I would like to thank three research assistants who were doctoral students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Juliette Dade helped with translations and became proficient at rendering Balzac (and sometimes Mortimer) into English. In addition, she tracked down references and typed up my illegible handwritten notes from pre-computer days. Ingrid Ilinca contributed speedy and thorough background research on several topics. Leila Ennaïli brought her intelligence and fine mind to a reading of the manuscript and provided judicious criticisms. All three gave generously of their considerable intellectual gifts, and I am grateful to them for their contributions.

It does not fail to amaze me how valuable teaching Balzac has been, and I have much to acknowledge from the students in all the classes where I have taught Balzac. In particular, let me mention Jordan Stump, who has since translated Balzac’s *L’envers de l’histoire contemporaine* and whose understanding of the opus grew deep and broad; and James Madden, whose excellent reading skills and ability to retain the myriad details of *La Comédie humaine* outshone anyone’s, and to whom the whole class would turn when a point needed remembering and verifying.

Colleagues of the Nineteenth Century French Studies Association heard me deliver papers mostly on Balzac at the annual conferences and gave me the benefit of their reactions. I am grateful for their listening and to the leadership of this organization and the hosts of the annual meetings for affording
me this opportunity to try out my ideas and to pursue them from year to year, I hope without becoming too predictable.

I also thank the members of the Groupe international de recherches balzacienues who invited me to present a paper on voyages in Balzac in 2001 in the suitably Balzacian location of Tours, in particular Paule Pétitier, who hosted the conference, and the GIRB’s chief animator, Nicole Mozet. Similarly, I thank the England-based Society of Dix-Neuviémistes who heard my papers on *La recherche de l’Absolu* and on *Melmoth réconcilié* in 2002 and 2003.

Illinois colleagues Larry Schehr and Andrea Goulet provided helpful comments and always fine, stimulating dialogue. I also thank a good reader and a hearty supporter for many years, Allan Pasco, one of the distinguished American Balzacians, for his valuable and encouraging criticism.

Finally, I cannot omit recognizing the person who started me on this journey through *La Comédie humaine*, Peter Brooks, whose graduate seminar on Balzac at Yale in 1971 opened the vein I have continued to mine for my entire professional career.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has supported my research in the form of travel funding and research assistants. The editors of the journals and the collective volumes in which earlier versions of parts of some chapters were published have allowed me to reuse those materials in this book, and I thank them. And I am grateful to the two anonymous readers of the manuscript for The Ohio State University Press, whose reports provided insightful feedback and helped me improve the manuscript.

A word about translations:
I have translated French quotations for the convenience of the non-Francophone reader, with the hope that the presence of both French and English will not distract either sort of reader. I thank Juliette Dade for her collaboration in the task of translating.

The following articles contained earlier versions of certain parts of this book:


