

THE INTERPRETATION OF HUMAN AND MONEY RELATIONS IS
HONORÉ DE BALZAC'S NOVELLA "GOBSECK"

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Abstract: This article analyzes the novella "Gobseck" by the French writer Honoré de Balzac. The work was written in 1830 and was later included in Balzac's large collection of works called "The Human Comedy." The novella tells of the events that befell the old usurer Gobseck and the family of Count de Restaud. The article discusses in detail the history of the work's creation, the development of events, the characters, the writer's artistic style, and the main idea of the work.

Keywords: Honoré de Balzac, "Gobseck", French literature, "The Human Comedy", usurer, the theme of money ,realism, 19th-century literature.

The theme of money is one of the subjects that have interested many writers. This is because money reveals a person's inner world, both their good and bad sides, very clearly. For some people money is a means, while for others it becomes an end in itself. It is precisely this situation that changes a person, shaping their character, family relationships, and even their fate. Honoré de Balzac also turned deeply to this very theme in the novella "Gobseck" The work was written in 1830 and depicts events that took place in Paris during the so-called Restoration period. This was a period in France when the bourgeoisie — that is, merchants and the wealthy class — were growing increasingly powerful in society. For this reason, the question of money and wealth became one of the frequently raised themes in the literature of that time. Balzac reworked this novella several times — this shows how seriously he approached the work. Balzac began work on "Gobseck" at the beginning of 1830. The first part of the novella was published that same February as a separate sketch under the title "The Moneylender" in a journal. A few months later, the work was published in full under the title "The Dangers of Misconduct" and was included in the collection called "Scenes of Private Life." Balzac did not stop there. In 1835, he reworked the novella again, titled it "Father Gobseck," and placed it in the collection "Scenes of Parisian

Life.” Finally, in 1842, when the work was included in the large collection called "The Human Comedy," it received the title “Gobseck,” which we know today. Thus, the work was rewritten several times and published under a new title each time. With each revision, Balzac added new details to the events and deepened the characters' personalities. This speaks to how responsibly Balzac approached his own work. Literary scholars regard this as the writer's striving for artistic perfection.

The work begins with the following events: the novella unfolds through a conversation in the drawing room of a woman named Viscountess de Grandlieu. The viscountess tells her seventeen-year-old daughter Camille about Count Ernest de Restaud. She warns her daughter that the young man's mother came from a lower class and was known for her extravagance, and that for this reason marrying this young man would not be appropriate. A family friend, the lawyer Derville, joins this conversation and wants to explain the situation properly. He recalls his student years and tells the story of how he came to know his neighbor at the time, the old usurer Gobseck. In this way, the reader hears, through Derville's narration, a second story — the story of Gobseck. Here Balzac employs the technique of a “story within a story.” The first story is the events in the viscountess's salon; the second story is the history of Gobseck and the de Restaud family as told by Derville. The two stories intertwine and ultimately merge into a single unified plot. The work was originally divided into three parts: “The Usurer,” “The Lawyer,” and “The Death of the Husband.” Each part shows a different stage of the events — first Gobseck's character is introduced, then Derville's activity as a lawyer is shown, and finally the death of Count de Restaud and the events that follow are narrated. At this point, a question arises: who was Gobseck, in fact? Jean-Esther van Gobseck is the protagonist and the most complex figure of the work. In appearance he is somewhat strange: his face is pale and motionless — Derville calls it a “moon face”; his eyes are yellow, rat-like; his nose is sharp and long; and his lips are thin. Through this outward appearance, Balzac conveys Gobseck's inner coldness and singularity. But Balzac does not portray him simply as a “bad person.” Gobseck is depicted as a complex individual with his own distinct way of thinking. For him, money is not simply wealth. Through money he gains a hidden power over other people. He lends money, but shows mercy to no one — whether the borrower is rich or poor, he treats them all with the same coldness. At the same time, Gobseck considers himself, in his own way, “honest” and “just” — he deceives no one; he merely sets very strict conditions. For example, when he learns that Count de Trailles, who owes him three hundred thousand francs, has nothing in his pocket, he refuses to lend him money. This shows that, by his own logic,

Gobseck is calculating, precise, and impartial. Literary scholars consider Gobseck not simply an “example of a miserly person,” but a living symbol of his era. Some researchers believe that Balzac drew on his own life observations in creating this character, and it is therefore assumed that elements of the author's personal experience are present in the work.

The work contains another important storyline — the history of the de Restaud family. Count de Restaud's wife, Anastasie, is beautiful but spends money recklessly and is unfaithful. She is involved with a frivolous young man named Maxime de Trailles, who does not value money, and over the years she squanders the family's wealth. One day Anastasie pawns her expensive diamond jewelry to Gobseck in exchange for money. When the count learns of this, he demands that Gobseck return the jewelry, since his wife had no right to dispose of it. However, Gobseck takes advantage of the situation and advises the count to transfer his entire estate to him (Gobseck) upon his death, so that his wife would not be able to manage and squander the money further. Before his death, the count gives his son Ernest a special sealed letter and asks him to drop it secretly into a mailbox without his mother's knowledge. In this way, he tries to preserve his estate for his children. After the count's death, Gobseck and Derville arrive at the house and witness a terrible scene: Anastasie, searching for the will, has turned the entire house upside down, not even stopping by her husband's corpse. In her panic, she throws important documents belonging to Derville into the fire — an act that ultimately deprives her own young children of their inheritance. As a result, the entire estate passes into Gobseck's hands. Through this episode, Balzac vividly and powerfully shows how greed and fear can drive a person to make terribly wrong decisions. Balzac is regarded as one of the major representatives of French realism. Realism is a method of depicting life, people, and events as close to reality as possible. In “Gobseck” too, Balzac portrays the real life of his era and the characters of people with great precision and credibility. There is an important feature of Balzac's writing style — he uses small but significant details in depicting his characters. For example, through Gobseck's face, his eyes, and the appearance of his room, the writer makes the reader feel his entire character. This technique is called “artistic detail” and is one of the most important features of Balzac's work. Balzac also strives to portray his characters not as ordinary, everyday people, but as individuals with their own distinct, singular character. Gobseck and Anastasie are each unique, unforgettable figures. The main idea of the work can be assessed as follows: the central theme of the novella “Gobseck” is the question of money's influence on a person. But here Balzac emphasizes an important point: money itself is not to blame, because

money is merely a conventional thing, a means, created by people themselves. What matters is in whose hands the money lies and for what purpose it is used. The work presents two opposite, equally wrong attitudes: Gobseck's calculating, cold miserliness, and Anastasie's careless, wasteful spending. Both are two sides of the same vice, and both lead a person to misfortune. There is yet another important conflict in the work — the struggle between feeling and reason. Anastasie gives in to her emotions and forgets to think rationally. Gobseck, on the contrary, relies solely on reason and calculation and completely rejects feeling. Through this, Balzac shows that neither path leads a person to true happiness.

Honoré de Balzac's novella "Gobseck" depicts the relationship between money and humanity in a deep and precise manner. Through the character of Gobseck, the writer convincingly shows how money can change a person, leaving them lonely and cold. Through the history of the de Restaud family, we see the harmful consequences that come from wasteful spending and greed. In this work, Balzac places the blame not on money itself, but on a person's attitude toward money. It is precisely this idea that distinguishes the work from other works on similar themes and gives it deep meaning. Although many years have passed since the work was written, it has not lost its relevance, because the problem of the relationship between money and humanity remains pressing in every era and every society. For this reason, "Gobseck" remains one of the works still read and studied by many readers and researchers today.

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