ in his works.

An important element that develops in Dostoevsky's close interaction with Balzac's text and then resurfaces in his own works is approaching characters as archetypes. It is known that Balzac worked on several editions of his novel with an aim to make Grandet less of a one-dimensional miser and villain and more of a complex, multifaceted character. When Balzac refers to Old Grandet, he calls him *monsieur Grandet, bonhomme, maître de la maison, l'oncle, le vigneron, le tonnelier* (Mr. Grandet, good man, master of the house, uncle, winemaker, barrel maker) to avoid focusing only on his avarice and not to emulate too closely archetypical misers such as Molière's Harpagon. Dostoevsky, on the contrary, highlights Grandet's monomania and makes obsession with money his salient characteristic. Instead of Balzac's many references, Dostoevsky only uses one epithet, *скряга* (miser), multiple times throughout the novel. The character of Eugénie is treated in a similar archetypal manner. Dostoevsky omits all the allusions to the sensual pleasures of love that Eugénie dreams about and makes his character very chaste, pure, and virtuous. In her devotion, chastity, and sacrifice, she

24 Stefan Zweig, *Balzac* (New York: Viking, 1946), 176.

resembles the idealized self-sacrificing and suffering women of Dostoevsky's own novels (Alyosha's mother in *Brothers Karamazov*, the nameless central character in *The Meek One*, Sonya in *Crime and Punishment*)

Another common point in terms of character creation for Balzac and Dostoevsky is their shared interest in *théorie du milieu*—an aesthetic principle that posits a strong connection between characters and their environment. Very specific detailed descriptions of the setting before the characters appear and the plot unfolds became Balzac's signature device. In *Eugénie Grandet* this artistic device is employed in the opening of the novel, where a detailed description of Saumur is presented on several pages. The author then dwells on the particular melancholic look of its houses before finally focusing on the house of the main character: ". . . vous apercevez un renforcement aussi sombre, au centre duquel est cachée la porte de la maison à monsieur Grandet. Il est impossible de comprendre la valeur de cette expression provinciale sans donner la biographie de monsieur Grandet"[25] (you will see a somewhat dark recess, in the center of which is hidden the door of the house of Monsier Grandet. It is impossible to understand the force of this provincial expression without giving the biography of Monsier Grandet).[26] Dostoevsky employed the same technique in his novels and stories, as evidenced by his meticulous descriptions of Saint Petersburg streets and buildings (see *Poor Folk*, The Double, and *White Nights*, the novels written in 1845–1848, shortly after the publication of his translation, or *Crime and Punishment*). His descriptions do not merely create for the reader an impression of the physical setting of the plot, but make the city itself one of the characters in the story. Dostoevsky's depictions of the characters' houses and atmosphere inside are directly connected to their inner world.

The theme of money is another element that is very important for Balzac, just as it is for Dostoevsky's own works. In Dostoevsky's major novels, attitude to money becomes the primary vehicle for character exploration and functions as the litmus test for a character's integrity, morality, and humanity. Motives of money and avarice allow Dostoevsky to create such brilliant plot nodes as the murder in *The Brothers Karamazov* or the money-burning scene with Nastasya Filippovna in *The Idiot*, and such memorable characters as Fyodor Karamazov, driven by money and lust,

25 Honoré de Balzac, *Eugénie Grandet* (Paris, France: Mme. Charles-Béchet, 1834), 6.
26 Translation mine.