

Old Goriot: Honore' de Balzac

## Questions for oral presentations:

- 1) Discuss the character of "Père Goriot" as a modern Lear.
- 2) Discuss the progression of Eugene de Rastignac's moral journey, as a result of his relationship with "Old" Goriot and his daughters.
- 3) Discuss the role of the society woman. What is the exact nature of the marriage contract established by aristocratic society?
- 4) Vautrin is often described by Balzac as another "Mephistopheles," setting out to tempt an unsuspecting "Faust" (Eugène), discuss the parallels, and the obvious contrast. How close does Eugène come to his soul's damnation?
- 5) Consider the idea of retribution, discuss in particular the manner in which Goriot acquired his wealth, and how he used it and for what purpose. Was his single-minded indulgence of his daughters bound to have the consequences they did?
- 6) Analyze and comment upon the Viscountess de Beauséant's cynical and ruthless advice to Eugène, p. 103-104. Eugène is both idealistic and struggling - he is being taught a lesson about the world he desires to inhabit. What is the lesson he learns, and how does he react to the instruction?
- 7) Balzac closes the novel by telling us that Eugène had declared war upon the "beautiful" society of the Fanberg-St. Germain. What will be the nature of this "battle", what "arms" and "weapons" will be used, and why does the declaration and challenge begin with Madame de Nucingen?