



Honoré de Balzac

The Girl with the Golden Eyes
and Other Stories

A new translation by Peter Collier

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THE GIRL WITH THE GOLDEN EYES AND OTHER STORIES

HONORÉ DE BALZAC was born in 1799 at Tours, the son of a civil servant. Put out to nurse and sent later to boarding-school, he had, except between the ages of four and eight, little contact with home. In 1814 the family moved to Paris, where Honoré continued his boarding-school education for two years and then studied law at the Sorbonne. From 1816 to 1819 he worked in a lawyer's office, but having completed his legal training he knew he wanted to be a writer. While his family gave meagre financial support he wrote a play, *Cromwell*, but it was a complete failure. He also collaborated with other writers to produce popular novels. During the 1820s he dabbled in journalism, and tried to make money in printing and publishing ventures, whose lack of success laid the foundation for debts that plagued him for the rest of his life.

In 1829 Balzac published his first novel under his own name, *Le Dernier Chouan* (later *Les Chouans*), and *La Physiologie du mariage*. In 1830 came a collection of six stories called *Scènes de la vie privée*. Self-styled 'de Balzac', he became fashionable in the literary and social world of Paris, and over the next twenty years, as well as plays and articles, wrote more than ninety novels and stories. In 1842 many of these were published in seventeen volumes as *La Comédie humaine*. Important works were still to come, but ill-health interfered with his creativity and marred the last years of his life.

In 1832, in his extensive fan-mail, Balzac received a letter from the Polish Countess Hanska, whose elderly husband owned a vast estate in the Ukraine. The next year he met Madame Hanska in Switzerland, and in 1835 the couple agreed to marry after Count Hanska's death. For seventeen years, with intermissions, they conducted a voluminous correspondence, until their marriage finally took place in March 1850. Balzac died three months later in Paris.

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*The Girl with the
Golden Eyes
and Other Stories*



Translated with Notes by

PETER COLLIER

With an Introduction by

PATRICK COLEMAN

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INTRODUCTION

BALZAC is a writer eager to provide his readers with answers to questions, with solutions to mysteries. Do you want to know how a Restoration banker makes his money, how a Romantic dandy spends his days, what schemes may be concealed behind a lady's veil or a thief's disguise? Balzac will give you even the information you didn't know you wanted, and more. This generosity with information, which befits the capacious genre of the realist novel, is also found in Balzac's shorter fictions, where one expects a more concentrated action and a more focused selection of detail. In *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*, one of the three stories gathered here, the plot doesn't even get going until Balzac has given the reader a virtuoso description of a day in the life of typical Parisians of almost every social class. This wealth of information seems to be included more to dazzle the reader with a display of knowledge than to provide a context for the action, but one of Balzac's aims is to make us wonder whether there is ever such a thing as an irrelevant detail. Anything and everything may contribute something vital to our understanding of reality. The novelist Henry James, a great admirer of Balzac, put the point well: 'nothing appealed to him more than to show *how* we all are, and how we are placed and built-in for being so. What befalls us is but another name for the way our circumstances press upon us—so that an account of what befalls us is an account of our circumstances.'¹

Indeed, the events in the story sometimes amount to a brief episode in a longer chain of events whose links extend far into the past. Do you wonder how it comes about that someone of routine habits suddenly explodes with passion, or how an apparently flourishing business falls so swiftly into bankruptcy? Balzac is ready to link effects with their hidden causes, often introducing his analysis with the simple 'Here is why...'. Where the narrator gets his knowledge, however, is less clear. On one level, of course,

¹ Henry James, 'Honoré de Balzac' (1902), in Henry James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers, Other European Writers, the Prefaces to the New York Edition* (New York: The Library of America, 1984), 135.

the knowledge the novelist claims must be taken for granted, at least provisionally. Only after we have taken our bearings under the author's guidance and explored this fictional world for ourselves can we get a sense of whether or when it makes sense to question what we are told about that world. Yet, in Balzac's fiction authoritative explanation is so insistent that it draws attention to itself from the start. It unsettles the conventions of what knowledge can or should be taken for granted just as much as Balzac's copiousness of information disturbs our conventional sense of the balance between description and plot. The two other stories in this volume illustrate the point. In *Sarrasine* many of the guests at Madame de Lanty's ball wonder how the family acquired its fortune. Only the narrator knows, yet he is himself one of the characters in the story, and he never tells us how he came to know the answer. The more he underscores his special access to a hidden truth—the better to seduce his curious female companion—the more the reader wonders about his privileged status.

In *The Unknown Masterpiece* we have the ironic situation of a fictional artist named Frenhofer explaining why a painting done by an artist who actually existed, François Porbus, doesn't really 'live'. The reader gets a vivid image of that painting (which itself exists only in Balzac's story), not from a description of what Frenhofer sees, but rather from his explanation of what he *doesn't* see because Porbus failed to execute the painting properly. The critic Roland Barthes has pointed out that an ugly face is easier to describe in concrete detail than a beautiful one, since it is easier to visualize something flawed than something perfect, but Balzac gives the idea a new twist. We derive our image of the painting from a technical analysis of Porbus's failure to use lines and colours properly; the content of the painting, the scene Porbus depicts, is hardly described at all. Frenhofer goes on to correct the painting with a few quick strokes, to the admiration of his audience. Yet, if the explanation of how the painting is constructed becomes the focus of attention, then the public is more likely to question the artist's authority than if it were simply given a finished painting to admire. Trained artists and connoisseurs have of course always argued about technique, but here these matters of

craft are brought out into the open and turned into a discussion about the basis of artistic power. One definition of 'modern' art might be precisely that it accepts, even invites, investigation of the process behind the product, but Balzac is perhaps the first writer to present the issue so explicitly, and with the intention of increasing rather than diminishing our reverence for the artist.

It was only to be expected that Balzac's free way with information and explanation would itself come to be scrutinized. In the last two generations especially, critics have double-checked the accuracy of Balzac's information about the society of his time, debated the persuasiveness of his explanations, and deconstructed the authority with which Balzac offers them. A great writer, it is now generally assumed, must be wary of conclusive answers. For the *nouveau roman* writers of the 1950s and the structuralist critics of the 1960s 'Balzacian' became the label for a literary attitude of over-confident certainty in the truth of artistic representation, an illusion best consigned to the dustbin of discredited ideologies. Roland Barthes's study of *Sarrasine*, published under the enigmatic title *S/Z* (1970), has become a classic of this kind of criticism. The very strength of the argument has prompted more recent critics to push back against it, and it is now agreed that in some ways Balzac is a less assertive writer than may appear at first sight. A categorical pronouncement he makes in one place is often contradicted by another one offered elsewhere, a clash of perspectives of which the author was well aware as he juxtaposed them in the collected works he called *La Comédie humaine*.

Yet, one should beware of turning Balzac too quickly into the postmodern ironist he is not. If his fiction is less tidy in its resolutions than he sometimes boasts, it is not because Balzac finds himself unable to provide a solution to the questions he raises. In a fictional *œuvre* as ambitious as the (unfinished) *Comédie humaine* some loose ends will never be tied up, simply for lack of time and space. It is more faithful to Balzac to think of him as someone determined to provide the reader with answers, but to recognize that information and explanation are not the only kinds of answer he offers. Alongside what might be called the provisional mysteries of how and why something happens, there is also the deeper,

more enduring mystery 'that' something just is. Here, the answer takes the form not of information or explanation, but of an invitation to receptive contemplation. A novel such as *Eugénie Grandet*, rich in explanatory detail at the start, ends with such an invitation: to see the heroine as the person she has become, in a manner that leaves off searching for further knowledge, not because we have no further questions about her past or future, but rather because those questions gradually lose their point as we allow ourselves simply to take in the picture of the woman with which Balzac leaves us. After reading a novel like this one, we understand how Henry James, who at first sight appears so much more preoccupied with literary aesthetics than Balzac, could speak of an 'inscrutable perfection' in his predecessor that transcends the mass of all-too-scrutable details.

One should not, however, exaggerate Balzac's idealism. In other novels, *Père Goriot* being a good example, this kind of contemplation is dramatized within the story as only a moment within the life of a hero who quickly returns to more practical concerns. As he contemplates the dying Goriot, the young Rastignac is so deeply impressed by the spectacle of the old man who has foolishly but unstintingly sacrificed everything for his children that for a moment he sets his self-interest aside. Yet, although Rastignac is forced to recognize the mixed nature of his own motives, his eagerness to put the answers to his questions about Goriot's daughters to practical use is ultimately unaffected. What he discovers gives him pause, but it does not reach the core of his identity. The stories in this volume present their heroes with this more radical kind of test, an image of themselves and their desires not so easily integrated among the others that together compose the necessarily plural or divided identity with which the modern self learns more or less comfortably to live. The outcome in each case is different, but it is important to recognize that whatever the result, it cannot easily be judged by reference to an agreed-upon standard of success. One reason why these stories are unsettling is that the severity of the test is not matched by a clear notion of what would constitute a heroic response.

Each of the three stories dramatizes what happens when a

question vital to the erotic and aesthetic desires of the hero (in each case the central character is a man) is answered, not just by information gained or explanation found, but by an object or image which, when finally seen, forces the character to confront a difficult truth about those desires. Not only is the female figure who represents both a sexual and an artistic ideal not who the hero thought she was—a common enough mistake—but the desires themselves suddenly appear in a new, unwelcome light, such that the hero's most cherished image of himself is redrawn. It is the kind of answer that cannot be put to immediate use. First and foremost, it needs to be faced, and the self-contemplation involved is no easy matter. What is particularly intriguing about these stories is the way Balzac embeds this drama within another one. In each case, the central character's quest is an object of discussion by or with other characters, and in different ways the answers revealed about the questing character reveal something in turn about the curiosity of these other characters. Because of their peculiar double structure, which highlights the unexpected existential and moral stakes involved in dealing with discoveries of meaning, these stories may be said to belong to what one critic has called Balzac's 'hermeneutical narratives'.² One should add that this hermeneutical focus extends to the way Balzac structures the reader's relationship to the texts. In contrast to a novel like *Père Goriot*, the stories do not tell us what happens afterwards, when the surviving characters return (if they can) to their normal lives. The author leaves us at the point where the drama of discovery turns back on itself. What readers are supposed to make of what they have learned is an issue Balzac also leaves open.

It is likely that Balzac's narrative strategy in these stories owes something to his experience in journalism. In 1830, after the commercial failure of his historical novel *The Chouans*, Balzac turned to the new weekly and monthly magazines that sprang up just before and just after the July Revolution which toppled the restored Bourbon monarchy and put Louis-Philippe on the throne. For several years, he earned much of his living from the

² Chantal Massol, *Une poétique de l'énigme: le récit herméneutique balzacien* (Geneva: Droz, 2006).

sketches, stories, reviews, and polemical essays he contributed to them. The first two stories in this volume date from this period. *Sarrasine* (1830) appeared in the *Revue de Paris*, a general-interest magazine launched the year before, while *The Unknown Masterpiece* (1831) came out in *L'Artiste*, a weekly paper focused on the arts. Each was published in two instalments. *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* (1834–5) was written when Balzac had achieved some measure of success and was beginning to publish again directly in book form, adding new works to old in an ongoing series of volumes of ‘scenes’ and ‘tales’. As in some of the other new works, however, Balzac incorporated into this longer story a bit of his journalistic writing, a humorous profile of ‘The Little Haberdasher’ (1830), a sketch of a contemporary social ‘type’ he had published in the satirical paper *La Caricature*.

The first decades of the nineteenth century had seen the significant expansion of a reading public eager to keep up with topics of current interest, from the latest trends in art and fashion to the exotic customs discovered in foreign lands—not just those of the ‘Orient’ France was exploring and conquering at this time, but those of the hidden corners of the ever-expanding and diversely stratified metropolis that Paris had become. Clever entrepreneurs such as Émile de Girardin, with whom Balzac was acquainted, attracted subscribers with new magazines designed both to satisfy and to cultivate what today we call the ‘aspirational’ desires of cultural consumers. These were not yet the cheap mass-circulation newspapers of the 1840s, in which Balzac, like Eugène Sue and Victor Hugo, would publish long novels in serial form. The production techniques for these were not yet in place. Rather, these smaller publications of 1830 aimed at various ‘niche’ markets, and sought to give their relatively prosperous readers a flattering sense of being ‘in the know’. Their contributors, including Balzac, tackled such topics as the unwritten and supposedly mysterious rules of behaviour that marked one as belonging to, or a suitable candidate for, a prestigious elite group, or labelled one unwittingly as an illustration of a particular social type. In these articles the boundary between investigation and imagination is often hard to draw, just as it would be difficult to determine to

what extent readers were seeking practical information or merely a model for the witty conversation that itself constituted an asset in Paris society. The fact that Restoration censorship did not allow for explicitly political debate in these papers presented an additional occasion for writers to display their ingenuity by forcing them to find clever ways to elude a constraint they could not openly challenge, just as they needed to find a balance between conforming to the expectations of the paper's subscribers and providing them with the surprise revelations they also craved. Balzac, for one, made no secret of his discomfort with a creative servitude he felt all the more keenly because of the contrast with his own ideal of the unfettered artist inspiring the people to think great thoughts. At the very least, he could make his readers aware of how conscious he was of their curiosity, thereby infusing his writing with a further dimension of knowing irony, an irony directed at the author as much as at his readers, but which he sometimes turned into an occasion for more biting reflection.

Sarrasine

We see this most clearly in *Sarrasine*, the earliest of the stories gathered here. The unnamed narrator is presented as a liminal figure standing on the threshold of a lavish party given by the Lanty family. He has brought with him a young woman who seems not quite to belong in this exalted milieu. Although in the final version published here she is called Madame de Rochefide, the name of a character who appears elsewhere in the *Comédie humaine* (Balzac adopted this device of 'recurring characters' to give his work greater unity and depth), she is identified as a dancer, hardly the occupation of a genuine lady. There is the suggestion that the narrator hopes to gain her favours by offering her a glimpse of high society and initiating her into some of its secrets. One wonders, though, if the narrator would have volunteered to tell the sexually scandalous story of *Sarrasine* if he had not been provoked into doing so by an unexpected turn of events. After an unsettling encounter with a strange old man who plays a mysteriously important role in the Lantys' family life, the narrator and his companion

take refuge in a room decorated with a painting of Adonis, with which Madame de Rochefide becomes so smitten as to arouse the narrator's jealousy. To break the spell, he will reveal the identity of the person who served as the ultimate model for a figure Madame de Rochefide says is more beautiful than any ordinary man. The narrator can't compete on the level of erotic attractiveness, nor can he paint, but he is in possession of a secret known only to a very few, and he counts on this knowledge to triumph over the competition. What he fails to anticipate, however, is that his revelations will turn against him. Madame de Rochefide will find in them an unwelcome answer about her effort to legitimize the fulfilment of sexual desire by attaching it to a transcendent ideal that lifts it above the level of material transaction.

The disconcerting effect of this framing narrative echoes that of the events the narrator goes on to relate, and which took place in the mid-eighteenth century, that is, in a pre-revolutionary past recent enough to lie within living memory yet psychologically remote. An impetuous young sculptor named Sarrasine leaves Paris for Rome in order to complete his artistic education. For reasons Balzac only hints at, Sarrasine's teacher has kept him in the dark about some of 'the realities of life', notably about what kind of singers at that time played the female operatic roles in the Papal States. Yet Sarrasine's failure to take the many hints given him by the diva known as La Zambinella, with whom he becomes infatuated, suggests a stubborn insistence stemming from something more complicated than simple naivety. In a story actually written in the eighteenth century (the autobiography of Casanova, for example, which Balzac may have used as a source), the hero's eventual discovery that 'she' is really a castrato would have been the occasion for a comic or rueful comeuppance, or for a display of compassionate sensibility. Sarrasine, however, is neither a picaresque hero nor an enlightened man of feeling. His reaction is rage, a rage that is directed more against himself than at anyone else, and at his artistic just as much as at his masculine identity. The 'truth' about the beauty he has captured in his sculpture of Zambinella, the iconographic source of the painting contemplated by Madame de Rochefide, appears to undermine the integrity of

the artwork as much as it exposes an unacknowledged dimension of the artist's desires.

The revelations Balzac so complexly orchestrates in *Sarrasine* certainly reflect a general mood of disenchantment with literary idealism, as well as his resentment at having to cater to the prurient yet jaded curiosity of magazine readers. But they do more than make a point about the writer's powerlessness and prostitution in the cultural marketplace. The lurid excess of the drama combined with the inarticulateness of the characters' reaction to it point to a deeper unease, one which can be illustrated but not explained. In this respect, *Sarrasine* belongs to a tradition of French Romantic fictions about men suffering from a disturbance in the conventional pattern of erotic and gender relations. In Chateaubriand's *René* (1802), the hero's life is blasted by the revelation of his sister's incestuous love for him. The hero of Stendhal's *Armance* (1827) refuses to marry the woman of the title because of an impediment that is never revealed in the novel itself. In a letter he wrote to his friend and fellow author Prosper Mérimée, Stendhal claimed the problem is impotence, the subject of the unpublished novel which inspired him, Madame de Duras's *Olivier*, but it has been argued on textual and other evidence that homosexuality is also a possible explanation. The most immediate influence on *Sarrasine*, however, was Henri de Latouche's *Fragoletta, or Naples in 1799* (1829), which Balzac reviewed upon publication as a favour to an author who was also a literary friend. Like *Sarrasine*, Latouche's hero is a Frenchman in Italy, in this case an officer of the revolutionary army fighting on behalf of the short-lived Neapolitan republic, who falls in love with a tomboyish girl who eludes his pursuit. Back in Paris on leave, he discovers his sister enchanted by Fragoletta's delicately handsome brother, who likewise flees when the subject of marriage is broached. Early in the book the hero is taken to see a Roman statue of a hermaphrodite in a Naples museum (the description fits the Borghese hermaphrodite purchased by Napoleon in 1807 and exhibited in the Louvre). The end of the novel reveals, though in discreetly veiled terms, that Fragoletta is such an in-between creature, admired in art as combining the beauty of both sexes, yet prevented in life from

enjoying full sexual partnership with either man or woman. As in *Sarrasine*, the tension between artistic fullness and sexual lack is also illustrated by the figure of the castrato singer. We are told that a sign on a Naples building advertises that castrati singers are produced there. Although many French readers would be able to understand the Italian phrase in the text, Latouche offers a translation in a footnote, taking the opportunity, however, to change 'castrated' to 'perfected'.

Latouche's irony is connected to the political events of the novel. The sign is being repainted as a corrupt and despotic monarchy is returning in triumph to Naples, and as Napoleon's *coup d'état* draws the curtain on a French republic already weakened by the feckless leaders of the Directory. Latouche's republicanism was not shared by Chateaubriand or Stendhal, or by Balzac, who at the time he wrote *Sarrasine* was moving from a youthful liberalism similar to Stendhal's to an allegiance to the exiled Bourbon monarchy as idiosyncratic in its way as that of Chateaubriand. Yet, common to all these writers is a sensitivity to the emotional turmoil caused by the dislocations of political and moral order that began with the Revolution and the execution of the king, the symbolic father of the nation, and continued through further violent changes of regime and ideology: the militaristic virility of Napoleon's empire, the reactionary efforts of the Bourbons to restore the prestige of throne, altar, and age, and the complacently bourgeois monarchy of Louis-Philippe, with his cloying image as the model family man. For sensitive young men especially, these changes seem to have affected the most intimate dimensions of personal identity, such as the integrity of bodily self-image and sexual difference, and the deep cultural taboos that underpin that identity by demarcating familial bonds from those of marriage and other sexual, emotional, and social relationships. That the connections were more intuited than explained is understandable, since such disturbances do not lend themselves to clear theoretical understanding on the part of those who experience them. The kind of 'answer' *Sarrasine* offers seems designed to make one wonder how the question might rightly be phrased. One might call it a symptomatic fiction.

One further feature of *Sarrasine* is worth remarking, and may serve as a transition to the next two stories. This is Balzac's ambivalent presentation of the various father-figures in the story: Sarrasine's biological father, the Jesuits, and the painter Bouchardon. None of them is entirely bad; indeed, they are all quite indulgent in various ways, at times surprisingly so, given the turbulence of Sarrasine's character. Their authority is not really disputed, yet the young sculptor does not find in any of them the guidance he really needs. There is a failure in the transmission of a crucial structuring viewpoint, one that would enable Sarrasine, by working through or against it, to define himself clearly in relation to the world and his own desires. What that something is is not defined, but its absence seems to be related to the violent but obscure disorder in Sarrasine's character that drives his first mistress away, as if it were something she, as a woman of Sarrasine's own generation, could not remedy. (It is noteworthy that the crucial relationship of Balzac's own early manhood was with a considerably older woman, Madame de Berny, who was both his lover and a substitute mother, and that with the gruesome exception of Paquita's mother in *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*, maternal figures are notably absent from all three of the stories here.) When confronted with full knowledge of the 'realities of life', Sarrasine is unable to handle it. A father-figure's failure to transmit identity-structuring guidance to the younger man, a failure manifested in the latter's morally and aesthetically polarized conceptions of womanhood, is also found in *The Unknown Masterpiece* and *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*, but in a more elaborated, reflective form that suggests that if Balzac has not found a resolving insight, he has at least gained some perspective on the problem.

In these stories the disruption of genealogical and gender structures that in *Sarrasine* short-circuits the narrator's communication of desire and triggers in his listeners an inchoate and melancholy pensiveness becomes the starting-point for a less paralysing contemplation of unconventional forms of desire. Enabling this exploration is Balzac's belief in the process of aesthetic reflection, modelled not by ordinary father-figures but by artists devoted to the authority of art itself, as an alternative means of structuring

the identity of the self and integrating its chaotic and conflicting desires into a larger whole. This shift in perspective is already apparent in *A Passion in the Desert*, a short tale Balzac published the same year as *Sarrasine*. A soldier on campaign in Egypt with Napoleon meets a female panther in a cave. A strange intimacy develops between them—one might even call it an affair, given the sexual overtones of the narrative. As in *Sarrasine*, the relationship ends in violence, but when the soldier tells his story, many years later, to a woman he meets at the zoo, his tone is more wistful than seductive, for his desire is transformed into a painterly appreciation of the desert landscape that was the setting for his experience. The rhetoric of sublimity into which the disquieting elements of the tale are absorbed may sound hackneyed to the sceptical reader, but through it Balzac is sincerely reaching for some kind of aesthetic transcendence.

The Unknown Masterpiece

The Unknown Masterpiece offers both a more explicit and extreme example of the aesthetic redemption of questionable desires by art, and a sharp critique of such attempts. Again we find two connected plots, and as the story was revised over several different versions, Balzac seems to have hesitated as to which should serve as a frame for the other. At the centre of the tale is Nicolas Poussin, one of the great artists of seventeenth-century French classicism, portrayed here at the start of his career. Newly arrived in Paris, he encounters two older artists: François Porbus, a real painter associated with the court of Henri IV and Marie de Medici, and an invented character named Frenhofer (no first name is given), whose career is said to have begun well back into the sixteenth century as the pupil of Jan Mabuse (d. 1532). The historical setting provides Balzac with a convenient way of treating the long-standing debate over the relative priority of line and colour in painting, which in the Italian Renaissance had opposed the painters of Florence and Rome to those of Venice, and which had been revived in new form in French Romanticism in the quarrel between the partisans of Ingres and Delacroix. As the dedication of *The*

Girl with the Golden Eyes to Delacroix indicates, not to mention the frequent use of ‘red’, ‘yellow’, and ‘white’ in the story, Balzac leant toward colour, but he was even more interested in the possibility of transcending this opposition in a higher, more totalizing conception of art, and the development of this concern is reflected in the composition history of *The Unknown Masterpiece*. The information about Mabuse, Porbus, and Poussin in the 1831 magazine version of the story is drawn almost entirely from accounts of the painters’ lives in Michaud’s *Biographie universelle*, a widely distributed reference work of the day.³ Frenhofer’s detailed critique of Porbus’s painting was added in 1837, by which time Balzac had become personally acquainted with leading members of the Paris art world and had gained a greater familiarity with its technical vocabulary. At the same time, this display of critical mastery will make Frenhofer’s fate appear all the more poignant. If *his* reach exceeds his grasp, then what chance do others have? Unless, that is, Balzac is saying that the writer can succeed where painters have failed.⁴

In addition to providing Balzac with art-historical perspective, his decision to set the story in an earlier period of French culture had other advantages. One was to insert his tale into a broader current of reflection among painters of the Restoration period about the past as at once a source of renewed inspiration and an obstacle to it. This reflection on their historical condition was also a way for artists to think about their relationship to reality in general. They realized they had to define themselves in opposition to reality in order to achieve the creative independence they needed to represent it. One product of the ironic perspective to which such reflections led offers a particularly interesting analogue to Balzac’s preoccupations in *The Unknown Masterpiece*. Ingres’s *Raphael and La Fornarina* (1814) depicts the artist Balzac admired above any other sitting in his studio with his mistress Margherita Luti on his lap (she was called ‘La Fornarina’ because she was a

³ See Adrien Goetz, ‘Frenhofer et les maîtres d’autrefois’, *L’Année balzacienne*, NS 15 (1994), 69–89.

⁴ This is the case argued by Alexandra Wettlaufer in *Pen vs. Paintbrush: Girodet, Balzac, and the Myth of Pygmalion in Postrevolutionary France* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).