

= Ewelina Hańska =

Eveline Hańska ( Ewelina , née Rzewuska , 6 January c . 1805 ? 11 April 1882 ) was a Polish noblewoman best known for her marriage to French novelist Honoré de Balzac . Born at the Wierzchnia estate in Volhynia , ( now Ukraine ) Hańska married landowner Wacław Hański ( Wenceslas Hanski ) when she was a teenager . Hański , who was about 20 years her senior , suffered from depression . They had five children , but only a daughter , Anna , survived .

In the late 1820s , Hańska began reading Balzac 's novels , and in 1832 , she sent him an anonymous letter . This began a decades @-@ long correspondence in which Hańska and Balzac expressed a deep mutual affection . In 1832 , they met for the first time , in Switzerland . Soon afterward he began writing the novel *Séraphita* , which includes a character based on Hańska .

After her husband died in 1841 , a series of complications obstructed Hańska 's marriage to Balzac . Chief of these was the estate and her daughter Anna 's inheritance , both of which might be threatened if she married him . Anna married a Polish count , easing some of the pressure . About the same time , Hańska gave Balzac the idea for his 1844 novel *Modeste Mignon* . In 1850 they married and moved to Paris , but he died five months later . Though she never remarried , she took several lovers , and died in 1882 .

= = Biography = =

= = = Family and early life = = =

Hańska was the fourth of seven children born to Adam Wawrzyniec Rzewuski and his wife , Justyna Rzewuska ( née Rdułowska ) . Their family was established as Polish nobility , known for wealth and military prowess . One ancestor had imprisoned his own mother in a tower to extract his part of an inheritance . Hańska 's great @-@ grandfather , Wacław Rzewuski , was a famous writer and Grand Crown Hetman . When the Russian Empire gained control of lands owned by the family through the Partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century , Rzewuski swore his allegiance to Catherine II . He was rewarded with a comfortable position in the ranks of the empire . Moving between assignments in Kiev , St. Petersburg , and elsewhere , he chose as his primary residence the village of Pohrebyszcze in the region of Volhynia .

She was born in the Pohrebyszcze castle , in the Kiev Governorate of Russian partition of Poland . Although scholars agree that Hańska was born on 6 January , the year is disputed . Her biographers and those of her Balzac offer conflicting evidence of her age , taken from correspondence , family records , and testimonies from descendants . Most estimates range between 1801 and 1806 . Balzac 's biographer Graham Robb writes : " Balzac chose 1806 as her date of birth and he was probably right . " Roger Pierrot 's 1999 biography of Hańska , however , contends that she was born in 1804 . Polish Biographical Dictionary gives 24 December 1805 ( Georgian ) which converts to 5 January 1805 ( Julian ) .

Like her brothers and sisters , Hańska was educated by her parents about family lineage and religion . Her mother was a devout Catholic , but her father also taught the children about Voltairian rationality . The family was secluded in Pohrebyszcze , with only occasional trips away . Once a year , the family visited Kiev for a market gathering , during which Rzewuski sold grain and her mother purchased clothing and supplies for the estate .

Ewelina had three brothers : Adam , Ernest and Henryk , and three sisters : Alina , Karolina ( better known as Karolina Sobańska ) and Paulina . Hańska was closest to her brother Henryk , who later became famous for his work in the genre of Polish folk literature known as *gawęda* . They shared a passion for philosophical discussions , especially related to love and religion . Hańska 's other brothers , Adam and Ernest , both pursued military careers . Hańska 's eldest sister , Karolina , was admired as a child for her beauty , intellect , and musical talent . She later married a man 34 years her senior , a landowner from Podolie named Hieronim Sobański . They separated after two years , and she began a series of passionate affairs with some of her many suitors . These included the

Russian general Ivan Ossipovitch Witt , the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz , and the Russian writer Alexander Pushkin . The Tsar considered her behavior scandalous and declared her dangerously disloyal . As a result , Hańska and the other Rzewuski women were watched carefully by police when they visited the Russian capital of St Petersburg . Hańska 's younger sisters , Alina and Paulina , married early into comfortable upper @-@ class families . Alina married a wealthy landowner from Smilavichy , whose father had gained his fortune by managing property for the Ogiński family . Her nephew Stanisław Moniuszko became a renowned composer . Paulina married a banker from Odessa named Jan Rizni .

= = = Marriage to Hański = = =

In 1819 Eveline married Wacław Hański , a noble who lived nearby at Verhivnya ( Wierzchownia ) . Their marriage was a union of wealthy families , not of passion . His estate covered 21 @, @ 000 acres ( 85 km<sup>2</sup> ) and employed over 3 @, @ 000 serfs , including 300 domestic servants . The manor had been designed by a French architect , and its owner filled it with luxuries from around the world : paintings from galleries in Milan and London , dinnerware from China , and a library of 25 @, @ 000 books in a variety of languages . Hański boasted that none of the furniture was Russian .

Hański was more than twenty years older than Ewelina , who was a teenager at the time of their wedding , and his personality clashed with her youthful vigor . He spent most of the day supervising the grounds , by some accounts with an iron fist . After dinner he was usually too fatigued to spend time with his wife , and retired early . He was generally dour , and lived with a depressed condition that Hańska referred to as " blue devils " . Although she was surrounded by opulence , Hańska found herself dissatisfied with her new life and with her husband 's emotional distance in particular . As one biographer put it : " He loved Eve but he was not deeply in love with her . "

In the first five years of their marriage , Hańska gave birth to five children , four of whom died as infants . The surviving daughter , Anna , was a welcome joy to Hańska , and she trusted her care to a young governess named Henriette Borel who had moved to Wierzchownia from the Swiss town of Neuchâtel .

The estate at Wierzchownia was isolated . Hańska was bored by visits to the court at St. Petersburg , and even more bored by noble guests in her own home . She found nothing in common with the ladies of high society , and longed for the stimulating discussions she had enjoyed with her brother Henryk . She spent her time reading the books her husband imported from faraway lands .

= = = Becoming " The Stranger " = = =

One of the writers who most enchanted Hańska was the French novelist Honoré de Balzac . After laboring in pseudonymous obscurity for ten years , Balzac published *Les Chouans* ( *The Chouans* ) in 1829 . A tale of star @-@ crossed love amidst a royalist uprising in Brittany , it was the first work to which he signed his own name . Hańska was intrigued by the glowing portrayal of the female protagonist , driven by true love to protect the object of her desire . She also enjoyed Balzac 's *Physiologie du mariage* ( *The Physiology of Marriage* ) , also published in 1829 , which heaps satirical scorn on husbands and celebrates the virtue of married women .

When she read his 1831 novel *La Peau de chagrin* ( *The Magic Skin* ) , however , Hańska was appalled by the coarse depiction of Foedora , the so @-@ called " femme sans cœur " ( " woman without a heart " ) . She felt that Balzac had lost the reverence shown in his earlier works , and worried that he had based Foedora on a real woman from his life . Motivated partly by concern , partly by boredom , and partly by a desire to influence the life of a great writer ( as her sister Karolina had done ) , she wrote to Balzac .

On 28 February 1832 Hańska posted a letter from Odessa with no return address . In it , she praised Balzac for his work , but scolded him for the negative portrayal of women in *La Peau de chagrin* . She urged a return to the glowing representations in his earlier novels , and signed enigmatically : " L 'Étrangère " ( " The Stranger " or " The Foreigner " ) . Balzac was intrigued by the letter ; he took out a personal advertisement in the *Gazette de France* indicating his receipt of an

anonymous letter and expressing regret for being unable to reply . She probably never saw this notice .

Ha?ska wrote to Balzac several times during 1832 . On 7 November she posted a seven @-@ page letter filled with praise and flattery :

Your soul embraces centuries , Monsieur ; its philosophical concepts appear to be the fruit of long study matured by time ; yet I am told that you are still young . I would like to know you , but feel that I have no need to do so . I know you through my own spiritual instinct ; I picture you in my own way and feel that were I to set eyes upon you I should exclaim , ' That is he ! ' Your outward semblance probably does not reveal your brilliant imagination ; you have to be moved , the sacred fire of genius has to be lit , if you are to show yourself as you really are , and you are what I feel you to be ? a man superior in his knowledge of the human heart .

She insisted , however , that they could never meet , and indeed that he should never know her name : ( " For you I am The Stranger , and shall remain so all my life . " ) Still , she wished for him to write back , so she advised him to place a notice in La Quotidienne to " L 'É " from " H.B. " . He purchased a notice similar to the earlier one in the Gazette , and signed it according to her instructions .

In her next letter Ha?ska made arrangements for a trusted courier to collect letters from Balzac , and thereby allow for a direct correspondence . Before long she sent him the news that she and her husband would be traveling Europe , and visiting Vienna , Hanski 's childhood home . They would also travel to the Swiss village of Neuchâtel , to visit the family of her daughter 's governess . Contradicting her vow of eternal anonymity , she suggested a meeting . Balzac agreed immediately , and began to make preparations for the journey . Also , sometime in 1833 , Balzac wrote his first confession of love to her , despite being at that time in another relationship .

= = = Meeting Balzac = = =

In September 1833 , after traveling to the French village of Besançon to find cheap paper for a publishing enterprise , Balzac crossed into Switzerland and registered at the Hôtel du Faucon under the name Marquis d 'Entragues . He sent word to Ha?ska that he would visit the garden of the Maison Andrié , where she and her family were staying . He looked up and saw her face at the window , then ? as he described it later ? he " lost all bodily sensation " . They met later that day ( September 25 ) at a spot overlooking Lake Neuchâtel ; according to legend , he noticed a woman reading one of his books . He was overwhelmed with her beauty , and she wrote soon afterwards to her brother , describing Balzac as " cheerful and lovable just like you " .

Ha?ska and Balzac met several times over the next five days , and her husband became enchanted with Balzac as well , inviting him to meals with the family . During a trip to Lake Biel , Ha?ski went to arrange lunch , leaving his wife and Balzac alone . In the shade of a large oak tree , they kissed and exchanged vows of patience and fidelity . She told him of the family 's plan to visit Geneva for Christmas ; Balzac agreed to visit before the end of the year . Before he left Nauchâtel , she sent a passionate letter to his hotel : " Villain ! Did you not see in my eyes all that I longed for ? But have no fear , I felt all the desire that a woman in love seeks to provoke " .

Arriving in Geneva on December 26 , the Christmas Eve , Balzac stayed at the Auberge de l 'Arc , near the Maison Mirabaud where the Ha?ski family had settled for the season . She left a ring for him at the hotel , with a note asking for a new promise of love . He gave it , and described how he began wearing the ring on his left hand , " with which I hold my paper , so that the thought of you clasps me tight . " At this time he began working on a philosophical novel , Séraphîta , about a hermaphroditic angel united by the love of a mortal man for a compassionate and sensual woman . Balzac explained that she was his model for the latter . It was clear to all that Ha?ski was in ill health , and Ha?ska began to think about her future with the French author . In the meantime , she asked Balzac to begin collecting for her autographs of the famous people he spent time with in Paris and elsewhere .

After leaving Geneva on 8 February , the Ha?ski family spent several months visiting the major cities of Italy . In Florence the sculptor Lorenzo Bartolini started work on a bust of Ha?ska . In the

summer of 1834 they returned to Vienna , where they would stay for another year . During this time Balzac continued writing to Ha?ska , and by accident two especially amorous letters fell into the hands of her husband . He wrote to the French author , furious , and demanded an explanation . Balzac wrote to Ha?ski claiming that it was nothing more than a game : " One evening , in jest , she said to me that she would like to know what a love @-@ letter was . This was said wholly without meaning .... I wrote those two unfortunate letters to Vienna , supposing that she remembered our joke .... " Ha?ski apparently accepted the explanation , and invited Balzac to visit them in Vienna , which he did in May 1835 .

Balzac 's biographers agree that , despite his vows of loyalty to Ha?ska , he conducted affairs with several women during the 1830s , and may have fathered children with two of them . One was an Englishwoman named Sarah who had married the Count Emilio Guidoboni @-@ Visconti . Ha?ska wrote to Balzac about these rumors in 1836 , and he flatly denied them . Her suspicion was raised again , however , when he later dedicated his novel *Béatrix* to " Sarah " . Balzac also corresponded with Ha?ski ; while most of their family disapproved of Balzac , Ha?ski respected him , and the two exchanged letters on literature and agronomy . Meanwhile , Ha?ska was experiencing a renewal of religious interest , partly because her daughter 's governess , Henriette Borel , left to join a nunnery in Paris . Ha?ska taught her daughter Anna from the works of Christian scholars including Jean Baptiste Massillon and St. François de Sales . Her religious interest was more towards mysticism than mainstream religions ; she corresponded with Baroness Barbara von Krüdener , and read on Rosicrucianism , Martinism and Swedenborgianism . Balzac treated this attack of devotion with the sharpest disapproval . When Balzac sent her works in progress , her only replies were moral queries , rather than the stylistic criticism for which he hoped .

= = = Ha?ski 's death = = =

Ha?ski died in November 1841 . She sent Balzac a letter , sealed in black , with the news . He instantly wrote back : " je n 'en aurais peut @-@ être pas voulu recevoir d 'autre de vous , malgré ce que vous me dites de triste sur vous et votre santé " ( " I could not perhaps wish to have received any other [ news ] from you , in spite of the sad things you tell me about yourself and your health " ) . He made plans to visit Dresden in May , and obtain a visa to visit her in Russia .

The future , however , was not as simple as Balzac wanted to believe . Ha?ska 's family did not approve of the French author ; her Aunt Rozalia was especially disdainful . To make matters worse , her late husband 's uncle protested the Ha?ski 's will in which she had inherited Ha?ski 's estate . Horrified that her daughter would be robbed of everything , Ha?ska insisted that she must end her relationship with Balzac . " You are free " , she wrote to him . As she made plans to protest the uncle 's interference in St. Petersburg , Balzac wrote back to offer his help . He suggested that he could become a Russian citizen and " go to the Czar myself and ask him to sanction our marriage " . She asked for his patience , which he offered anew .

Soon after she arrived in the Russian capital of St. Petersburg , in order to resolve some of the litigation issues surrounding her inheritance , she took Anna to a recital by the Hungarian composer and pianist Franz Liszt . Although she did not succumb to Lisztomania , she was impressed by his musical talent and his good looks . " He is an extraordinary mixture " , she wrote in her diary , " and I enjoy studying him . " They saw one another on several occasions , but she ultimately rejected his advances . One biographer says that their last meeting " gives striking evidence of her loyalty to Balzac " .

In late July 1843 Balzac visited her in St. Petersburg , the first time they had seen one another in eight years . He was struck by Ha?ska 's resilient beauty , but his condition had deteriorated over the years . Biographers agree that she was much less physically attracted to him at this time . Still they renewed their vows of love and planned to marry as soon as she won her lawsuit . In early October he returned to Paris . Soon afterwards , she wrote a story based on her own experience writing to Balzac for the first time . Unhappy with it , she threw it into the fire , but the French author begged her to rewrite it so he could adapt it . He assured her that she would " know something of the joys of authorship when you see how much of your elegant and delightful writing I have

preserved " . Her story became *Modeste Mignon* , Balzac 's 1844 novel about a young woman who writes to her favorite poet .

Also in 1844 Ha?ska won her lawsuit . The wealth of her late husband 's estate would go to Anna , who had become engaged to a Polish Count , Jerzy Mnischek . They planned to marry in 1846 , after which time Ha?ska would bestow the inheritance . Thus Ha?ska 's marriage to Balzac would have to wait . In the meantime , two urgent problems began to complicate their plans . One was his health , which had been deteriorating for years . In October 1843 he wrote to her about " horrible suffering which has its seat nowhere ; which cannot be described ; which attacks both heart and brain " . Balzac 's other problem was financial : despite his illness , he could not afford to relax his work schedule , since he owed more than 200 @,@ 000 francs to various creditors .

= = = Second marriage and widowhood = = =

Ha?ska and Balzac were determined , however , and in 1845 she visited him in Paris with Anna and Jerzy . In April of the following year they visited Italy ; Balzac joined them for a tour of Rome , and they proceeded to Geneva . Soon after he returned to Paris , she wrote with the news that she was pregnant . Balzac was overjoyed , certain that they would have a boy , and insisting on the name Victor @-@ Honoré . The thought of having a son , he wrote , " stirs my heart and makes me write page upon page " . To avoid scandal , he would have to marry Ha?ska in secret , to hide the fact that their child was conceived out of wedlock . In the meantime , Anna married Jerzy Mnischek on 13 October in Wiesbaden . Balzac served as a witness and wrote an announcement for the Paris newspapers , which offended Ha?ska 's sister Alina .

Ha?ska , living for a time in Dresden , was not soothed , either , by Balzac 's disregard for financial stability . For years he had planned to buy a house for them to share , but in August 1846 she sent him a stern admonition . Until his debts were paid , she wrote , " we must postpone buying any property " . One month later he purchased a house on the Rue Fortunée for 50 @,@ 000 francs . Having collected finery from his many travels , he searched across Europe for items to properly complete the furnishings : carpets from Smyrna , embroidered pillowcases from Germany , and a handle for the lavatory chain crafted from Bohemian glass .

In November , Ha?ska suffered a miscarriage ; she wrote to Balzac with the tragic news . He wanted to visit her , but Anna wrote asking him to remain in Paris . The emotion involved , she wrote , " would be fatal " . Ha?ska made plans to return to Wierchownia , but Balzac begged her to visit him , which she did in the spring of 1847 . As soon as she was back in Ukraine , however , a new wrinkle unfolded . Ha?ska had long been unhappy with the presence of Balzac 's housekeeper , Louise Breugnot , and he promised to break with her before marrying . He wrote with alarm to Ha?ska explaining that Breugnot had stolen her letters to him and blackmailed the author for 30 @,@ 000 francs . Biographers disagree about truth of this story ; Robb suggests it was " a convincing hysterical performance put on for the benefit of his jealous fiancée " .

Still , Balzac believed that keeping her letters was dangerous and , in a moment of characteristic impulse , threw them into the fire . He described it to her as " the saddest and most frightful day of my life ... I am looking at the ashes as I write to you , and I tremble seeing how little space fifteen years takes up . " On 5 September 1847 he left Paris to join her for the first time in Wierchownia . They spent several happy months together , but financial obligations required his presence in France . The Revolution of 1848 began one week after his return . Back in Wierchownia , Ha?ska lost 80 @,@ 000 francs due to a granary fire , and her time was consumed with three lawsuits . These complications , and Balzac 's constant debt , meant that their finances were unstable , and she hesitated anew at the idea of marriage . In any case , a wedding would be impossible without approval from the Tsar , which he did not grant until spring of 1850 . On 2 July 1849 Russian authorities responding to Balzac request of December 1847 to marry widow Ha?ska stated that he can do so but she cannot keep her lands .

Balzac returned to Wierchownia in October , and immediately fell ill , with heart issues . His condition deteriorated throughout 1849 , and doubts persisted in her mind about their union . Biographers generally agree that Ha?ska was convinced by Balzac 's frail state and endless

devotion . One wrote : " It was charity , as much as love or fame , which finally turned the scale . " Robb indicates that the wedding was " surely an act of compassion on her part " . To avoid rumors and suspicion from the Tsar , Ha?ska transferred ownership of the estate to her daughter . On 14 March 1850 they traveled to Berdychiv and , accompanied by Anna and Jerzy , were married in a small ceremony at the parish church of St. Barbara .

Both Ha?ska and Balzac took ill after the wedding ; she suffered from a severe attack of gout , for which her doctor prescribed an unusual treatment : " Every other day she has to thrust her feet into the body of a sucking @-@ pig which has only just been slit open , because it is necessary that the entrails should be quivering . " She recovered , but he did not . They returned to Paris in late May , and his health improved slightly at the start of summer . By July , however , he was confined to his bed . Ha?ska nursed him constantly , as a stream of visitors ? including the writers Victor Hugo and Henri Murger ? came to pay their respects . When Balzac 's vision started to give out , she began to act as his secretary , helping him with his writing .

In mid @-@ August Balzac succumbed to gangrene and began having fits of delirium . At one point he called out for Horace Bianchon , the fictional doctor he had included in many novels . But he also expressed great worry for Ha?ska , once telling Hugo : " My wife is more intelligent than I , but who will support her in her solitude ? I have accustomed her to so much love . " He died on 18 August 1850 .

As most of Balzac 's biographers point out , Ha?ska was not in the room when he died . Robb says she " must have retired for a moment " , while André Maurois notes that she had been by his side for weeks with no way of knowing how long it would continue , and " there was nothing to be done " . Vincent Cronin attributes her absence to the nature of their relationship : " From the first day by the lakeside at Neuchâtel theirs had been a Romantic love and Eve wanted to guard it to the end against that terrible taint of corruption . "

= = = Later years and death = = =

Ha?ska lived with Balzac 's mother for a time after his death , in the house he had spent so much time and expense furnishing . The elder Mme. Balzac moved in with a friend after several months , and Ha?ska approached the remains of her late husband 's writing . Several works had been left incomplete , and publishers inquired about releasing a final edition of his grand collection *La Comédie humaine* . Ha?ska sponsored new editions of his works and was involved in editing some of them , even adding occasional content . Balzac 's debt , meanwhile , still exceeded 200 @,@ 000 francs , which Ha?ska paid while also providing for his mother 's living expenses . One of her letters at the time gives voice to her frustrations : " In nursing my husband 's incurable malady I ruined my health , just as I have ruined my private fortune in accepting the inheritance of debts and embarrassments which he left me . " Anna and Jerzy moved into a nearby house in Paris .

Despite her obligations , Ha?ska was a beautiful unmarried woman of means living in Paris . The writer Jules Amédée Barbey d 'Aureville described her this way : " Her beauty was imposing and noble , somewhat massive , a little fleshy , but even in stoutness she retained a very lively charm which was spiced with a delightful foreign accent and a striking hint of sensuality . " As she began sorting through Balzac 's papers , she called on his friend , Champfleury , for assistance . As they worked one evening , he complained of a headache . " I 'll make it go away , " she said , and began massaging his forehead . As he wrote later : " There are certain magnetic effluvia , in such situations , of which the effect is that the matter does not stop there . " Her affair with the man twenty years her junior was brief , but it provided a tremendous release to Ha?ska , who had spent decades with older men in various states of ill health . She began partaking of the social life around her . " The night before last I laughed as I have never done before , " she wrote in 1851 . " Oh , how wonderful it is not to know anyone or have to worry about anyone , to have one 's independence , liberty on the mountain @-@ tops , and to be in Paris ! "

Champfleury was intimidated by her vitality and jealousy , and removed himself from her life . On his recommendation , she turned creative control of Balzac 's unfinished novels *Le Député d 'Arcis* and *Les Petits Bourgeois* to another writer , Charles Rabou . Rabou added extensively to them and

published both books in 1854 . To soothe the publisher , Hańska falsely claimed that Balzac had chosen Rabou as his literary successor .

Hańska met the painter Jean Gigoux when she hired him in 1851 to paint Anna 's portrait . They began a relationship that lasted many years , but never married . Over the next thirty years , Hańska and particularly her spend @-@ thrift daughter spent the remainder of their fortune on fine clothing and jewelry . Jerzy , meanwhile , succumbed to mental disorders and died in 1881 , leaving behind a trail of debts . Hańska was forced to sell the house , but was allowed to continue living there . She died on 11 April 1882 and was buried in Balzac 's grave at Père Lachaise Cemetery .

= = Influence on Balzac 's works = =

Eveline was an inspiration for many of Balzac 's characters . She can be seen as the model for La Fosseue , Mme Claes , Modesta Mignon , Ursule Mirouet , Adelina Houlot , and especially Eugenie Grandet and Mme de Mortsauf . There is less agreement among scholars on whether she was also the inspiration for more negative characters such as Fedora and lady Dudley , as Balzac seems to have used her mostly as a model for more positive personas . His works also mention numerous characters named Eve or Eveline , and have several dedications to her .

In addition to Eveline , her daughter Anna , sister Alina , aunt Rozalia , first love ( Tadeusz Wyleżyński ) , and several other figures that she introduced Balzac to or told him about , were also incorporated into his works . After they met , Poland , Polish topics , Polish names , and Polish ( Slavic ) mysticism began to appear much more frequently in his works , as exemplified by such characters as Hoene Wroński , Grzianka and General Chodkiewicz .

= = Defenders and detractors = =

Hańska became a controversial figure among the biographers and researchers of Balzac . As Zygmunt Czerny notes , the " mysterious Pole " was criticized by some ( Henry Bordeaux , Octave Mirbeau ( La Mort de Balzac ) , Adolf Nowaczyński , Józef Ignacy Kraszewski , Charles Léger and Pierre Descaves ) , and praised by others ( Philippe Bertault , Marcel Bouteron , Barbey d'Aurevilly , Sophie de Korwin @-@ Piotrowska , Tadeusz Boy @-@ ?eleński , Tadeusz Grabowski , Juanita Helm Floyd and André Billy ) . Czerny notes that one of the " greatest experts on Balzac " , Spoelberch de Lovenjoul , referred to her as " one of the best women of the epoch " , and that while there are those who deride her influence on Balzac , and question her feelings and motivations , few deny she had a crucial impact on him , and , for most , the " Great Balzac " emerged only after meeting her in early 1830s . Czerny concludes by saying : " However one could analyze her and their relationship , the impact of her love on Balzac was persistent , all @-@ enveloping and decisive " .