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Mazeppa-Maseppa: Migration of a Romantic motif

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Mazeppa (1640–1710), The Ukrainian leader and folk-hero, has a controversial history, and a distinct presence in literature and the graphic arts. Byron's poem (1819) of the legendary figure's "wild ride" released a mythical energy which absorbed certain French poets and painters of the 19th century. While the Russian tradition, at least from Pushkin's *Poltava* (1828), re-worked the historical Ukrainian hetman from a Tsarist and nationalist perspective, the myth of the Western Romantic Mazeppa is best realised by Delacroix, perhaps in anticipation of the displacement of the horse by Faustian technology. Mazeppa becomes a Romantic Phaethon, shifted from the transcendent to the mundane, from a vertical to a horizontal trajectory. Early in the century Mazeppa had also become a figure and theme of popular spectacle and literature, incorporated by the common imagination into politics, journalism and folklore, coming to terms with a new Faustian context. A small group of poets of the 1920s and 1930s return in different Modernist ways to the theme. The coda of this selective survey is sounded in South Africa.

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Romanticism

With the publication of Byron's poem *Mazeppa* in May 1819, the Ukrainian hero bursts anew into the western European imagination. Deriving direct from Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII* (1731) and *Histoire de la Russie sous le règne de Pierre le Grand* (1759) Byron's poem deals with both the historical and the legendary Mazeppa (1644–1709), as does its source. The historical figure is the Ukrainian folk-hero, anathema to both Tsarist and Soviet Russia. Although he was at times loyal to Peter the Great, Emperor of Russia, the historical Mazeppa, in his efforts to maintain his country's independence (and his own power?), eventually sided with Charles XII of Sweden, and with him suffered defeat at the battle of Poltava on 8th July 1709. The battle, in Voltaire's account, is a great Enlightenment crisis, fought out on *les frontières de l'Europe*—but most of the explicit political energy is drained from the Romantic Mazeppa. Ukraine (Little Russia) disappears from Voltaire's narrative, Byron's poem and the French paintings of the nineteenth century which derive from Byron, as it disappeared into the Tsarist and Soviet empires, until its re-emergence in the last decade of the twentieth century. Yet Byron himself was exploring the frontiers of Europe. "There is no hope for nations!", as he wrote in the "Ode on Venice" (l.104),

and as Mazeppa, facing the Tzarist and Ottoman Empires, and the imperial ambitions of Charles XII, seems to learn.

The legendary Mazeppa is a young page at the Polish court of King Casimir who, for an indiscretion with the young wife of an old nobleman, is strapped naked to the back of a wild “Tartar” horse, which is sent galloping off across the steppes. After four headlong days the horse dies under its burden, who is rescued by a Cossack maiden and survives to become Hetman of the Ukraine. This is an instance of what Mercea Eliade calls “‘mythicisation’ of historical personages” (39).¹ The “ride” is charged with symbolic power. Mazeppa, like Géricault’s chasseur, in Kenneth Clark’s words, “does not so much dominate and control his horse as unite himself with its elemental energy; he is immersed in it and part of it. Through this union he becomes heroic” (Clark, *Civilization* 132). The heroine of Byron’s poem is Theresa (for Theresa Giuccoli) and Mazeppa is a figure of the poet himself, punished by his countrymen and sent into exile, but the mode of the poem is dramatic monologue within narrative, rather than lyric, and the romantic energy is tempered by enlightenment irony, at moments recalling Johnson and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*.² Fictional accounts of Mazeppa make selective use of Mazeppa’s history, but, after Byron, the figure is iconically identified with the “wild ride” (Babinski 3).

The nightmare headlong gallop, itself an instance of purgation through suffering, becomes a journey to and back from the edge of the abyss, even a type of the voyage of life: a Romantic topos—Cowper’s “John Gilpin”, Burns’ “Tam O’Shanter”, Washington Irving’s Ichabod Crane in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, the Steenie Steenson of Scott’s *Redgauntlet*, Pringle’s “Afar in the Desert”, Gustave Moreau’s “Cavalier écosais” (Musée Gustave Moreau, Paris)—and Mazeppa is, for a brief era, particularly in the work of Byron’s followers, a type of the heroic Romantic artist, exiled and reviled (for passion and commitment) in one dispensation, only to survive into the praise and recognition of another.

Amadée Pichot’s French translation of Byron’s *Mazeppa* was published in 1819, and caused a sensation. Géricault who on 27th December 1821 returned to Paris from England, where he had absorbed the work of Byron, was the first to respond. In a lithograph made with Eugène Lami, and an oil sketch, Géricault illustrates the moment from Byron’s poem at which man and horse cross a river on to “a boundless plain” which “Spreads through the shadow of the night” (XV 4–5), close to the nadir of the hero’s journey. Charged by the artist’s possible personal commitment to the figure, Géricault’s Mazeppa has the power of a crucifixion or a *pieta* (see Aimé-Azam). *Géricault réduit la scène aux deux protagonistes* (Bazin 44). The most powerful of the images would have a similar focus and concentration. Louis Boulanger’s *Mazeppa* (Oil on canvas: 1827? Musée Fabre, Montpellier) is without any of the trappings of the story—no horse, no ropes, no wolves, no ravens, no Cossack maiden. The picture nonetheless conveys something of the potential of the legend by giving the figure a heroic and

sculptural cast: this body stretched on the ground in a tortuous pose forced on him by his four days' ride recalls Prometheus bound to his rock as much as it recalls Mazeppa.

Hugo's "Mazeppa", published in *Les Orientales* in 1829, although inspired by Byron, from whom it takes its epigraph—"Away, away!"—is dedicated to Boulanger, who made more than one image of Mazeppa. Hugo's vision is a selection from rather than a concentration of the resources of the image: "In Hugo's poem, vision absorbs everything, and one no longer has two terms, distinct and set in relation, but [...] a 'symbol': there, 'takes place the fusion of moral idea in physical image.'" (Ablouy, in Hugo, 1330; quoting Leroux)³

Although in Byron's poem Charles compares the old Hetman and his mount to Alexander and Bucephalus (101–04), Bruno Sibora argues that Byron's man and horse on the 'wild ride' form a centaur, whereas Hugo's recall Bellerophon and Pegasus (Sibora 14). Mythic potential is replaced by lyricism and symbolism, while the sublime and gothic elements of the narrative are highlighted. Hugo's Orientalism was in Edward Said's terms that of "a gifted enthusiast" (31), for whom "the Orient is a form of release, a place of original opportunity [...] One always returned to the Orient..." (167) In the "Préface" to *Les Orientales* Hugo wrote that "Space and time are the poet's [...] The poet is free [...] The Orient, whether as image or as thought, has become for the intellect as well as for the imagination, a kind of general preoccupation which the writer of this book has obeyed, perhaps without his knowing it."⁴

The "Mazeppa" of Jules, Comte de Resseguier, first published in the third edition of *Tableaux Poétiques* in late spring, 1829, two weeks after Hugo's *Les Orientales* (Babinski 62), is concerned to evoke rather than interpret the wild ride, and begins *in medias res*, but takes the hero all the way to the arms of the Cossack maiden at the end.

In the *Salon* of 1845 Baudelaire wrote that Hugo had betrayed Romanticism and highjacked Mazeppa:

These are the last ruins of the old Romanticism. This is what it means to arrive in an era when it is accepted belief that inspiration suffices for and replaces everything else; there is the abyss to which leads the chaotic ride of Mazeppa.—It is M. Victor Hugo who has misled M. Boulanger after having misled so many others.—It is the poet who has tumbled the painter into the ditch. (qu. Rouen 15)⁵

But before the ruination, shortly after the death of Géricault and in his immediate wake, the most prolific and energetic of the French painters of the nineteenth century to engage with the legend had made his Mazeppa. Partly because he turned more than once to the subject and partly because he left some record of his thinking in his *Journals*, Delacroix best enables us to understand the general appeal and significance of the legend of the man carried naked on a wild horse into the waste. It was because, momentarily, the legend embodied something of cultural significance for Europe as

a whole at a particular historical moment, that many artists were engaged by Byron's original insight and imagination.

In this respect Delacroix found both model and inspiration in Géricault. An oil painting which seems to have been Delacroix's major statement of the theme has not been seen since 1896: "He is strapped on a horse at full gallop across the plain, under a sky lit by an irradiation of conflagration. To the right, in the valley, wild horses flee." (qu. Johnson I, 207); "Notice the great pack of horses approaching from afar to the right." (Ann in Johnson I, 207)⁶

These notes imply a scene from late in Mazeppa's ride; the horses in Ann's note may be those of the Cossacks among whom Mazeppa has fallen, but they could also be the *chevaux affolés* of an earlier moment. The engraving by Robaut after this painting seems to acknowledge the inspiration of Géricault. Lee Johnson thinks that a signed water-colour in Helsinki (c.1824? Ateneum Taidemuseo) "represents Mazeppa at approximately the same moment in the narrative as in the painting" (I, 207), although the ominous bird in the sky suggests a later incident, and the horse is on a downward trajectory rather than struggling upwards, as in the Robaut engraving.⁷

The relationship between animals and human beings inspired some of Delacroix's great paintings, and led him to profound observations about his art: he noted in his *Journal*: "Art does not consist in copying nature, but in recreating it, and this applies particularly to the representation of animals" and he wrote further of horses: "One mustn't aim at the perfection of the naturalists" (quoted in Clark, *Animals and Men* 42). Two of Delacroix's journal entries may bring us closer to an understanding of the Mazeppa legend in its historical setting, and of its attraction for his contemporaries. In March 1824 when he seems to have been working on one of his versions of Mazeppa, probably the big painting, Delacroix wrote: "Thinking, in working on my Mazeppa, of what I say in my note of 20th February, in this journal, that is to say, copying, as it were, nature in the manner of *Faust*." (quoted in Johnson 207–08)⁸ In making his *Mazeppa* Delacroix thinks of drawing (*calquer*) as it were (*en quelque sorte*) nature in the manner of his own *Faust* illustrations (*dans le genre du Faust*). The entry for 20th February, which refers to these engravings for Goethe's *Faust*, may not unambiguously explain the argument: "Whenever I see again the engravings of *Faust*, I feel a desire to make a new kind of painting, which would consist in copying, in a manner of speaking, nature." (quoted in Johnson, 208)⁹

For Delacroix to represent Faust or Mazeppa, then, is to represent nature itself, which is to represent the *relation* between the human and the natural, yet these two figures relate to nature in diametrically opposed ways: Faust's ambition is to dominate nature and society, while the essence of Mazeppa's ride is, if only momentarily, subjection to and dependence on nature, and alienation from society. The juxtaposition of these two figures in the artist's imagination expresses a historical turning-point. In fact, Goethe's account of one of Delacroix's *Faust* lithographs suggests that the two

figures may be ideologically contrasted. In *Faust and Mephistopheles galloping on Walpurgis Night*, "Faust rides a black horse, which gallops with all its might, and seems as well as its rider, afraid of the spectres under the gallows. They ride so fast that Faust can scarcely keep his seat; the current of air has blown off his cap, which, fastened by straps about his neck, flies far behind him" (Quoted in Arts Council 70). It may be significant that these Mazeppa images were made "before the high-speed camera had revealed the actual sequence of a horse's galloping leap". Mazeppa's horses have "a 'flying' gallop, which is a conceptual rather than a perceptual representation" (Laughton 218n).

The horse is a potent cultural symbol, whose mythical and legendary resonances charge the Mazeppa story:

In many of the shamanistic myths of Inner Asia [where Mazeppa was bound, remember *Les Orientales*] [...] the initiate mounts a white horse and is suddenly carried off, out of control, into the world of the gods, where his initiation takes place. Thus the horse leads man from the world of the tame to the world of the wild, the magic, supernatural world of the gods. (O'Flaherty 467)

These myths and cultural practices arise in particular historical circumstances, and Byron's *Mazeppa* is carried across the continent at the end, in Joseph Campbell's words "of the long majestic day in Europe of the conquering cavalier and his mount" (209). According to Oswald Spengler that day had dawned "in the early centuries of the first millennium BCE, when, somewhere on the broad plains between the Danube and Amur rivers, the riding horse appeared" (quoted in Campbell 209). Across "this flat plain", where "Five centuries ago, an army could march from a castle on the Baltic to a fort on the Black Sea without meeting a physical obstacle greater than a fast-running river or a wide forest" (Applebaum xi), Mazeppa rides. And here with the appearance of the ridden horse, occurred the onset of the first of Spengler's "two great revolutions in the manner of waging war produced by sudden increases in mobility" (Quoted in Campbell 209). The second revolution was occurring even as Byron wrote and Delacroix painted: its completion—depicted according to Joseph Campbell, in Picasso's *Guernica* (208)—achieved "the displacement of the horse by the 'horse power' [and the fire power, one might add] of Faustian technology" (quoted in Campbell 208). Clark expresses this sense of Delacroix's imagination suspended at the end of an era in slightly different terms:

Delacroix's vision of men and animals locked in a conflict where magnificent energy and strength might succumb to the weapons of more evolved humanity, was too strong for the growing humanitarianism of the nineteenth century. (Clark *Animals and Men* 42)

Mazeppa is locked with the horse in a paradox of weaponless conflict and co-operation: he survives, thanks to the horse, into the Cossacks' retention of the old male-dominated order of the horseman. The transition into the modern age of horsepower needs another story for its telling, the story of Faust, "one of the rare modern myths" (Bonney II, 769). De Nerval's translations of Goethe's *Faust* appeared between 1828 and 1840.¹⁰ Mazeppa may be a proto-modern Phaethon, his trajectory shifted from vertical to horizontal, into the Foucauldian dimension of modern space.¹¹ And for the artists Mazeppa's ride anticipates the Freudian unconscious.¹²

The last of the French high art Mazeppas is an oil by Théodore Chassériau (1819–56), "Une jeune fille cosaque trouve Mazeppa évanoui sur le cadavre du cheval auquel il avait été attaché" ("A young Cossack girl finds Mazeppa in a faint on the corpse of the horse to which he had been strapped"—Strasbourg, Musée des Beaux Arts). This captures the hero in the last throes of his journey: before he is kinged but as he is succoured by the Cossack maiden. The qualities are Orientalist, in Hugo's sense, but without the poet's grandiose flamboyance: the painting is anthropological, picturesque, sentimental and elegiac, a farewell to both the figure and his legend, which for a while had engaged French romanticism.

Popular culture, spectacle and fiction

Popular entertainment had very early seized on the sublime, Gothic and spectacular features of Byron's poem, exploiting the story's resources for half a century from the extremes of its imaginative range. A version, now lost, played at the Coburg in London in 1823 and Cuvelier and Chandezon's *Mazeppa: ou le Cheval tartare, melodrama en 3 actes*, at the Cirque Olympique in Paris in 1825, staged by the equestrian Franconi. Henry Milner, when he became house dramatist at Astley's revised his own earlier play, which owed something to the French, with the co-operation of the horseman Ducrow, and *Mazeppa: a Romantic Drama in Three Acts* opened at the Royal Amphitheatre on 4th April (Easter Monday) 1831. John Howard Payne's *Mazeppa; or, the Wild Horse of Tartary* may never have been performed.¹³

Cuvelier and Chandezon's play ("tiré de Lord Byron") precedes Hugo's "Mazeppa" and is the foundation of the adaptation of the hero to popular cultural forms.¹⁴ The "wild ride" of Byron's poem follows on adultery, a story which was modified for the bourgeois and working-class audiences of the hippodromes, where Mazeppa is neither a Pole nor an Ukrainian but a Tartar foundling, captured as a child in the defeat of his people by the Poles, and brought up in the Lawrinski household, where he is re-baptised Casimir and falls in love with Olinska,¹⁵ the Castellan's daughter, betrothed to Premislas the Count Palatine (who is no longer an old man cuckolded by the young Mazeppa). The wild ride comes as Casimir's punishment for challenging his rival. The horse takes Mazeppa back to Tartary, where he is mistaken by the peasants for the

Volpas, a Tartarean phantom horseman, but Abder Khan, the prophet-King recognises him, from *ce nom de Mazeppa gravé* [...] (38).¹⁶ Having foiled a plot against his father, Mazeppa, mounted on a Tartar steed, leads his fellows back to Lawrinski, where Oniska is planning suicide to avoid marriage to the Palatine (echoes of *Romeo and Juliet*). In the guise of gipsy entertainers, the Tartars gain admission to the castle, and defeat the Poles in battle. Mazeppa claims the hand of Olinska, even as she stands at the altar with the Count (echoes of Young Lochinvar), who has loved him all the time.

The legend of the aristocratic and transgressive romantic artist has been displaced into the bourgeois narrative of comic romance, setting intrepid hero against both bumbling clown and treacherous villain and heightening the contrast between Polish (European) sophistication and pride and Tartar (oriental) mystery, energy and honour.¹⁷ In the legendary tradition, Mazeppa's Ukrainian political identity had already faded from the story. In Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII*, Mazeppa is "a Polish gentleman" (as he is in Byron), the horse ("A Tartar of the Ukraine breed" in Byron) is from the Ukraine, to which it returns, and, among the Cossacks, Mazeppa "distinguished himself against the Tartars". From horseback Byron's hero sees scattered battlements "Against the Tartars built of old". The historical co-ordinates of Mazeppa's Ukraine were Peter the Great's Russia, Poland, the Europe of Charles XII, and the Ottoman Empire. For the purposes of exotic spectacle, the geography is simplified: Poland borders on Tartary, the boundary being the River Dnieper.

Delacroix had unleashed the Romantic energy of Mazeppa's ride by focussing on the single horse-man: but Milner and Payne's "hippodramas" were to be played in arenas that combined circus ring and theatre stage, whose space and Faustian machinery made it possible to fulfil such directions as these: "A tremendous storm of thunder and lightning, hail and rain [...] The wild horse gallops off with Mazeppa, R. Music. The storm abates, the sun rises, and the panorama begins to move. The horse, still bearing Mazeppa on his back, is seen wading up the stream from R to L." (Milner 18–19)

In one form or another this *Mazeppa* of melodrama and spectacle filled theatres in North America and Europe for almost 50 years, engaging a number of celebrated performers, among them Ducrow, the Franconis and Adah Isaacs Menken. Menken's cross-dressed performance, wearing what seems to have been a close-fitting flesh-coloured body stocking, so that she appeared naked on the wild ride, was a scandalous transAtlantic success in the 1860s.¹⁸ Escapism, stunning spectacle and cardboard character and plot: nonetheless performances like these met the genuine needs of an urbanising audience working long days in the industrialised imperial economies. The stage could reflect both the actual and the ideal of its spectators.

The same is true of *Mazeppa: a burlesque in one act* of the 1860s,¹⁹ where, in doggerel couplets and a succession of hammer-blow puns, interspersed with comic songs (nonce-lyrics to popular tunes), the plot is reduced to four scenes and the action

confined to a conventional stage. Mazeppa's "wild horse of Tartary" becomes a "*Lowther Arcade* [site of a fashionable toy-shop] *rocking-horse, on wheels*" (19), of which the hero says:

A piece of carrion soon I fear he'll be,
And then, of course, he'll leave off carryin' me. (24)

Mazeppa's rival is a fop, and Abder Khan, weeping, is followed around by a servant who bears "a pile of pocket handkerchiefs" (22). The play is a belly-laughing send-up of the *Mazeppa* legend itself and of melodrama as a genre, taking pot-shots as it goes along at a succession of bourgeois Victorian targets: the exploitation of governesses; young girls of fashion; wives, maids and husbands; smoking; men's clubs; parental discipline; dandies; urban pretension; the snobbery of middle-class pronunciation; horsey men; chimney sweeps; Shakespeare; Tennyson. The text's peppering of topical allusion (to products, places, performers) and its urban idiolect of mid-nineteenth century England make it in some ways less accessible than the melodrama's slower-changing post-Romantic poetic diction.²⁰ Menken herself, the best-known stage Mazeppa, who played the part in the late 1860s, is mocked in a song to the tune "The Sewing Machine" (for the rocking horse, "dreadful see-sawing machine"):

The last sensation out
Is Adah Isaacs Menkeen,
Whose classical style of dress has not
Much troubled the sewing machine. (36)²¹

The sophisticated potential of burlesque is evident at least in one performance which this text reflects. The part of Mazeppa was played by Frederick Robson (1821–64), a "burlesque actor". He was short ("With less than a cubit added to his stature, Mr. Robson would be the first Shakespearean actor of the day.") and the burlesque makes much of this.²² Oniska will "choose a husband I can *look up to*" (7) but falls in love with Mazeppa whom she "must look down on", he's "so short". Robson had played the tapster, in *Boots at the Swan* in 1857, to which a stage direction alludes when Mazeppa is treated as a servant by his rival the Count Palatine: "(à la *Boots at the Swan*) Pint of pale ale, sir? Yes, sir!" (16) Yet in *The Season: a Satire*, a lament for the decline of the Victorian theatre, first published in 1861, Alfred Austin acknowledged this performer as "the great—the only—*tragic* actor we have" and deplored the fact that Robson was playing Mazeppa, lying "in tights on a bare-backed steed stuffed with straw" (44).²³ Others saw the burlesque Robson differently: "a performer who, while other people were burlesquing reality, could put such a startling reality into burlesque [...] it is odd enough that at a time when all serious acting is tending to the burlesque and unreal, a burlesque actor should start up with a real and very serious power in him". Even in parody, "through the medium [...] of doggerel and slang" Robson could

convey emotion “with astonishing force and vigor” (10). For his *Mazeppa*, Robson is the Delacroix of the burlesque theatre.

Mazeppa’s “wild ride”, on which, after Byron, the French poets and painters almost exclusively focussed, remains a high (or low) point of hippodrama and burlesque, but bourgeois expectations required other narrative elements, transmuted from the legend and the history of the Hetman: the young page at the royal court becomes a foundling; adultery becomes courtship, romance and true love; the wished-for political independence of Mazeppa’s people becomes the triumph of Tartary over the Poles, a clash of classes as much as of nations. The stage *Mazeppa* is a “lost child” story, of family and social instability, characteristic of the age of Dickens.

The circumstantial detail of attempted verisimilitude (together with historiographical license) takes the prose fictions even further from the mythical energy of Delacroix. The anonymous *Mazeppa, or, the Wild Horse of the Ukraine, a Romance*, published in book form in 1850, had first appeared as a serial, and combines features of melodrama and burlesque. Under the name Tolozi, Mazeppa serves as a page to a Ukrainian prince who, for a challenge to his authority, administers the horseback punishment, which takes the hero to “the verge of a forest in Tartary” (17). The central threads of the story are Mazeppa’s love for Miaza, the restitution of his noble status, and his revenge on the prince. A comic sub-plot involves Mr Lumpus of High Holborn, “the inventor of the royal patent no-lace-anti-tag-stays, and the inflexible cravat” (86). Having hoped to make a killing in the harem of the Sultan of Turkey, Mr. Lumpus suffers shipwreck, loses his stays and ends up in “Grim Tartary”. After sharing in the adventures of Mazeppa, he returns to High Holborn.

The setting shifts from earth to water in *The Ocean Mazeppa; or, Found at Last*, a popular (“price 1d.”) story of the late 1880s. Picking up some of the political elements of the figure, this is the story of Henry Monteith, a Scottish officer in the Royal Navy who, on a visit to his father on his estate in France, falls in love with Madeleine Navarre, daughter of a next-door neighbour, a French naval officer. When hostilities break out, Henry assumes the role of a French officer and sails aboard *La Minerve* with Captain Navarre, but his letter to Madeleine is intercepted by the Captain and he is imprisoned below decks. In a storm *La Minerve* is wrecked, but Madeleine is picked up by English fishermen, believing her father drowned and despairing for her lover. Madeleine is saved by Rookwood, whose daughter Lucretia is engaged to William Turrell, who has befriended Henry aboard the ship which has saved him, but Henry has lost his memory. The two girls are kidnapped by pirates aboard the *Terror*, and rescued by men from the *Phoenix*. Henry, who has taken the name Malcolm, comes to when he hears Madeleine’s voice. The “wild ride” parallels are made explicit in the description of Henry after the wreck:

[...] the unhappy youth was carried about on his spar, like Mazeppa on his wild steed. To make the simile closer, he, too, was pursued by wolves—the sharks

followed in his wake and hardly turned in their swoop at his feebly splashing the water with his unfettered hands. The sea-birds, too, proved a continual annoyance, so that he almost hailed a storm with pleasure, which swept away the pests, though it buffeted him sorely. (35)²⁴

In Fred Whishaw's novel *Mazeppa* (1902), a more sophisticated narrative with some respect for history, the narrator is Chelminsky, the hero's "cousin in the third degree". The two are "in constant rivalry—whether as lovers, as leaders of our compatriots, or in any other capacity" (1). Having been dismissed from the court of John Casimir for quarrelling with a group of young Poles, the cousins return to their home Volhynia, where both become, honourably, involved with the wife of Falbofsky, a Polish noble, who sets a trap, from which Chelminsky escapes. It is he who tracks Mazeppa (for "twelve or thirteen leagues") and finds him expiring beneath the dead horse. In the final chapter Chelminsky tries to save Mazeppa, who, after Poltava, has taken refuge "in the old ruined mansion of a Pasha, lent him by the Sultan" (333–34) but the hero is eventually poisoned by old enemies loyal to the Tsar.²⁵

The narrative fictional possibilities in the 19th century's re-telling of the European Mazeppa story are nicely contrasted in Gustav Nieritz's "Mazeppa, ein Erzählung" (1842) and F. H. van Leent's novel, *Mazeppa, de Leeuw der Steppen*. (1875) Nieritz takes some Gothic and sentimental liberties to concentrate on the romance, the ride and the revenge. His Mazeppa is a young (Polish) page at the court of the King in Warsaw, who falls in love with Helène, the seventeen-year-old cousin of Count Rubowsky, the Chamberlain. When Mazeppa returns to Warsaw from service abroad with the King, Rubowsky, who has resigned from his court post, invites the young page to visit him at Castle Mnowiz, the rural estate he has inherited, promising him country sports and news of Helène. When Mazeppa arrives there, he does meet Helène, but she is now the wife of the Count, who has manoeuvred her into marriage by lying to her that her young lover has died in a fall from his horse. In a way that Nieritz does not explain, the lovers continue to meet until they are discovered by the Count, who proceeds to the horse-borne punishment. In a spectacular conclusion, Mazeppa has become leader of the Cossacks who saved him at the last minute: having heard of the death of the Countess, he returns to Castle Mnowiz and razes it to the ground. Rubowsky dies in the flames brandishing a life-size doll of Helène, in an attempt to deceive his enemy into dying with him. But Mazeppa finds Helène's remains in the castle crypt. He lives into old age, and never marries.

Nieritz's is an effectively sensationalist version of the story. The ride brings Mazeppa, as in Byron, in and out of consciousness, through stream, storm and river, and, face-to-face with wolves and wild horses. Nieritz adds a passing horse-drawn wagon (130). The etching which illustrates the ride recalls Vernet, but to Gothic setting and melodramatic characterisation Nieritz adds classical touches; Mazeppa's horse is

compared to Alexander's Bucephalus (128, echoing Byron) and the hero to Actaeon (124, 127), and, as the horse wades across a stream, to Tantalus (130). Mazeppa's vengeful burning of the castle is powerfully extrapolated from a few lines of Byron's poem (391–406):

I saw its turrets in a blaze,
Their crackling battlements all cleft,
And the hot lead pour down like rain
From off the scorch'd and black'ning roof,
Whose thickness was not vengeance-proof. (402–06)

Van Leent's Mazeppa is the son of the Count and Countess of Stadnitsky in Poldolia. His mother is killed, and as a young boy, he is kidnapped by gypsies in revenge for his father's cruel murder of an old gypsy. The band visits Warsaw on the occasion of a religious feast and Mazeppa is taken into the king's service as a page. Jealousy drives one of his fellows to frame Mazeppa for the killing of the king's pet monkey Jocko, but the gardener's daughter helps to clear his name and he grows up to be a trusted member of the royal court. As a young man he is sent by the King on a diplomatic mission to the Khan of the Tartars, with whom he concludes a treaty. On the way home Tartars jealous of his success with the Khan trick Mazeppa into breaking into the pavilion (within the harem) of the Tartar queen, but he fights his way out and, separated from his companions, gets back on to the road home. He finds shelter at a ruined castle, in whose count he recognises an unidentifiable enemy. A maid lets slip the name Stadnitsky and Mazeppa recognises her as Minka, his mother's servant, who reveals that Mazeppa is not the son but the step-son of Stadnitsky, the count in whose castle he has found shelter. After the death of his mother in the Saint Sandomir convent Stadnitsky had married a younger woman, sold up and moved to this ruinous border castle. Mazeppa comes to blows with his step-father and, having knocked him senseless, rides on. Lost in the dark he is captured and imprisoned by bandits, who, in league with his stepfather, subject him to the iconic horseback punishment. In the Ukraine, the horse is shot from under its burden by Cossacks, among whom Mazeppa settles, eventually marrying Radetscha, only daughter of the Hetman, to whose office he succeeds.

The Dutch author gives his (ultimately tragic) tale a real context, as in the history of the Poland of John Casimir (56–58). In 1674 the historical Mazeppa, "while he was on a mission to the Khan of the Crimea [...] was captured by Ivan Sirko, the leader [...] of the Zaporozhian kozaks" (Smytniw, 2). History returns in the closing chapters with Mazeppa's final turn against Peter the Great, aiming for *eigen grootheid* ("his own greatness") as *onafhankelijk vorst over de Ukraine* ("independent ruler of the Ukraine", 205). In alliance with Swedish Charles the hero suffers defeat at Poltava, but is granted a brave death and burial with military honours by order of the Tzar (211) rather than the dubious end on a "barren strand" of the Ottoman Empire. Geography is also

particular, although perhaps not entirely accurate: Podolia borders on the Ukraine of the Cossacks, and the land of the Tartars. Stadnitsky seems to move from Podolia to just across the eastern border.²⁶ Mazeppa is a *Poolschen Edelman* ("Polish nobleman", 81), somatically distinguished and sensitive to nature (79). The gypsies are *bontgetooide heidens* ("colourful heathens") whose *donkere gelaatskleur getuigde van hun Oosterschen oorsprong* ("dark complexion testifies to their eastern origin", 9), and *paarden-dieven* (60), while the Tartar Khan keeps slaves and a harem (83).

The Byronic abandon of the "wild ride" is toned down: the wolves and the storm feature, as do shepherds and their dog, and van Leent explains the fording of the river: the horse stumbles into the water. Throughout the ride Mazeppa is haunted by the memory of his mother. Van Leent was a prolific writer of *jeugdliteratuur* (youth literature) stories, including *Het Gestolen Kind: Droeve en blijde dagen* ("The Stolen Child: Sad and happy days", 1903) and his re-telling sets Mazeppa's story firmly in the near archetypal narrative of the lost child. The sentiment and energy are focussed in the re-constituted family, the villain is the stepfather and the crux is the hero's Oedipal bond with his mother.²⁷

Both Nieritz and van Leent will be recalled in 20th century re-tellings.

Fugitive allusions

Mazeppa gave his name to steamboats, locomotives, fire engines and pubs. He became a Staffordshire pottery figure and a trademark, and was emblazoned on snuff-boxes. Byron's yacht was christened *Mazeppa*. At any time in the nineteenth century *Lloyd's Register* might list half-a-dozen sailing vessels of that name, and speed is the spirit of many passing references which nonetheless testify to the figure's currency. Oliver Wendell Holmes's "How the old horse won the bet" quotes Byron and alludes ironically to the Tartar:

"Bring forth the horse!" Alas! He showed
 Not like the one Mazeppa rode;
 Scant-maned, sharp-backed, and shaky-kneed,
 The wreck of what was once a steed. (234)

In "Miss Killmansegg and her precious leg", Hood makes comic use of the image of speed:

Away she gallops!—it's awful work!
 It's faster than Turpin's ride to York,
 On Bess that notable clipper!
 She has circled the ring!—she crosses the Park!
 Mazeppa, although he was stripp'd so stark,
 Mazeppa couldn't outstrip her!

Often the point is the helplessness of Mazeppa, as in Hood's "The Epping Hunt":

And by their side see Huggins ride,
As fast as he could speed:
For, like Mazeppa, he was quite
At mercy of his steed
(Hood II, 317).

This helplessness of "modern" Mazeppas made for good political copy. The cartoonist Nast portrayed Jefferson Davis, the Confederate president, in that way in *Phunny Fellow* in 1862, and the British magazine *Fun* attacked Lincoln, in the Union presidential election of 1864, as carried away "To the Ruins". Nast revived the figure in an attack on Horace Greeley, the Republican presidential nominee in 1872. In the early 1860s, Greeley had denounced Menken's near-naked Mazeppa.²⁸

Occasionally allusion touches on the deeper reaches of the story. Alexander Anderson was a railwayman, a poet who appreciated the mythical potential of steel and steam, for whom the Faustian locomotive was "a man-made Prometheus":

And I shriek in my frenzy "A steed for the gods
Or some Titan Mazeppa to back".

I turn from your creed to this miracled deed
We have set on twin pathways of rods;
And I know that the new flings a blush at the old,
And that my fellows are gods.
("On the Engine (Again)" 133)²⁹

Horace Smith's "account of a very remarkable Aerial Voyage made in the grand Kentucky balloon", gives this a Phaethonic resonance:

[...] we [...] might compare
Our danger with Mazeppa's wretchedness
For our wild steed no curb or check would bear...
("A Poetical Epistle" 195).

J. T. Trowbridge's "Captain Seaborn" (1903), the sole survivor of a disaster at sea, is left afloat on a raft:

Still, like Mazeppa to his horse,
I clung, while, half submerging me,
On foaming shoals with fearful force
The winds and waves were urging me. (280)

There may be some ironic Romantic Mazeppa resonance even in this story. Captain Seaborn makes land and becomes the leader of a tribe of cannibal islanders whom he pacifies and civilises. When he returns to the island many years later he finds himself venerated as a “Son-of-the-Great-Sea-Mother” (283). The islanders are enraged when he disabuses them, but he can do nothing for them:

Nor could I venture more among
The clans of that vicinity,
Because I had with impious tongue
Denied my own divinity. (286)

The populist politics of Mazeppa (as the fighter for Ukrainian—or Tartar— independence) may be touched on in R. E. Egerton-Warburton’s “The Spectre Stag”, in which a German baron, an obsessive huntsman, denies his people any rights or privileges but punishes cruelly any peasant caught poaching:

[...] woe that wretch betided
Who in the quest was found;
On the stag he would have slaughter’d
Was his naked body bound.

Borne like Mazeppa, headlong,
From the panting quarry’s back
He saw the thirsty blood-hounds
Let loose upon his track. (26)

Impiously following a spectral stag one Easter morning, the Baron dies at the jaws of his own blood-hounds.

While the “wild ride” remains the central attraction, other aspects of the story do surface. Under the heading “A Modern Mazeppa” the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1884 reported on Burbank, a young Nebraska Cornishman’s adultery with the wife of his elder partner, Wilson:

[...] Burbank was captured while asleep in bed, by Wilson and three of his men, stripped of every bit of clothing, and bound on the back of a wild bronco, which was started off by vigorous lashing. Before morning Burbank became unconscious [...] the man must have been seven days travelling about the plains on the animal without food, and exposed to the sun and wind. (10)

In the USA Mazeppa was distinctively imagined. Simon Butler was a Kentucky pioneer, whose experience at the hands of Native Americans during the US War of Independence earned him the soubriquet “The American Mazeppa”.³⁰ In 1878 Albert W. Aitken had published *The Indian Mazeppa: or, the Madman of the Plains. A Strange*

Story of the Texan Frontier. Aiken's "Prairie Mazeppa" is Silver Spear, a young "half-breed" (Mexican-Comanche) woman, whose uncle tries to kill her and her brother to prevent them inheriting the hacienda for which he has already tried to murder their father. Silver Spear grows up as Mexican and Christian, her brother as "the White Mustang", leader of the Comanche. The Madman of the Plains, a wild prophet who roams the frontier is revealed to be their father, who, as "the Madman of the Plains" an itinerant desert prophet, survives to kill both his son and his brother before throwing himself off a cliff, pursued by vengeful Comanches. The frontier lies between Mexican and Indian and the story is partly built on an ethnic and somatic hierarchy which descends from "American" (Gilbert Vance, the gentleman Mustanger and Davy Crockett, "the border lion"), through Mexicans to Comanches. In the resolution the Mexican beauty marries the American adventurer and the heroine marries her "half-breed" first cousin. The female Mazeppa may recall Menken, and the story, another "lost child" tale, is charged with melodrama and spectacle, and the archetypal assimilateness of popular culture.³¹ In 1907 *Buffalo Bill Stories*, a weekly "devoted to border life", ran a cover story of "Buffalo Bill's Mazeppa Ride or the Robber League of the Panhandle" in which "With gleeful and vindictive cries the outlaws drive the wild horse into the terrible desert with Buffalo Bill bound to its back". Again, these fusions prolong the life of differing mythopoeic energies.

Joaquin Miller's Byronesque "The Tale of the Tall Alcalde" (1909) tells the story of the love of the hero for Winnema, a California "Indian" maiden. Miller, who himself married a Native American woman and was an acquaintance of Menken, writes of his poem:

The story is not new, having been written, or at least lived in every mountain land of intermixed races that has been: a young outlaw in love with a wild mountain beauty, his battles for her people against his own, the capture, prison, brave release, flight, return, and revenge—a sort of modified Mazeppa. (Miller 90)

This is no longer simply the Mazeppa of history or even Byron's hero, who had quite soon become an inclusive Romantic figure. In the late 1820s Bold Jack Donahoe (b.1805) perhaps the earliest Bushranger, led a gang that terrorised parts of New South Wales until he was shot dead by a soldier in 1830. Colonel Sir Thomas Mitchell made a drawing of Donahoe dead, which he inscribed with a quotation from Byron's poem:

No matter; I have bared my brow
Full in Death's face—before—and now. (567–68)³²

Throughout the 19th century the figure maintained this negotiable symbolic currency.

In Western European literature nonetheless there had been an attempt to keep the legendary Mazeppa distinct from the historical. Merimée in 1884 acknowledged that "The story of the wild horse which carried him to the home of the Zaporogian

[Cossacks] is a pretty tradition not supported by any credible evidence." (83)³³ Mazeppa was "the last Hetman of the Ukraine who tried to regain the independence of his nation" (82–83), but "Today only a few privileges without great importance form the only distinction between the Cossacks and the other subjects of the Russian Empire" (89).³⁴ Writing shortly before the First World War, on the eve of Modernism, de Vogüé sustains the image of an enigmatic figure who had tragically misinterpreted "the exigencies of his age" (70) but for whom "poetry reserved [...] a kingdom he knew not of—one more enviable, and certainly more permanent than those which are the sport of policy" (71).

Modernism: some 20th century poets

Brecht's "Ballade vom Mazeppa" is a young man's bravura poem: written when he was 18 and first published in Berlin in 1923, seven years later, it was collected as one of the "Chroniken" in the ironically named *Hauspostille* (Book of family devotions) first published in 1927.³⁵ Brecht was influenced by the French symbolists, and probably knew Hugo's poem and possibly Freiligrath's German translation of Byron, but he also admired the exotic machismo of Kipling. The genre of Brecht's poem recalls the Romantic revival of folk forms, and its almost anonymous hero (apart from the title) becomes the common man rather than the isolated artist.

On the one hand Brecht sustains the tradition of the *bänkelsänger*, 18th and 19th century street singers, whom he could still have heard in the Augsburg of his youth, recounters of *Moritaten* (from *Mordtat*—murderous deed), sensational stories of passion and violence.³⁶ Brecht sought to reproduce their rough-and-ready rhythms with the diction of the pioneer and the cowboy. Mazeppa is referred to only as "he" except when he is "the bound one" or "the living bait". He may "ride" (*reiten*) but he is not *der Reiter*, he is without noble connotations. Vultures wait for him to die like an animal (for his *Verrecken*). The horse is *Pferd* and *Ross* (mount or steed) but also, twice, *der Gaul* (the nag), or a butcher's tray (*Teller*) carrying *das lebende Aas*. In the conclusion man and horse ride together into an ambiguous "eternal peace", but the verb *einreiten*, to ride into, may also suggest "to break down, to overturn, to break in".³⁷

On the other hand the poem anticipates some features of Brecht's mature aesthetic, and in this way achieves power and dignity. The rhythmically insistent repetition—the phrase "*Drei Tage...*" begins six of the poem's eleven stanzas—concentrates existentially on the ride, so that there is a focus, recalling Delacroix, on man and horse alone in the cosmos. There is no retrospect to the ride, which is thus neither a punishment for a past transgression nor a prelude to triumph. With no hint of the Countess or the Cossack maiden, the only female reference in the poem is to compare the horse to a woman: "Blind und vertweifelt und true wie ein Weib." ("Blind and perplexed and loyal as a wife.") Brecht's Mazeppa is like Rembrandt's *The Polish Rider*

in monochrome: rather than a trajectory or a journey, the ride becomes a human condition, an epic *gestus*.

The editors of *Gedichte* (vol. II of the *Werke*) claim that Brecht's source is Nieritz's "erzählung" of 1842. Brecht gives a completely different colour, even to the ride, which forms the central section (128–32) of Nieritz's account, but there are some echoes too.³⁸

Campbell's "Mazeppa" (1930) deriving, as he acknowledged, from Victor Hugo rather than from Byron, like both Hugo's and de Resseguier's, says nothing of any original misdemeanour, and omits both significant female figures from the story. Campbell, like Hugo again, begins with the first moment of the punishment of a pathetic figure. Horse and victim gallop like a kind of centaur through the waste. For one stanza Campbell contemplates his hero from the perspective and in the language of the *vaquero*, the *caballero*, the mounted hunter, figuring himself as outsider in what later in the poem he will call "the world we know" (97).

The South African poet's reading of the story is both symbolic and projective, suggesting that he figures himself as Mazeppa. By the end of the poem, the horse is no longer a mundane, though wild, Ukrainian courser returning to its home, and the centaur has become Pegasus, the mythical embodiment of inspiration, imagination and creativity. The "they" (87) who cannot hear the approach of the winged horse become the "We [who] only know" (105) of the ultimate triumph of genius.

Campbell imagines that the artist as heroic individual must suffer rejection, pain and doubt, as a condition of (his) being. Yet what isolates him also distinguishes him: hence the artist's upside-down perspective on the world. This combination of sensibility and experience takes genius to the extremes of human possibility. The term common to tenour and vehicle of the image is the union of man and horse. "Mazeppa" also suggests a pattern of the process of poesis itself. Campbell acknowledges the historical context of his hero in such atmospheric terms as "Tartar prince" (67) and "cossacks" (71).

Unaware of the Ukrainian *origins* of Mazeppa, Campbell projected himself into his hero: in the 1920s, rejected by and himself rejecting South Africa, he sought recognition elsewhere. This personal psychological charge helped Campbell to identify imaginatively with Mazeppa.

The poem is an early expression of the allegiance which Campbell claimed, along with Boers, Red Indians, cowboys and cossacks, to the brotherhood he called the "equestrian nation" (*Collected Works III* 382).³⁹ But the poem identifies him with a tradition of South African English verse springing from Pringle's "Afar in the Desert", another poem which opens with a ride into the waste and closes in proximity to the divine.⁴⁰ The poem's historical energy may derive more particularly from the ride of Dick King, and the escape of the schooner *Mazeppa*, both undertaken to save a British force from the besieging boers in 1842. That King's horse, Somerset, died under him as he reached Grahamstown, recalled Byron's Mazeppa.

In his "Mazeppa", then, Roy Campbell transmutes the energy of nostalgic colonial historiography even as he aligns himself with the alternative French symbolist poetic tradition. Into his version of Hugo's metaphor of Mazeppa as the isolated genius, Campbell projects himself. If King's ride and the voyage of the *Mazeppa* saved Natal for civilisation, Campbell in his putative rebellion against his provincial upbringing claimed that heroic role for himself.

As in Brecht and Campbell, the hero's name occurs only in the title of Evan Shipman's "Mazeppa" (1936), the most allusive and enigmatic of the modernist avatars, but the ride, as an ironic metaphor for the poet's life, or a stage of it, is one thread of the poem's ordering. This off-beat blank verse Rimbaudesque vision of *recherché* diction is also a *bricolage* of memories, the diary of a guilt-ridden alcoholic, the jottings of a horse-fancier and the confessions of a train-jumper. Shipman was a member of Gertrude Stein's "lost generation" and a friend of Hemingway, so one trajectory of the poem suggests the passage from the hopeful peace of 1918 to the shock of the depression.

As if waking to a hangover (Josephson 854) the poem opens in the glare of "a drab world". The speaker "finds a mirror Neither customary nor astonishing": for him "The fire is out; I pissed on it". Yet he proceeds to "gather the blooms". He recalls the years of "Dekalkamania peace and the rencontres" but despair and death ("the train's unavoidable wreck" (290) always threaten: even though memory gives faces and names to friends and lovers past, his company now is spectral only. As the ride becomes more explicit in the poem, the ashes of the fire of passing life encase man and horse:

Until it is a centaur racing through chaos
As a clown tumbles though a paper hoop. (291)

Soon the ride, whose destination and purpose are always changing, has become a charabanc trip to the cemetery (292) and a "lingering death" (293). There is a hint of Hugo and Campbell here: that the horse is the poet's imagination and his art, both compensation and companion, at once a means of escaping and facing reality. The horse is not responsible for the thongs that "cut deeply into the flesh", nor that its burden is "dizzy with the ferocious pace" (294). So the poet absolves his own imagination.

As a young man Shipman had followed the horses, not simply as a punter, but as a hand in a trotting stable touring New England county fairs (Josephson 841). This is evoked in the final section of the poem.

Billiard balls click, freights wail messages,
Horses are jogging on the dew-damp track.

Yet here too, as he resolves the contradictory energies of his poem, Shipman fuses the equestrian dream and the mechanical actuality:

Now, far down, the approaching spurt of smoke
 Is suddenly the passing of the express,
 The crash before the gape of emptiness.
 I revenged myself on all the lonely hours,
 Your body was so white there in the dawn!
 And always on the outskirts of small towns
 We tossed the bottles into the brush,
 Tightened our belts, ran beside the red
 Easily rocking hulk that promised distance.
 Good-bye to ghosts. The lights swing suddenly out. (295)

These three poets respond in creative, original and distinctive ways to the Mazeppa motif. Brecht's modernism is sombre, gritty and macho: Campbell's a neo-Romantic appropriation with individual psychological, cultural and verbal flourish: Shipman's idiosyncratic, inventive, elusive.

In 1950 the Catholic poet Rob Lyle (b.1920), published a sonnet whose Christ-like Mazeppa may be the last modern embodiment. As in the poems of Hugo and Roy Campbell, Lyle's colleague and mentor, the poem falls into two parts: image and application. The octave (in the present tense) evokes the ride:

His drama is the drama of the soul
 That has the burning body for its steed...

While the sestet (in the past tense) imagines resurrection:

But still he rose, a phoenix of the flesh,
 The flower of suffering by pain renewed!

South African Coda

J. J. Groeneweg's *Mazeppa, die Leeu van die Grasvlaktes* ("Mazeppa, the Lion of the Steppes", 1929) is a novel for young readers, and an adaptation of van Leent. The hero is the young son of Count Stadnisky, who is kidnapped by gypsies, in revenge for his father's cruelty. Under the name Lako, he visits Warsaw with his band, to exploit the opportunities offered by the crowds thronging the city on the day of the king's coronation. Chance enables Lako to prevent the king's horse stumbling during the procession, and he is taken into the royal service as a page. Jealousy incites one of his fellows to betray him and Lako is driven from the court.

He makes his way back to Stadnisky, where he is taken in by Ulrika, the innkeeper. From a birthmark on his right arm, she recognises him as Mazeppa, and warns him against the wrath of his father, who has isolated himself in his castle and given out that the Countess is dead. Convinced, by the sight of what the peasants believe to be

ghosts on the battlements, that his mother is in fact alive, Mazeppa visits the castle by night, but is captured, strapped to a *wilde perd van die steppe* ("wild horse of the steppes," 65) and driven out into the wilderness. Days later he is spotted by Cossacks, who shoot the horse from under him and take the young man in as one of their own. Soon Mazeppa has fallen in love with Helena, daughter of the Hetman, and with the help of two young Cossack friends, rescues his mother from the dungeon in which she has been held by her husband for many years. The Count, by now *onherstelbaar kranksinning* (lit. "irreparably mad"; "incurably mad" 203), is detained at his majesty's pleasure, the Countess continues as chatelaine of Stadnisky, and Mazeppa returns to the land of the Cossacks to marry Helena.

In his foreword Groeneweg claimed in his youth to have read the history of Mazeppa: although he had forgotten much of it, he had remembered the essentials. The novel takes some recognisable liberties. There is no mention of the Ukraine, Mazeppa is Polish, becomes a *dapper Russiese generaal* ("brave Russian general"), and dies in a war against the Turks, who honour him with the name *die Leeu van die Grasvlaktes*. A visitor to Stadnisky in 1929 could still see the graves of Helena and Mazeppa.⁴¹ In effect this history of Mazeppa, like van Leent's seems to derive from the popular tradition of melodrama and fiction. The gypsies recall the hippodramas of the early 19th century, and the Count and Countess of Stadnisky recall the Rutowskys of Nieritz's story. Groeneweg's name for Mazeppa's beloved is the same as Nieritz's, but this Afrikaans novel for young readers continues the "stolen child" motif.

Groeneweg has been recognised for "the romantic depiction of exotic lands and cultures at a time when not many other sources existed from which the young Afrikaans reader could become acquainted with the outside world" (Wybenga, Daan 261).⁴² Thus the writer sympathetically explains exotic culture in terms of South African experience *die uitgestrekte, oneindige Russiese grassteppe* ("the extensive, unending Russian steppes") are *net so oneindig as die Afrikaanse vlaktes* ("are just as unending as the African plains," 65). "In South Africa it can be hot but in Russia in high summer, the sun burns with equally strong scorching rays as there" (141).⁴³ Groeneweg insists on somatic discriminations which either answer to or are designed to shape his young readers' expectations. The gypsies (*perdediewe*, "horse thieves") are not Europeans *want hulle gelaatskleur is koffiebruin en hulle oë swart* ("because their complexion is coffee-brown and their eyes black," 3) Although they seem to earn their living by music, dance and fortune-telling, "yet it is certain that after their departure there are farmers, who miss one or other of their horses" (4).⁴⁴ Mazeppa is blond: during his captivity the gypsies, to make him one of them, rub him with 'n *soort olie* ("some kind of oil," 53). The King tells Mazeppa: "You cannot possibly be a gipsy. You have blonde hair and blue eyes" (24).⁴⁵ Unlike the Stadnisky villagers Mazeppa enjoys *die skoonheid van die natuur* ("the beauty of nature," 45). When the young Cossacks hunt white wolves, Groeneweg explains: "Among all species, including humans, albinos occur,

snow-white specimens with red eyes. Who of us has not seen a white kaffir? But a white wolf is a great rarity" (152).⁴⁶

Groeneweg's novel is a close contemporary of the Mazeppa poems of Brecht, Campbell and Shipman, but the South African resonance of Mazeppa which moved Campbell finds an echo elsewhere, in toponymy and folklore. In 1905 Stephanus Coetzee Botha gave the name *Mazeppa* to his farm south of Middelburg, Cape. The farmhouse lies about 200 metres west of the road from Graaff-Reinet. On a rock-face on the eastern side of the road, facing the house, is painted a white horse, with the inscription: *88 jaar oud* (88 years old). The horse is believed to have been there for a long time, and according to Mr P. F. ("Oom Frikkie") Aucamp it was painted by a bored road-worker one Sunday afternoon in 1940, when a road engineer, Mr Wheeler, had a camp at Ventershoek, just below the Lootsberg Pass, on the Middelburg side. Whatever the motive of the bored road-worker, his fresco harmonizes with local folklore, in which Stephanus Coetzee Botha is subjected to a transformation so as to conform to the demands of legend. He becomes Stephen Petrus Botha, who "fought on both sides" during the South African War of 1899–1902: perhaps this double allegiance is expressed in the two Christian names, one English and one Afrikaans. When his support of the British is discovered by fellow Afrikaners shortly before the peace, he is judged by a commando near Rosmead Junction and punished by being strapped naked to a white horse which is sent galloping back to the family farm.⁴⁷ The name *Mazeppa* then recalls Botha's punishment, but also alludes to the original Ukrainian, striving for the integrity of his homeland, and torn between opposing sides. But the hero of this story is a Botha, and Mrs Anna Botha, the widow of Hendrik Botha, of Middelburg, her two daughters and three sons were among the survivors of the Trichardt trek, brought to Port Natal from Delagoa Bay on board the *Mazeppa* in 1839. And John Owen Smith, of Port Elizabeth, the owner of the *Mazeppa*, owned farms in the Middelburg district in the 1850s.

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Notes

1. "[...] no sooner is [the hero's] historical personality received into the popular memory than it is abolished and his biography is reconstructed in accordance with the norms of myth" (Eliade 40). The alleged adultery seems to descend from the jealous invention of Jan Pasek, a rival and contemporary of Mazeppa at the court of John Casimir (Chukhlib).

2. This selective account acknowledges but does not deal with all the many historical, legendary Mazeppas imagined in the literatures of eastern and western Europe: for example, in Russian, the narrative poems of Ryleev (*Voynarovskiy* 1825) and Pushkin (*Poltava* 1828); the tragedies, in Polish, of Slowacki and in German, of Loewe and Gottschall, and works in Italian.
3. "Dans le poème de Hugo, la vision absorbe tout, et l'on a, non plus une comparaison entre deux termes distincts et mis en rapports, mais... un 'symbole': là, "s'opère la fusion de l'idée morale dans l'image physique". (Ablouy, in Hugo, 1330; quoting Leroux) All translations from the original are mine.
4. "L'espace et le temps est au poète [...] Le poète est libre [...] L'Orient, soit comme image, soit comme pensée, est devenu, pour les intelligences autant que pour les imaginations, une sorte de préoccupation générale à laquelle l'auteur de ce livre a obéi peut-être à son insu" (Hugo 577, 580).
5. "Voilà les dernières ruines de l'ancien romantisme. Voilà ce que c'est de venir dans un temps où il est reçu de croire que l'inspiration suffit et remplace le reste; voilà l'abîme où mène la course désordonnée de Mazeppa.—C'est M. Victor Hugo qui a perdu M. Boulanger après en avoir perdu tant d'autres—C'est le poète qui a fait tomber le peintre dans la fosse." (qu. Rouen 15)
6. "Il est attaché, sur un cheval lancé au galop, à travers la plaine, sous un ciel qui s'éclaire d'un irradiement d'incendie. A droite, dans la vallée, des chevaux affolés s'enfuient." (qu. Johnson I, 207); "Signaler l'énorme bande de chevaux qui arrive de loin à droite." (R. Ann, in Johnson I, 207)
7. Delacroix also left a number of small sketches (now in the Musée Magnin, Dijon) on or about the theme: *Deux études d'homme nu, l'un attaché à un cheval, l'autre tombant de cheval* (pen and brown ink on paper: 517); *Personnages liant un homme sur la croupe d'un cheval* (pen and brown ink on paper: 518); *un cheval, ayant un homme nu lié sur son dos, traversant une rivière* (black lead on paper) 1824? (519) In the Musée Magnin, is another pencil sketch of the moment captured in Boulanger's *Supplice*: "Mazeppa being tied to the horse, with the palace in the background" (black lead on paper) 1824? Early in his narrative in Byron's poem the old man looks back on his vengeful razing of the Count's castle (X, 379–422). Delacroix seems to have contemplated another Mazeppa picture on this theme: "Les imprécations de Mazeppa contre ceux qui l'ont attaché à son coursier, avec le chateau du Palatin renversé dans ses fondements." ("The imprecations of Mazeppa against those who had strapped him to his horse, with the castle of the Palatine razed to its foundations." *Journal*, I, 60).
8. "Pensant, en faisant mon Mazeppa, à ce que je dis dans ma note du 20 février, dans ce cahier, c'est-à-dire calquer en quelque sorte la nature dans le genre du *Faust*." (qu. in Johnson, 207–08)
9. "Toutes les fois que je revois les gravures du *Faust*, je me sens de l'envie de faire une nouvelle peinture, qui consisterait à calquer pour ainsi dire la nature." (quoted in Johnson, 208)
10. Perhaps this is the turning point marked by Carlyle's "Close thy Byron: open thy Goethe". Jemima Blackburn, the Scottish painter of Mazeppas admired by Ruskin, may have sensed something of the implication of the motif as I have sketched it: she also painted "Plough Horses Startled by a Railway Engine" (R. A., now lost: Fairley letter), suggesting a theme which recurs elsewhere, as in some painters of the westward expansion of the USA (Oscar Bennington, Charles M. Russell), and in a Currier and Ives print ("Westward the Course of Empire takes its Way"), in which the mounted Native Americans look on as the railroad heads west.
11. Elements of the story are prefigured in the rejection of Bellerophon when he tries to fly to Olympus, mounted on Pegasus.
12. Bruno Sibora quotes from a letter to Friess in which Freud gives an account of his writing of *The Interpretation of Dreams*: "It completely follows the dictates of the unconscious, on the well-known principle of Itzig, the Sunday rider: 'Itzig, where are you going?' 'Do I know? Ask the horse.' I did not start a single paragraph knowing where I would end up." (319) This recalls "The horse knows the way", from "Over the River and through the Woods", Lydia Maria Child's poem of 1844, which became the title of one of John O'Hara's books of short stories. In Australia the motif recurs. Banjo Patterson's Man from Snowy River "let the pony have his head". Colin Heggie the South Australian wine-farmer would ride his horse into the pub for an evening's drinking: "if he stayed in the saddle his horse would find the way home..." (Jones 204). More recently a Sydney beer ad evoked the authority of the past: "When the horse was the designated driver." The association with intoxicating liquor may be significant.
13. Payne's play is indebted to the French for much more than its title, to the extent that it is a translation more than an adaptation. Milner owes a great deal to the French but remains an alternative text. Payne shows a tendency to the genteel, which may result from his reliance on the

- French: for “casket” and “dagger” (Milner 32), Payne has *cofferet* and *poniard* (194). From the French he retains some Polish local colour (*Vaivode*, local ruler or military commander, 195: “St. Casimir”, patron saint, 197) and heightens the exotic with *scimitar* (185), and “slaves” (190).
14. In fact Hugo’s poem owes something to the *Mimodrame*. See, for example the “Chanson Tartare” (30) and Mazeppa’s speech as he is revived at the end of the wild ride (44).
 15. In Astley’s *Mazeppa* of 1831 the heroine was Theresia (from Byron’s *Theresa*).
 16. “...engraved in Arabic letters on his right arm” (Milner 26; “graven” in Payne 171).
 17. Byron seems, without prejudice, to anticipate this ethnic contrast: of Theresa, Mazeppa says: “She had the Asiatic eye, / Such as our Turkish neighbourhood, / Hath mingled with our Polish blood, / Dark, as above us is the sky; / But through it stole a tender light, / Like the first moonrise of midnight...” (208–13). Byron’s Charles compares Mazeppa as a warrior to the Scythian (101–05).
 18. Menken was a celebrity, married to, among others, a prize fighter: she was an acquaintance, in San Francisco, of Bret Harte, Joaquin Miller, and Mark Twain; in England, of Dickens, Charles Reade, and Swinburne (Mankowitz).
 19. The copy in the State Library of New South Wales is missing its cover and title-page: the cataloguer’s OCLC-derived dating, “186_?” is confirmed internally and by other texts. In Bologna in 1850 the Gran Teatro Comunitativo offered a programme including “tre melodrammi[...] *Macbeth—Luisa Miller—Mazeppa...*”
 20. Laurinski’s “native ballad chaunter” is to be given “Of Port, South African, a small decanter” while “The foreign fiddler *must* have the *best* dishes, Claret, Champagne, and anything he wishes.” (4) Despite championing the Tartar cause, the play flirts with colonial ethnic attitudes. Mazeppa sings a song to the tune of “The Nigger’s History of the World” and Laurinski threatens Olinska, when she is reluctant to accept the Count’s suit: “A halter settler is the halter-native.” (14)
 21. *Mazeppa or Bound to Win* (“A ridiculous one-horse burlesque in Three Hacks”) was published in 1885.
 22. Reviewers’ comments on Robson are from Mullin (389–92).
 23. Austin was appointed Poet Laureate in 1896; he was ridiculed for his ode on the Jameson Raid.
 24. Anticipated in Byron’s poem: “I felt as on a plank at sea, When all the waves that dash o’er thee, At the same time upheave and whelm, And hurl thee towards a desert realm” (553–56).
 25. “Mr. Wishaw is an expert chronicler of historical-adventure stories [...] well compacted of love, politics, and fighting.” (From *Academy*, of the writer’s *A Forbidden Name* quoted in the end-papers of *Mazeppa*.) In general outline Wishaw’s version of Mazeppa’s story is confirmed by De Vogüé.
 26. Podolia, now in the Ukraine, was a province of Poland, and bordered, in the east, on the land of the Zaporogian Cossacks, to the east of which lay the Khanate of Crimea. (Haywood 4.13)
 27. Van Leent’s image of Mazeppa’s mother and stepfather may be transpositions of history. Mazeppa’s “pious mother [...] became the Abbess Mary Magdalen of the Voznesensk convent in Kyiv [...]” Mazeppa himself married a widow in “a marriage of convenience, inasmuch as she brought her second husband vast properties and a substantial income from the estates. Although the marriage lasted over thirty years, Hanna did not have any children and kept herself in seclusion [...]” (Smyrniw 2, 14).
 28. Ernest H. Shepard drew Hitler as the wild horse making off with Germany as Mazeppa.
 29. “I who have within a vigour equal to all fabled pow’r, / And the soul of mad Prometheus, with his cunning for a dow’r.” (“On the Engine in the Night-Time” 141). Anderson also quotes Carlyle’s “Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe” (46).
 30. Butler was the subject of a drawing by Millet (1852) (Czestochowski pl. 52).
 31. Aitken’s novel was based on his own play, produced in New York in 1870, *The Red Mazeppa or, The Wild Horse of Tartary* (Smyrniw 16).
 32. The lines come after Mazeppa and the horse have emerged from “the wild wood” (464) and are about to cross “the wilder stream” (582). Mitchell’s drawing may recall the prone Promethean Mazeppa of Boulanger.
 33. “L’histoire du cheval sauvage qui l’emporta chez les Zaporogues est une très-jolie tradition qui, malheureusement, n’est attestée par aucun témoignage contemporain digne de foi” (Merimée 83).
 34. “Le dernier des atamans de l’Ukraine qui ait essayé de reconquérir l’indépendance de sa nation” (82–83); “Aujourd’hui quelques privilèges sans grande importance forment la seule distinction entre les Cosaques et les autres sujets de l’Empire Russe” (89).

35. Privately printed under the title *Taschenpostille* (Pocket book of family devotions) in 1926. I rely on volume II (*Gedichte I: Sammlungen 1918–1838*) of the *Werke* of 1988 and *Die Hauspostille/Manual of Piety: A Bilingual Edition* (English text by Eric Bentley and notes by Hugo Schmidt) of 1966.
36. *Bänkelsänger* were also known as *Avisensänger* (report singers?) or *Marktsänger*. (market singers).
37. Hugo Schmidt's claim in a note that Brecht's Mazeppa, uniquely, "dies during his ride" (304), seems to me to be one possibility, rather than a certainty.
38. The general vocabulary is germane to the subject. Not unexpectedly Nieritz uses *Pferd* and *Ross*, but, towards the end of his account, also *Gaul*. The verb *trug* (from *tragen* to carry) occurs in both: Nieritz uses *peischte* (from *peischen* to whip), Brecht has *aufpeischte*. Both use the word *Aas*, Nieritz for the corpse of the horse under Mazeppa, Brecht, apparently, for man and horse.
39. Elsewhere Campbell imagined himself in an image that recalls the Mazeppa/Faust nexus: "Against a regiment I oppose a brain / And a dark horse against an armoured train" (*Collected Works I* 300).
40. The romantic version of this figure is elsewhere in 19th century South African verse. A. Brodrick's "Jong Koekemoer" (1875) (in Butler and Mann, 60) is a humorous version of Scott's "Lochinvar", and F.W. Reitz's "Klaas Geswind en sy perd" of Burns' "Tam o' Shanter" (Opperman 1). C. J. Langenhoven "imitated" Cowper in "'n Pêrelse John Gilpin" (Langenhoven 264–70).
41. Poles are said to have emigrated to America in Mazeppa's time (Groeneweg 35, 50); the Cossacks drink camel's milk (85); there is some confusion as to whether a gipsy is literate or not (12, 161, 163).
42. "[D]ie romantiese uitbeelding van eksotiese lande en kulture in 'n tyd toe daar nie baie ander bronne vir die Afrikaanse jeugleser bestaan het om met die buitewêreld kennis te maak nie" (Wybenga, Daan 261).
43. "In Suid-Afrika kan dit warm wees, maar in Rusland in die volle somer, brand die son met ewe sterk versengende strale as daar ..." (Groeneweg 141).
44. "[T]og is dit seker dat na hulle vertrek daar boere is, wat een of ander van hulle perde mis" (Groeneweg 4).
45. "[...] jy kan onmoontlik 'n sigeuner wees. Jy het blonde hare en blou oe!" (Groeneweg 24).
46. "Onder al die diersoorte, ook onder mense, kom albieno's voor, spierwit eksemplare met rooi oe. Wie van ons het nooit 'n wit kaffer gesien nie? Maar 'n wit wolf is en bly 'n groot seldsaamheid." (Groeneweg 152) The wild horse is called "die wit duiwel" (the white devil) (Groeneweg 66, 68).
47. Interview with Mrs Peggy Torr, Bultfontyn, Middelburg, E. Cape, July, 1994. Letter from Mrs. Hester du Toit, Curatrix, Middelburg Cultural History Museum dated 25th November 1996.

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