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The Horlas: Maupassant's Mirror of Self-Reflection

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Edward J. Lusk and Marion Roeske,
"The Horlas: Maupassant's Mirror of Self-Reflection"
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Abstract: In their co-authored paper, "The Horlas: Maupassant's Mirror of Self-Reflection," Edward J. Lusk and Marion Roeske present a comparative analysis of three works of Maupassant: *Lettre d'un fou*, *Le Horla* of 1886, and *Le Horla* of 1887. The authors argue that these works form a trilogy by which Maupassant expresses his struggle to resolve the issues that seem to haunt him during the time that he pens the Horla trilogy. This introspective search is crafted around the failure of a mirror to provide a reflected image and the assessment of the likelihood that the strange events presented in the trilogy are caused either by hallucinations or by a menacing force called Le Horla. Further, to understand the way that Maupassant has developed the story lines as his mirror of self-reflection, Lusk and Roeske examine, in detail, four aspects of Maupassant's life that provide the context for the Horlas: his struggle with syphilis, the relationship he has with Flaubert, the novel of his maternal uncle Alfred Le Poittevin called *Une Promenade de Bélial* and finally, the intense personal relationship of Flaubert and Alfred Le Poittevin.

Edward J. Lusk and Marion Roeske

The Horlas: Maupassant's Mirror of Self-Reflection

During the mid 1880s, Guy de Maupassant published the following three works couched in the fantastic: *Lettre d'un fou* (17 February 1885), *Le Horla* in its first version (26 October 1886), and *Le Horla* in its second version (25 May 1887). We wish to offer the interpretation that these works form a "trilogy" within which Maupassant reflects, in an increasingly frenetic manner, the search for his identity; and further that the evolution of the intensity of this search as displayed over the trilogy is fuelled by his unavoidable decent into the life-ending third stage of syphilis. We will argue that this introspective search is articulated using 1) an increasing number of references first to psychological and then to a combination of psychological and medical indications over the three stories, 2) a mirror which fails to provide an image of the strange creature haunting the protagonist, and 3) hallucinations as a textual *homme de paille* which are used as a reality check for the strange events which form the story line. To examine the way that these stories form Maupassant's mirror of self-reflection and thereby encode his struggle with the many issues with which he is dealing during the time when he pens these stories, we first summarize the essentialities of each of the three stories. We then examine, in some detail, the possible genesis of the trilogy -- genesis in the sense of the complex series of events which start before Maupassant's birth but which seem to form the basis of the introspective catharsis that is the trilogy, and finally we will discuss the development of his search as we find it encoded in the Horla stories.

The first story, *Lettre d'un fou*, opens as the protagonist, who remains nameless in all three stories, comes to a psychiatric hospital desperately seeking help. He addresses one of the attending physicians: "Je vais vous dire franchement mon étrange état d'esprit, et vous apprécierez s'il ne vaudrait pas mieux qu'on prît soin de moi pendant quelque temps dans une maison de santé plutôt que de me laisser en proie aux hallucinations et aux souffrances qui me harcèlent" (37). To give an air of credibility to the bizarre tale that he is about to tell, he first discusses, in some detail, the inherent limitation of the five human senses. He concludes this by noting that there are many things in the universe that one cannot perceive but which nonetheless exist such as: hypnotic sleep and subliminal suggestion, electricity, and magnetism. After this preface, the story begins. He notes that suddenly one day he experienced inexplicable feelings of fear and trepidation. Thereafter, for a number of consecutive nights precisely at 9:22 p.m., he would hear creaking sounds as if someone or something was walking about in his bedchamber. One night while locked in his room which was ablaze with candlelight, he looked at himself in his large dressing mirror and noticed that he had a strange look in his eyes and that his pupils were very dilated. Then at 9:22 p.m. he experienced the following: "je perçus une indescriptible sensation, comme si un fluide, un fluide irrésistible eût pénétré en moi par toutes les parcelles de ma chair, noyant mon âme dans une épouvante atroce et bonne. On y voyait comme en plein jour, et je ne me vis pas dans la glace! Elle était vide, claire, pleine de lumière. Je n'osais pas aller vers elle, sentant bien qu'il était entre nous, lui, l'Invisible, et qu'il me cachait" (42; note that ellipses have been eliminated in the quotations). After this traumatic encounter, he felt compelled to wait for the return of "l'Invisible"; however, it never returned. Instead, what he saw was: "Et, dans cette glace, je commence à voir des images folles, des monstres, des cadavres hideux, toutes sortes de bêtes effroyables, d'être atroces, toutes les visions invraisemblables qui doivent hanter l'esprit des fous" (43). The story finishes with: "Voilà ma confession, mon cher docteur. Dites-moi ce que je dois faire?" (43). The story is signed "Maufrigneuse."

The second story, called *Le Horla*, begins with the presentation by a Dr. Marrande of his patient, the protagonist, to his colleagues at a psychiatric hospital. After being escorted in, he begins by describing himself and his comfortable living situation close to Rouen. He indicates that one autumn he was suddenly taken ill; his physician proscribed a bromide but to no avail. The next night he had the following nightmare: He felt an "épouvantable sensation d'un poids écrasant sur ma poitrine, et

d'une bouche qui mangeait ma vie, sur ma bouche" (47). Then, for no apparent reason, he began to lose weight. This inexplicable weight-loss was also experienced by his coachman. Following a troubling sense of anxiety, a series of strange physical manifestations began to occur: water and milk that he kept by his bedside began to disappear. The next spring while walking in his garden, he noticed a rose mysteriously floating in the air. When he tried to grab it, it vanished. Household things began to break for no apparent reason. Pages of a novel that he was reading began to turn as if by themselves. When he approached the easy chair next to the table where the novel was placed, the chair suddenly flew aside and tumbled over as if someone had bolted from it. He then describes the exact same mirror scene as was presented in the first book, to wit he could not obtain his reflected image. He finishes by noting that three of his neighbours had reported essentially the same strange events. He ascribes these manifestations to an invisible force/person that he names: Le Horla. Then, as in the first book, so as to establish the credibility of his incredible tale, he discusses the inherent limitations of the five human senses. The story concludes with Dr. Marrande's final assessment: "Je ne sais si cet homme est fou ou si nous le sommes tous les deux … ou si … si notre successeur est réellement arrivé" (54).

Rather than a case presentation, the third story, also called *Le Horla*, is presented as the diary of the protagonist. It begins, as does the second book, with a detailed description of his living circumstances close to Rouen, his inexplicable fever and the physician's ineffective remedy. He then reports essentially the same frightening dream. Concerned and anxious, he decides to take some time in the countryside; while there, he feels as if something is tracking him during his strolls in that bucolic setting. To escape these haunting feelings, he sojourns to Mount St. Michel. He returns home in good health and in good spirits. However, very soon after his return, the nightmares return. To escape these feelings of trepidation, he travels to Paris to immerse himself in the festivities of the national celebration of the 14th of July. While there he is privy to a demonstration of the powers of hypnotic sleep and suggestion. He returns home refreshed and renewed; but shortly thereafter the strange physical manifestations reported in the second book and attested to by his neighbours start. He wonders if these events are hallucinations. To collect information on this supposition, he feels that he must go to Rouen. Once there, he secures with great dispatch: "le grand traité du docteur Hermann Herestauss sur les habitants inconnus du monde antique et moderne" (73). He continues his research: "Je viens de lire ceci dans la *Revue du Monde Scientifique*: «Une nouvelle assez curieuse nous arrive de Rio de Janeiro. Une folie, une épidémie de folie, comparable aux démences contagieuses qui atteignirent les peuples d'Europe au Moyen Age, M. le professeur Don Pedro Henriquez, accompagné de plusieurs savants médecins, est parti pour la province de San-Paulo, afin d'étudier sur place les origines et les manifestations de cette surprenante folie" (75-76). With this information, he concludes that in fact an Entity, which he names *Le Horla*, has arrived and the reign of humankind is over. He then prepares himself for an epoch battle against *Le Horla*: "Et alors! ... alors, j'aurais la force des désespérés; j'aurais mes mains, mes genoux, ma poitrine, mon front, mes dents pour l'étrangler, l'écraser, le mordre, le déchirer" (79). Following this commitment to annihilate *Le Horla*, essentially the same mirror episode is presented as in the other two books except this time he feels the creature's menacing touch on his shoulder. He finishes this mirror episode by noting that the entity had escaped -- "il m'échapperait encore" (79). He again then tries to kill *Le Horla* but fails. Weary of the futility, he surmises that the only course left open to him is to commit suicide: "Alors ... alors ... il va donc falloir que je me tue moi!" (82). This ends the story.

These three stories may be compared on four principal literary constructions that provide a way to understand how Maupassant has used them to form, as Bienvenu suggests, an encoding of his psychological struggle and attempt at catharsis (47). The four shared features are: the mirror, "l'inconnu," the lack of an image in the mirror, and hallucinations. The mirror is used as the point of contact with the other dimension -- a dimensional portal of sorts. The mirror for Maupassant is a familiar and often used way to express reflection and introspection in his story lines. For example, in *Bel-Ami, Fini, Monsieur Parent, Au Bois, Fort comme la mort,* and *Notre coeur* a mirror figures as a

central feature in the story development. In the Horla trilogy, the mirror represents the only way that the protagonist may obtain a resolution of the haunting force, "l'inconnu," that is tracking him. The mirror is used to develop the relationship between "l'inconnu" and the hallucinations as follows: if the inexplicable events are not really happening -- i.e., they are the result of hallucinations, then there is really no Horla. However, if the hallucination scenario that is presented in all three stories is rejected, then *Le Horla* is real; but the question rests: What is it exactly? Therefore after hallucinations are dismissed as the likely cause, the inability of the protagonist to obtain an image in the mirror suggests that the protagonist cannot determine what exactly this strange force is and the related question of how to deal with it. And so, as it is aptly put by Dugan "hallucinations are not a flight from reality but a genuine struggle to come closer to it" (173). To understand the comparative development of the stories, the way that Guy's past is encoded in the trilogy, and how these four literary constructions are orchestrated in the trilogy, one must first consider the following: the complex familial relationships among Maupassant's family -- the Maupassants, the Le Poittevins, and the Flauberts, the short story, *Une Promenade de Bélial*, penned by his maternal uncle, Alfred Le Poittevin, the medical plague of the era -- syphilis, and Maupassant's relationships with Flaubert. These aspects are presented in the next five sections.

The inception of the Horla stories seems founded in the highly intertwined familial relationships among the Maupassants, the Le Poittevins and the Flauberts. M. Le Docteur Flaubert, the father of Gustave, is the godfather ("Le Parrain") of Alfred Le Poittevin (born 29 September 1816 in Rouen); in return Gustave Le Poittevin, the father of Alfred, is the godfather of Gustave Flaubert (born 12 December 1821 in Rouen). Alfred will be the maternal uncle of Guy de Maupassant. Gustave Flaubert, hereafter noted as Flaubert, will become Maupassant's principal literary mentor. Both Le Poittevin and Flaubert, who attend the Collège Royal de Rouen, will effect the literary career of Maupassant but in very different ways. Le Poittevin pens a short story published shortly before his death in 1848 which seems to be the formulary for Maupassant's trilogy. On the other hand, Flaubert will play a direct role in Maupassant's life as his mentor -- a role he seems to accept at the urging of his mother Laure Le Poittevin (born 28 September 1821). In a letter to Flaubert, she says: "l'aîné [Maupassant] est un jeune homme, déjà sérieux. Il te rappellera son oncle Alfred, auquel il ressemble sous bien des rapports, et je suis sûre que tu l'aimeras" (16 March 1866: the chronology and correspondence references are taken from the correspondence versions edited by Leclerc). Laure is also the sister of Alfred, close childhood friend of Flaubert and wife of Gustave de Maupassant. Further, according to Douchin, Flaubert and Laure possibly re-connecting in later life as lovers may have had an amorous rendezvous about nine months before the birth of Guy de Maupassant (5 August 1850). This possibility seems to cast doubt on Maupassant's paternal lineage -- a fact that is never proven but which seems to be accepted in the social milieu of Maupassant the writer. The final aspect which binds these families together is the marriage of Alfred to Louise de Maupassant, the sister of Gustave de Maupassant on 6 July 1846. Upon learning of this marriage, Flaubert writes a final letter to Alfred Le Poittevin on 31 May 1848 communicating, in no uncertain terms, his feelings of betrayal. During this span of almost 20 years, many of the 55 authenticated letters exchanged between Le Poittevin and Flaubert are rather explicitly pornographic. Also of interest, about 25 percent of the letters have closings such as: "Aimons-nous bien, Je t'embrasse, Je t'embrasse en te socratisant, Adieu-vieux pédéraste, Je t'embrasse le Priape," and "Je t'aime beaucoup," suggesting, without reaching for a conclusion, a rather intense personal relationship. Let us now examine the role that each of these persons plays in Maupassant's life.

Le Poittevin, probably owing to his untimely death at the age of 31, does not directly effect the literary modernity of the first half of the nineteenth century. However, he makes an "indirect" connection with his short story: *Une Promenade de Bélial,* an early version of the fantastic. Le Poittevin's story opens onto a scene where a newly married couple is sitting in their honey-moon bed chamber; the groom is engrossed in reading *Candide* and the bride, bewildered by this untimely

preoccupation, suddenly notices someone sitting at the foot of the bed. This personage initially is not given a name but is simply referred to as "l'inconnu." Later in the text, he/she, this "person" has, in the past, taken on both genders, is varyingly referred to as -- Bélial, which in French translates into something less menacing than Satan. It is more like the English term Beelzebub -- a more playful rendering of the dark side -- also as "Béel, Le Génie, un des génies," and "Le Diable." This is itself interesting because the specification of a name, in particular a family name, will become an issue for Maupassant. Bélial offers to the couple, who seems ready for an adventure, in particular the bride, the possibility of taking a rather uncommon journey -- "á la découverte en ce qui concerne la nature humaine." To gain the full measure of the richness of the proposed adventure, Bélial suggests that they must be able to observe without being observed -- i.e., they need to be invisible. This is accomplished with the special ring of Gyrès that Bélial gives to the bride rendering the couple invisible. They then set off to study the human nature which is so readily observable in one's daily activities. They are following the exploits of four young persons when Bélial takes out a special mirror. He suggests that because all life is interconnected in time and space that with this all-seeing mirror they may view the lives of these four individuals in the past as well as in the future. This shocking revelation begins the development of the metaphysical part of the story. This development will profoundly influence Maupassant if the way that the three Horlas are organised is any indication.

As the story continues, Bélial discusses the nature of the soul transmigration and selective relocation. "Vous allez dire que Pythagore croyait à la métempsycose, à laquelle ni Madame ni vous ne croyez? Pardonnez-moi, reprit le Duc. J'ai parfois été tenté d'adopter cette philosophie. La matière est dans un éternel mouvement, [les forces se renouvellent sans cesse]" (5-6). Bélial then discusses this idea at length and illustrates it with a number of specifics. For example, Bélial and the Duke begin talking about how the soul effects changes in the nature of living creatures. The Duke says "Aujourd'hui roi, palefrenier demain, cheval peut-être bientôt après" (6). Bélial affirms this with "L'âme ne peut mourir; elle renouvelle le corps qu'elle habite à chaque phase de son existence" (6). He then dicusses the three stages of this formal transmigration from the soul/spirit perspective as follows: "Mais dans sa condition plus haute, il faut encore que l'Esprit reproduise les trois phases que vous connaissez: épris des merveilles inconnues dont La Nature lui fait largesse, d'abord il redeviendra son esclave, puis la niera pour s'en affranchir, et enfin, retournant à elle, l'asservira à son empire" (43). As indicated here there is a natural cycle where "l'Esprit" passes through three phases: from dominated, to breaking out, which suggests aggression, to returning to Nature a dominating force. This spirit migration and the mirror as the enabling agent will again be found in the Horla stories. It is worth noting here that Guy in his correspondence with Flaubert never directly mentions Alfred's novel as a source document for the Horla stories. However, in a letter of 24 June 1873 to Flaubert, Maupassant notes: "mais en causant avec vous il me semblait souvent entendre mon oncle que je n'ai pas connu mais dont vous et ma mère m'avez si souvent parlé et que j'aime comme si j'avais été son camarade ou son fils." Therefore, one may readily suppose that even if Maupassant had not read Le Poittevin's work he was aware of the particularities of *Une Promenade de Bélial* through these conversations because Le Poittevin and Flaubert had actively discussed it.

Another issue for Maupassant seems to be his paternal lineage as indicated by his preoccupation with the theme of illegitimacy. Shortly after the death of Flaubert in 1880, Maupassant turns in a major way to the themes of paternity and name. For example, the first four novels published after the death of Flaubert *Une Vie* (1883), *Bel-Ami* (1885), *Mont Oriol* (1887), and *Pierre et Jean* (1888) treat these themes! Also, the preface to *Pierre et Jean* is dedicated to Flaubert. The setting for the question of Maupassant's paternal lineage is fixed in the relatively troubled marriage of Laure Le Poittevin and Gustave de Maupassant (married 9 November 1846) which lasts about ten years and her life-long friendship with Flaubert -- a womaniser of reputation. Given these preconditions, it is easy to believe the well-reasoned arguments offered by Douchin who concludes his study of Flaubert's paternity with: "Cette étude ... m'a amené à constater en premier lieu que rien ne pouvait s'opposer, de façon

décisive et indiscutable, à la thèse da la paternité de Flaubert. Preuve *négative*. Il me fallait alors produire des preuves *positives*. Je pense y être parvenu" (292). Although this paternity question will be a part of the rumour mill of the salon scene of the period, Maupassant was strangely silent about the gossip circulating about his paternal lineage. For example, according to Douchin, "Quand Henri Fouquier affirma que Flaubert était le père de Maupassant, celui-ci ne réagit aucunement. Il 'laissa dire.' Et l'on sait, par un document écrit que René Dumesnil posséda, qu'Henri Céard, romancier naturaliste, a dit alors: 'On s'étonna que Maupassant laissât dire'" (288). This debate continues even today. For example, Biasi who, admitting the possibility that Flaubert was Maupassant's father, argues for his marital paternity.

This familial context that starts before his birth and touches Maupassant during his life, exists in a parallel fashion with the malady that will end his life -- syphilis. This pervasive viral "monstre du jour" was a clear source of fear for the Parisian population largely owing to the writings of the "medical enforcer" of the day -- Dr. Alfred Fournier. His writings dating from the 1880s, fuelled the fires of paranoia of the Parisian citizenry with horror stories fabricated with just enough real information to be believable. As Charles Bernheimer notes: "he [*Fournier*] was already the leader of the neoregulationist movement" (235). Fournier dwelled on frightening descriptions of innocent bodies covered with grotesque lesions and generated anxiety by developing an ever-increasing list of possible sources of infection, including the most banal objects of everyday life such as pipes, coins, linen, and ordinary gestures such as kissing the crucifix at communion or shaking hands (235). This pervasive propaganda campaign presumably touched Maupassant. For example, Roger Williams notes that: "Léon Hennique once watched Maupassant paint a facsimile of syphilis on his penis, and in the presence of one of his women, express his anxiety about the frightful illness that had reddened his sex organs" (262-63). It was also part of the lore of the day that syphilis in some way resulted in an immune response that protected against transmission of the disease and against re-infection! Perhaps, this folk-belief promoted a sense of hope, albeit a false hope, because, as we know today, there is no immune protection from syphilis. This strange mix of manic hope and morbid fear may have put people on a psychological roller-coaster. All of this taken together provides some insight into the confused state of medical information and lore that Maupassant would have been trying to use to understand what was happening to him -- i.e., to process the various future scenarios that were likely to play out in his life as he is engaged in developing the trilogy.

Considering the above information, in particular Le Poittevin's conception of *métempsycose* -- transmigration of the soul, this is a good juncture to posit some scenarios that follow in a direct way from Maupassant's past and his life situation as he pens the Horla stories. Given that at the time Maupassant is writing the trilogy both Le Poittevin and Flaubert are dead, we suggest four scenarios that are founded upon the idea of anchoring which posits that one's past experiences serve as constant subliminal sources of suggestion that are often incorporated in one's conception of reality (Stephens and Graham 125): s*cenario* A: Guy looks like Alfred because the transmigrated spiritual essence of Le Poittevin lives in Maupassant. And so, the spirit of Flaubert is trying to reconnect, through Maupassant, with his beloved friend that he lost so early in their relationship. Here, it is important to note that for Flaubert, Maupassant seemed to be more than just the image of Le Poittevin. In an article written by Maupassant regarding Flaubert, he notes speaking about one of their meetings: "et tout à coup je vis les yeux de Flaubert pleins de larmes. Il se dressa, enveloppé des pieds à la tête dans cette grande robe brune à larges manches qui ressemblait à un froc de moine, et levant ses bras, il me dit d'une voix vibrante de l'émotion du passé: Embrassez-moi, mon garçon, ça me remue le coeur de vous voir. J'ai cru tout à l'heure que j'entendais parler Alfred" (qtd. in Nadeau 116). *Scenario* B: if Flaubert is Maupassant's father, then he is biologically part of Maupassant and it is the spiritual essence of Le Poittevin that is trying to reconnect with his beloved friend. *Scenario* C: Maupassant is the son of Laure and Gustave de Maupassant. It is through Laure de Maupassant's intimate connection with the past of Rouen that Le Poittevin and Flaubert are encouraged to seek out

Maupassant as the haven for their spiritual reconnecting. *Scenario* D: All of these possibilities including the questions of paternal lineage and his contracting syphilis are just hallucinations born of worry and anxiety. It is important to remember that at the time that Maupassant writes the Horla series he has been ravaged for a number of years by syphilis and by his excessive womanising and drug use -- principally ether, a legendary hallucinogenic. As Pierre Borel notes: "Sans cesse, Maupassant a voulu découvrir du nouveau, abandonner le réel, atteindre l'inaccessible. Il a abusé des stupéfiants, et des femmes pour exaspérer ses sens, jusqu'aux folies révélatrices" (156). This certainly seems to characterise Maupassant who has placed himself at risk physically and mentally from his dissipative life style. Therefore, it is not that one has to believe that scenarios A, B, or C are actually happening to Maupassant, only that in his fragile mental and physical state, scenarios like these may have occurred to him as real possibilities. For example, the day journal of Gisèle d'Estoc contains a chilling account of a time when, in her presence, Maupassant apparently believed that he saw and was being menaced by a phantom (Borel 184-85). One could imagine that a person in Maupassnt's fragile state could have attached an identity to that "phantom" that would have indicated which of the scenarios were in play. Consider now the trilogy.

For *Lettre d'un fou* the action begins in earnest when the protagonist examines himself in his mirror: "Derrière moi, une très grande armoire à glace. Je me regardai dedans. J'avais des yeux étranges et les pupilles très dilatées" (42). This gives the story a basic line; the mirror is functioning as a normal mirror in that you see yourself in it. By analogy, this is the moment where Maupassant, after inspecting his reflected image, realises that he may be showing signs of syphilis. Recall that by the time he publishes the first story, he has affirmed in writing that he has contracted syphilis; the trilogy, therefore, records the progression that he has experienced -- i.e., a flashback that rolls forward and is projected into an uncertain future. As *Lettre d'un fou* continues, "l'inconnu," the way the creature is first named, is suggested as a possible perpetrator of the strange events. This is also the first naming word used by Alfred to describe Bélial. In his encounter with the mirror, the protagonist is not able to see himself clearly; somehow "l'inconnu," is making it impossible for him to obtain a resolution of his image. Metaphorically, the "l'inconnu" represents the real issues haunting Maupassant. This mirror scene where a normal image cannot be obtained seems to be the moment when Maupassant marks his introspective search. The orchestration of the psycho-drama that is the trilogy uses the following four constructs discussed in section 5: the *mirror* as the reflection of the all seen reality; "*l'inconnu*" playing the role of the existence of the three issues haunting Maupassant: disease, paternity, and role; *hallucinations* as the counter-point to "l'inconnu"; and the lack of image indicating an inability to resolve these issues through the collection of believable evidence *or* alternatively the refusal to accept their existence -- i.e., denial. These four constructs anticipate in a remarkable way the classical Freudian model of repression and expression. For example, using Maupassant as the point of reference: there are the three issues that Maupassant may see as possibilities that are haunting him -- the disease, his paternal lineage, and his role scripted in scenarios A, B, or C. These issues may be real or the fantasy of hallucinations born of worry, anxiety, or fear and enabled by his profound fatigue. If the hallucination scenario is ruled out by the existence of verifiable evidence -- i.e., evidence that cannot be denied, then the problems represented by l'inconnu" are real and must be dealt with. If these problems are denied through repression or suppression then there will not be any way to obtain a resolution of them. Therefore, continued repression obfuscates the possibility to see clearly what needs to be done as the void in the mirror indicates. In this way, the lack of image represents the inability or the unwillingness to attempt to resolve the difficulties at issue which over time could lead to profound frustration (see Singer, in particular chapters 1-5, 17, and 18).

A slight caveat is needed here regarding the way that Maupassant has used hallucinations in the trilogy. They are the construct indicating fantasy and are set in opposition to *Le Horla* that represents the existence of real issues. He is not using hallucinations as manifestations of expressing repressed

problems. This conceptualisation will be one of the possibilities found in the Freudian interpretation of hallucinations and as such post-dates the Horla stories. Therefore, for the psychological motif as it is encoded in the trilogy, to arrive at the point where one expresses acceptance of the psychological issues, one must first reject the hallucination scenario and then begin the process of coping with the reality of the difficulties at issue. This is the way that the mirror is presented in Le Poittevin's story where the mirror gives the truth over time and space; therefore the lack of a clear image suggests an inability or refusal to confront the problems and obtain, on some level, a constructive resolution. For both Le Poittevin and Maupassant, the mirror is the enabling mechanism to ascertain reality. The rhetoric and psychological motif used in the first book provide the context for the three aspects of Maupassant's search. Consider his viral infection. Note the imagery of invasion in the citation relative to the mirror encounter noted above in section two -- i.e., "pénétré en moi par toutes les parcelles de ma chair" which is the perfect metaphor for the viral invasion. Also interesting is that his assessment finishes with ambivalence -- "une épouvante atroce et bonne" suggesting both positive and negative feelings. This is consistent with a disease presentation where the symptoms are not specific, leading to both worry and the comfort of ascribing them to other reasonable explanations. The second aspect is his paternal lineage. In the first book, all personal identifying features are sublimated, buried in ambiguity -- in a sense blurred by repression or its intentional analogue, suppression. The protagonist is not named, nor is "l'inconnu," and Maupassant uses a female pseudonym to sign the work. This parallels *Une Promenade de Bélail* where Bélial, the personage who is conducting the voyage of discovery as is Maupassant, has assumed both genders and has been given many names or no name in particular. This reticence to give a name fits well with the paternity issues that are swirling around Maupassant. The third aspect of the search is the role that Guy may see himself playing relative to the scenarios A, B, or C. The void in the mirror requires that Maupassant attempts to resolve the uncertainty or confront his continued denial regarding the role that he may have fallen into relative to his past familial connections. This will be a most challenging task possibly leading to frustration.

The first book began by the protagonist noting that he believes that the bizarre events that he has been experiencing have been produced by hallucinations: "de me laisser en proie aux hallucinations et aux souffrances qui me harcèlent" (37). As *Lettre d'un fou* ends, a series of horrific images are perceived in the mirror. Here the circle is closed; the protagonist sees the frightening images which he notes as: "toutes les visions invraisemblables qui doivent hanter l'esprit des fous" (43). Essentially, he ascribes them to hallucination in favour of *Le Horla* which he is only able to rationalise as a possibility using the argument of the limitations of our human senses. To emphasise this conclusion, in *Lettre d'un fou* there are 36 references to psychological factors such as fear, confusion, anxiety, and the like; there are *no* references to possible medical problems. This is consistent with the first stage of syphilis where there are possible warning signs that often provoke a sense of anxiety. The anxiety may be ascribable to the uncertainty of the possibility of being infected and also about its consequences relative to the scenarios presented above. In this case, if Maupassant sees himself as the haven for the spiritual joining proposed in scenarios A, B, or C, this virus invasion could render him unsuitable for that spiritual rendezvous thereby exacerbating his level of anxiety. Also in the first book there are no psychological undulations from morbid depression to the elation of denial. This is also consistent with the first stage of syphilis where the symptoms are non-specific and so can easily be ascribed to less threatening causes. In this case, denial as a coping mechanism is not necessary.

In the second book, *Le Horla*, the protagonist who lives close to Rouen, the birthplace of Le Poittevin and Flaubert, after experiencing a series of strange dreams and inexplicable occurrences feels that he is under attack from an entity that he calls Le Horla. Recall the menacing nature of the dream that he has: an "épouvantable sensation d'un poids écrasant sur ma poitrine, et d'une bouche qui mangeait ma vie, sur ma bouche" (47). Here Le Horla plays the same role as "l'inconnu" in the first book; it represents the three issues -- infection, paternal linage, and role identity that are haunting Maupassant. The menacing aspect of this Horla encounter is consistent with 1) the second

stage of syphilis that arrives after a short period of latency with definitive, severe, and observable symptoms, and 2) referencing scenarios A, B, and C, the rage and aggression that Maupassant may feel that Le Poittevin and Flaubert are directing against him because his careless and irresponsible actions have rendered him, now with syphilis, an unsuitable host for their reconnecting. Recall in Le Poittevin's conception of the transmigration there is hostility and struggle associated with *métempsycose*, the sort of which that may be associated with the nightmare reported by the protagonist. In the second story, the protagonist makes the same possibility argument and cites the testimony of his neighbours as a way to rule out the hallucination scenario thereby arguing for Le Horla as the likely cause. However, this evidence does not seem convincing. In this case, in contrast to the first book, where hallucinations were the accepted explanation, both possibilities, hallucinations, or real unaddressed psychological issues, are left open. Recall the final statement of Dr. Marrande: "Je ne sais si cet homme est fou ou si nous le sommes tous les deux ... ou si ... si notre successeur est réellement arrivé" (54).

This ambiguity and the range of conjectures both positive and negative that it permits, produce a sort of psychological roller coaster of anxiety or depression and the manic exuberance enabled by denial. Such denial is best illustrated by *Désirs* -- a poem written by Maupassant in 1880, a time when he admits to having contracted syphilis and is experiencing severe medical problems. *Désirs* extols the wild and sexually irresponsible behaviour that finds him contracting syphilis and seems a classic illustration of the exuberance of his denial (Leclerc 1993, 352-53). In the second book, there are two such psychological changes. First, his initial depression is noted as: "il y a eu un an à l'automne dernier, je fus pris tout à coup de malaises bizarres et inexplicables. Ce fut d'abord une sorte d'inquiétude nerveuse qui me tenait en éveil des nuits entières" (46), and is followed by a moment, albeit brief, of positive feelings: "Tout à coup, le miracle cessa. On ne touchait plus à rien dans ma chambre. C'était fini. J'allais mieux d'ailleurs" (49). The second story finishes on the side of a relatively deep depression and frustration. The protagonist is either beset by hallucinations or being menaced by the strange force that has arrived. Metaphorically, neither is a positive sign for Maupassant as his use of rhetoric in the second story indicates. One finds in *Le Horla* a mixture of the psychological and medical problems as the story develops. There are 72 mentions of the two problems with 14 representing medical difficulties and 58 noting psychological problems. This may be contrasted with the first book where 100 percent of such references were for psychological indications. This is certainly consistent with the actual progression to the second stage where there is a clear sign of the disease and the resulting increase in anxiety that one would expect to accompany it -- i.e., time may be running out so that urgency to gain some resolution is definably more acute.

The beginning of the third book, also called *Le Horla*, presented as the protagonist's day journal giving it an air of believable intimacy, replicates the beginning of the second book. He begins with a similar description of his bucolic living circumstances close to Rouen, describes the same frightening dream and discusses the disappearance of liquids and the rose episode. To initially account for these inexplicable events, he ponders the possibility that they are hallucinations. However, rather than trying to rule them out by referencing the anecdotal third-party testimony of his neighbours or our sensory limitations, he elects to collect scientifically valid verification. To accomplish this, the protagonist decides that he must go to Rouen! This is a profound and revealing connection to the world of both Alfred and Flaubert suggesting that the truth lies in their Rouen of the past. The first indication is mass hysteria: "Une folie, une épidémie de folie, comparable aux démences contagieuses qui atteignirent les peuples d'Europe au Moyen Age" (75). Here the protagonist initially tries to rationalise his hallucinations as part of an epidemic. This avoidance defence rationalises the hallucinations as a contagion for which one cannot be held personally responsible. This belief, essentially the same as asserted at the conclusion of book one, is short lived for the protagonist remembers that the preceding year, he saw a three-masted ship from Brazil. Given the South American connection as documented in the treatise that he found in Rouen, he concludes definitively

that the creature must have been aboard that ship and that the hysteria is not caused by hallucinations but rather the creature -- "Malheur à l'homme! Il est venu, c'est lui ... *le Horla* ... il est venu ! ... " (76-77). The final piece of evidence, confirmatory in nature, is the tactile contact -- he actually feels the creature's touch. These four pieces of evidence -- possibility, testimony, scientific validation, and experiential -- i.e., tactile contact, then are sufficient to rule out hallucinations in favour of Le Horla.

This conclusion is founded on the accumulation of evidence over the trilogy. As more evidence is added the balance shifts from hallucinations to Le Horla as the likely cause. In *Lettre d'un fou*, the evidence offered was solely information regarding the limitations of the five human senses. This argument admits only the possibility that "l'inconnu" could exist. Hallucinations were indicated as the likely cause. The second book makes the same possibility argument and adds the eyewitness testimony of his neighbours. This additional anecdotal evidence called into question the hallucinations as the only likely cause thereby leaving the question of hallucination or Le Horla open. In the third book, one finds essentially the same possibility and testimony arguments, but it is the collection of scientifically valid information confirmed by the tactile contact that permits the protagonist to rule out hallucinations in favour of Le Horla as the likely cause -- i.e., the problems are real; they exist. Consistent with this conclusion, one observes a frequency increase in psychological undulations from manic denial to morbid acceptance. These undulations crescendo in the third work where there are 13 changes from negative to positive in comparison to just two in the second book. For example, the third story begins with a long description of a pastoral scene. This idyllic scene ends abruptly with a discussion of his profound illness: "J'ai un peu de fièvre depuis quelques jours; je me sens souffrant, ou plutôt je me sens triste. D'où viennent ces influences mystérieuses qui changent en découragement notre bonheur et notre confiance en détresse" (56). The third book ends on a note of morbid depression -- suicide is proposed. Consistent with this finale, there are now 55 references to medical problems -- a four-fold increase of such references relative to the second book. These medical indications are accompanied by 371 references to psychological indications such as anxiety, fear, and frustration, which represents a six-fold increase in the number of references to psychological problems. Metaphorically, the medical uncertainty is no longer in question. It cannot be written off to hallucination or mass hysteria. It is real and the clear sign that time is the bandit. The time frame for collection of information to resolve the paternal linage issue and the role he is playing may not be sufficient thereby accelerating the frantic nature of the search -- a search which ends in profound frustration.

The third book ends on a note of uncertainty, frustration, and morbid depression -- i.e., the final course of action proposed is suicide. The mirror never gives up an image. Metaphorically, after ruling out the hallucination scenario, Guy never achieves the resolution he seeks. The only certainty is that he has syphilis. This exacerbates the problem of resolving, in a timely fashion, the paternity and role issues haunting him. The protagonist is convinced that Le Horla exists; but what is it? This is the same frustrating question that plagues Maupassant as the void in the mirror indicates. His sources of information and the time left to him are wanting. Specifically, during his lifetime his mother maintains her "no comment" policy regarding the paternity issue so actively discussed during Maupassant's later years. So here he has no information only conjecture and uncertainty. Recall that he refuses to be baited into a dialogue of his paternal lineage. Further, Maupassant is Le Poittevin's look-alike as attested to by his mother and Flaubert. Much of the structure of Le Poittevin's *Une Promenade de Bélial* appears in the three Horlas. To this extent, Le Poittevin has achieved a literary re-birth through Maupassant's work; perhaps he feels that the re-birth extends beyond the literary dimension. For example, consider the way that Maupassant's given names are recorded on his birth and death certificates. The names on the "Acte de naissance" are: Henri-Alfred-Guy de Maupassant. However, when Maupassant dies, the *Acte de décès* lists four names: Henri-René-Alfred-Guy -- René-Alfred -- i.e., the reborn Alfred! Finally, Flaubert is for Maupassant an enigma. For most of their correspondence

they maintained a formal register -- i.e., "ils se vouvoient" until just before Flaubert's death. Flaubert often referred to Maupassant as "mon fils"; however, this is probably more a term of endearment between mentor and student than an affirmation of paternity. Still, it is suggestive. Another confusing aspect of the Flaubert connection is that sometimes he included some very intimate, sexually explicit details in his correspondence with Maupassant as he really only did with Le Poittevin. This mix of formal register, the warm and loving familiarity of "mon fils," and the pornographic banality would certainly have been difficult for Maupassant to reconcile and may have been irresistibly suggestive. This set of confusing information on some questions and the dearth thereof on others is reflected in the trilogy as the mirror that never gave up an image and the related frustration it provoked. Frustration that eventually resulted in the protagonist proposing that the only way to escape the uncertainty that plagues him is suicide -- an act which Maupassant attempts, unsuccessfully, after the publication of the last book.

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