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LITERARY RELATIONSHIPS OF GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Balzac remarks disparagingly of his native city, Tours, where the best French is spoken, that it was one of the least literary cities in France.¹ In like manner Guy de Maupassant, acclaimed as the master of a perfect French prose style, was to an astonishing degree unversed in literature. "No mind was less bookish," observes M. Faguet. "When he published at the beginning of *Pierre et Jean*, perhaps in order to enlarge the volume, a brief critical study, he proved nothing except that he had read nothing."² Amid the Sunday afternoon discussions at the house of Flaubert, and at the famous "jeudis" of Zola, Maupassant was taciturn, and made the impression of a brawny athlete with little interest in writing. More than one person who met this "taureau triste"³—as Taine called him familiarly—before his reputation was established, was astonished to learn later of his ability as a writer. "Il n'aimait point à parler littérature," was his excuse.⁴

In this way that *vision directe*, unobscured by the medium of books, which the Goncourt brothers had heralded, Guy de Maupassant actually possessed.⁵ Such a perfect realist did he thus become that, to quote M. Faguet again, "le lecteur ne sait pas, et c'est ce qu'il faut, quand il lit Maupassant, si c'est de l'art de Maupassant, ou seulement de la vérité, qu'il a le goût."⁶

We may confidently expect, therefore, that any important literary influence upon Maupassant will be exerted by means of oral

¹ *Le Curé de Tours*, in *Œuvres de Balzac* (Calmann Lévy ed. [1892]), p. 193. In his correspondence Balzac usually speaks of Touraine in terms of deepest affection.

² Émile Faguet, in *Revue Bleue*, LII (July 15, 1893).

³ Victor Giraud, *Essai sur Taine* (5^e ed.; Paris, 1912), p. 106, n. 3.

⁴ Letter of Édouard Rod to Monsieur le baron A. Lumbroso, October 6, 1904 (A. Lumbroso, *Souvenirs sur Maupassant* [1905], p. 374). René Doumic, in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, CXX (1893), 194, says: "Tout ce qui est d'ordre intellectuel, œuvre ou conquête de l'esprit, lui échappe. Et comme il arrive, ce qu'il ne comprend pas, il le nie. . . . Et quand Rodolphe de Salins continue exposant ses théories sur la destinée humaine, à savoir que la pensée est dans la création un accident à jamais regrettable, et que la terre a été faite pour les animaux non pour les hommes, décidément par sa bouche c'est Maupassant qui parle."

⁵ E. Maynial, "La Composition dans les romans de Maupassant," in *Revue Bleue* LXXII (October 31, 1903), 563. See *Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, Préfaces et manifestes littéraires* (Paris, 1880), p. 13.

⁶ E. Faguet, *loc. cit.*

transmission, so familiar in the history of the primitive ballad and folk-tale. To Alfred de Musset he is indebted hardly more than for the inspiration of juvenile madrigals and sonnets composed at the *lycée* of Rouen.¹ Possibly also traces of that quality, which Professor Irving Babbitt calls "the Romantic art of impassioned recollection," which was so prominent a characteristic of Musset, may be discovered in the works of both Flaubert and his pupil, Maupassant. At the conclusion of the *Éducation sentimentale*, Frédéric remarks: "C'est là ce que nous avons eu de meilleur!" Deslaurier replies, in similar reminiscent vein, "Oui, peut-être bien? C'est là ce que nous avons eu de meilleur!" In *L'Épave*, Maupassant concludes with a sob as the memory of the former beauty of the heroine comes back to him: "Ah! celle d'autrefois . . . celle de l'épave . . . quelle créature . . . divine!"² In *Regret*, Monsieur Saval weeps as he thinks of the happiness which was once in his reach and which he had failed to grasp.³

Despite these resemblances, it is safe to assert that Maupassant's indebtedness to Musset was not excessive. His imitation of Edgar Allan Poe was slighter still and has been overestimated by a few writers. Notwithstanding the protestations of Mme de Maupassant, most critics are disposed to accept as conclusive the argument that stories like *Le Horla*, so far from having any foreign origin, are merely the faithful journal of an author whose reason was tottering.⁴ Where Maupassant's imitation of Poe seems perfectly clear is in an unedited story called *Le Tic*. Instead of describing the father and daughter, about whom the narrative revolves, Maupassant says simply: "Ils me firent l'effet, tout de suite, de personnages d'Edgar Poé. . . ." Then follows a tale of the daughter's rescue from the grave, quite in the manner of the *Premature Burial* and the *Fall of the House of Usher*.⁵

¹ E. Maynial, *La Vie et l'œuvre de Guy de Maupassant* (Paris, 1907), p. 82.

² *L'Épave*, in *La Petite Roque*, p. 92. The Louis Conard edition (1908-1910) has been used for references to Maupassant's works.

³ *Regret*, in *Miss Harriet*, pp. 259 ff.

⁴ E. Maynial, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-251. See Henry James in *Fortnightly Review*, XLIX (1888), 376: ". . . These last things range from *Le Horla* (which is not a specimen of the author's best vein—the only occasion on which he has the weakness of imitation is when he strikes us as emulating Edgar Poe). . . ." To parody the language of the late Mr. James, this very inaccurate statement is certainly not a specimen of the critic's best vein.

⁵ *Le Tic*, *Œuvres Posthumes*, I, 227-234.

This story affords apparently the one instance where Maupassant mentions Poe. A more significant influence upon Maupassant, exerted of course through the medium of books, is that of Balzac. As Maupassant remarks, speaking for his realistic brethren, it is "Balzac que nous citons tous, quelles que soient nos tendances, parce que son esprit est aussi varié qu'étendu. . . ."¹

Despite the usual opinion of critics that the direct influence of Balzac upon Maupassant was slight, the two authors clearly had much in common. If we have M. Faguet's authority that Maupassant read nothing at all, we also have his authority that Balzac read no other author than Walter Scott. It is not surprising, then, that Maupassant had Balzac's passion for observing life at first hand, for recording his impressions in carefully taken notes, for a realism which was the farthest possible remove from the classical copying of Virgil and other "perfect" models. On the other hand, if Balzac was classical in his exclusive study of man, and all that pertains to mankind, Maupassant flaunted the classical motto of Terence: "Je tâche que rien de ce qui touche les hommes ne me soit étranger."² Furthermore, if Taine finds the *Comédie humaine* a vast study of humanity from the zoölogical point of view, the works of Maupassant lay no less emphasis upon the animalism of man. There is even in the *Contes* and in the *Nouvelles* far more of the lingering Romanticism of Balzac than is commonly supposed.

Occasionally it is not difficult to discover resemblances of detail between the writers. *Bel-Ami* has been recognized as a modernized *Lucien de Rubempré*. It seems to me also that Balzac's story entitled *Adieu*³ may well have furnished Maupassant with a suggestion for his *conte* entitled *Berthe*.⁴ *Adieu* concerns a girl named Stéphanie, reduced to insanity, who finds as a companion Geneviève, an idiotic peasant girl. Geneviève had been loved by a mason named Dallot, who married her for her dowry. For a time she was extremely happy, for love had awakened in her heart a great response. Then Dallot deserted her for another girl who possessed two quarters of

¹ *Réponse à M. Albert Wolff*, in *Mlle Fifi*, p. 284.

² *Réponse à M. Wolff*, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

³ *Œuvres Complètes* (Calmann Lévy ed. [1892]), in volume entitled *Louis Lambert*, p. 234.

⁴ In volume entitled *Yvette*, pp. 251-269.

land more than she, and Geneviève lost what little intelligence love had developed in her. Maupassant's *Berthe* concerns an idiot girl with a fair dowry who is greatly benefited by marriage and declines immediately after she is deserted by her husband.

Often the influence of Balzac upon Maupassant is exerted through the intermediary of Flaubert, as in the case of the famous doctrine of "impersonality," formulated by Flaubert, adopted by Maupassant, but probably inspired by a reading of Balzac's novels. A curious illustration of this second-hand transmission is found in the imitation of an incident of Balzac's *Honorine*.¹ In the midst of his garden Count Octave has a magnificent basin, swarming with goldfish. When he is in a pensive mood, he goes there to brood over Honorine, who has deserted him. It had been as he stood over the basin with Honorine, then a girl of seventeen, and had thrown bread to the fishes, that he had spoken his first words of love to her. This episode, utilized by Flaubert, reappears in *Bel-Ami* when Georges Du Roy accompanies Suzanne Walter to the basin in the conservatory to throw bread to the fishes and to plan an elopement.²

It is not my intention, however, to enter thoroughly into the subject of Balzac's influence here. Even briefer mention will be allowed Maupassant's story entitled *L'Endormeuse*, which appeared in September, 1889,³ and concerns a suicide club which may have been modeled on that described by Robert Louis Stevenson in the *New Arabian Nights* (1882).

If Maupassant was acquainted with few authors through their books, his obligations to two life-long friends of his mother Laure and his uncle Alfred le Poittevin are well known. Mme de Maupassant declares that one of these friends, Louis Bouilhet, was prevented only by an early death from making her son a poet.⁴ The other, Gustave Flaubert, instructed him in the art of the novelist.

In his essay on *Le Roman*, which appeared as a preface to *Pierre et Jean*, Maupassant has described the lessons in the art of composition which he received from his masters. First, Bouilhet taught

¹ *Honorine*, in *Le Colonel Chabert*, pp. 119, 128.

² *Bel-Ami*, pp. 510, 511.

³ In *La Main Gauche*, pp. 241 ff.

⁴ E. Maynial, *op. cit.*, p. 44 (citation from A. Albalat, on Mme de Maupassant, in *Le Journal des Débats*, December 12, 1903).

him an appreciation of perfect form in verse, impressing upon him the fact that one short but flawless poem may confer immortality upon its author. After some two years, Bouilhet's mantle fell upon Flaubert, who insisted upon faultless, classic prose, correcting tirelessly Maupassant's compositions.

The influence of Flaubert upon his pupil is a subject treated most thoroughly in the forthcoming University of Chicago thesis of Miss Agnes R. Riddell, so that only one or two observations will be attempted here. The emphasis laid by Flaubert upon details is evident in the following often-quoted passage from Maupassant's essay on *Le Roman*:

Quand vous passez, me disait-il, devant un épicier assis sur sa porte, devant un concierge qui fume sa pipe, devant une station de fiacres, montrez-moi cet épicier et ce concierge, leur pose, toute leur apparence physique contenant aussi, indiquée par l'adresse de l'image, toute leur nature morale, de façon à ce que je ne les confonde avec aucun autre épicier ou avec aucun autre concierge, et faites-moi voir, par un seul mot, en quoi un cheval de fiacre ne ressemble pas aux cinquante autres qui le suivent et le précèdent.¹

The extent to which such "leçons d'école" influenced the style of Maupassant has already been indicated to a certain degree by a number of critics, notably Brunetière. It remained for Miss Riddell to demonstrate that Maupassant, not satisfied with learning the literary methods of Flaubert, was inclined to adopt also some of his characters and episodes. One illustration of this practice is mentioned here, in anticipation of Miss Riddell.

The rendezvous of *Bel-Ami* with Mme Walter in the Church of the Trinity suggests strongly that of Léon Dupuis with Emma Bovary in a cathedral. Both Du Roy and Léon arrive ahead of time—Léon discovering that it was nine o'clock by looking at the cuckoo clock of the hairdresser; Du Roy, that it was three o'clock by consulting his watch. To while away the time, Léon walks three city blocks, and decides to return. Du Roy, also, walks slowly along the dock, until he concludes that it would be better to return. Both wait impatiently for the arrival of their lady-loves, Léon being startled by a rustling of silk over the flag-stone; Du Roy, by the noise of a dress. "C'était elle!" announces Flaubert. "C'était elle!" echoes Maupassant. "Léon se leva et courut à sa rencontre."

¹ *Le Roman*, in *Pierre et Jean*, p. xxiv.

As for Du Roy, "Il se leva, s'avance vivement." Emma and Mme Walter seek refuge from temptation in prayer. "Emma prayed, or rather attempted to pray," we are told, "hoping that some sudden resolution would descend to her from heaven." As for Mme Walter, "Then she tried to pray. With a superhuman invocation she attempted to call upon God, and, her body vibrating, her soul distraught, she cried 'Pity!' to the sky." Emma filled her eyes with the splendors of the tabernacle and breathed its incense, in order to fortify herself; but her efforts only increased the tumult of her heart. Mme Walter shut her eyes in order not to see Du Roy, endeavored to drive his image from her mind, but instead of the celestial apparition for which she hoped, she perceived always the curly moustache of the young man.¹

I shall further venture the statement, upon my own responsibility, that Flaubert's influence manifested itself even upon those feelings which we are accustomed to regard as absolutely instinctive with Maupassant, such as his repugnance for death, for old age, for the gray hair which is the token of the approaching end. Writing more than a decade before Maupassant's *Fini, L'Épave*, and *Fort comme la mort*, Flaubert in his *Éducation sentimentale* makes Frédéric Moreau observe with consternation the gray hair of Mme Arnoux in the strong light of a lamp. "It was like a blow full in his chest," Flaubert comments.² Equally instinctive with Maupassant seems that feeling of fear, of unreasoning fear, "la peur de la peur," which finally mastered his reason. Nevertheless, we may discover evidences of even this characteristic in the narrative of the duel in the *Éducation sentimentale*. Frédéric Moreau is terribly afraid that he will be afraid. "Une angoisse abominable le saisit à l'idée d'avoir peur sur le terrain," says Flaubert.³ Maupassant, imitating this passage in *Un Lâche*, makes the Viscount Gontran-Joseph de Signoles find this fear overwhelming: "Et ce doute l'envahit, cette inquiétude, cette épouvante; si une force plus puissante que sa volonté, domina-

¹ *Madame Bovary* (L. Conard ed.), pp. 326-329; *Bel-Ami*, pp. 397-405.

² *Éducation sentimentale*, p. 604.

³ *Éducation sentimentale*, p. 323. Miss Riddell notes the resemblance between the duels in *Éducation sentimentale* and in *Bel-Ami*, pp. 237 ff. The similarity between *Un Lâche* and the pages cited from *Bel-Ami* was observed by E. Maynial, "La Composition dans les romans de Maupassant," in *Revue Bleue*, LXXII (November 7, 1903), 607.

trice, irrésistible, le domptait, qu'arriverait-il? Oui, que pouvait-il arriver?"¹

Furthermore, emphasis should be laid upon the fact that the influence of Flaubert upon Maupassant, very noticeable in Maupassant's earlier novels, such as *Une Vie* and *Bel-Ami*, afterward diminished considerably. When Lemaitre, adopting the opinion of Maupassant's perspicacious publisher, Havard, notes that *Mont-Oriol* (1887) is a transitional novel, because of the emotional and dramatic elements it contains, he is actually noting a decline in the influence of Flaubert.² When he remarks that in *Pierre et Jean* (1888) the transformation of the author's manner is complete, for the whole interest centers in the dramatic struggle between the guilty mother and the inquisitorial son, he really signalizes the passing of the influences of Flaubert.³

On the whole, Maupassant does not appear to have been influenced greatly by authors of the naturalistic school, aside from Flaubert. For Zola, whose lack of practical sense he ridiculed,⁴ whom he called "absolument fou" because of his colossal conceit,⁵ and to whose followers he was an object of suspicion for a time because of his supposed lack of devotion to the naturalistic cause,⁶ his feelings were perhaps as friendly as for any of the other realists. It was at Zola's suggestion that Maupassant contributed to the *Soirées de Médan*, conforming readily to the Decameron-like framework which was proposed and preserving the volume from obscurity by his *Boule de Suif*.⁷

Suspicious for a time of Alphonse Daudet,⁸ Maupassant never appears to have become intimate with him. Nevertheless, early in

¹ *Un Lâche*, in *Contes du Jour et de la Nuit*, p. 113. Cf. *Bel-Ami*, p. 238.

² *Revue Bleue*, XLIII, June 29, 1889 (3d series, No. 26).

³ *Ibid.* Brunetière, adopting a different point of view, concludes that Maupassant, once he has passed the early stage of excessive imitation of his master, surpasses all his contemporaries of the naturalistic school, being more realistic than Flaubert himself (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, LXXXIX [1888, 3d series], 694, 696). Havard's opinion of *Mont-Oriol* is quoted by Lumbroso, *op. cit.*, p. 417: "Vous donnez là, avec une puissance inouïe, une nouvelle note que j'avais devinée en vous depuis longtemps. J'avais senti ces accents de tendresse et d'émotion suprême dans *Au Printemps*, *Miss Harriet*, *Yvette*, et ailleurs."

⁴ Letter to Flaubert, in *Boule de Suif*, p. cvii (July 5, 1878).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. cxx (April 24, 1879).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. cxix (February 26, 1879).

⁷ E. Maynial, *op. cit.*, pp. 105, 106.

⁸ Cf. n. 3.

his career, Maupassant aligned himself with Daudet and the other realists who depicted the lower strata of life. He thus became for a time one of the most ardent apologists for "bas-fondmanie," which he claimed was only a natural reaction against excessive idealism.¹

Despite the ardor of the young convert, there were at first two opposite tendencies in Maupassant. We find him, on the one hand, insisting that the novelist must "faire le monde tel qu'il le voit, lever les voiles de grâce et d'honnêteté,"² and attacking even more violently "la sentimentalité ronflante des romantiques."³ On the other hand in *Mlle Fifi*, as well as in *Boule de Suif*, he really adopts the favorite Romantic theme of the courtesan, ennobled by love and other lofty sentiments—the theme of *Marion Delorme*, revived in *La Dame aux camélias*. "Des filles épousées deviennent en peu de temps de remarquables femmes du monde,"⁴ pleads Maupassant.

It was Daudet who brought him thoroughly to the true realistic point of view. After reading Daudet's *Les Femmes d'artistes*, which he calls "ce petit livre, si cruel et si beau,"⁵ we find Maupassant speaking with a certain disgust of the "fréquentation constante de cette race de dindes qu'on nomme les modèles."⁶ In imitation of Daudet, he published, in December, 1883, his story entitled *Le Modèle*, dealing with the frequent marriages between painters and their models. Henceforth we shall find him, like the other naturalists, tending to depict the horrible side of life for its own sake, without veneer or idealization.⁷

Had Jules de Goncourt lived, it is impossible to predict what his relations with Guy de Maupassant would have been. Certainly they had much in common, from their aristocratic birth to the bromides and *douches* to which both were obliged to submit in their respective sanitariums. The surviving brother of Jules de Goncourt,

¹ E. Maynial, *op. cit.* p. 282.

² Réponse à M. Francisque Sarcey, in *Mlle Fifi*, p. 277.

³ *Les Soirées de Médan—Comment ce livre a été fait*, in *Boule de Suif*, p. 82.

⁴ Réponse à Sarcey, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

⁵ *Le Modèle*, in *Le Rosier de Madame Husson*, p. 75.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 76: "Elle a risqué le tout pour le tout. Était-elle sincère? Aimait-elle Jean? Sait-on jamais cela? Qui donc pourra déterminer d'une façon précise ce qu'il y a d'âpreté, et ce qu'il y a de réel dans les actes des femmes? . . . Elles sont emportées, criminelles, dévouées, admirables, et ignobles, pour obéir à d'insaisissables émotions. . . ."

Edmond, delighted in making carping criticisms of Maupassant, and spent much of his time wondering why he was considered a simple gentleman and amateur writer, while Maupassant was taken seriously.¹

It must be granted that the direct influence of the philosopher Taine upon Maupassant, as far as it existed, was exerted principally through his books. In the latter part of his life, Taine became one of Maupassant's warm admirers and is said to have exclaimed, on finishing *Le Champ d'Oliviers*, "Cela, c'est de l'Eschyle."² However, sufficient attention has not yet been paid by critics to the fact that the real intimacy between the two writers began only in 1888, after an introduction at Aix-les-Bains in Savoy, through the intermediary of Dr. Cazalis.³ Previously to that time it seems that Maupassant had observed Taine only from a distance, as when he described him attending the afternoon receptions of Flaubert, "le regard caché derrière ses lunettes, l'allure timide," but with "son œil perçant de philosophe."⁴

The fact that this acquaintance was slight during the period of Maupassant's greatest activity points strongly to the conclusion that Taine's influence may have been slighter than M. Giraud would estimate.⁵ To answer his oft-cited statement, it may suffice to call attention to a few well-established facts. There is evidence that it was Flaubert, rather than Taine, who persuaded Maupassant to abandon verse-writing and become a novelist. It is true that when Maupassant speaks of "ces petits faits insignifiants . . . qui forment le fond même, le trame de l'existence,"⁶ he approaches closely the language of the Preface to the *Intelligence*. However, on the whole, Brunetière is correct in tracing Maupassant's attention to what has been called "l'humble vérité" to Flaubert rather than to Taine.⁷

¹ E. Maynial, *op. cit.*, pp. 207 ff.

² A. Lumbroso, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ V. Giraud, *loc. cit.*

⁵ V. Giraud, *op. cit.*, p. 189: "À tous ces écrivains, dont quelques-uns ont débuté par des vers et qui, peut-être, auraient pu continuer dans cette voie, il a persuadé que la forme du roman leur fournissait le meilleur et le plus moderne emploi de leur talent; . . . il leur a appris à regarder autour d'eux et même au-dessous d'eux, à ne rien dédaigner de ce que l'un d'eux a appelé 'l'humble vérité.' . . ."

⁶ *Mlle Perle*, in *La Petite Roque*, p. 135.

⁷ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, LXX (1885, 3d series), 215. Cf. *Mademoiselle Cocotte*, in *Clair de Lune*, pp. 128-129: "Les choses les plus simples, les plus humbles, sont parfois celles qui nous mordent le plus au cœur."

When Maupassant notes that the door of the *Folies-Bergères* is "une porte matelassée à battants garnis de cuir," or that at the theater one sees of the persons seated in the *loges* only "leur tête et leur poitrine," he is, declares Brunetière, following the regular procedure of *Madame Bovary*, *Éducation sentimentale* and *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Furthermore, so far as the question of studying the lower strata of humanity was concerned, we find Maupassant and Taine absolutely at variance. In his *Réponse à M. Francisque Sarcey*, Maupassant quotes the following passage from a letter from Taine, "dont je ne partage point l'opinion":

. . . Vous peignez des paysans, des petits bourgeois, des ouvriers, des étudiants et des filles. Vous peindrez sans doute un jour la classe cultivée, la haute bourgeoisie, ingénieurs, médecins, professeurs, grands industriels et commerçants.

A mon sens, la civilisation est une puissance. Un homme né dans l'aisance, héritier de trois ou quatre générations honnêtes, laborieuses et rangées, a plus de chances d'être probe, délicat et instruit. L'honneur et l'esprit sont toujours plus ou moins des plantes de serre.

Cette doctrine est bien aristocratique, mais elle est expérimentale. . . .¹

Moreover, the affinity between the determinism of Taine and the fatalism² of Maupassant may well have been due to indirect influences, if not to a certain similarity of temperament which manifested itself toward the close of the lives of each.³

The relationship between Maupassant and Paul Bourget, who was his friend and occasionally his travelling companion, seems important. There is an incontestable connection between the plots of Maupassant's *Fort comme la Mort* and Bourget's *Le Fantôme*, due to oral transmission if we are to accept the story published by Lumbroso.⁴ Mme Lecomte du Nouy, it appears, when she deserted Bourget to

¹ *Mlle Fiñ*, p. 276.

² "Les gens calmes nés sans instincts violents, vivent honnêtes, par nécessité. Le devoir est facile à ceux que ne torturent jamais les désirs enragés. Je vois des petites bourgeoises au sang froid, aux mœurs rigides, d'un esprit moyen et d'un cœur modéré, pousser des cris d'indignation quand elles apprennent les fautes des femmes tombées. . . .

"Mais chez ceux-là que le hasard a fait passionnés, madame, les sens sont invincibles. Pouvez-vous arrêter le vent, pouvez-vous arrêter la mer démontée?" From *L'Enfant*, in the collection entitled *Clair de Lune*, p. 233.

³ "Peut-être aussi pourrait-on noter que vers la fin Guy de Maupassant—tout comme Hippolyte Taine—s'attendrissait singulièrement; mais dans ce dernier fait, on pourrait voir plutôt l'action des mêmes causes extérieures (le malaise social, l'expérience grandissante de la vie) qu'une influence réciproque." A. Lumbroso, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

⁴ A. Lumbroso, *op. cit.*, pp. 332, 333.

become intimate with Maupassant, communicated to him the plot of *Le Fantôme*, which Bourget had outlined to her, but did not utilize until 1900–1901. Bourget's *Un Cœur de Femme* and Maupassant's *Notre Cœur* have also related themes, possibly for the reason suggested in Lumbroso's valuable volume, that both authors have taken for their heroine Mme Lecomte du Nouy.¹ An attempt will now be made to determine, more clearly than has been done heretofore, the obligations of Maupassant to Bourget. In drawing our conclusions it should be borne in mind that while Maupassant borrowed heavily from other writers, mainly Flaubert, Bourget, who possessed the advantage of a wider range of reading, was no less an offender. Hence, while seeking to discover traces of Bourget's influence upon Maupassant, we should be mentally prepared to find the source current flowing from Maupassant to Bourget.

Let us consider first the most important resemblances between *Le Fantôme* and *Fort comme la Mort*. Maupassant's novel relates the love of the painter Olivier Bertin for the Countess de Guilleroy. When Annette, the daughter of the Countess, reaches maturity, she reveals a startling likeness to what her mother had been when Bertin first met her. The painter falls in love with Annette, guilty though he feels in so doing.

This theme finds practically a twofold version in Bourget's *Le Fantôme*. M. d'Andiguiet, who had blamelessly loved Antoinette Duvernay for nearly fifteen years,² nine years after her death became enamored of the daughter Éveline, who made the deceased lady seem very present to him, "so great was the resemblance in silhouette, in gestures, in physiognomy."³ It develops later that Malclerc, who marries Éveline, had previously been the paramour of Antoinette.⁴ It is the remarkable likeness of daughter to mother which attracts him irresistibly to Éveline.⁵

There is a serious objection to accepting the story published by Lumbroso of Maupassant's indebtedness to Bourget for this theme. As early as January, 1883, a full year before Bourget wrote his first published story in England, *L'Irréparable*, there appeared in *Gil-Blas*

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 334. Cf. E. Maynial, *op. cit.*, p. 203, and n. 3.

² Paul Bourget, *Le Fantôme*, in *Œuvres Complètes*, VI (Plon ed. [1906]), 153.

³ See also *ibid.*, p. 177.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

Maupassant's *M. Jocaste*, which apparently had no connection with the *Jocaste* of Anatole France (1879). It was the story of Pierre Martel, who had loved a young married woman. Years afterward he met the daughter, and fell in love with her at once because of her resemblance to the dead mother. "It was she! the other! the one who was dead!"¹ Her age was exactly the same as her mother's had been; hers were the same eyes, hair, figure, and voice as her mother had had. Pierre Martel's passion became uncontrollable.

The only important dissimilarity in the two stories is that Bourget's *Éveline* is not the daughter of Malclerc, whereas in *M. Jocaste* the case is probably different. The title chosen by Maupassant, *M. Jocaste*, is guaranty that the more repulsive—and "realistic"—version of the story goes back to earliest antiquity.

Even more suggestive of the subject of Bourget's *Le Fantôme* is Maupassant's *Fini*, which appeared in *Le Gaulois*, July, 1885. The Count de Lormerin had been in love with Lise. Twenty-five years later he met the daughter, who looked exactly like her mother at the same age, only younger, fresher, more childlike.² Similarly, Malclerc finds *Éveline* younger, with rounder cheeks, and animated by more childlike gaiety than Antoinette.³ Lormerin is seized with

¹ *M. Jocaste*, in the collection entitled *Mlle Fifi*, p. 263.

There are also cases in Maupassant's earlier works where the man is intimate with the mother, and marries the daughter later, without regard to any resemblance between the two. In *Bel-Ami*, Mme Walter is the mistress of Du Roy, who afterward elopes with her daughter Suzanne. In one of Maupassant's later stories, *Hautot Père et Fils* (*La Main Gauche*, p. 73), the rôles are reversed. "Mam'zelle" Donet, who has been the mistress of Hautot père, is about to have the same relation with Hautot fils, a situation comparable to that in Zola's *La Curée*.

Incest is a frequent theme with Maupassant. See *L'Ermite*, in *La Petite Roque*, p. 106: "J'avais fait, sans le vouloir, pis que ces êtres ignobles. J'étais entré dans la couche de ma fille." In *Le Port* (*La Main Gauche*, p. 216): "Il la sentait sur lui, enlacée à lui, chaude et terrifiée, sa sœur!"

The preoccupation of Maupassant for the fate of outcasts from society is one of his noteworthy characteristics. Cf. also *Un Fils* (*Contes de la Bécasse*, pp. 195-213).

² *Fini*, in *Œuvres Posthumes*, I, 241.

³ Paul Bourget, *op. cit.*, p. 229. Six years or more before the publication of *Le Fantôme*, there appeared also an expurgated American version of the story, entitled *The Honorable Peter Stirling*, by Paul Leicester Ford (Copyright, Henry Holt & Co., 1894). When a young man, Peter had asked the hand of Miss Pierce after a very brief acquaintance (p. 29), having been especially attracted by her slate-colored eyes (p. 20). Years later he met the daughter Leonore, whom he rescued from a runaway accident. Amid the excitement of the occasion, his most vivid impression was that "the girl had slate-colored eyes!" (p. 202). As a matter of fact, she resembled her father Watts D'Alloi more than she did her mother. "But to Peter," the author observes, "it was merely the renewal of his dream" (p. 204).

The subject is treated also by Maurice Donnay, in *L'Autre Danger* (Paris, 1906). Cf. A. Lumbroso, *op. cit.*, p. 333, n. 2. In Act III, scene 11, we learn that Freydières, who

an irresistible desire to embrace the girl and whisper into her ear, "Bonjour, Lison."

It is true that in *Cruelle Énigme* (1885)¹ Bourget speaks of the kind of melancholy inspired by the spectacle of a mother of fifty, to whom her daughter of twenty-five bears such a striking resemblance that "l'une se trouve ainsi présenter le spectre anticipé de la vieillesse de l'autre." Yet the palm for the fully developed story of the man who loves the daughter because of her extraordinary resemblance to the mother, seems clearly to belong more to Maupassant than to Bourget.

The main subject of *Le Fantôme* is not the only thing which Bourget borrows from Maupassant in order to make double use of it. He apparently does as much with Maupassant's favorite episode, the unhappy discovery of old letters and souvenirs. M. d'Andiguiet, after the death of Antoinette Duvernay, finds an envelope of white leather, tied with ribbons, on which Mme Duvernay has written: "For my dear M. d'Andiguiet, who will destroy the envelope *just as it is*. . . ."² After a moral struggle, he complies with the wishes of the deceased. All is not well, however, for in a short time Éveline Malclerc discovers her husband, after perusing in distracted fashion a bundle of old letters, loading his revolver to commit suicide.³ She rushes to D'Andiguiet for counsel, and matters are patched up for a time, Malclerc delivering his old correspondence with Antoinette into the hands of D'Andiguiet. One day, unfortunately, Éveline succeeds in prying into the drawer where D'Andiguiet had locked up the letters.⁴ In the catastrophe that follows both Malclerc and Éveline would prefer to die, were it not for the premature birth of a son, which gives them something to live for.

Bourget also made use of this episode in an earlier novel, *André Cornélis* (1887), in which the influence of a variety of writers, notably the authors of *David Copperfield* and of *Hamlet*, is apparent. The central problem is intended as a modern parallel to *Hamlet*,⁵ with a

later weds Madeleine Jadain, has been the lover of her mother. A strong physical resemblance of Madeleine to her mother is hinted at in Act II, scene 3, but this feature of the plot is not emphasized.

¹ *Œuvres Complètes*, I, 5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

² Paul Bourget, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 352-54.

⁵ *André Cornélis* (*Œuvres Complètes*, I, 312).

soliloquy of the hero on the question "to be or not to be," his hand on the trigger of a pistol,¹ with a nineteenth-century substitute for the players, who performed before the guilty stepfather,² with André as the avenger of his father's foul and most unnatural murder,³ his faltering resolution being occasionally awakened by some startling event.⁴ Borrowing an idea from Maupassant, Bourget makes of the letters of André's father, or rather of the room in which André read them, the ghost which summoned the hero to action. "C'était comme si le fantôme de l'assassiné fut sorti de son tombeau pour me supplier de tenir la promesse de vengeance jurée tant de fois à sa mémoire."⁵ Unlike D'Andiguiers, he has not obeyed the entreaty of the dying woman who would have him burn the letters, in order to spare him the suspicions which they have engendered in her.⁶ The evidence which is thus produced results in André's own unhappiness, if also in the punishment of his father's assassin.

A variation of the episode is found in *Le Disciple*,⁷ when Charlotte de Jussat, forcing the lock, goes through the papers of Greslou. She declares: "J'ai été trop punie, puisque j'ai lu dans ces pages ce que j'y ai lu."

Bourget is probably under obligations for this theme to Maupassant, for whom the subject of old letters and souvenirs apparently had a horrible fascination, and who in turn doubtless derived his suggestion from two episodes in *Madame Bovary*. "Oh! ne touchez jamais à ce meuble, à ce cimetière, des correspondances d'autrefois, si vous tenez à la vie!"⁸ he exclaims in *Suicides*. In *Une Vie*,⁹ the baron Simon-Jacques Le Perthuis des Vauds warns his daughter to burn her own letters, her mother's, his own, all. Nothing is more

¹ *André Cornélis* (*Œuvres complètes*, I, 412).

² *Ibid.*, p. 400.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 348.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 341, 350 ff.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 365. For further examples of the influence of Shakespeare upon Bourget, see the Shakespeare library described in *Le Disciple* (*Œuvres complètes*, III, 78 ff.). In *Un Crime d'Amour* (*Œuvres*, I, 276), there is a quotation from a speech of Lady Macbeth. On the following page there is a reference to the "Hamletisme" of Armand.

⁶ *André Cornélis*, pp. 361 ff.

⁷ *Le Disciple* (1889), p. 205.

⁸ *Suicides*, in *Les Sœurs Rondoli*, p. 235.

⁹ For old love letters discovered by Jeanne, see E. Maynial in *Revue Bleue*, LXXII (October 31, 1903), 606.

terrible, he asserts, than to nose into the history of one's youth.¹ Despite this admonition, Jeanne is doomed to discover the love letters of her dead mother and undergo the bitterest dissillusionment.²

One other feature of *Le Fantôme*, the physical aversion which Malclerc feels for Éveline during her pregnancy, is suggestive of Maupassant. Paul Bretigny, in *Mont-Oriol*, is also of the race of lovers, and not of fathers.³

In the case of the connection between *Un Cœur de Femme* and *Notre Cœur*, apparently Maupassant was under obligations to Bourget. The problem involved in the two novels is essentially the same, and concerns the dual nature of humanity. As Lord Herbert Bohun sums up the situation at the close of Bourget's *Cœur de Femme*, Juliette de Tillières is a woman who has a sensual love for Casal, without ceasing to entertain a certain sentimental feeling for Poyanne.⁴

While conceding the credit for this theme to Bourget, rather than to Maupassant, let us admit at the outset that Bourget himself was in turn doubtless influenced by Laclos, not forgetting that also in *Un Crime d'Amour*, Bourget refers more than once to the Valmont of the *Liaisons*.⁵ As Doumic remarks: "L'attrait qui porte Casal

¹ *Une Vie*, p. 228.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 240-243. This motif is combined with that of utter weariness over the monotony of life in *Suicides (Les Sœurs Rondoli*, pp. 237-239), where M. X— commits suicide after perusing his old correspondence. He had been led to drag his skeleton out of the closet by reflections on his humdrum existence (p. 232): "Tous les jours, à la même heure depuis trente ans, je me lève; et, dans le même restaurant, depuis trente ans, je mange aux mêmes heures les mêmes plats apportés par des garçons différents."

Monotony of existence is the theme of several other stories by Maupassant. In *Promenade (Yvette*, p. 202) appears the case of M. Leras who passes through the same daily routine for forty years. After brooding over the hopelessness of his situation, he hangs himself by the suspenders in the *Bois (ibid.*, p. 211). A similarly sad outlook is depicted in *Garçon, un Bock (Miss Harriet*, p. 235): "Je me lève à midi. Je viens ici, je déjeune, je bois des bocks, j'attends la nuit, je dîne, je bois des bocks. . . . Depuis dix ans, j'ai bien passé six années sur cette banquette, dans mon coin; et le reste dans mon lit, jamais ailleurs." Miss Agnes R. Riddell, in her unpublished thesis on *Flaubert and Maupassant: A Literary Relationship*, compares this incident with *M. Parent*, pp. 49-52, 62, 72-73. She thinks that the hero of *Garçon, un Bock* is modeled on Reginbart, in *Flaubert's Éducation sentimentale*, pp. 55, 246, 319-320, 564-565. In her opinion, Maupassant's references to old love letters and souvenirs hark back to *Madame Bovary*, where Rodolphe is described as cynically looking over the relics of his love affair with Emma, and remarking: "Quel tas de blagues!" (pp. 278-280). After Emma's death, Charles finds her love letters to Léon and to Rodolphe, with the result that life loses all interest for him. The people surmise that he "s'enfermait pour boire" (*ibid.*, pp. 478-479).

³ Paul Bourget, *op. cit.*, p. 303. Cf. *Mont-Oriol*, p. 256.

⁴ *Un Cœur de Femme (Œuvres Complètes*, III, 499, 500).

⁵ *Un Crime d'Amour (Œuvres*, I, 159, 164).

vers Mme de Tillières, dans *Cœur de Femme*, est le même qui faisait souhaiter au roué des *Liaisons* l'amour d'une dévote."¹ However, after due allowance is made for the influence of the famous picture of eighteenth century morals, the fact remains that in *Cœur de Femme* Bourget is at least on familiar ground. The main problem of the woman cherishing sentimental reveries on the one hand, but yielding to ungovernable appetite for sensations on the other, is also that of Thérèse, in *Cruelle Énigme* (1885).² There are numerous other references in Bourget's works to the dual conflict which is the heritage of man, the matter being of paramount importance in the character of Robert Greslou, *Le Disciple*.

The conclusion toward which this discussion points is that the literary obligations existing between Bourget and Maupassant were more important than Maynial, for example, seems prepared to concede. Despite his reserve, however, Maynial admits readily that the authors must without doubt have communicated to each other, in the course of their conversations, the ideas, if not the actual plots, of certain of their works.³ From the evidence at hand, the general direction of this literary influence appears most often to have been from Maupassant to Bourget.

Before leaving the matter of Maupassant's influence, mention should be made of at least two of his stories which may have furnished suggestions to Rudyard Kipling. *Misti*,⁴ a tale which appeared in *Gil-Blas* in January, 1884, concerns a pet cat—called "Mouton"—with almost human attributes, intelligent as a child, and so idolatrous of his mistress that he made more than a fetish of her. Kipling's Bimi, the all too affectionate pet orang-outang of Bertran, French "king of beasts—tamer men,"⁵ possessed similar human endowment: "Den I felt at der back of my neck der fingers of Bimi," declares Hans Breitmann. "Mein Gott! I tell you dot he talked through dose fingers. It was der deaf-and-dumb alphabet all gocomplete. . . ." Mouton, more subtly, slept on his mistress' pillow, where she could hear his heart beat.

¹ *Portraits d'Écrivains*, II (1909), 14.

² *Cruelle Énigme* (*Œuvres*, I, 82). Cf. p. 113 ff.

³ E. Maynial, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

⁴ Collection entitled *Yvette*, pp. 273-283.

⁵ *Bertran and Bimi*, in *Life's Handicap* (Doubleday, Page & Co., 1913), X, 336-342.

One day, when a young man made love to Mouton's mistress, and embraced her, as one embraces when one loves, suddenly Mouton uttered a never-to-be-forgotten cry, and tore out the eyes of his rival. Bimi was slower to act. For a time after the marriage of Bertran he merely sulked, till one day, in the absence of his master, he killed the woman of whom he was madly jealous.

The conclusion of *Bertran and Bimi* has certain features in common with Maupassant's *Un Loup*,¹ which appeared in *Le Gaulois* in 1882. The mysterious wolf, which seemed to think like a man, was the cause of the death of Jean d'Arville. Jean's younger brother, François, drove the monster to bay, charging him, cutlass in hand. Then, seizing the beast by the neck, without even making use of his weapon, François strangled him slowly, listening to his dying breath and to the weakening pulsations of his heart. Furious as was François for the death of his brother, he was no more so than Bertran for the loss of his wife. "Now you know der formula of der strength of der orang-outang—it is more as seven to one in relation to man," is the calculation of Hans Breitmann. "But Bertran, he haf killed Bimi mit sooch dings as Gott gif him. Dat was der miracle."

Perhaps the most conspicuous cases of imitation of Maupassant are to be found in the work of Gabriele D'Annunzio.² In the *Novelle della Pescara*, for instance, borrowings are made from Maupassant which Lumbroso does not hesitate to brand as plagiarisms. Maynial employs a milder term, although he does not contest the fact of the resemblances in question. And certainly the close imitation of Flaubert by Maupassant—even in such a passage as the rendezvous of *Bel-Ami* at the church of the Trinity, modeled on the cathedral scene in *Madame Bovary*—is slight compared with the imitation of Maupassant by D'Annunzio, in his more reminiscent moods.

However, we should not insist too much upon the influence of Maupassant, despite the enormous sale of his books. As M. Giraud justly observes, his influence was far below that of Taine, for example,

¹ *Clair de Lune*, pp. 39 ff. Incidents of the *Misti* and *Bertran and Bimi* type are occasionally found in real life. A friend vouches for the following occurrence, which happened while he was a student at a German university. A young student, accompanied by his pet collie, went for a walk with his mistress. The details of the difficulty that followed are not perfectly clear, but at any rate the dog—whether through jealousy or not—attacked the woman, and was with difficulty prevented from killing her.

² A. Lumbroso, *op. cit.*, pp. 519–545.

although Taine apparently had not one-tenth as many readers as Maupassant.¹

Furthermore, if Maupassant's influence upon his contemporaries is easily exaggerated, so was his own indebtedness to other writers not excessive, after all. The limit which he deliberately set upon his field of production was at once a source of strength, as well as of weakness.² In fact, after due allowance has been made for all literary influences, including that of Flaubert, it must be owned that his principal source was his own observations. For him, as for the other realists, the most important part of the preparation for his stories was the taking of notes, despite the contention of Paul Bourget to the contrary.³ It is this matter which will be discussed in an article to be published shortly.

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¹ Victor Giraud, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

² *Œuvres posthumes*, II, 100 (*Essai sur Flaubert*).

³ A. Lombroso, *op. cit.*, p. 612 (*Souvenirs intimes de M. Ch. Lapiere*).

[CORRECTION.—*Modern Philology*, XIV, 163: for "Villemessant" read: "A protégé of Villemessant."]