



El Horla

Guy de Maupassant

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A través de un diario el autor nos muestra las alucinaciones del protagonista, el cual siente la presencia de un ente que él llama El Horla.

El Horla Details

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Markus says

Le Horla

Maupassant (1850 – 1893)

C'est l'histoire d'un homme qui prend note dans son journal intime de l'évolution de sa maladie psychiatrique, il se rend compte qu'il devient fou.

Il nous raconte la peur qui augmente, au jour le jour.

Il s'imagine qu'il a un double de soi, Le Horla, qui fait tout pour remplacer son âme, saine à l'origine, avec l'âme malade.

Pour finir il succombe, mais essaie de prendre son double au piège dans sa maison, qu'il incendie, pour le détruire. Il n'est pas sûr que son double n'est pas indissociable de lui-même. La mort de l'un n'entraînera pas la mort de l'autre.

Un chef d'œuvre en originalité et en qualité d'écriture.

Marius says

Old-school horror story. It reminds me of 'The Double' by Dostoevsky.

Sara says

[4.0]

(Read this for school)

It was amazing to read these three stories!

The first one got published in 1885 and is only ten pages long.

The second one is named Le Horla and is the first version of this name, written in 1886.

The last one is the final, most famous and longest version. It has the same name as the previous one.

It was really interesting to see how Guy de Maupassant develops and changes his story and that's why I liked it! There are some parts that are the same which is fun.

The only thing was that the last one was quite boring because of the too long descriptions and explanations.

Yani says

Existen al menos dos versiones de este cuento y son bastante diferentes en el formato, más que en el argumento. Digo "al menos" porque se considera que el cuento "Carta de un loco" es, en realidad, la primera versión de las otras dos (ay, qué lío). Existen varias similitudes entre los tres cuentos, porque todos tienen como protagonista a un demente que percibe una presencia. Como también leí "Carta...", me pareció bien hacerle un espacio y comentarlo muy brevemente.

"Carta de un loco" (1885, sería la primerísima versión): Tal como dice el título, es la carta de un paciente a su médico. Tiene un inicio muy lento en donde se desarrolla toda una teoría sobre el hombre y el conocimiento del mundo exterior, pero con determinado fin. Si bien el elemento sobrenatural está, no se desarrolla tanto como en las supuestas versiones que le siguen. De todas formas, es bastante contundente.

Primera (1886) y segunda versión (de 1887, la cual releí este mes) de "El Horla":

En la versión publicada en 1886, el doctor Marrande, un psiquiatra, reúne a varios colegas para que escuchen el relato de uno de sus pacientes. Este hombre no se identifica, pero sí cuenta que goza de una buena situación económica (no es un detalle menor en esa época). Un día, empieza a sentirse debilitado y nervioso, a tal punto que consulta un médico. Hay algo que lo está consumiendo, algo que se le acerca y lo atormenta con extrañas manifestaciones. Breve y con dos narradores, este cuento es efectista. Tal vez hubiera querido más precisiones porque lo que plantea es interesantísimo y se queda a mitad de camino. Sin embargo, te deja pensando.

En cambio, en la segunda versión (la definitiva y la que más se publica) no hay un doctor que presente el caso, sino un hombre que directamente registra sus experiencias en un diario que se vuelve cada vez más precipitado a medida que se hunde en la locura. La trama es la misma, pero hay varias escenas agregadas y una introspección mucho más fuerte del personaje, quien no me gusta en ninguna de las versiones. El final es seco, bien a lo Maupassant, así que se puede amar u odiar. Yo me inclino a lo primero porque ese recurso me encanta si está bien usado (y Maupassant es un maestro). Lamentablemente, sigo queriendo que este cuento sea una novela, con un desarrollo más lento de los acontecimientos. Imposible, lo sé.

Me gustaron los tres textos, pero siento que lo mejor de Maupassant todavía no lo leí (con todo lo que escribió, es imposible elegir un favorito antes de tiempo). Sin embargo, "El Horla" me parece muy recomendable, sobre todo por la relación que tiene con la época en que fue escrito, además de la vida del autor.

Florencia says

May 15, 16

* Also on my blog.

** You may read this short story in Spanish or English

Fernando says

Guy de Maupassant (a quien admiro, realmente), escribió más de 300 cuentos y no acostumbraba a encasillarse en un género, más allá de ser un protegido de Zola y Flaubert y un alto exponente del realismo y

del naturalismo, tenía una técnica brillante para elaborar sus cuentos. El Horla, un cuento sobre la locura, y, tal vez, su mejor cuento, tiene para mí, connotaciones autobiográficas. Era un talento para este tipo de cuentos, ya que él sufrió un proceso de este tipo en carne propia. No olvidemos que ya en su deterioro psicológico, intentó degollarse tres veces, aunque no tuvo el valor de hacerlo. En El Horla repercuten perfectamente los ecos de su propia locura.

Les Sadiq says

"Quand nous sommes seuls, nous peuplons le vide de fantômes."

Latasha says

this story was ok, I liked The Inn better. but I don't think there was really a ghost or vampire haunting this guy. I think he had some mental issues. and I'm sure that is absolutely terrifying in itself but I'm just saying I don't think it was an external haunting.

Katarina Nabokovna says

Entre raison et folie, Maupassant nous fait vraiment entrer dans la tête du héros qui maintient le doute sur l'existence réelle du Horla. Il est primordial de rappeler qu'il a écrit cette nouvelle à une période de sa vie où la folie commencée à l'emporter déjà. Le style d'écriture est captivant, d'une grande originalité.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

I listened to the audio first, and followed up by reading through the print. It would have been a different experience if I'd flipped the two, because once I hit halfway I definitely wanted to "skip to the end." I almost always feel that way about horror stories, though. So much time and energy spent on describing something atmospheric or suspenseful and I just want to get on with it. That may say more about me than about the story.

As horror stories go (this is grouped with ghost stories, but to me it is more horror), the (view spoiler) This was my first Guy de Maupassant, although I hear he is important.

A few little quotes:

"Whence do these mysterious influences come, which change our happiness into discouragement, and our self-confidence into diffidence?"

(Anyone who teaches wonders this.....)

"Do we see the hundred thousandth part of what exists?"

This is a repeated theme in the short story, and one that I remember hearing a lot growing up.

"Certainly solitude is dangerous for active minds. We require men who can think and can talk around us. When we are alone for a long time we people space with phantoms."
And then Al Gore invented the internet, and active minds forever had someone to talk to....

"We are terribly under the influence of our surroundings."

It is puzzling why the narrator of the story keeps returning to his oppressive home, especially after (view spoiler).

"He does not show himself any more, but I feel that he is near me, watching me, looking at me, penetrating me, dominating me, and more redoubtable when he hides himself..."
Nothing scarier than an invisible penetrator! ;)

"We are so weak, so unarmed, so ignorant, so small, we who live on this particle of mud which turns round in a drop of water."

Dina says

Yuyu absoluto!

Un loco que no es tal loco.

Luz de gas? No, es El Horla, que es una especie de Dementor pero peor ^_^

Alicja says

|Relecture / Reread - Review only in FR|

Une bonne relecture ! Maupassant parvient avec brio à nous relater la lente descente aux enfers d'un homme (lui ?) vers la folie. L'ambiance est oppressante et l'emploi du "je" ainsi que la forme de journal intime nous met dans la tête du personnage principal. Résultats ? Malaise et questionnement. On veut sortir de "son" corps tout en voulant en savoir plus. Redoutable mais efficace !

+ : nouvelle déstabilisante, style parfaitement maîtrisé (Maupassant en somme !)

- : quelques petites longueurs

peiman-mir5 rezakhani says

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Blair says

The Horla is a very short psychological horror story about a man who becomes convinced that an invisible being - seemingly ghost-like, but also compared within the narrative to a vampire - is quietly terrorising him, invading his bedroom at night, driving him mad. This creature, 'the Horla', drives him to increasingly irrational and extreme action as he seeks to destroy its hold over him. I saw a lot of parallels between this story and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, published five years later: both stories are written in first person and in diary format; both tell a story of escalating paranoia and fear and, congruently, a belief in something impossible; both build to a horrifying climax and end with a shock. And, of course, both authors suffered from mental health problems - Gilman from postnatal depression and de Maupassant from hallucinations caused by syphilis - and in both cases this influenced their writing. However, the fact that I couldn't help noticing these parallels meant my opinion of *The Horla* was adversely affected - it's simply not as powerful or frightening as *The Yellow Wallpaper*; it is effective, but doesn't stand out significantly when compared to other horror/supernatural tales of a similar period, and doesn't feel ahead of its time, unlike Gilman's story or J.S. le Fanu's *Carmilla*. I was led to de Maupassant by a recommendation from a friend,

and still intend to read more of his stories - I'm intrigued by his reputation as 'one of the fathers of the short story', but this one, for me, was simply good, not great.

Rym says

Pre-Review:

I have read **The Horla** in French since I believe that semantic losses are inevitable in Translation. So if you can read it in its source language (**SL**) rather than in English—or any other target language (**TL**), then please do it.

Review:

The Horla is a short horror story written by the prolific French writer Guy de Maupassant. It was originally published as “**Letter from a Madman**” in 1885. It was then revised and published again as “**The Horla**” in the newspaper Gil Blas in 1886. The Horla underwent a third revision before its final publication in May 1887. The Horla is considered as a portmanteau of the French words “*hors*” —and “*là*” (meaning “outside”—and “there” respectively). **The Horla** is said to have influenced H.P. Lovecraft’s *The Call of Cthulhu*.

Narrated in the first person as a series of entries to an intimate diary, The Horla tells the story of an upper-class man, who becomes engulfed by troubled thoughts—and hallucinations. After having impulsively waved to a Brazilian vessel, this unnamed narrator starts experiencing a series of occult events that foster his descent into madness. In the days that follow the sight of the vessel, the narrator finds himself seized by a strange sense of malaise that intensifies at night. The local doctor fails to find a physical—and concrete reason for his patient’s malady. The narrator’s misfortune worsens when an invisible force tries to strangle him during his sleep on several occasions. Determined to put an end to this mystifying situation, the protagonist decides to leave his home country in order to spend a few days at *Mont Saint-Michel*. Much to his surprise, all his troubles vanish *in toto*. Unfortunately, he finds himself back to square one as soon as he returns back home. Little does he know that he had unwittingly invited an invisible creature—the Horla—that will haunt him until the end of times.

Most of Maupassant’s works focused on the realism of war and its effect on the innocent civilians. However, **The Horla** differs considerably from his other stories, as it is a refined combination of realism—and horror. This tale is quite reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe’s short stories due to the eerie atmosphere that prevails in it.

A comparison between the Horla—and Maupassant’s life shows that this short story is actually a depiction of the author’s life. The subjectivity of Maupassant can be felt by the reader, while delving into this semi-autobiography. In his later years, Maupassant suffered from syphilis. This disease had deeply affected him—and rendered him paranoid. Following his attempt to commit suicide by cutting his own throat, the French writer was admitted to the private asylum of *Esprit Blanche*—where he spent the rest of his days. It was probably Maupassant’s psychological state that had prompted him to produce such a disturbing—and macabre short story. The resemblance between the protagonist and Maupassant is flagrant. It is through this work that the French author questions his own sanity.

The Horla explores a myriad of themes linked to existentialism—and the frailty of Man. Some of the

themes that were integrated in this short story are: *the fear of the unknown, the deceptiveness of senses, Man's irrationality, absence of free-will & critical thinking, national rulers & indoctrination, etc.*

This short story is very rich in terms of content —and also very deep. It is full to the brim with symbolism (e.g. the white vessel that reminds the reader of the whitewashed monastery in Herman Melville's Benito Cereno. In these two works, we have an allusion to madness)—and can be interpreted in various ways. From the protagonist's inability to perceive his own reflection in the mirror to his final decision (view spoiler), every single detail seems to mirror Maupassant's desperation —and his declining health.

I highly recommend it to everyone—and I hope you will enjoy it as much as I did. I literally loved every line.

P.S: I will update this review as soon as possible.

“..La solitude est dangereuse pour les intelligences qui travaillent, Il nous faut autour de nous, des hommes qui pensent et qui parlent. Quand nous sommes seuls longtemps, nous peuplons le vide de fantômes..”

? Guy de Maupassant, Le Horla
