MAZEPPA'S HORSE:
A CASE OF ANGLO-FRENCH INTERTEXTUALITY
(VOLTAIRE-BYRON-HUGO)

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to reassess the value of the horse-figure in the tale of Mazeppa. The study begins with an attempt to establish the status of the tale as a Romantic myth in Western European culture and identifies four texts as a corpus of study: Voltaire’s *Histoire de Charles XII, roi de Suède*, Lord Byron’s *Mazeppa*, its translation into French by Amédée Pichot and, finally, Victor Hugo’s ‘Mazeppa’ from his collection *Les Orientales*. Using methodologies derived from the history of ideas, psychoanalysis, and contextual and intertextual approaches, it is proposed that these four texts form a chain of meaning. The texts are examined at symbolic, structural and textual levels. At these levels, the concepts of the ‘centaur complex’ and the ‘Pegasus complex’ are introduced, enabling the outline of the horse as a representation of poetic inspiration and genius to emerge. This appears implicitly or explicitly in the texts and is effected through a dialectical process of fusion and inversion occurring within the man-animal relationship.

As a result, the horse becomes not only a thematic link, or ‘bridge’, horizontally tying the chain of texts together, but it also endorses, within each text, a deeper, vertical function supporting metapoetic meaning and thus reaching the field of poetic ontology. The figurative horse is the ‘real’ creative surge for each writer within himself and between each text. Poetic creation springs from a hollow wound which the horse, representing the urge of expression, comes to fill and heal. This language transcends nationalities, but, as the story of Mazeppa was written both in English and in French, and also for other methodological reasons, the thesis is distinctively comparative. However, the double function of the horse implies that each text is studied on its own as well as in relation to the other texts of the corpus.
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THE FACE OF THE HORSE

[...]
And if a man should see
The horse's magical face,
He would tear out his own impotent tongue
And give it to the horse. For
This magical creature is surely worthy of it.

Nikolaï Alekseevich Zabolotsky


LONGING TO BE A RED INDIAN

Oh to be a Red Indian, instantly prepared, and astride one's galloping mount, leaning into the wind, to skim with each fleeting quivering touch over the quivering ground, till one shed the spurs, for there were no spurs, till one flung off the reins, for there were no reins, and could barely see the land unfurl as a smooth shorn heath before one, now that horse's neck and horse's head were gone.

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A/ METHODOLOGY AS THE TROJAN HORSE:

When poets want to talk or write about their own artistic practice, in other words when they are involved in a metapoetic activity, they are faced with a choice between two ways which could be compared to some extent with the 'dry' and the 'wet' ways of the alchemists, or with the 'ethereal' or the 'material' ways of the Alexandrine gnostics and the Cathars: either they theorise their art or they figure it, putting it into images. Of course, one could argue that it is not always so simple, that they often do both at the same time (a typical example of this fusion is to be found in Boileau's Satires). However, I would like to take as a basic postulation that, in any single text, there is a degree of differentiation between the two levels; furthermore, I shall argue that this degree is particularly interesting in the works of Voltaire, Byron and Hugo.

Hugo, the only one of the three chosen authors to have a consciously metapoetic discourse within the text in question, felt the need to write a second part commenting on the first; this is particularly representative of the distinction that these writers strove to maintain between the two fields of poetry and theory of poetry. When poets choose the second 'wet', 'impure' and 'materialistic' way, it is noticeable that they often refer to or use animals such as bees, birds, horses, etc to metaphorise their own creative activity. It is as if animals were considered to be appropriate symbols of this function which is traditionally considered as not
entirely belonging to the realm of rational consciousness. But precisely why were the specific animals chosen? More pertinently, which level of the creative consciousness were these animals seen as representing or emanating from, and how was the representation effected within the texts? In this thesis, the field of research will be limited to the horse, an animal which has the crucial particularity of being a vehicle in reality, endowed with a motricity useful for humans, whilst also rhetorically being the *vehicle* opposed to the *tenor* in the *figure* of the horse as the metaphor of poetic inspiration.¹

The horse appears in three interconnected texts: Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII, roi de Suède* (1731), Byron's *Mazeppa* (1817) and Hugo's 'Mazeppa' (1828) in his collection *Les Orientales*. Voltaire, Byron and Hugo all used the same story of the martyrdom of a man who, as punishment for having committed adultery, is attached, naked, to a wild horse which is whipped into startled flight; in this tale, the torturers were sending both to certain death. However, quite unexpectedly, the man escaped and was even promoted to a glorious future. However, my question is: can it be proven that it is the horse and not the human hero himself which is the real bridge between the three texts?

A first answer to this question lies in the way Byron reads Voltaire. Indeed, if we look at the three quotations from Voltaire which Byron used as epigraphs to his poem, it is obvious that Byron's aim is not only to introduce the main human hero of his poem: Mazeppa is mentioned in only one out of three excerpts, King Charles is mentioned twice, but the horse appears in all three excerpts and is in fact the common denominator, being always linked with the idea of pain, suffering or wounds:

¹ I shall use the word *vehicle* in italics each time I shall be talking about it as the textual support for the metaphorical transfer. This word which I use following I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936) via Paul Ricoeur, *La Métaphore vive* (Paris: Seuil, 1975) is synonymous of the word *phore* used by Jean Molinot in 'Présentation: problèmes de la Métaphore', *Langages*, 54 (juin 1979), 5-40, in so far as both stress the dynamic value of this process. Their opposites are *tenor* for Richards and *thème* for Molinot.
Celui qui remplissoit alors cette tâche étoit un gentilhomme polonois, nommé Mazeppa, né dans le palatinat de Podolie; il avait été élevé page du roi Jean-Casimir, et avoit pris à sa cour quelques teinture des belles-lettres. Une intrigue qu'il eut dans sa jeunesse avec la femme d'un gentilhomme polonois ayant été découverte, le mari le fit fouetter de verges, le fit lier tout nu sur un cheval farouche, et le laissa aller en cet état. Le cheval, qui étoit du pays de l'Ukraine, y retourna, et y porta Mazeppa demi-mort de fatigue et de faim. Quelques paysans le secoururent: il resta longtemps parmi eux, et se signala dans plusieurs courses contre les tartsres. La supériorité de ses lumières lui donna une grande considération parmi les cosaques: sa réputation s'augmentant de jour en jour, obligea le czar à le faire prince de l'Ukraine.

Voltaire, Charles, Livre IV, p. 153

Le roi, fuyant et poursuivi, eut son cheval tué sous lui; le colonel Gieta, blessé et perdant tout son sang, lui donna le sien. Ainsi on remit deux fois à cheval dans la fuite, ce conquérant qui n'avait pu y monter pendant la bataille.

Ibid., p. 165

Le roi alla par un autre chemin avec quelques cavaliers. Le carrosse où il étoit rompit dans la marche; on le remit à cheval, pour comble de disgrâce, il s'égara pendant la nuit dans un bois: là son courage ne pouvant plus suppléer à ses forces épuisées, les douleurs de sa blessure devenues plus insupportables par la fatigue, son cheval étant tombé de lassitude, il se coucha quelques heures au pied d'un arbre en danger d'être surpris à tout moment par les vainqueurs, qui le cherchoient de tous côtés.

Ibid., p. 166

It is this very strong presence of the horse in these three excerpts which triggered my speculation that, beyond the explicit grafting given by Byron via the title of his poem, Mazeppa, which endorsed the figure of the human hero drawn from Voltaire's text, there was another grafting, this time implicit, which endorsed the figure of the animal and gave it as much, if not more, meaning in the text. A first reading of Hubert Babinski's book on Mazeppa

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and other analyses of Byron's poem showed that, while much attention has been devoted to
the human figure, the value of the horse in the story on the other hand has been overlooked.
Generally, only a few lines or paragraphs deal with the theme of the man-animal fusion. This,
however, is totally insufficient if we wish to assess its importance as a textual link and as the
support for Hugo's further thematic development. So the mount rather than the rider might
well be the true bridge between the texts.

The word *bridge*, in itself metaphorical, is here to be understood as the textual link
which ties the series of texts together. But what does this bridge help us to cross? How does it
help us to pass from one text to another? What does the horse as a *vehicle* stand for? What is
it galloping over, or across, with the hero, the poet or the reader as rider on its back? The
borrowings from one text to another are fairly obvious, but can the graftings be read in a
straightforward manner or are they places of struggle where one text is pitted against another,
one author against another, where the story strives to withstand the attacks of history? Finally,
can creativity be spoken about or described in terms which are other than metaphorical?

At the origin of this thesis, there was the simple wish to reactivate a Romantic myth
which, unlike that of Don Juan or Faust, had fallen out of fashion after having been very much
‘en vogue’ in the XIX th century in several countries of Europe. In France particularly, the
sustained interest that painters like Théodore Géricault, Louis Boulanger and Horace Vernet
had in this story is noticeable. But beyond this wish, the aim is twofold: from the study of the
myth of Mazeppa and the textual complexes which structure it (the ‘complex of the centaur’ in
Byron, the ‘complex of Pegasus’ in Hugo), I shall endeavour to consider the notion of *textual
chain* and its value for intertextual studies, while, within the perspective of a *poetic ontology*
I shall strive to re-evaluate the notions of genius and inspiration in the texts of Byron and Hugo (Voltaire's version of the story is very brief).

The first aim is thus to outline what differentiates a mere study of sources from a deep intertextual analysis. For instance, Voltaire's textual influence on Byron and Byron's more hidden influence on Hugo, as well as the explicit comments one makes on the other(s) should illustrate how 'every literary imitation is a supplement which seeks to complete and supplant the original and which functions at times for later readers as the pre-text of the 'original'.'

The second aim is to gain a clearer understanding of the phenomena involved within the process of poetic creation, and more accurately to see how the poets themselves perceive and interpret these phenomena. The information obtained will help to understand better how the different meanings of the word genius are articulated in relation to each other and how the concept evolved for an author like Hugo. The outcome of this reflection should also show how a writer builds his own creative personality, or rather his creative persona - his mirror-image as a poet ('persona' in Latin meaning a small terracotta mask which is usually hung from a tree in a sanctified place), through the reading of his own work together with the reading of his predecessors.

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My methodology is comparative in so far as it seeks to establish relations and comparisons between the texts and to draw conclusions from these. The texts thus compared are not only those from the defined corpus, i.e. the fourth book of Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII*, Byron's *Mazeppa*, Amédée Pichot's translation of Byron's text and Hugo's poem 'Mazeppa' from *Les Orientales*, but also some contextual texts directly linked with the defined corpus either for biographical reasons (for example, Byron's letters) or for thematic and theoretical reasons (for example, Freud's remarks on horses to explain certain mechanisms of the unconscious, Kant's use of the comparison of genius to a wild horse, etc).

The general context of this project is also comparative for the obvious reason that it deals with two languages and the problem of translation from one into another: Byron could read French fluently and read Voltaire in the original; however, Hugo could not read English and read Byron's poem in translation. Even more crucially, Byron himself is at the heart of the comparative problematic. As Susan Bassnett remarks, the interest which authors such as Byron and Shakespeare provoked in France at the beginning of the nineteenth century was critically linked to the debate current at the birth of comparative studies. The chief aim of their promoters was not necessarily to discover other cultures and thus open onto a world literature, but rather to assimilate the thoughts and works of great revolutionary writers in order to strengthen national identities. For Hugo and other Romantics, it was much more a process of appropriation designed to support their own political and literary causes than true literary devotion. As we shall see later with the help of Estève, they saw Byron as a pioneer of their own literary concerns, and that was all that mattered to them.

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7 Edmond Estève, *Byron et le romantisme français* (Paris: Boivin, 1907)

8 This is also particularly clear in an article written by Hugo for Byron's death in *La Muse française* (June 1824) to which we shall devote detailed attention in the third part of this thesis.
But there is an even more important aspect of comparative literature studies which is relevant to the methodological approach of this thesis. As Yves Chevrel puts it, ‘La littérature comparée est une discipline à vocation transversale’. Beyond the definition of a field of studies, comparative literature looks at intersections between different ‘sub-fields’ and devotes special attention to the various displacements of concepts, themes, figures and other rhetorical devices which may occur between them. In this transversality, there is a double dimension of laterality and movement synthesised in the notion of transfer, in its etymological sense rather than its psychoanalytical one. Here again, Byron commands a crucial position in this thesis, for we shall see that Robert Escarpit describes him as a ‘transitional’ writer and I shall endeavour to prove that his *Mazeppa* is a ‘transitional’ poem. Moreover, at an intertextual level, the figure of the horse is in itself a place of transfer (from *trans-ferare*, to carry beyond or across), since it is the textual horse which carries the myth beyond a specific text - from one text to another. To some extent, intertextuality, considered as a certain type of comparative literature studies can be viewed as a ‘transitolgy’, a science devoted to transitions.

The theoretical background of this thesis is drawn from four different fields, used to varying degrees:

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11 Using a different terminology, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in their book *Mille plateaux* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1980), outline the same kind of transfers and lateral motions in various fields of arts and thinking. Later on, I shall refer to their concepts of ‘line of flight’ and ‘plane of consistency’ to understand the dynamic phenomena at play in the myth of Mazeppa.
a) to a certain extent, the history of ideas and symbols will be called upon in order to gain some understanding of the ways the horse has been perceived by man during the course of his relationship with this animal and around the time of the writers concerned. The difference between the perception of the real animal and its phantasmatic projections will be clearly maintained in perspective;

b) in my intertextual analysis, I shall use as model Bloom’s approach to intertextuality (taking into account his Freudian framework); but also at the micro-textual level, and inspired by the Riffaterrian approach, I shall devote particular attention to semantic and rhetorical devices, while at the macro-textual level and when dealing with biographical data, I shall refer to Freudian psychoanalysis, especially to the notion of narcissism. However, it is necessary to bear in mind here that the chief purpose of the study is textual and not biographical, even if an approach to the notion of authorial consciousness is unavoidable when dealing with the concepts of inspiration and genius;

d) finally, the underlying philosophical substratum of the thesis as an approach to poetic ontology will be phenomenological, with references to Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze and Guattari. An incursion into the field of Kantian aesthetics will also be necessary when examining the Hugolian conceptions of genius and the sublime.

12 Although I do not make any explicit references in this thesis to the stylistic tools designed by Michael Riffaterre, I am greatly indebted to his approach in the fields of structural stylistics and intertextuality, and to his studies of Victor Hugo in *Essais de stylistique structurale* (Paris: Flammarion, 1971) and *La Production du texte* (Paris: Seuil, 1979).
B/ THE BIRTH OF A MYTH

First and foremost, we need to assess the extent to which the basic story of Mazeppa can be considered to be a myth. Voltaire offers one of the first written accounts of an oral story, but it has to be pointed out that already in 1731, the tradition around the Polish hetman was evolving into two main streams.¹³

First, there was the properly historical approach which was developed in Eastern Europe. This approach gave more importance to the end of Mazeppa's life; depending on the ideological stance of the commentators, either Czarist or Ukrainian nationalist, Mazeppa was portrayed as an infamous traitor or as an honourable model to be followed. In Russia, his name was ritually held in contempt each year in every single Orthodox church of the empire, until the October revolution in 1917. In the Ukraine, a secret society called themselves the 'Mazeppists'. In the nineteenth century, Pushkin, with his poem narrating the battle of Poltava, belonged to the Czarist camp, while Tchaikovsky, who was also concerned with the end of Mazeppa's life in his opera, adopted a more nuanced position.

Second, the other stream, based on the legendary adventure of Mazeppa's youth, was to gather a large audience in the Romanticism of Western Europe, mainly as a result of Byron's poem. Voltaire had a follower in the second half of the eighteenth century in André-

¹³ This word, 'hetman', means the General-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Cossacks. This is what Mazeppa became at the end of his long career.
Guillaume Contant D'Orville who mentions Mazeppa's story in his *Mémoires d'Azéma*, but even if, as Babinski suggests, it is possible that Byron read this book and drew his idea of the unpredictability of fortune from it, there is no hard evidence to prove this and Byron does not refer to that text explicitly in his poem. Moreover, the episode of the horse occupies only a few lines - and the animal has little significance in the passage. For these two reasons, I shall not take this version into consideration in my corpus. After Byron, numerous painters and musicians took up the Romantic side of the story - the tale of the wild ride - in France, amongst them Louis Boulanger, Horace Vernet, Théodore Géricault, Théodore Chasseriau, and Franz Liszt. My thesis concentrates on this second stream representing the Western Romantic tradition, rather than on the political aspects of Mazeppa's later life.

In his study, Hubert Babinski examines very thoroughly these two trends of the artistic and historic tradition. In his view, Mazeppa's life and experiences reflect a struggle for both political and artistic freedom. Mazeppa's Promethean figure becomes the ideal support for what he calls a 'mystical messianism'. According to him, the tale of Mazeppa is a typically Romantic myth which becomes one of the chief vehicles for neo-Gothism. It fosters a new moral interpretation of history and of the inscription of the artist and his creative activity in society. It also gives particular significance to personal suffering as a force of change for humanity as a whole. He concludes that the figure of Mazeppa bears some resemblance to the Christ figure but in a world animated by the idea of progress and social development.

Voltaire appears as one of the initial triggers for this evolution. In the introduction of his *Histoire de Charles XII*, he claims that he obtained all his information from direct sources

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14 André-Guillaume Contant d'Orville, *Mémoires d'Azéma, contenant diverses anecdotes des règnes de Pierre le Grand, empereur de Russie, et de l'impératrice Catherine, son épouse* (Amsterdam: [n. pub.], 1764).
16 Ibid., 'Conclusion and afterthoughts', pp. 147-150.
and first-hand accounts (the events had occurred only about twenty years before Voltaire wrote his book; he himself was fifteen at the time of the battle of Poltava). For him, truth is the critical factor for any historical piece of work to be presented as fact. However, he does not cast any doubt on the reality of the story he tells us. The initial ‘trauma’ - the wild ride - that he mentions, takes place many years before the main subject of his book, the war between the Swedish king and the Czar Peter the Great, and more precisely the battle of Poltava in Book IV. This means that the crime of Mazeppa and his subsequent punishment is set in a bygone past which is similar to the ‘temps primordial’ or ‘temps fabuleux des commencements’ in which Mircea Eliade situates the birth of a myth.\(^17\)

The King of Sweden, Peter the Great and Voltaire himself, of course, knew him as the old general in chief of the Ukrainian Cossacks, their hetman, but the story with the horse tells us how, during his youth, he arrived in the Ukraine from Poland. It is therefore a story of beginnings - as Eliade considers a myth must be. So when Byron and Hugo decide to take this story and recharge it with new meanings of their own (‘destiny’ in the case of Byron, ‘inspiration’ for Hugo), we can say with Eliade that Mazeppa's unfortunate adventure becomes indeed the ‘modèle exemplaire’,\(^18\) the ‘paradigme’\(^19\) for some significant


\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 16.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 30.
human activity. Such an understanding implicates us in a typical chain of temporality that
the perpetuation of myth implies.20

Significantly, it is not absolutely clear how Voltaire obtained his information: his
informant, Orlick, the son of one of Mazeppa's friends, may not have been absolutely truthful.
The underlying truth could be that Mazeppa had indeed committed adultery with the wife of a
Polish lord, Falbowsky. Having discovered him in ‘flagrant délit’, this lord may well have had
Mazeppa whipped, then attached naked the wrong way round (head to tail) to his own horse.
Some say he was tarred and feathered as well, and that Mazeppa returned home after this
mishap mad with anger and humiliation. Furthermore, Babinski, certainly the best modern
specialist on Mazeppa, tells us, fairly convincingly, that the whole story could well have been
invented by another noble Polish lord, Jan Passek, who had fought and lost a duel against
Mazeppa in 1663. It would thus be out of spite that, in order to discredit the winner, Passek
forged the calumny in his memoirs written between 1656 and 1688.21 One further
interpretation could be that Mazeppa himself embellished this shameful event of his youth in
order to gild his already tarnished fame. In a process of hyperbolization typical of the
legendary register, the horse became wild and took Mazeppa directly to the Ukraine. Prosper
Mérimée, who could read Russian, wrote in his study ‘Les Cosaques d’Ukraine’: ‘L’histoire du
cheval sauvage qui l'emporta chez les Zaporogues est une très jolie tradition qui,
malheureusement, n'est attestée par aucun témoignage digne de foi.’22

20 Ricoeur in his article ‘L’Interprétation philosophique des mythes’, in the Encyclopaedia Universalis, 22 vols (Paris:
1985), XII, 883-890, states that: ‘C'est dans la mesure où le mythe institue la liaison du temps historique avec le
temps primordial que la narration des origines prend valeur de paradigme pour le temps présent, ordinaire’, p. 887.

21 These Memoirs by Jan Passek were not published until 1836, and then only in Polish, making them doubly
inaccessible for Voltaire and Byron.

22 Prosper Mérimée, Mélanges historiques et littéraires (Paris: Lévy, 1855), quoted by Joseph-Marc Bailbé, ‘Mazeppa
The origin of the legend is therefore shrouded in mystery, veiled by the mists of time. But what turns a legend into a myth? Is it perhaps the fact that it is a fantasy ready to be lived again through writing? Lévi-Strauss has always strongly advocated a synchronistic perspective in so far as a myth is a 'schème doué d'une efficacité permanente', that is to say that, beyond any literary evolution, every single version of the myth bearing the same scheme will have the same efficacy. Following Lévi-Strauss, 'un mythe se compose de l'ensemble de ses variantes'; the fact that we have at our disposal three successive yet different textual versions of the same legend would thus seem to support us in our belief that, at a textual level, we are indeed dealing with a myth. We would not need to resort to its broader cultural background as well, which involves the history of its pictural illustrations and its stagings, as there was a mimodrame entitled 'Mazeppa ou le cheval tartare' played at the equestrian circus Franconi, in Paris, in 1825. The initial legend, developed, interpreted and inflated through several re-writings, had become a myth.

The comparison between the three versions could be especially fruitful in studying the relationship between the man and the horse, since for Lévi-Strauss, the major function of a myth is to reveal oppositions and to offer some sort of mediation between them: 'Certains mythes semblent entièrement consacrés à épuiser toutes les modalités possibles du passage de la dualité à l'unité.' The story of the relationship between the man and the horse is eminently the tale of a process of fusion and dissolution, a passage from duality to unity and back to

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24 Ibid., p. 258.
25 Ibid., p. 260.
duality. Outlining and staging this process is perhaps one of the main functions of the story in question.26

Here, I would like to stress a point of terminology about the conceptual position of the horse in relation to the texts and in relation to the myth perpetuated by the texts. Whilst we remain in the field of textual analysis, the concept of ‘horse’ is perceived in terms of rhetorical figures, as one of the two elements (the vehicle or phore) forming a metaphor either in absentia (in the case of Byron) or in praesentia (in the case of Hugo), the other element (the tenor or thème) being the concept of ‘genius’ or ‘inspiration’ which will be examined in the last part of this thesis. The notion of metaphor must be considered in its dynamic and functional aspects, and in this respect, I am following Paul Ricoeur who, in his book La Métaphore vive, places metaphor at the heart of the creative process.27 The conjunction of the essential ‘reality’ of the horse defined as a useful motricity and its literary use as figured producer and perpetuator of the text enables us to see it as an iconic moment of active recreation, as understood by Ricoeur, in which both the fictional ‘reality’ of the action described and the ‘sublimity’ of the act of creation effected are borne in mind at the same time - by the reader as much as by the writer.

If we read the texts of the corpus all together as different versions of a single myth, the horse can be viewed as a ‘symbol’ in its narrow sense of the conscious or unconscious

26 It might be worth mentioning here that the question of the duality is also at stake in a text slightly posterior to those I am examining in this thesis, but whose theme is closely related. It is ‘Le Centaure’ by Maurice de Guérin, first published in 1840 in La revue des deux mondes. The following quotation shows how problematic the dualism inherent to the man-horse fusion can become: ‘Je me délassais souvent de mes journées dans le lit des fleuves. Une moitié de moi-même, cachée dans le lit des eaux, s’agitait pour les surmonter, tandis que l’autre s’élevait tranquille et que je portais mes bras oisifs bien au-dessus des flots’ (Maurice de Guérin, Pages choisies (Manchester: The University Press, 1965), p. 3). We shall see in all three writers concerned, Voltaire, Byron, Hugo, that the link of the motif of the water to the theme of the man-horse fusion is a recurring one.

27 Ricoeur, Métaphore, p. 252.
transposition of an abstract notion into a concrete figuration. If we read the texts of the corpus at a purely (inter)textual level, this symbol becomes a metaphor and the allegorical process as a whole becomes the equivalent of the metaphorical function as defined by Ricoeur. When the two levels, the textual and the mythical, are to be taken into account in parallel, throughout all the texts of the corpus, I shall name the whole body of study the Text of Mazeppa.

In this trajectory from Voltaire to Byron to Hugo via Pichot, we shall witness a constant drift and shall even participate in that drift. The myth of Mazeppa is to be re-interpreted in different ways according to different concepts, but the core always remains the staging of a reversible relationship between two tortured beings, while the story itself is in a volatile, sliding state, along a (dis)continuous chain of images and meanings. It is this 'drift' which is to be assessed, and also the dual function of the horse within that drift. For if the mythical chain essentially cannot end anywhere, nor can the mad race, the horse in itself is at the same time the figurative bridge which links all the texts of the chain together (this would be its ‘horizontal’ role) and, more than the vehicle or support for the representation of genius or poetic inspiration, the body of a ‘vertical’, energetic creative surge. Endowed with this double function, the horse is truly the only permanent element in the Text of Mazeppa. More than the vehicle for the man, hero, writer or reader, and ensuring the perpetuation of the texts, it is both the binding which produces a single Text and the surging of this text through and across the hero, the writer or the reader, who is ridden by it. The horse is henceforth the condition for the voice's utterance and the continuity of the discourse. This is why, apart from outlining the conflictual relationship at play between the texts of the corpus, we shall also need to concentrate on the dual role held by the horse at the core of this corpus.
Before starting the study, it is, however, necessary to gain a picture of the varied dimensions of the reading to which the Text of Mazeppa is to be submitted.

First, the Text of Mazeppa is divided into three major texts and five folds:

I  -1 VOLTAIRE: *Histoire de Charles XII*, livre IV.
II -2 BYRON: *Mazeppa*
   -3 PICHOT: Translation of Byron's *Mazeppa*
III -4 HUGO: 'Mazeppa' first part
   -5 HUGO: 'Mazeppa' second part

Second, each of these five folds is to be or could potentially be interpreted at three different levels:

A/ The **textual level**, in which the figures, motifs and themes understood within their literary function are outlined, showing the self-perpetuating rhetorical fabric of the texts.

B/ The **mythical level**, in which the symbols and complexes understood both in their literary and psychoanalytical senses can be read. This is the level of the Byronic allegory of fate as much as the Hugolian allegory of genius respectively operated by the complex of the centaur and the Pegasus complex.

C/ The **creative level** which refers to what I call a poetic ontology and in which the notions of genius and inspiration anchored in the corporality of the writer are at play. This is the level where a narcissistic drive intervenes and also where we can understand the notion of *inspiration* as the physical expression of the creative drive defined as *genius*. 
The notion of animality, figured, symbolised or physically experienced through one's own inner being crosses all three levels, from the figurative to the symbolic and to the corporeal.

Thirdly, two 'planes of consistency'\(^\text{28}\), as dynamic and evolutive structures are to be outlined:

**PLANE 1**: The causal, horizontal and linear structure of the series, which works as a chain of meanings and to which a comparative approach can be applied when studying the texts in question.

**PLANE 2**: The non-causal, vertical and circular structure of each text perceived as a 'super-complex' independently of the other texts but in which all the other texts are also present. In that case, such temporal categories as 'before' or 'after' are inoperative and the comparative approach becomes irrelevant.

These three dimensions at play in my reading can be roughly described as the raw material, the analytical tools and the conceptual framing of the two different planes of consistency, or even planes of escape (for it is there that the meaning of the story can 'escape' from a fixed interpretation). Their articulation and interaction has to be clearly understood and borne in mind if one wants to further elements of a conclusion. It is only when the last dimension of the two dynamic planes is taken into account that one can perceive how the

\(^{28}\) 'On parlera d’un *plan de consistance* des multiplicités, bien que ce ‘plan’ soit à dimensions croissantes suivant le nombre de connexions qui s’établissent sur lui. Les multiplicités se définissent par le dehors: par la ligne abstraite, ligne de fuite ou de déterritorialisation suivant laquelle elles changent de nature en se connectant avec d’autres. Le plan de consistance (grille) est le dehors de toutes les multiplicités. La ligne de fuite marque à la fois la réalité d’un nombre de dimensions finies que la multiplicité remplit effectivement; l’impossible de toute dimension supplémentaire, sans que la multiplicité se transforme suivant cette ligne; la possibilité et la nécessité d’aplatir toutes ces multiplicités sur un même plan de consistance ou d’extériorité, quelles que soient leurs dimensions’, Deleuze et Guattari, *Mille plateaux*, pp. 15-16.
productive and innovative value of the Text of Mazeppa is transmitted to the writer or reader as a potential re-creator, or rather how the writer and reader can participate fully in its forever-renewed productivity.

It is also by mirroring one of these dimensions in another, or in the two others at the same time that one can fully perceive it in its integrity. To some extent, moreover, none of these three dimensions exists outside the relation it maintains with the others. Starting from this mirroring, we need to re-define, or rather specify and develop the instrumental notions that we usually take in their 'traditional' fixed meanings to begin with in the introduction.

Obviously, we have to recognise the fact that the conceptual drift apparent in the research is influenced by the drift which is to be inflicted upon us by the series of texts. The elements or signs being read as figures, symbols or complexes could not be read with their new meanings until strung together by the chain of signification emanating from the whole chain of texts. Before being included in a continuous and open reading of the whole chain, they work independently, as figures, symbols or complexes, and it is only once they are related to each other within that chain that it is possible to recognise their dynamic function and their ever-changing definitions. This is the first lesson to be drawn: our analytical tools appear in different lights at the beginning and end of the whole chain. The journey which we are to undergo in the texts is as much an initiation for the reader as is the mad ride for Mazeppa. As he is transformed, so we too are to be transformed and metamorphosed by our reading.

In a superficially dialectic fashion, the first plane necessarily precedes the second in the process of discovery for it is only once we apply a comparative approach to the study of the texts that it is possible to see that, ultimately, they do not succeed each other but rather, like Troy's ruins, superimpose themselves upon one another within the same limits. They are all an embodiment of the same surge, and the knowledge gained in moving from the first plane to the
second is not transcendent but immanent, as the second plane is immanent to the first. In this respect, we are not led into the temptation of superior interpretation, but rather we penetrate slowly inside the meaning of the story rising towards us. This is how a hermeneutic reading does not ‘follow’ a heuristic one but comes from within it, so as to complete it. This is the recognition of an intrinsic dimension dwelling en creux at the heart of the artistic production, allowing the writer or the reader to re-invest this production. But the re-investment of this hollow cannot occur without the existence of a corresponding desire animating the writer or the reader, a desire which testifies to the presence of a corresponding hollow within the writer or the reader himself. In this perspective, the centre of the encounter between a writer or a reader and the body of a work of art is always a hole and only the margins are full. It is only by standing in these margins that one can remain on firm ground in order to produce any critical discourse.

Finally, if the initially linear and almost narrative approach of this thesis had to be justified, as opposed to a more thematic or conceptual approach, it would be because the linearity which is ultimately put in perspective, if not in doubt, cannot be challenged until it has been displayed and described. In order to deny the validity of a uni-directional and unidimensional series or chain of texts, and its apparently continuous development, the series or chain has to be posited to start with. The comparative view can only be partial and a more phenomenological one, in the footsteps of Bachelard, Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze and Guattari (even if the last two would perhaps deny this filiation), must also be maintained if one wants to account for the way the whole process, textual and mythical, is perceived - lived through - by readers as well as writers.
PART II: VOLTAIRE, THE Appearance OF THE Myth

A/ THE EQUINE SOUL

During the time spanning the lives of the three writers concerned, horses were a common feature in the streets of London or Paris. However, their status was rather ambiguous. For some, the horse was, according to Buffon's well-known definition,¹ 'la plus noble conquête de l'homme', and second only to the dog as far as intelligence and friendship were concerned, whilst for the majority, it was the most obvious example of 'animal-machine' described by Descartes.² People complained about its dirtiness and talked about its purchase or maintenance in the same matter-of-fact manner that we might discuss a car today. In his comprehensive book Man and the natural world, Keith Thomas notes that England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries 'was proverbially a hell for horses [...] many were


² Descartes, Le Discours de la méthode, ed. by André Riboux (Paris: Gallimard/Pléiade, 1953), p. 165. As far as Descartes was concerned, the crux of the matter was his notion of 'animal-machine' as he elaborated it at the end of the fifth part of Le Discours de la méthode. Describing the body of the animal as a mere 'automate', certainly more sophisticated than any one could conceive but not intrinsically different from any other automaton, he denies it any kind of ratio for two main reasons: the animal cannot speak, nor can it acquire knowledge. Its actions are only directed by the disposition of its organs. For Descartes, there is no difference (apart from its complexity), between an animal and a clock. Human reasoning is a faculty of the soul given to man by God. This rather extreme opinion concerning animals (even Descartes's contemporaries considered it as such) was necessary in order to maintain an elective link between man and god. Indeed, in the Cartesian conception, it is first of all our rational soul which belongs to divine nature and differentiates us from brute matter. Descartes had in fact already foreseen the far-reaching implications of his scientific materialism and, by this device, was trying to delay the conclusions that more materialist or libertine thinkers were to draw later on.
literally ridden to death'. He quotes these lines of John Gay which seem to anticipate some of the images we will find in Byron:

The lashing Whip resounds, the Horses strain,  
And Blood in anguish bursts the swelling Vein.

However, the situation was not always bad for this animal and some owners looked after their horses better than they did their servants; furthermore, riding manuals urged 'that there should be “a sincere and incorporated friendship” between the horse and its rider'.

Before studying the first text of our corpus, Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII, roi de Suède*, and examining how the figure of the horse is used in this text, it is important to outline the perception which the contemporaries of Voltaire, Byron and Hugo had of this animal: a brief survey of its symbolic value will inform us of its latent and permanent presence in the deeper layers of human consciousness and will illuminate the conceptual framework permeating the mind of the three authors concerned. In order to do so, I shall draw my

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4 For a comprehensive review of the debate around the question of animals’ souls in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Jean Ehrard, *L’Idée de nature en France dans la première moitié du XVIII siècle* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1963), p. 684: ‘Le système de l’automatisme est le seul dont, à l’extrême rigueur, la théologie puisse s’accommoder. Dès que l’on s’écarte tant soit peu, la voie est ouverte à un matérialisme qui abolit toute distinction substantielle entre l’homme et l’animal. [...] Accorder aux bêtes le moindre lueur de sensibilité, s’empressent-ils [les théologiens] de proclamer, c’est ruiner le dogme de la spiritualité de l’âme. Entre l’homme et l’animal, il ne subsiste plus, en effet, une fois le premier point admis, qu’une différence d’organisation, différence physiologique et non métaphysique. Si les organes grossiers des bêtes suffisent à leur assurer “la faculté de sentir et de percevoir”, n’est-il pas logique, interroge Voltaire, de croire que les “organes plus déliés” que nous possédons sont la véritable source de “cette faculté de sentir, d’apercevoir et de penser, que nous appelons raison humaine” ? Pour un disciple de Locke, persuadé que les formes les plus complexes de la pensée rationnelle naissent de la sensation, il est tentant d’admettre que la sensibilité animale et la raison humaine sont deux attributs d’une même substance: si la première est matérielle, la seconde doit l’être aussi.’ See also Condillac, *Traité des animaux* (Paris: Vrin, 1981), pp. 509-510: ‘Rien n’est ordonné aux bêtes, rien ne leur est défendu, elles n’ont de règles que la force. Incapable de mérite et de démérite, elles n’ont aucun droit sur la justice divine. Leur âme est donc mortelle. Cependant cette âme n’est pas matérielle, [...]. Conclusons que, quoique l’âme des bêtes soit simple comme celle de l’homme, et qu’à cet égard il n’y ait aucune différence entre l’une et l’autre, les facultés que nous avons en partage, et la fin à laquelle Dieu nous destine, démontrent que si nous pouvions pénétrer dans la nature de ces deux substances, nous verrions qu’elles diffèrent infiniment. Notre âme n’est donc pas de la même nature que celle des bêtes.’
examples from three very different fields of study but it will be obvious that, fundamentally, they all come to the same conclusions which will apply to the texts of the corpus with a remarkable degree of relevance.

1) The status of the horse in ancient societies

The relation between man and horse is a longstanding one, and one which considerably precedes its use as a vehicle. The French structuralist prehistorian André Leroi-Gourhan has shown the importance of the horse in the pantheon of paleolithic hunters between thirty thousand and ten thousand years ago. Although he rejects any extensive interpretation based on insufficient data, he reveals that, during the period called Magdalenian between 15000 and 8000 B.C., the small prehistoric horse played a dominant role in cave painting; it would thus have had importance not only in economic terms but also in symbolic terms. The central theme of this art was a binary association of horses and bison or wild oxen. For Leroi-Gourhan, this association horse-bison corresponded to a sexual division and established a link between sexuality and cymegatic symbols like the spear-wound couple often depicted on the surface of the painted animal. We shall see that the theme of the wound as outlined by Leroi-Gourhan often appears in connection with the figure of the horse.


6 ‘La réalité des cavernes dépasse de loin les théories de la préhistoire classique, mais c'est une réalité de chiffres, sans paroles et l'on n'a aucun mythe à montrer, aucun rite à décrire’, Leroi-Gourhan, *Religions préhistoire*, p. 115.

7 Ibid., p. 110: ‘Le cheval est présent partout dans le temps et l'espace paléolithique.’ Today's Prejalwsky's horse from the Asiatic steppes gives us a good idea of what the animal looked like in those times.
The relation between the horse and sexuality is also a very strong one, as Jung has amply demonstrated in another context. The most important characteristic of the horse that Jung determines is the faculty to effect an intersection between two different areas: the sexual and the dynamic. The second is typified by the well-known expression: as fast as the wind. The idea of movement can therefore be seen to be one of the foremost notions attached to this animal. In *Dictionnaire des symboles*, Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant note that, especially for the populations of the central Asiatic steppes, but more generally in all societies where the horse was known, it is above all others the ‘psychopomp’ animal, that is to say, because of its chthonian, ‘infernal’, nature, the horse is the animal which carries the souls of the dead to their new residence. That is why horses are to be found buried in the Kirghyz tombs and the Scythian tumuli (this custom is, in fact, the dominant common feature of all Central Asiatic civilisations). By extension, it becomes the ‘minister of darkness’, endowed with magic powers which link earth and sky, reality and fantasy, life and death. The horse exerts the functions of guiding and intercession: the shamans require its spiritual services when they need to undertake a divinatory journey, and their famous drum with its typical galloping rhythm is even called the ‘shaman’s horse’. Some medicine-men use a bent stick adorned with a horse-head to journey into the underworld (this could well be the ancestor of the witch’s broomstick). Even more crucially, there can be an inversion of roles in the rider-horse relationship: this is what happens in some voodoo and Abyssinian rituals where the possessed

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8 In *The Practice of Psychotherapy*, in *Complete Works*, ed. by Sir Herbert Read, trans. by R. F. C. Hull, 20 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), XVI, Jung mentions the horse as an archetype: "horse" is an archetype which is widely current in mythology and folklore. As an animal it represents the non-human psyche, the sub-human, animal side, the unconscious. That is why horses in folklore sometimes see visions, hear voices, and speak. As a beast of burden it is closely related to the mother archetype. As an animal lower than man, it represents the lower part of the body and the animal impulses that arise from there. The horse is a dynamic and vehicular power: it carries one away like a surge of instincts. It is subject to panics like all instinctive creatures which lack higher consciousness. Also it has to do with sorcery or magical spells - especially the black night-horse which heralds death", p. 159 (347).

rider himself becomes a horse to be mounted by a spirit. The possessed man-horse obeys its
daimon 'as a corpse'. In the Dionysiac ceremonies of Asia Minor, the adepts of mysteries were
also 'mounted' by the gods. This possibility of inversion of roles will be particularly well
illustrated in Victor Hugo's poem.

I shall be referring in symbolic and psychocritical terms in my thesis to two important
figures of Greek mythology linked to the horse: Pegasus and the centaur. It is also useful to
examine how these imaginary beings were perceived in Antiquity, considering that this
perception is likely to have been transmitted as common background knowledge down to
Voltaire, Byron and Hugo, or to reflect permanent features of the understanding of the man-
horse relationship also present in these writers. This examination will prove useful for my
interpretation of the texts concerned.

For the ancient Greek, the horse was the warrior's indispensable companion; like his
weapons, it was an integral part of the warrior's being. Interestingly connected to the idea of
sacrifice, the horse appeared as a sort of substitute for the hero, simultaneously his extension
and his double, while embodying all the human dreams of lightness and speed, like the wind
and water with which it was often associated in worship. For the Greeks, the power of horses
is a disturbing but necessary one, destined to be domesticated by man for the greater benefit of
civilisation; in this, the horse may symbolize the woman, as is also suggested by frequent
comparisons between the bit or headband of the horse and the diadem which used to be forced
upon the young wife. The multiple metaphors of poetry, especially tragic poetry, that describe
woman as a mare, as well as the myths of Bellerophon and Hippolytus, made full use of this symbolism.\(^{10}\)

In the myth of Bellerophon, several features that we shall find in the Byronic version of the story of Mazeppa are already present, showing much common ground between the two stories. Bellerophon is a figure whose fate seems to be organised entirely as a function of the problematics of marriage seen from the male point of view. Deprived of all rights because of an original exile, like Mazeppa, Bellerophon cannot marry and covers an itinerary that leads him to regain his aristocratic status after a series of trials over which he triumphs successively. The first task is the taming of Pegasus, the archetypal horse, son of Poseidon and of the Gorgon, and hence a half-brother of Bellerophon himself, who was a descendant of the same god. Despite all his efforts, the hero cannot master Pegasus without Athena’s intervention. She teaches him how to do so and gives him a bit compared to a ‘golden diadem’. The taming of Pegasus implies mastery over the unchained natural forces that emanate from Poseidon, god of the sea, and also dwell within Bellerophon as his own brother. Given the relations that mythical thought establishes between the tamed and harnessed horse and the young bride, this initial success metaphorically foreshadows the hero’s triumphant wedding. The evidence of visual depictions illustrates this parallelism by having Bellerophon flanked, symmetrically, by Pegasus held by the bit, and the young woman in a bridal gown. We shall recognise the same link between the horse and feminity in an extract of Buffon’s text on the horse which is to be commented in this chapter. We shall see that, in Byron’s poem, the link between the woman

whom Mazeppa loves and the horse to which he is attached is a very important structural feature, whilst Hugo, in his own poem, constantly plays on the semantic ambiguity of the horse or the rider, each in turn described in feminine terms.

As far as the centaur is concerned, his most obvious and relevant aspect for this thesis is that he is systematically construed as a double being. Barbaric and coarse, he is also an educator. Occupying thus the two extremes of the nature-culture spectrum, he exists mainly through the play of this tension. We shall see that the whole fabric of Byron’s and Hugo’s poems is based on that very same kind of dualistic play of tension.¹¹

One can thus see that in these various archaic and ancient cultures, the horse, whether prey or vehicle, is linked both to vital instinctual energies and to death. This is only an apparent paradox. When hunted, its flesh gives the strength to survive and continue the fight for survival. Used as a mount, it gives extra speed and power to its rider. Thus the hunter, the warrior or the shaman at a symbolic level needs the horse to be able to face death on an equal footing, and somehow survive death. This is why, although the horse gives us an extra chance to overwhelm death, and is loaded with vital living energy, it can become a chthonian figure in the typically antithetical fashion that psychoanalysis - after other more ancient schools of thought and literature - has revealed to us. Moreover, if we consider the horse as a representation of libido, we must be aware of how any outburst of vital energy, putting at risk the stalemate of a continuity ensuring self-preservation, can bring us to a state where the line between life and death is somewhat blurred.

2) The psychoanalytic value of the horse

As one can see, it is certainly not enough simply to say that it is because this animal was widely available as a means of transport in the previous centuries that it could readily serve as support for symbolic projection. A well-known example of a study involving the figure of a horse exists in one of the major case histories of Freudian psychoanalysis: the 'little Hans' case. The analysis here differs considerably from the literary case in question in this thesis, for Mazeppa's story is not the story of a phobia and the little boy uses the figure of the horse mainly as a screen onto which he projects his fantasies. This explains why Freud interprets the animal alternately as a symbolic representation of the mother and of the father. However, Freud points out a feature of the horse which is of crucial importance for this thesis, although it is secondary in the case of little Hans's projections. After stating that it was almost 'by chance' that the horse had been chosen by the child, Freud rapidly discovers that this animal is endowed with characteristics which make it an ideal support for the phobia. The most important of these elements from which he draws his striking conclusion is the

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13 'I thought you were so big you'd have a widdler like a horse', Freud, Hans, p. 10.

14 ' [...] and both kinds of horses, the biting horse and the falling horse had been shown to represent his father', ibid., p. 126.
mobility of the horse. A mobility which, by reverse consequence, prevents little Hans from making any movement: he can no longer leave his home, imprisoned there by his fear of the horses crowding the streets of Vienna. This mobility allows us to draw a parallel with the instinctual drive, which is described as energy. The first point of articulation between the horse and the unconscious drive is the fact that both are fundamentally dynamic forces.

A second particularly important characteristic of the horse appears elsewhere in Freud's work: a letter to his friend and colleague Wilhelm Fliess dated 7.7.1898 mentions what Freud calls 'The principle of Itzig', a principle he will refer to several times in his later works when he wants to illustrate the impossibility of consciously guiding the unconscious (or the id):

Vienna, July 7, 1898

Dear Wilhelm,

Here it is. It was difficult for me to make up my mind to let it out of my hands. Personal intimacy would not have been a sufficient reason; it also took our intellectual honesty to each other. 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.'

This humorous text establishes an analogy between a horse and the unconscious. Thus the second characteristic is the impossibility of knowing where the unconscious is going and a fortiori the impossibility of guiding it. It would be the case for any bad rider, but all the more when the animal is a wild and untamed animal as it happens to be in Mazeppa's story. There is

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another reference to this principle later in Freud's life when, in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, he describes a dream he had of riding a horse (a thing that he never actually did in his life) while he was suffering from a boil situated in a rather awkward position. The next and most important passage is where the uncontrollable horse is used as a comparison for the unconscious; this is many years later in *The Ego and the Id*. Freud here talks about the ‘id’ rather than the unconscious, but the way he resorts to the horse is the same. Neither the Ego nor the conscious can really guide the ‘id’ or the unconscious. If they do not want to be separated from the other instances, they have to follow the ‘id’ or the unconscious in the direction they want to go. Thus, the Ego (or the conscious) can be compared to an impotent rider - as we shall see, the equivalent of Mazeppa during his mad ride. It would thus seem that, in Freud's mind, the two most important characteristics of the horse are its motricity and the difficulty of guiding it. These two features help him to establish throughout his life a constant analogy between this animal and either the basic drive or the unconscious (the id) itself. These analogies will later play a crucial role in the development of this thesis.

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18 'The functional importance of ego is manifested in the fact that normally control over the approaches to motility devolves upon it. Thus in its relation to the id it is like a man on horse-back, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse; with this difference, that the rider tries to do so with his own strength while the ego uses borrowed forces. The analogy may be carried a little further. Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; so in the same way, the ego is in the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own', Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, Trans. by Jean Rivière, ed. by James Strachey & J. D. Suther (London: The Hogarth Press, 1974), p. 15.
3) The ambivalent nature of the horse in the 18th century

Contemporarily with the emergence of the myth of Mazeppa, Buffon, a follower of Descartes, maintained in all his writing a strong separation between man and animals, including the ape. He made this division all the more pronounced because, as a naturalist, he was particularly aware of the common points that man shares with animals. In order to achieve this, he goes to great length to show that the similarities are only formal and external. He considers that animals have no faculty of speech, no ability to think, nor any semblance of reason. If they were to be endowed with some kind of soul, it could only be a material soul, while man's soul, given by God, is essentially immaterial.¹⁹

A close reading of the opening paragraph of his chapter devoted to the horse in his *Histoire naturelle* greatly enhances our understanding of the way the horse was perceived during the Classical and Romantic periods:

La plus noble conquête que l'homme ait jamais faite est celle de ce fier et fougueux animal qui partage avec lui les fatigues de la guerre et la gloire des combats: aussi intrépide que son maître, le cheval voit le péril et l'affronte; il se fait au bruit des armes, il l'aime, il le cherche et s'anime de la même ardeur; il partage aussi ses plaisirs: à la chasse, aux tournois, à la course, il brille, il étincelle. Mais, *docile autant que courageux*, il ne se laisse point emporter à son feu; il sait réprimer ses mouvements: non seulement il fléchit sous la main de celui qui le guide, mais il semble consulter ses désirs, et, obéissant toujours aux impressions qu'il en reçoit, il se précipite, se modère

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¹⁹ "C'est donc parce qu'une langue suppose une suite de pensées que les animaux n'en ont aucune. [...] et si l'on voulait attribuer une âme aux animaux, on serait obligé de n'en faire qu'une pour chaque espèce, à laquelle chaque individu participerait également. Cette âme serait donc divisible; par conséquent elle serait matérielle, et fort différente de la nôtre [...]. Mais ces preuves de l'immatérialité de notre âme peuvent aller plus loin [...]. Il y a une distance infinie entre les facultés de l'homme et celles du plus parfait animal; [...] on passe tout d'un coup de l'être pensant à l'être matériel, de la puissance intellectuelle à la force mécanique [...]. En voilà plus qu'il n'en faut pour démontrer l'excellence de notre nature, et la distance immense que la bonté du Créateur a mise entre l'homme et la bête. L'homme est un être raisonnable, l'animal est un être sans raison." Buffon, 'De la nature de l'homme', in *Oeuvres choisies*, ed. by Félix Hémon (Paris, Delagrave, 1888), pp. 126-128.
ou s'arrête: c'est une créature qui renonce à son être pour n'exister que par la volonté d'un autre, qui sait même le prévenir; qui par la promptitude et la précision de ses mouvements, l'exprime et l'exécute; qui sent autant qu'on le désire, et ne rend qu'autant qu'on veut; qui, se livrant sans réserve, ne se refuse à rien, sert de toutes ses forces, s'excède, et même meurt pour mieux obéir.  

(my italics)

This paragraph is built around a central ambivalence: ‘Mais, docile autant que courageux’. According to Buffon, the horse is gifted with two major qualities which are its courage and its docility, the latter counterbalancing the former. The first seven lines are devoted to the description of its pride, its fearlessness and its taste for violent actions, as in warfare, hunting and tournaments. These features portray the active energetic side of the animal using virile terminology. The second part presents the horse in a totally different configuration. This time it appears submissive, obedient, receptive and passive, all qualities which seem altogether much more ‘feminine’ in the traditional sense of the term. It is as if the horse were an androgynous animal, encompassing in its very nature the two poles of sexuality. However, this is an unstable condition, for the presence of man is felt through his conquest and his will, and the addition of the ‘masculine’ violence to the ‘feminine’ receptivity thus submitted to man's power sends the horse into a movement of denial of its own being. Its total commitment to serve results in the denial of its own life. Moreover, one can assume that the antinomic qualities previously stated have been absorbed by the man during a process which amounts to its near total annihilation. It is as if the man has been given a bi-polar, quasi-androgynous completeness by the horse. We shall see that this process is close to what happens at the end of the man-horse relationship in Byron's version of the Mazeppa story.

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It is possible to conclude from these insights that the horse has attracted man's imagination mainly because of its intrinsic qualities of mobility and strength. These qualities enabled the human psyche to project onto the horse fantasmatic representations of sexual drive and inner instinctual energy. The horse is often conceived and portrayed as an assertive life-force, characterised by courage and independence. When this assertiveness is emphasised, the horse becomes so difficult to control that an inversion between the animal and its rider can occur: the horse controls the man who finds himself symbolically ridden by the horse in a manner which can be termed masochistic.

However, the horse is also viewed as fundamentally double, because of its natural wildness, coupled with its potential to be hunted or tamed and then used as food or vehicle. When only these weak, submissive and exploitable features are taken into consideration, the horse becomes the support of a symbolic wound, the image of a potential victim to be sacrificed for the sake of man's success. If some strength remains attached to the dark, negative side of its personality, the horse becomes a herald of death, ready to submit man to some terrifying and painful experience after which, if he survives, he will remain for ever changed. All these different aspects are present in the mad race of Mazeppa, and we shall see them all exploited in turn by the three writers concerned.
B) ‘HORSE-SUFFERING’ AND ‘HORSE-SALVATION’

We are now ready to examine the first written version of Mazeppa's story in French: Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII, roi de Suède*. In spite of the subtle wit and humour which pervade each page, Voltaire wished this book to be considered as a model of historical studies. He wrote it towards the end of his stay in England (1727-28), but Jean Orieux informs us that already, around 1719-20, not long after his second stay in La Bastille and six years before he left for England, Voltaire, still called Arouet, was in contact with an adventurer, the Baron Goertz, an informal emissary of the King of Sweden.¹ There was even a rumour that Voltaire was ready to leave France for Sweden in order to become the ‘protégé’ of Charles XII. However, this King neither spoke nor even read French, and it was only a rumour. However, it is certainly at that time that Voltaire conceived the project of writing a history of the ‘Prince of the North’, as he was called, and it is thanks to Baron Goertz that he started gathering information for his book.

1) *The historical background of Mazeppa’s story*

The book deals mainly with the War of the North, eighteen years of conflict between the King Charles XII, consumed by an almost hysterical dream of glory, and the enlightened

barbarian, Czar Peter the Great who transformed his medieval empire into a modern nation. Commenting on the opposition between the two men, Lionel Gossman points out that Voltaire's deepest sympathies appear to lie with Peter the Great, who heralded progress, reason and good sense rather than with Charles, as this ruler represented for him a more retrograde and extravagant adventurism.\(^2\) Voltaire himself explicitly sets up this contrast:

Charles avait le titre d'"invincible", qu'un moment pouvait lui ôter; Les nations avaient donné à Pierre le nom de ‘grand’, qu'une défaite ne pouvait lui faire perdre, parce qu'il ne le devait pas à des victoires.\(^3\)

After several years of successful campaigns in Poland, the Baltic states and Prussia, Charles made the same mistake as Napoléon one century later (as Byron was to remember): he advanced his army without proper supply lines, deep into Russia's frozen waste, where it was subjected to a war of attrition. This was to be fatal for him: his hopes of conquest were dashed at the famous battle of Poltava in July 1709, described in a poem by Pushkin, himself a great admirer of Byron. However, at the start of the campaign, Charles did not head directly towards Moscow. To the surprise of his officers, he started directing the army South, into the Ukraine. This strange manoeuvring was based on a secret plan to link up with reinforcements from the Cossack army of Ivan Stepanovitch Mazeppa. This man, their General-in-Chief, was an ambiguous character. Some considered him a traitor, others raised him to the glorious status of a liberation hero.

\(^2\) Lionel Gossman, "Voltaire's Charles XII: History in Art", in *Studies on Voltaire and the 18th century*, ed. by Th. Besterman, 25 (1963), 691-720 (p. 691).

\(^3\) Voltaire, *Histoire Charles*, p.162.
Mazeppa was already old at that time. He had started by being a great friend of the young Czar, but later on, concerned with the independence of his country, he decided to switch his alliance and support the Swedish king, whose army he was meant to reinforce and supply when the plan was thwarted. Most of his forces and reserves were destroyed by the Russians and Mazeppa could only provide Charles with very limited logistics. As a result, both were defeated. After the battle, Mazeppa and Charles managed to flee towards the South and the frontier of the Ottoman empire. Soon after, Mazeppa died there of age and exhaustion (although some say he was poisoned). Charles spent nine years in the pitiful exile that Voltaire describes with picaresque eloquence.

We have already seen how Voltaire introduced the character of Mazeppa into his book by telling the shameful adventure of the punishment that attracted Byron’s interest and the subsequent fame of Mazeppa in Western Europe. Let us now examine the textual presence of the horse in the fourth chapter as a whole, for this will enable us to apprehend the animalistic dimension that Byron perceived and decided to utilise in his own act of re-writing.

2) Byron’s intuition of the suffering horse in Voltaire

If we start by looking at the quotations used by Byron in his epigraphs, it is striking to see how the figure of the horse is linked with a double theme of suffering and salvation:

a) at the beginning, Mazeppa is tied up ‘tout nu sur un cheval farouche’. The weakness of the man is opposed to the strength of the horse, but through bonding, this opposition will necessarily become a complementarity;
b) ‘Le cheval, qui était du pays de l’Ukraine, y retourna et y porta Mazeppa, demi-mort de fatigue et de faim.’ The horse takes the man away from civilisation to the wilderness. This movement increases the man’s weakness, but, as we shall learn later, it will subsequently bring him antithetical strength;

c) ‘Le roi, fuyant et poursuivi, eut son cheval tué sous lui.’ The King’s position of weakness in flight is increased by the death of his horse. This situation corresponds to the first stage of Mazeppa’s increasing exhaustion from the pain and the suffering imposed on him by the horse;

d) ‘Le colonel Gieta, blessé et perdant tout son sang, lui donna le sien.’ Another man is in a weak and suffering position. However, his horse will help the King to overcome his own weakness. The second horse is the equivalent of the second stage in the dialectical relationship between Mazeppa and the wild Ukrainian horse. After the ‘horse-suffering’, the ‘horse-salvation’ intervenes. In this scheme, the relations are first of all associative, based on positive or negative values, and only secondarily causalist.

e) ‘Ainsi on remit deux fois à cheval dans la fuite, ce conquérant qui n’avoit pu y monter pendant la bataille.’ Here again, if we consider that the moment of the battle is the time when one shows one’s strength - and this consideration is supported by the use of the term ‘conquérant’ - the horse is made useless by the fact that the king is unable to mount it. Alternatively, at a time of weakness for the King (‘la fuite’), the

4 This double and antithetical movement of fall and salvation is the dominant and recurrent feature of the three versions of our corpus. It is strikingly summarised in the last line of Hugo’s poem: ‘Il court, il vole, il tombe, et se relève roi.’
presence of the horse is stressed. And there is not only one horse, but two, as if it was necessary to emphasise the importance of the horse in the antithetic movement. Within the global negativeness of man’s failure, the negative value is twofold. One part is inherent to man’s weakness in combat, while the second, reinforcing the first, seems systematically related to the presence of the horse. There we recognise the presence of the ‘horse-suffering’ as a textual factor to enhance the unfolding tragedy. From this global negativeness springs a third stage which reflects the return of strength due to the apparition of the ‘horse-salvation’;

f) ‘Le carrosse, où il était, rompit dans la marche; on le remit à cheval.’ The ‘horse-salvation’ intervenes again to reverse a situation where the King was left once more in a weak position;

g) ‘Son cheval étant tombé de lassitude, il se coucha quelques heures au pied d'un arbre en danger [...]’. Here, as in c), the horse undergoes the suffering itself, and puts the King in a weak position. However, this indispensable rest under the trees gives him the strength to carry on his dramatic journey. As we can see, the horse may be present or absent at the onset of the tragedy, but what is certain is the existence of an initial negativeness for man, a ‘global negativeness’ perhaps caused by his hubris, which is systematically reinforced by the presence of the ‘horse-suffering’. It is only thanks to the intervention of a second type of horse, the ‘horse-salvation’ that the passage from the negative to the positive is effected, and a new increase in strength, a kind of redemption, is given to man.
We can thus recognise an antithetic status similar to that we had already detected in Buffon and which Leroi-Gourhan had spelt out in his study of cave-paintings: the servitude of the horse in Buffon and its link with the wound that Leroi-Gourhan had outlined correspond to the 'horse-suffering' in the Voltairean context. An initial and paradoxical weakness linked to the horse's presence ultimately brings strength to the man who is involved in a dialectical relationship with it. In the case of Buffon, the strength gained by man eventually benefits the progress of civilisation ('la plus noble conquête'). In the case of Leroi-Gourhan, it amounts simply to food which is the fundamental source of energy. In the present case it is survival and freedom.

This correspondence between the three fields also sheds very interesting light on the paradox of the horse at the symbolic intersection of vitality and death, and helps us to comprehend this paradox. The same scheme is thus likely to be the basic framework for Byron's poem, for it is what he chose to announce at the beginning of his text. The three quotations that Byron extracted from Voltaire's text certainly foretell the real theme of the poem and 'Mazeppa' as a heading is more the name of a 'complex' of antithetic relationships between several entities, caught in a dialectical process within such a framework, than the name of a man, the 'pseudo-hero'.

I have used here the word 'complex' in its neutral sense of an ensemble of elements held together in a special configuration and not in its psychoanalytical sense which is,
according to Laplanche and Pontalis, '(un) ensemble organisé de représentations et de souvenirs à forte valeur affective, partiellement ou totalement inconscients'. Later in this thesis, following Gaston Bachelard, I shall use this term with a meaning more strongly related to its textual dimension as a configuration of themes, figures and images fostering an active and original creation, therefore turned towards a productive future for the reader as much as for the writer. Such a conception of the complex is also close to what Deleuze and Guattari call 'rhizome' or 'agencement' in so far as it takes into consideration the transformative potential of evolutive structures (expressed in their own terms by the concept of 'lines of flight'). In this way, it is possible to bear in mind the future outcome of a literary complex, which is also present in a ‘becoming’: the becoming-centaur of the rider, the becoming-genius of the poet, the becoming-Pegasus of the horse. I shall use more extensively the Deleuzian and Guattarian theories later in this thesis.

3) The textual function of the horse in Voltaire

However, in what way does the antithetic framework around the horse outlined above apply to Voltaire's text, regardless of Byron's reading of it? Does the horse function also as a double agent of suffering and salvation in the wider context of book IV of Histoire de Charles

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5 Laplanche et Pontalis, Vocabulaire psychoanalyse, pp. 72-73.

6 Gaston Bachelard, Lautréamont (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1939), 'Une originalité est nécessairement un complexe et un complexe n’est jamais bien original. C’est en méditant ce paradoxe que l’on peut seulement reconnaître le génie comme une légende naturelle, comme une nature qui s’exprime. Si l’originalité est puissante, le complexe est énergique, impérieux, dominant: il mène l’homme; il produit l’oeuvre’, p. 118.
or has Byron projected his own concern on a text which bore no relation whatsoever with his interpretation? This is what we need to check now.

In this book, the primary cause of the tragedy is clearly human hubris, passion and immoderation: the thirst for glory in the case of Charles; lust or an illegitimate desire for independence in the case of Mazeppa. However, when we decide to study the role played by the horse in the tragedy, we should bear in mind that this animal was a basic ever-present tool in the reality of warfare at that time: Voltaire merely reflects and reverberates this reality. We should therefore recognise the fact that its structural function in such a text is certainly stronger than its symbolism - which will not necessarily be the case in Byron's and Hugo's versions of the story. This is why, when we read 'horse-suffering' or 'horse-salvation' in Voltaire's text, we should not understand it as a symbol for suffering or salvation but as a literary tool within a configuration of material and textual relationships. Voltaire never makes any personal comments on the plight of the horse nor does he hint at its symbolic value; he uses it, at a textual level, exactly as if it were the animal-machine of which Descartes had conceived.

However, in his task of representing the battle and its aftermath, Voltaire was facing two problems which he had to solve in order to achieve his aim. The first is a problem of objectivity: as the writer cannot represent every single event of the battle, he has to select, to choose which relevant aspects he will stress or emphasise. These choices are significant, not only in themselves, but in their arrangement between themselves. The second problem is a question of dynamism in the description. The events which Voltaire is reporting are highly dynamic: a battle and the subsequent flight. It is certainly relevant to see how Voltaire gives an
equivalent dynamism to the narrative fabric of his text. And it is clear that the horse is to play a crucial role in this dynamic process. So the real questions about the position of the horse here are not simply ‘Why is Voltaire talking about horses and what do they symbolise?’, but mainly ‘How is he talking about it? When is he talking about it and with which narrative purpose in mind?’

The first time the horse appears in book IV is in the form of a classical synecdoche: ‘Il (Pierre le Grand) ne perd point de temps, il détache quinze cents chevaux de sa troupe, à l’entrée de la nuit, pour aller surprendre le roi de Suède dans la ville’ (p.149). From the couple, rider and mount, Voltaire retains the mount, a device which, as in Fontanier’s famous example of the sail and the boat,\(^7\) emphasises the dynamic aspect of the action; the active support and cause of the movement is thus stressed. The next appearance of the animal is this time directly linked with the King of Sweden. When some Russian horsemen are about to reach him in the midst of a combat, he mounts his horse. But when he notices a young officer whom he holds in affection being wounded and rendered incapable of walking, he dismounts and obliges this officer to take his horse. He himself carries on fighting on foot (p. 150). Once again, in this episode, we see that while fighting and showing one’s strength are not necessarily linked with the presence of the horse, as soon as the position of the man is weakened by a wound or fear of an attack, then the horse becomes indispensable.

In the next reported battle (Smolensk 22 September 1708), ‘Le cheval du roi fut tué sous lui: un écuyer lui en présentoit un autre, mais l’écuyer et le cheval furent percés de coups. Charles combattit à pied [...]. L’armée reprit ses rangs: Charles monta à cheval, et tout fatigué

qu'il était, il poursuivit les moscovites pendant deux lieues' (p. 152). The death of two horses does not prevent the King from fighting and re-ordering his troops with rare energy. But, when Charles gets back on his horse, Voltaire feels the need to mention his fatigue. It is as if the act of mounting the horse revealed the fatigue, as if one was necessarily linked to the other. Beyond any causal logic (a man mounts a horse because he is tired), the textual presence of the horse functions as the sign of man's weakness; the horse-suffering as we understand it is the sign of exhaustion or of a wound. Its appearance reveals man's closeness to death. At a textual level, if we pursue the symbolic reasoning to its limits, Charles would not mount a horse because he is tired but, rather, he would be tired because he is to mount a horse - which is the representation of suffering. Stage two then follows logically: in spite of his tiredness but thanks to the horse, Charles has the strength to pursue his foes, and the horse-suffering figure is turned into the horse-salvation; the man is redeemed.

The next occurrence of the horse in the text is again very striking: on 27 June of the following year, Charles is outside Poltava, besieging the town. He is wounded by a shot in the heel. Voltaire writes that no-one noticed anything and that the impassive King 'continua à donner tranquillement ses ordres, et demeura encore près de six heures à cheval' (p. 160). Charles would certainly not have been able to do this if he had not been on a horse, but once again, there is a direct association in the text between a man, a wound and a horse. Regardless of who is affected by the wound, whether it is the man or the horse, this configuration is undoubtedly a recurring one.

From the Russian side the horse appears similarly linked with weakness and danger: 'Les escadrons moscovites furent rompus et enfoncés. Le czar accourut lui-même pour les rallier; son chapeau fut percé d'une balle de mousquet; Menzikoff eut trois chevaux tués sous lui: les Suédois crièrent victoire.' (p. 163).
At last, during the decisive battle of 8 July 1709, the tragedy accelerates: ‘A neuf heures du matin la bataille recommença; une des premières volées du canon moscovite emporta les deux chevaux du brancard du roi de Suède; il en fit atteler deux autres: une seconde volée le mit en pièces, et renversa le roi’ (p. 164). The horse is present right at the beginning of the tragic events, and the survival of the wounded King depends directly on the quick replacement of his horses which are being butchered by the enemy's fire. ‘Il fit signe à deux drabans, qui prirent le roi par dessous les bras, et le mirent à cheval, malgré les douleurs extrêmes de sa blessure’ (p. 165). The horse, à son corps défendant is an instrument of torture even if this torture is essential to ensure the survival of the man.

What appears from this inventory is the surprising paradox that the horse, with all the extra strength which he can bring to man, is not absolutely necessary in a successful fight. Several times we have seen the King fighting on foot with great bravery and success (and there are other examples in the text which are not quoted here). This seems paradoxical to the fact that a cavalier is necessarily more powerful and dangerous than an infantryman. It is only at the beginning of livre IV, when the Czar wants to capture the Swedish king in Grodno, that Voltaire shows us a powerful party of Russian cavalry, who nevertheless will not achieve their goal (p. 149). To some extent, the fate of the man and the fate of the animal are bound together far more in times of defeat than in times of success. All through the text, the first appearance of a horse is systematically linked to a position of weakness for man, an initial negative situation. It is only in a second stage that this negative is transmuted into a positive. Byron and Hugo will not need to invent this characteristic feature of the horse. It is already clearly present in Voltaire's text.
With this logic, the more the action intensifies, the more the tragedy unfolds and the more often the horse is quoted in its link with increasing danger, weakness, pain and suffering. If one considers that the appearances of the ‘horse-suffering’ and the ‘horse-salvation’ correspond to two successive textual stages of a dramatic function, it is as if the whole narration is progressing through a series of successive falls and landings (preparatory to subsequent new surges in the action), in which the horse is a crucial agent for the unfolding of the tragedy. The horse then becomes one of the main devices for an increase in dramatic tension. Its dynamism is reasserted more as a textual tool than as an element of equine reality, for at no stage does Voltaire describe this animal in a way which would enhance its speed, strength or grace. It is just a servile, soulless tool, even bodyless apart from when it is killed, a mechanism used for the benefit of human passion.

However, as in Buffon, the horse is an indispensable tool for it is its physical degradation intertwined with man’s own degradation which allows the latter to be subsequently saved. To some extent, Voltaire inscribes the horse with a negative, almost mortal potential in order to ensure the progression of his text, to make it more vivid and intrinsically tragic. It is this repetition of animal deaths which authorises the survival and perpetuation of the human heroes. It is the successive deaths and reappearances of the horse which ensure the sombre, grim and grotesque glory of Charles XII and the continuation of Voltaire’s text. Let us suppose a time when there were no more horses to be killed under the King, and that the King takes the full blow of the shot and dies. There his story would finish. There Voltaire’s book would end. Both at the historical level and at the textual level, the

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8 One cannot help recalling Buffon’s ‘feminine’ horse which, as an act of ultimate devotion, is ready to abandon its own being for the sake of its rider, or Leroi-Gourhan’s prehistoric horse. In this second case, the nature of violence has changed - from hunting to warfare - but its result remains: the wounding of the animal and its ultimate destruction.
young writer and the presumptuous King are sacrificing the animal to ensure the perpetuation and survival of their story of history.

Byron's intuition was acute when he picked the figure of the horse from Voltaire's text to support his Romantic conception. The English poet did not simply project his own preoccupations onto this historical book, for the horse does indeed play an essential role in the very fabric of this dramatic text. It is at the same time a structural and a symbolic role, and we may legitimately assume that we shall find an echo, reverberation or development of the same fundamental antithetic value for the figure of the horse as it stands, in Byron's *Mazeppa*.

4) *Water and horse confronting each other or joining forces.*

We have one more point yet to examine in this fourth book of Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII*. As we shall see in studying Byron's and Hugo's versions of the story, most commentators have noticed the striking importance of the landscape and various external agents included in it. Most of the time these agents play an oppositional role in the narration. Joseph-Marc Bailbé for example points out that in Hugo's poem, the elements of the landscape contribute to reinforce an impression of mystery and fantasy blurring and confusing the senses.\(^9\) Is it the same in Voltaire's account of the King and Mazeppa's flight?

The Swedish army was vanquished as much by nature as by the Russians, just as the Napoleonic army was to be a century later. As early as the fourth page, Voltaire specifies that: ‘Depuis Grdno jusqu'au Borysthène, en tirant vers l'orient, ce sont des marais, des déserts, des

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\(^9\) Bailbé, 'Mazeppa et les artistes romantiques', p. 23.
forêts immenses dont il faut abattre tous les arbres qui obstruent le passage' (p. 149).

Nature's adversity is constantly recalled: ‘Les obstacles qu'on avait trouvés jusqu'alors dans la route, étoient légers en comparaison de ceux qu'on rencontrera dans ce nouveau chemin. Il fallut traverser une forêt de cinquante lieues, pleine de marécages [...], presque toute l'artillerie et tous les chariots restèrent embourbés ou abymés dans les marais' (p. 154).

Further on, this oppositional conjunction of nature with the enemy is stressed again: ‘Charles voulait braver les saisons, comme il faisoit ses ennemis’ (p. 157). Out of fidelity to the dogma of historic authenticity, Voltaire declines to spare us a single river crossing: there are six in the thirty pages which form the chapter (book IV). Most of them are mentioned only rapidly, but one at least deserves to be examined carefully because of the intervention of the horse which facilitates the crossing, and also because Byron will remember this passage when writing his own version of the story. Indeed, while most of the time the men can cross the rivers on foot, if necessary with water up to their shoulders, by swimming or with makeshift rafts, the fifth crossing presents a major difficulty. It is the first river to be traversed after the defeat and the army is in flight, with the Russians on its heels. The current is very strong and there is no time to build a temporary jetty or some rafts; ‘[Seuls les cavaliers] se fiant à la bonté de leurs chevaux, hasardèrent de passer le fleuve à la nage. Leur troupe bien serrée résistait au courant et rompoit les vagues; mais tous ceux qui s'écartèrent un peu au dessous furent emportés et abymés dans le fleuve. De tous les fantassins qui risquèrent le passage, aucun n'arriva à l'autre bord’ (p. 167).

This is the end of the great Swedish army. The capitulation of the infantry follows shortly and the men on foot surrender to a body of ten thousand horsemen each carrying an extra man on the pillion. We can easily see how the presence of horses ensures the perpetuation of the adventure. The absence of horses necessarily implies the end of hostilities.
and the cessation of all action. Furthermore, the horse appears here as a counterpart to
the opposing liquid element in helping the Swedes to surmount the obstacle of the river.
Indeed, the river operates as the ally of the Russian army to confirm the downfall of the
Swedes. Nature and mankind join forces together in order to implement a *fatum*, a
supernatural, superhuman reality which the hero confronts and by which he is slowly but
steadily destroyed. The horse is the only help the hero can find to delay his ineluctable end.

In the narration, what immediately follows the overcoming of the ‘liquid’ opposition is
the crossing of a desert, which offers a symmetrical confrontation with a ‘dry’ hostile
landscape:

[Un] désert, où ils ne voyoient ni huttes, ni tentes, ni hommes, ni animaux, ni chemins:
Tout y manquoit, jusqu'à l'eau même. C'étoit dans le commencement de juillet. Le pays
est situé au quarante septième degré: le sable aride du désert rendoit la chaleur du
soleil plus insupportable, les chevaux tomboient, les hommes étoient près de mourir de
soif. Un ruisseau d'eau bourbeuse fut l'unique ressource qu'on trouva vers la nuit; on
remplit des outres de cette eau qui sauva la vie à la petite troupe du roi de Suède.
Après cinq jours de marche, il se trouva sur le rivage du fleuve Hippanis.10

It is now the conjunction of the elements earth and fire (sand and sun) which hinders
the progress of the King of Sweden. In this case, the horse is helpless; man is left alone to face
these powers. This leads us to believe that there is a special link between the water and the
horse, some kind of underlying agreement between these two bodies in motion. Sometimes
they confront each other, sometimes they complement each other and help each other to solve
the successive blockages that man encounters. We already know, owing to our brief survey of
the value of the horse in Greek mythology, that this animal maintains special links to the liquid
element, sea or river. It is born from the sea and belongs to Poseïdon. Examplified as Pegasus,

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a strike of its hoof makes a new spring burst. It is as if its special relationship with this
element allowed it to dominate and circumvene water’s strength. Byron’s crossing of the river
thus will appear fully in line with tradition.

In any case, in this terrible game between internal and external forces, between
progressive ones and regressive ones, in which man’s will is one of the factors, the horse is
certainly more than a simple pawn. This will be obvious in the other versions of the myth
which we shall study, but it still had to be demonstrated in the initial Voltairian text. Man’s
desire for gold, sex, power or glory can be the trigger for the action, but when difficulties
occur, the horse is there to support and perpetuate the unfolding actions. Byron’s poem now
gives us the opportunity to deepen our study of the relationship the horse maintains with man’s
desire and libido, how and where its energy meets the trigger to set the text in this motion
from weakness to strength, from suffering to salvation. The general direction of such a
motion, with its anthetical pattern, will remain the same, but the deepening of the man-animal
relationship will require a new methodological approach, taking more into account the
psychological and biographical presence of the author in his text. However, these new
dimensions will remain subservient to the text, which is the original place where inspiration
and genius exert themselves. To a large extent, the ‘psychology’ of the author can be viewed
more as another mode of expression of the text itself than its ‘cause’ or ‘origin’. This
phenomenon will be more clearly appreciated in our reading of the next text, Byron’s
Mazeppa.
PART II BYRON: THE FIRST EXTENSION

A/ BIRTH OF A RIDER

Having paid attention to the validity of the grafting of Byron's text on to Voltaire's one, we need now to examine how the main theme of the man-animal fusion works within Byron's poem itself. So, from a 'horizontal' reading of the myth, we move to a 'vertical' reading of one of its versions. We shall eventually need to see how these two types of reading relate to each other, but, for the time being, I shall concentrate on Byron independently of his precursors or followers. According to Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, we are thus moving from one plane of consistency to another, without losing sight of the fact that they are all parts of a larger dynamic entity, the Text of Mazeppa.

When approaching Byron's Mazeppa in the context of an intertextual project, we face a double challenge:

a) first, there is the overwhelming presence of the author, either in its Romantic 'Byronic' aspect, or as revealed by the more objective treatments of successive biographers;

b) second, there is the strange fact that most critics and commentators have tended to overlook the poem, Mazeppa, itself, focusing on more famous tales such as The
The fact that Mazeppa seems to have appealed to many more painters than literary critics may be an indication that its appeal is more visual than narrative. Only once we have taken into account those two elements shall we be able to analyse the text from the point of view of its narrative structure and its psychocritical content.¹

1) The ‘biographical’ curse

In France, the first translation of Byron’s Mazeppa by Amédée Pichot and Eusèbe de Salle was published in Byron’s Oeuvres complètes (Paris, Ladvocat, 1819-21), later followed by several more reprintings. By the 4th edition in 1822-25 (6 vol. in octavo), it was accompanied by Amédée Pichot’s Essai sur le génie de Lord Byron together with an introductory Notice by Charles Nodier. Although Byron despised this attempt to translate his works,² this publication was one of the greatest literary successes in France in the nineteenth century. In his monumental thesis on Byron, Robert Escarpit remarks humorously that ‘Cette traduction en prose est souvent plus byronienne que l’original’,³ and Edmond Estève points out that it is this translation which really triggered the Byronic myth in France and throughout Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁴

¹ In using this word ‘psychocritical’, once again, I want to stress the fact that it is a personal understanding of the text which is the final goal of my research and not some kind of ever pursued truth about its author. In this respect, the type of analysis which I shall develop will largely differ from those of Charles Mauron.


³ Escarpit, Byron, i, p. 22, note 24.

These introductions by Nodier and Pichot, written while the poet was still alive, are representative of the way the English poet and his works were received at that time in France. All of the public’s attention was focused on the personality of the author and the only thing that mattered in his texts was the elements which could improve the readers’ knowledge of his personality. Here are three extracts from the introductions by Nodier and Pichot, which at once force us into a psychological and biographical interpretation of the poems:

Les héros des fables modernes n’ont guère de lutte à soutenir que contre leurs propres penchants, leurs erreurs, leurs préjugés, leurs passions, parce que notre sécheresse et notre égoïsme n’ont pas laissé d’autres agens de sympathie à la disposition du poète. C’est là l’idée première des principaux poèmes de Lord Byron. Il n’en est aucun qui ne puisse servir à l’histoire philosophique de la pensée.  

Lord Byron a tellement identifié son caractère avec ses écrits, dont une grande partie est comme un miroir où se refléchissent tous les mouvements de son âme, que le critique doit bien se pénétrer du sentiment de son impartialité avant de condamner dans ses jugemens l’homme avec le poète.

Cette identité de l’homme et du poète, cette étude de l’âme d’un grand écrivain à travers le voile de la poésie et de la fiction, ont un intérêt bien au-dessus de celui qu’excitent les compositions ordinaires, et je ne sais quel charme sauve de la monotonie ce développement continuel du même caractère et des mêmes pensées.

In Pichot’s extracts, there are some efforts to distinguish between the intrinsic poetic quality of the works and their biographical content, but these efforts are immediately thwarted by his fascination for the character of the author with whom he is dealing. As soon as the

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7 Ibid., I (1823), pp. i-clii (p. vii).
Cantos I and II of *Childe Harold* had been published in 1813, the public started to identify the poet with the hero of his writing. Undeniably something in the text itself had produced this effect, but after the crisis of 1816 and Byron's departure into exile, the process of identification took another step. At this stage, critics like Pichot had to justify their taste for the works of someone of whose scandalous behaviour they disapproved. Both through literature and public fame, the author's personality was a clear presence for the readers although this was not to Byron's own liking. Repeatedly in the first preface to the *Childe Harold* Cantos I & II and in the additions to this preface, he denied any autobiographical references and stressed the fictitious nature of his hero. However no-one was convinced. Finally, in a letter to Hobhouse which appears as the inscription of Cantos IV, he admits his weariness of denying what he considered to be the prejudicial fusion of the fictional hero and the poet and gives in to his reputation. In this letter, there is indeed a sense of fate, of a destiny difficult to accept, something we could call the 'biographical curse'. For the rest of his life, he will maintain a rather ambiguous position on the inscription of the biographical dimension in his writings and this is particularly noticeable in *Don Juan*.

To some extent, this curse has passed on to his more recent commentators. For more than a century, critics have relished this atmosphere of scandalous biography. By the 1950s, Escarpit was one of the first to realise that such an approach could not take the critical reading of Byron's works much further. At the heart of Escarpit's project, there is a desire to move away from the 'biographical curse' and to put the emphasis back on the text; he regrets that the biographical aspects have had too much attention devoted to them - to the detriment of the

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*The fact is I have become weary of drawing a line which every one seemed determined not to perceive*, Byron, *Works*, p. 146.
literary aspects. His concern is to re-establish a balance in order to recognise Byron's proper literary value. This project can find support within the texts themselves. Indeed, in the transition period from 1817-18, Byron did all he could to break the mould of the Byronism in which he had been cast and it is in the very middle of those years of transition that *Mazeppa* was composed. However, Escarpit cannot totally escape all biographical references. As far as he is concerned, the author is weakening but not yet dead. Escarpit cannot detach himself from Byron's *persona*, from the mask of the author. In spite of his demythifying purpose, Escarpit is nonetheless obliged to admit that a knowledge of the author is necessary to understand his works more accurately. Towards the end of his study though, he will even contradict himself by admitting that what he calls 'la partie détachable de son oeuvre, le produit fini' cannot do justice to Byron. Escarpit thus operates a drastic critical U-turn and, in short, is not able to free himself from the 'biographic curse'.

It is generally admitted that the Romantic school strove to liberate the direct expression of feelings and emotions of the self, in opposition to the Classical stance aiming at a distancing of the author from his work. However, Byron can be situated at a point of transition between Classicism and Romanticism. This position made him rather ambivalent

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9 Escarpit, *Byron*, I, p. 15, and also: 'Ils (les critiques) se sont trouvés à réduire la portée littéraire de ses œuvres à l'insignifiant phénomène de la dramatisation de soi. Cette perspective est encore trop souvent celle de notre temps parce qu'on a persisté à donner au héros byronien une importance morale ou psychologique plutôt que littéraire, en un mot à l'abstraite de son contexte', II, p. 148.

10 'Il faut seulement qu'elle (la dimension biographique) aide le lecteur au lieu de le gêner, qu'elle éclaire les textes au lieu de les obscurcir, en un mot qu'elle ait des objectifs principalement littéraires', ibid., I, p. 125.

11 'C'est pourquoi on ne peut lire Byron comme on lit n'importe quel autre poète. Dans la lecture en effet, l'oeuvre cesse d'être la chose de l'auteur pour devenir celle du lecteur. En elle la création littéraire se paralyse par l'abandon de l'objet créé à celui pour qui il a été créé. Ainsi comprise, la lecture ne permet pas de rendre justice à Byron. La partie détachable de son œuvre, le produit fini, n'en est pas l'essentiel. Et c'est justement parce que le lecteur honnête et anonyme s'en tient au produit fini, à la page imprimée, qu'il lui est impossible de rendre justice à Byron. Pour reprendre une vieille métaphore byronienne, c'est juger le volcan d'après sa lave refroidie, et non point d'après son éruption', ibid., II, p. 251.

12 Byron often expressed his early admiration for Alexander Pope, while Voltaire's influence became more and more important towards the second half of his life. Pichot remarked that Don Juan had been obviously modeled
regarding the expression of the self and we saw that he tried, but failed to maintain some kind of separation between the author and his own creation. We shall thus have to maintain a double strategy - biographical and textual - in our approach to Byron's *Mazeppa*, following Escarpit's line in this respect, but also taking care not to confuse the two dimensions.

Moreover, when I come to examine Victor Hugo's reading of Byron's *Mazeppa*, it will become noticeable that the French poet also fell victim to 'the biographical curse': Hugo's understanding of his predecessor's text was to a large extent influenced by his perception of the author. This fact equally compels us to take into consideration the biographical dimension in our study of the English poem, and to make a psychocritical detour which will take us to an interpretation of Byron's Mazeppa within the broader context of the complete work. However, we must be wary of the fact that, in this way, we might ourselves fall into the trap of the 'biographical curse' and be guilty of some sort of intentionalism. This is imposed on us by the nature of the texts studied, one commenting the other, and we can only tackle the question adapting ourselves to their respective bias with an acute consciousness of this risk and its inherent difficulty.

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on Voltaire's philosophic tales ('C'est évidemment sur les contes philosophiques de Voltaire que ce nouveau poème est modelé' Pichot, 'Essai', I (1823), p. cxxx). It is in Venice that Byron bought the Complete Work of Voltaire in 92 volumes (known as the 'Kehl duodecimo' edition) which he read extensively and in which he found his argument for *Mazeppa*. He appreciated in it the cult of human reason which he himself claimed to revere (Escarpit, *Byron*, I, p. 111; II, p. 159-160).
2) Byron in a transitional space

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the transitional value of Byron's poem within the larger textual chain that we are studying, we need to examine how Byron projected his own transitional situation into his writing. This is of crucial importance to this thesis since, as I argued in the introduction, the intertextual dimension is made of nothing but transitions, movements from one point to another without any rest, station or 'stasis'. In the case of Byron, the transition covers two aspects, one which can be perceived in terms of literary strategy or stylistic position, and another aspect which is purely biographical; both aspects are significant in the writing of *Mazeppa*.

Escravit also noticed that Byron's Romanticism was innovatory only by accident and that his artistic conceptions and writing techniques really derived from the previous century.\(^\text{13}\)

This allows Escravit to state that:

Il est dès lors plus facile de 'sitter' Byron, non point dans le débat classicisme-romantisme, mais dans l'hiatus qui sépare le XVIII ième du XIX ième siècle [...]. Il est un temps entre 1790 et 1800 où le XVIII ième siècle n'est pas terminé, et il en est un autre, entre 1810 et 1820 où le XIX ième est commencé. Mais il y a des chevauchements, des empiècements, de sorte qu'il est parfois assez difficile de distinguer entre les 'hommes nouveaux' et ceux qui vivent encore sur d'anciennes traditions.\(^\text{14}\)

The important words here are 'hiatus' and 'chevauchements', for stylistically *Mazeppa* is also the expression of this transitional place Byron held in the century, in between the centuries. The expression used here by Escravit, 'chevauchement', can be translated by 'overlapping', 'bestriding' or 'straddling'. This 'straddling' has stronger implications than one

\(^{13}\) Ibid., I, p. 144.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., I, p. 143.
might think from the play on words it gives rise to: a text about a horse and a mad ride is
the expression of an author overriding the literary generations, linking Classicism and
Romanticism. This is therefore another way stylistically to establish the link between
Voltaire's text and Byron's and to confirm the dialectical bond between the two stylistic eras
and its relevance for the understanding of Mazeppa. Thanks to its ambivalent stylistic stance,
the text straddles two distinct literary periods. The theme of the story itself is the icon of the
historical position of the text, representing it at the level of the fiction.

Furthermore, this text corresponds to another transition, this time inherent in Byron's
own life. Conceived and written in 1817-1818, Mazeppa is situated exactly between his two
major masterpieces, Childe Harold and Don Juan, between lyricism and the narrative. It
appeared at a time when Byron was still in the process of 'digesting' the psychological crisis
of the previous year 1816. This period of 'brooding over' the dramatic events of his past life
has been widely recognised in texts like Manfred or The Prisoner of Chillon, but less often in
Mazeppa. It is possible to consider that this poem springs from the same root, expressing in a
different way the need for a journey of initiation which would take the poet beyond the
difficult passage, from one stage in life to another, from one stylistical world to another.
Writing it thus becomes a ride and in reading it the reader witnesses the birth of a rider, a new
man within a new text.

15 'Par leur pureté de ligne, leur sagesse, disons le mot, par leur classicisme, The Prisoner of Chillon et Mazeppa font
un étrange contraste avec les autres productions de cette époque chaotique, Manfred et les deux derniers chants de
Childe Harold', ibid., II, p. 213.
3) The background of the writing of *Mazeppa*

Byron was still alive, a living and scandalous myth, when Pichot became his translator. The first version of Pichot's 'Essai sur le Génie et le caractère de lord Byron' appeared in the third edition, volume I of Ladvocat, published in 1821 and at that stage was entitled 'Notice sur Lord Byron et ses écrits'. The writing of this first version is contemporary with Byron's stay in Venice. This 'Notice' (as it was still called) may give us an insight into the background of the creation of *Mazeppa*. Nothing is said about the text but Pichot describes Byron's life and leisure at that time, and we notice that riding was one of his main activities. Did Byron, while improving his riding skill, find nourishment for his inspiration? Or was he checking certain impressions after having jotted them down on paper? Was it after one of his races that he read Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII*? In any case, there is a striking correspondence here between his physical life and his mental activities. One could even say, at textual level, that the anodine description of the poet riding on the sandy beaches of the *laguna* is more informative about the circumstances of Byron's creation than what Pichot said about the poem later on in his final version of his essay published two years later.

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As I have indicated, *Mazeppa* does not belong to the main list of recognised works. It has an original idea, but something is missing, which cannot be compensated for by the variety of tones, styles and registers. There is a lack of ‘incidents’; in other words there is no plot, no drama, no ‘story’. Herein lies the reason for the readers’ or critics’ disdain or neglect: the linearity of the plot, the flatness of the journey mar the main body of the poem. For the duration of eight cantos, it focuses purely on a horse running and a man tied to his horse. Of course, there are some events and incidents, but they are micro-events, pictorial illustrations of a scene or a theme. There is not much in the plot itself which can retain the reader’s attention. It is simply a protracted ordeal, and as Pichot says, a single new type of torture, displayed in various pictures.

This is also why *Mazeppa* attracted so many painters instead: it is a vision more than a story. Apart from the vivid depiction of the suffering endured by the rider and his mount, the ‘charme’ and the ‘agreeable’ are found only in the style and little else appeals to the nineteenth century’s reader. If it were not for the painters and illustrators, and for Hugo, the poem would have been quickly forgotten.

But we have a more direct and very important testimonial of the mental atmosphere surrounding the creation of *Mazeppa* in Byron’s mind: an extract of a letter written by the poet to his friend Thomas Moore around the time of its composition:

[... ] I don't know what Murray may have been saying or quoting. I called Grabbe and Sam the fathers of present Poesy; and said, that I thought - except them - all of ‘us youth’ were on a wrong tack. But I never said that we did not sail well. Our fame will be hurt by my admiration and imitation. When I say our, I mean all (Lakers included), except the postscript of the Augustans. The next generation (from the quantity and facility of imitation) will tumble and break their necks off our Pegasus, who runs away with us; but we keep the saddle, because we broke the rascal and can ride. But though easy to mount, he is the devil to guide, and the next fellows must go back to the riding school and the manege, and learn to ride the ‘great horse’.
Talking of horses, by the way, I have transported my own, four in number, to the lido (beach in English) a strip of some ten miles along the Adriatic, a mile or two from the city; so that I not only get a row in my gondola, but a spanking gallop of some miles daily along a firm and solitary beach, from the fortress to Malamocco, which contributes considerably to my health and spirits.18

(my italics)

In this letter, we can see that riding did not only maintain Byron's good health and high spirits, but also inspired the building up of a body of reflection on literary strategy.

This is an extremely important document for several reasons. It is obviously the first part which is important, the second serving only to confirm what Pichot argues. Although not referring explicitly to Mazeppa, Byron is writing about some problems of theory and poetic strategy. He postulates the fact that although starting a priori from a wrong position (a wrong 'tack'), this does not prevent him and his fellow poets from producing writings of good quality ('I never said we did not sail well'). After having used a continued seafaring metaphor, he launches himself into the fairly common metaphor of Pegasus in place of poetic inspiration, or poetic trend - no doubt here the Romantic notion of uncontrolled self-expression. He postulates a conflict between the poet and his inspiration because its novelty and its wildness make it difficult to govern. The 'rascal' is new and wild before the young poet bestrides it, having to tame it first, to 'break' it in order to be able to stay on the saddle. But though 'easy to mount', he admits how difficult it is to guide it. The basic problem with inspiration is therefore not to stay on it - that is to say 'to be inspired', to receive the gift of inspiration -, but to bring it to where one wants, and this seems to be particularly problematic for the Romantics.19 Here 'the rascal' becomes 'the devil', a term covering both fear and respect, and

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19 This poses the ever pertinent question of the relationship between phusis and technè, nature and art, as Longinus formalised it in his work Du sublime, trans. by Jackie Pigeaud (Paris: Rivages, 1991), and as it has
it is this devil which takes the poets where it wants. The followers will not inherit the ability
to ride it wherever it goes and will have to start the whole process of breaking-in anew, maybe
with a different horse. As we shall see later, this is also in accordance with the Kantian theory
of genius which Hugo will take up and make his own.

In this difficulty of guiding the wild horse, a common metaphorical ground appears in
Byron and in Freud. The former refers to a literary inspiration triggered by the expression of
the inner self (or by a natural gift depending on the adopted theoretical viewpoint), while the
latter uses the metaphor of the horse as standing for the unconscious or the id, impossible to
control or to guide. On this basis, Byron's and Freud's literary uses of the horse-figure are very
similar and, within the rhetorical limit of this figure which establishes the link, it is possible to
draw a formal parallel between the poetic inspiration as the Romantics understood it and the
forces of the Freudian unconscious. This comparison will help us to understand the function of
the horse within the psychocritical context of Byron’s *Mazeppa* more clearly.

since been developed by Boileau, Burke and Kant. For a discussion of this relationship in connection with the
notion of the sublime, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, ‘La Vérité sublime’, in *Du Sublime*, ed. by Michel Deguy
relève de la *phasis* (du génie) et d’une *technè*? [...] La *phasis*, je transcris littéralement, ”s’est constituée en
toutes choses comme le principe et l’élément archétype de toute naissance”. [...] La *technè* n’est ici pensée que
comme la régulation d’une puissance naturelle, un pouvoir de contrôle. Et c’est dans cette limite seule que l’art
du sublime relève de la *technè*.‘
4) Byron distancing himself from his hero

All this shows that Hugo was not wholly projecting his own concern in his interpretation of Byron's poem. The metaphor of the horse as bearer of poetic inspiration was indeed in Byron's conscious mind while he was writing it, and was part of the thematic infrastructure of the poem. The reference to Pegasus in his letter proves it. But the English poet seems to have hidden this metapoetic meaning to give greater emphasis to the more common moralistic message of the destiny which cannot be foreseen ('What mortal his own doom may guess?'). One may wonder why such a reading did not surface in the text, although one might suspect Byron's dread of being yet again identified with his heroes by the public. Accepting that Mazeppa was a representation of the poet, as Hugo did not hesitate to do a few years later, would hinder any attempt to differentiate the author from his hero. But this interpretation was certainly in the back of Byron's mind.

Another proof of the fundamental ambiguity in Byron's aesthetic attitude towards his heroes can be seen here. Such ambiguity would force him to alternate the moments of sincerity and the moments of insincerity. The case of Mazeppa being sent into exile bears so strong a resemblance to his own situation at that time that he would have preferred to conceal this resemblance rather than to enhance it.

20 It has been established that Byron started his poem in April 1817 and finished it in September 1818; it was published in October 1819.
21 Byron, Mazeppa, p. 367, line 853.
22 Escarpit also has recognised the figure of the author behind Mazeppa: 'Il serait difficile de réconcilier Mazeppa avec l'image traditionnelle des héros byroniens [...]. Si l'on s'obstine à vouloir considérer les héros de Byron comme des auto-portraits, on voudra bien reconnaître que celui-ci n’est ni moins vraisemblable ni moins acceptable que celui de Lara: il l’est même probablement davantage’, Escarpit, Byron, II, p. 215.
Following this line of thought, Byron endeavours to take the poem out of its autobiographical background and give it a universal dimension. As historian and moralist, Voltaire had a dual aim. Influenced by his model, Byron will draw a moral from his inner fiction (what Escarpit called his 'mythe personnel', a notion shared with Charles Mauron23). His narrative will be established as an act of defiance against his too lyrical and personal imagination.

Harold Orel reveals how Byron, alone of all the great Romantic poets, distrusted the imagination.24 He noticed 'his delight in the brevity of a didactic line'. The story of Mazeppa has an explicit didactic, an almost pedagogical purpose which is very clear in the final comment made about the mad race.

The poem is divided into three sections. The first and the third can be heard as the author's voice introducing the hero, Mazeppa, and concluding (a very common device to introduce and conclude an epic tale), while the second section framed by the others is the narration of the tale itself by the hero. This framing implies that there are two types of past, which correspond to the author's voice and to the hero-narrator's voice respectively, and two

23 Ibid., II, p.133. For a full account of the notion of 'mythe personnel', see Charles Mauron, Des Métaphores obsédantes au mythe personnel, introduction à la psychocritique (Paris: Corti, 1962), especially chapter XII, 'Le mythe et sa dynamique': 'On pourrait se contenter de cette définition empirique, nommer “mythe personnel” le fantasme le plus fréquent chez un écrivain, ou mieux encore l'image qui résiste à la superposition de ses œuvres. [...] Nous avons vu comment se formalaient ces figures mythiques. Elles représentent ces “objets internes” et se constituent par identifications successives. [...] Un incessant courant d'échanges peuple ainsi l'univers intérieur, noyaux de personnalité qui sont ensuite plus ou moins assimilés, intégrés dans une structuration totale', pp. 210-211, and chapter XIII, 'Interprétation du mythe personnel': 'Nous prendrons donc le mythe personnel comme une donnée moins immédiate que le texte, mais participant de son objectivité. [...] Interpréter un mythe personnel, c'est rechercher son origine et tâcher de comprendre sa fonction. Remarquons d'ailleurs aussitôt que ces deux termes n'ont pas pour nous le même intérêt: la fonction littéraire du mythe personnel nous importe bien plus que son origine probablement biographique.' One can see in these two quotations how my approach differs from Mauron's. If I share the same interest for the literary function of the personal myth, I do not intend to superimpose several works by Byron in order to prove the validity of the myth of Mazeppa in his works. I am rather superimposing works by several writers, an approach which will certainly not outline a personal myth. In my view, the writers concerned are simply the vehicles for the Text of Mazeppa, as previously defined, and this mythico-textual reality transcends them.

levels of fictional ‘vraisemblance’. To some extent, it can be considered that this dual
structure corresponds also to two different levels of reading of the poem. The first level, more
superficial and explicit, leads to the moral conclusion that no-one can guess one's own fate,
while a second, deeper level provides the support for the symbolic meaning of the story which
can be implicitly understood but requires some interpretation to bring it to light.

5) Mazeppa as a journey of initiation

From the start Byron develops an opposition between the despotic adventurer,
consumed by a pathological craving for honour, and the shrewd old horseman, who had long
since understood the vanity of human ambition.25

Charles cannot control his excessive egotism while Mazeppa has been obliged to let his
own identity be consumed in an ordeal which has somehow purified him. Thus, Mazeppa is
indeed the foil of Charles. He embodies a dearly acquired wisdom to which the monarch
should also submit himself. Unfortunately, Charles will not hear the lesson, for when Mazeppa
finishes his tale and draws his conclusion ‘the King has been an hour asleep’ (1. 869).26

To reinforce this contrast, Byron creates in his introduction a positive alter ego of
Charles XII. It will be the Polish King John Casimir whose court Mazeppa attended as a page
in his youth: ‘And most unlike Your Majesty’ (1.132) says Mazeppa ironically. Different

25 ‘The first shows his instinctive tendency to natural virtue and the second is his confirmation in a submission to
nature and fate, which finally teaches him how to reign over himself and his passions’, Jerome McGann, Fiery Dust;

26 From now on, the references to Byron's Mazeppa will be given in the main part of the thesis and not as footnotes.
The lines of the poem will be indicated. The edition referred to is the ‘Oxford Authors’ edited by J. McGann, already
mentioned.
indeed is this John Casimir, lover of peace, books and women (l.136-142) from the chaste, ignorant and warriorlike Swedish King.

The critics disagree about the way in which Mazeppa's ordeal has tamed the rider as much as his horse, hence delivering him from his passions. Some even doubt the real efficacy of the whole operation. After all, has the exhausted stallion not brought Mazeppa to the land of wild horses, the land where passions can run freely and where the sinner can become King among his fellow sinners? The story would then be only a 'cycle of crime and punishment' which would have failed. This is the interpretation supported by Babinski. Mazeppa has committed adultery but he is not really punished for it and, above all, his revenge some years later precludes any chance of redemption. Moreover, at the end of his life, he betrays his suzerain Peter the Great, an unforgivable act after all that he owed to him. Babinski wonders whether or not Byron in this poem is really trying to overturn the general moral view that crime must be punished. But is it really the author's moral conceptions that matter here? What really matters is surely the undeniably positive aura that emanates from the old hetman in the text. Whatever his sins were and whether they have been forgiven or not, the old man has understood something about human weakness and strength.

Quite rightly, if one looks at the beginning of the poem, but slightly abusively, if we apply this interpretation to the whole text, Babinski bases the story on the initial topic of defeat: public defeat for Charles XII on the battlefield, more private defeat for Mazeppa at the hands of Falbowski's henchmen. After having finished reading the poem, one cannot help

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28 Ibid., p. 43.

29 'Byron, ultimately a realist and on the alert for the irony of fate, sets the symbol in a historical frame, which, as pointed out, is defeat', Ibid., p. 45.
thinking, though, that there is a major difference in the moral hierarchy of the two protagonists. Mazeppa, through his torture, has reached a higher level of consciousness than the wounded King. Mazeppa is freed from chains which still bind his noble ally. Even if, at the beginning of his tale, he admits still being haunted in his old age by the love of his youth:

I loved her then, I love her still;
And such as I am, love indeed
In fierce extremes - in good and ill
But still we love even in our rage
And haunted to our very age.  

(1. 225-229)

These reflections appear precisely before the narration of the torture, and the feeling of peace and self-accord will really intervene after this narration, when Mazeppa can finally lie down and sleep: ‘Comrades, good night!’ (l. 860).

For Peter Manning, who applies a convincing psychoanalytical reading of the poem,^0 Mazeppa’s adulterous love for Teresa is representative of the fascination Byron has for a network of relationships assimilated to what Freud would call the Oedipal Cycle a century later: indeed, in Mazeppa, a young man fell in love with a woman married to an older man. The images that Byron projects onto his historic material are symptomatic of the resentment felt by the son towards his parents, father and mother in turn. Even more, at the end, Byron provides us with the vision of a reconciled Oedipus - or rather a resolved Oedipal complex - when Mazeppa wakes up in the Cossack’s house. The young girl who saved him goes and fetches her parents (‘She came with mother and with sire’, l. 840). Mazeppa’s narration of these painful events from his youth somehow equates with the patient’s discourse during

psychoanalysis. According to Manning, this is how Mazeppa gains the self-control to endure adversity, though Manning adds that the cure will not be total while there remains a disjunction between past and present.\textsuperscript{31} We could affirm, however, that the main function of the narration is precisely to abolish the past, to live it \textit{in praesentia} one more time, which will be the last time, and thereafter to forget it forever. In which case, there is only a fictional narrative present, and nothing else. Past energy is rekindled \textit{in praesentia} to sustain strength and self-control in the present. The return to the third person at the end of the text marks a renewed distance between the author and the hero-narrator: once the telling of the story has performed its curative function, through a fusion of past and present, Byron can shed the device of Mazeppa’s first-person narrative. For Byron, abandoning this ‘double’ consciousness is a psychological as much as a formal necessity, since writing as much as telling works as a deliverance. No disjunction of past and present is implied, for there is no more past. Once the story has been told by the hero, the author can describe Mazeppa lying down in the shade of an oak, on a leafy couch whose quality does not matter in the slightest; such a man takes his rest wherever and whenever the occasion arises. Unlike Charles (l. 860-866), Mazeppa can sink freely into an amnesia provided by Nature. Once the moral conclusion is drawn, Byron has no more reason to continue the poem. If, with McGann, one accepts that ‘biographically the poem is another curious example of Byron’s habit of compensating through poetry’,\textsuperscript{32} and more pertinently if one considers the moral of the tale as a decoy to prevent any excessive reading of identification, the real end of the tale is this: ‘Comrades, good night!’ (l. 860).

\textsuperscript{31} ‘Mazeppa is the first of Byron’s heros to contain both energy and control, but examination shows that its fullness is intimately related to the strata of time in the poem: the energies are largely remembered from the past, the control is a quality of the present. [...] The continuity has less positive overtones, for as the third person indicates, it implies a double consciousness based on a disjunction between past and present rather than a unified self-consciousness’, ibid., p. 104.

\textsuperscript{32} McGann, \textit{Fiery Dust}, p. 184.
The return to the third person in the last ten lines does not necessarily mean a return to the presence of the author; it is, rather, a renewed and reinforced ‘estrangement’ not only from his hero, but also from his own symbolic projection in the story. He introduces the moral of the tale not as an acknowledgement of the social ‘hors-texte’, that outer part of the textual universe that is in contact with a potential public, but as a dissimulation and a distancing of his self from that public. This function of the moral message preserves the effectiveness of the narration. My view, unlike Manning’s, is that the narration as cure has worked.

6) The crossing of the river as the centre of the initiation process

The crossing of the river is another passage which has attracted the commentators’ attention for its symbolic value and especially the following two lines:

And with a temporary strength
My stiffened limbs were rebaptized (l. 588-589)

Babinski, considering that the worst is still to come with the death of the horse and the near death of the hero, supports the idea that ‘Byron did not see the full symbolic importance of using the word “rebaptized”’. He explains that such a reference to the baptism comes as contradiction to what will follow. This is rather a strange statement since the meaning is obviously borne by the text. Beyond the river lies Ukraine, the land of wild horses where animal and man can at last expire in the lap of Nature, and the mad race extinguish itself. This is an absolutely different territory which it would be quite wrong to define in terms antagonistic to the preceding part of the story. Both Manning and McGann have been saved

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33 Babinski, Mazeppa Legend, p. 38.
from that type of interpretation. The first, in accordance with his psychoanalytic method, views the crossing of the river as a truly lustral baptism, but one which in nature would not be Christian but maternal, a feature which could imply some form of regressive impulse.\(^{34}\) For McGann as well, it is the initiatory reading which prevails. The river would represent a spiritual frontier. At the end of the journey, left alone after the death of the horse, Mazeppa ‘arrives at the fullness of understanding’:\(^{35}\) ‘[He] has discovered that life begins in the discovery of the fact and meaning of death’.\(^{36}\) Here McGann acknowledges a real metaphysical dimension in the text. This infernal ride is, for him, the key to understanding. It is only this ordeal which can provide Mazeppa with a lesson he must understand at all costs: the fact is that there is no real redemption without a preliminary abandonment. As long as Mazeppa extends his will and tries to free himself from his bonds, these bonds will tighten and his suffering will increase. The important thing is to give up the fight, to give in and accept one’s fate precisely in order to free oneself from it.\(^{37}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{With feeble effort still I tried} \\
\text{to rend the bonds so starkly tied,} \\
\text{But still it was in vain;} \\
\text{My limbs were only wrung the more,} \\
\text{And soon the idle strife gave o’er} \\
\text{Which but prolonged their pain.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(l. 635-640)

McGann has understood the agonistic nature of Mazeppa's struggle for freedom. The harder the hero tries to free himself from his bonds, the tighter his bonds become. This is the

\(^{34}\) Manning, *Byron*, p. 102.

\(^{35}\) McGann, *Fiery Dust*, p. 132.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 180.

\(^{37}\) ‘The fundamental weakness of the unmoderated passion and willfulness[...], a “headlong” nature tends to wear itself out prematurely and succumb to imposed trials precisely because such a man redoubles his agonies by fighting against them with inner fears and anxieties’, ibid., p. 181.
well-known principle of the snare. At a metaphysical level, it also bears some resemblance
to the message of Oriental philosophy: to rid oneself from the self, the chief cause of suffering
and death, and to leave the cycle of reincarnation, one must be able to free oneself even from
the desire to be free. McGann also sensed in this process the importance of the horse, which
functions as a kind of sacrificed part of the man-animal couple in order to ensure the
deliverance of the other part, man.\(^{38}\) This kind of process can be fruitfully compared, at an
inner level, to the sacrificing of the horse for the sake of human civilisation in Buffon.

However, we could reproach McGann for not exploring this process in more depth. This
relationship is a much more complex one and it is Babinski whose intuition about its nature
has guided him best. But, although Babinski has especially stressed the importance of the link
uniting man and animal, this critic too omitted to develop all the conclusions to which his
remarks might have led.\(^{39}\)

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\(^{38}\) 'At this point (the crossing of the river) both horse and man acquire a "new-born tameness" as the animal begins
his descent into death and Mazeppa his ascent to life', McGann, _Fiery Dust_, p. 182.

\(^{39}\) 'Two furious animals, both trapped in different ways, are tied to one another. As each lives out his destiny - the
horse to die and Mazeppa to be saved - one realizes that the fate of one not only reflects the other, but is also necessary
to the fate of the other [...]. Now perhaps we can see that the sacrifice of the horse's life becomes the new source of
Mazeppa's life. Tying the man to the beast seems to be a way of concretely demonstrating how alike and related they
are [...]. What seems most important in this struggle is that the horse's freedom apparently produces Mazeppa's pain
and vice versa, so that Mazeppa's life seems bound to the horse's death. Perhaps here the metaphor is explicit: the
horse is Mazeppa and vice versa; the one's death equals the other's life. Byron makes this intense identification
through most of the poem, trying apparently to fuse the parts of the analogy so that Mazeppa's ride might become, in
modern terms, a symbol', Babinski, _Mazeppa Legend_, pp. 34-36.
B/ THE CENTAUR COMPLEX

A clear vision of the man-animal relationship is essential to understand Byron's *Mazeppa* fully and also to understand the position of this poem within the textual chain that we are studying. The mad race establishes a process of fusion in which man and animal become intertwined in a rather masochistic fashion, the pain and suffering inflicted alternating from one member of the couple to the other. However, each time critics have mentioned this relationship, the horse has tended to be overlooked, due to a very common anthropocentrism. Also, if one considers that the initial trigger of this evolutive configuration comes from an unconscious complex developed by the author, it must however be asserted that any amplification or reverberation of the configuration is borne by the text itself. These two factors lead us to the idea that the text is the real producer of a complex 'in the making', and that the figure of the horse participates fully to the production of this complex. We are thus faced by a textual complex which we shall call the 'centaur complex' on account of its dual nature, a dual nature which remains to be construed.

1) The exemplary complementarity between the old hetman and his Buchephalus

At the beginning of the poem, Byron invites the reader to admire Mazeppa for the care he takes of his horse, Bucephalus. He embraces it as if it was a superior alter-ego. The
memory of Alexander’s horse enhances the value of the present animal whilst the reference
to the Greek conqueror works rather antithetically with Mazeppa: the old hetman has become
quite the opposite of Alexander. Thus, right at the beginning of the poem, we see Byron
emphasising as much the animal figure as the human hero. Byron uses a full twenty lines to
describe the sensual relationship that the hetman maintains with his mount (l. 57-77). As with
two old lovers, their similarity is stressed (‘But he was hardy as his lord’, l. 66) and their union
also relies upon the same complementarity as Buffon had noticed (‘But spirited and docile
too’, l. 68). Apart from its physical qualities (‘Shaggy and swift, and strong of limb’, l. 70), the
horse is exceptional for its obedience and the fact that it recognises its master among a
thousand, and would follow him throughout the night (l. 72-77). There is a strong mutual
dependence between the horse and his rider. Not only does the horse obey his master’s orders,
but it can follow him in the crowd or in the darkest of nights. This horse is presented almost as
the double of his master, hence the theme of a possible man-animal fusion is already strongly
hinted at in the first few pages of the poem. This explains why, whilst the horse obeys and
follows his master, the master himself grooms and feeds the horse like a servant; the slave and
master relationship alternates. One in turn dominates the other and it is necessary to pay close
attention to this alternating rhythm for indeed it is only when this dynamic va-et-vient motion
exists that the function of the double can really operate. If this alternating rhythm did not exist,
would a double be of any use? The main reason for the existence of a double is that it can take
the place of the ‘initial’ self (although, as in the rhetorical case of the propre and the figured,
this initial status can be put in doubt). In the case of an animal double, the animal will, in turn,
govern the man, or die on his behalf.
In the last line of Canto III (l. 77), an impression of consanguinity between the two
is even given by the use of the word ‘fawn’, as if Mazeppa was the father, or even the mother
of his horse! Looking after it would then become a parental duty. We have however to bear in
mind that Bucephalus is the horse of Mazeppa's old age, a quite different animal from the wild
one which took him to the Ukraine during his youth. The tameness of Bucephalus and its
trustworthiness would be the sign, or even the miror-image, of the old Mazeppa's dearly
acquired wisdom. One may wonder, as the King does, how the man and his horse have
achieved such complementarity. This is why Charles asks Mazeppa how, since Alexander's
time, i.e. since mythical times, no-one has ever seen such a well matched pair (l. 101-104) and
how he learnt to ride.1 Mazeppa replies at first reluctantly: ‘[...] I'll betide/ The school wherein
I learned to ride!’, (l. 107-108). Then he gives in to Charles's insistence and here starts the
story.

The story actually begins with a woman, and Mazeppa's ordeal (his mad ride), is linked
to his deprivation of this woman. The torture is a lesson as much as a punishment for
Mazeppa, for Charles and for us. As Babinski rightly noticed, the global starting point is a
defeat. It is important to acknowledge this and to appreciate its full value: the early sketches of
the tale bear a negative charge. As early as the third line of the third canto, we discover a
slaughtered army which can no longer fight. The wounded King bathes in his blood and in that

1 Bearing in mind the relationship of fusion between the man and his horse, and if we take the argument to its
limit, this question would mean: how did he learn to ride his own double, to ride himself? A possible answer
could be found in the Deleuzian concept of ‘becoming’; in his tale, which is his reply to the King's question,
Mazeppa will describe the process of his ‘becoming-horse’. In Deleuze and Guattari, Mill la plateaux, one
reads: ‘Un devenir n'est pas une correspondance de rapports. Mais ce n'est pas plus une ressemblance, une
imitation, et, à la limite, une identification [...] Devenir n'est pas progresser ni régresser suivant une série. Et
surtout devenir ne se fait pas dans l'imagination, même quand l'imagination atteint au niveau cosmique ou
dynamique le plus élevé, comme chez Jung ou Bachelard. Les devenirs-animaux sont parfaitement réels',
p. 291. Such a concept transcends the notion of double, or rather sets it in motion.
of his subjects. Byron has retained some passages from Voltaire, amongs which it is important to note the episode of the dying officer Gieta who gives his horse to the fleeing King. In accordance with what has been explained in the first part of this thesis, here also the negative presence of the 'horse-suffering' is strongly felt. The ambition, the hubris, has brought the characters their loss. The result: men lying, exhausted, bled-white, sustained only by horses. Around them, Nature reigns and foes lurk. All pride is not yet gone though:

King like the monarch bore his fall,
   And made, in this extreme of ill
   His pangs the vassals of his will   (l. 40-42)

Everything is quiet. Only one man is not totally demoralised and preserves a remnant of energy. He bustles about his horse, shares his food rations with the King and his fellow officers. This is Mazeppa. All the others are sad and mute, downcast (l. 49), downgraded to the level of brutes, of animals ('For danger levels man and brute', l. 51). Mazeppa is the only one who has preserved his status as a man. It is he who, at the King's request, will break the silence and will start to speak, to tell. One can see here how speech, even in the midst of defeat and weakness, both springs from and maintains humanity. Strangely, the horse has something to do with the maintenance of this status, for it provides the condition for the access to speech, thus to humanity. It is an animal, though at the same time more than an animal, owing to its special link with man, which is to take the human characters beyond the Borysthenes, beyond the river to where the stallions will be able to graze in peace (l. 115-116), this place of appeasement and fulfilment, earthly paradise of oblivion.
2) The relationship between Mazeppa and his horse and the relationship between Mazeppa and the woman he loves: a parallelism.

Certainly the key to the relationship between man and horse, between the man of words and the spoken horse, can be understood through examining the motif of bondage which Byron uses repeatedly. But it seems that such a motif, which opens the theme of the link between man and horse cannot be dissociated from its symmetrical counterpart, the motif of the look, the loving glance opening the theme of the love-affair between the man and the woman.\(^2\)

The second motif corresponds to a well-known poetic tradition going back to Petrarch: the lover is tied to his mistress by a spell that she has cast upon him with her eyes. However, it is a proof of Byron's originality that he links the two motifs together; both motifs, the binding to the horse and the exchange of a look with the woman, must therefore be studied in parallel. This establishes a correspondence between the woman and the horse which entails the contemplation of a larger, ternary, relationship between the man, his horse, and the woman. This kind of structural equivalence deduced between the horse and the woman reminds us of the equivalence between Pegasus and the bride in the myth of Bellerophon from the ancient Greek mythology. The existence of such a pattern, a triangulation hero-horse-woman, in Mazeppa's story is thus also confirmed.

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In the fifth canto, after comparing his bygone youth to his present state, Mazeppa launches into the description of Theresa, of her 'form' (a word which bears a much deeper meaning than 'shape' for it implies in neo-Platonic terms an approach to her essence). Now the first feature which he recollects and on which he expands with some indulgence is her ' Asiatic eye' (l. 208). This is characteristic and he spends twelve lines describing it (l. 208-219). Her eye is compared to a nocturnal sky, to a lunar light which is reflected in the water of a brook. The mention of her eyebrow, frame of the eye, widens the perspective and the whole is compared to a lake (l. 220-223). All this provides us with the vision of concentric circles, fitting into each other, and progressively widening like ripples in the water.

The rest of this blazon of the feminine body is hardly mentioned at all. Only the cheek and the lips are briefly touched on, and then... 'but why proceed?' (l. 224), the description stops abruptly. There, the banks of the look, the extremity of the frame is reached.

By looking at the setting of this passage in the narrative, one can notice that the description of the young woman which is centred around her eye, is itself framed in the text by two meditations upon memory and love. First Mazeppa wonders how 'quick and warm' his memory is. But the words are powerless 'to tell the shape' (l. 206-207) (and here the word 'shape' expresses the much more superficial notion of the 'silhouette', which then remains in the range of the sight. So no words can describe what is only seen, and not felt, without any deep acquaintance or understanding). Then he reflects upon the way love lasts and transcends human temporality, if not human life, even if all this is in vain (l. 225-230). This shows the same type of structure - although on a smaller scale - that Babinski outlined for the whole
poem: a burst of descriptive imagination framed by a more prosaic and realistic meditation
upon man's vanity and defeat, as a result of his fate as well as his words.

In the next canto VI, there is the first meeting with the two future lovers. This meeting is initially an exchange of looks rather than words, thus faithful to the neo-Petrarchist tradition:

We met - we gazed - I saw, and sighed;
She did not speak, and yet replied. (l. 232-233)

Although conventional, the description of love at first sight which comes next is very subtle: the looks are signs which spark thoughts and form an understanding, an ‘intelligence’ (l. 238) - this word being used here in its ancient meaning of ‘comprehension’, a communal and reciprocal understanding between two beings:

And form a strange intelligence,
Alike mysterious and intense,
Which link the burning chain that binds,
Without their will, young hearts and minds; (l. 238-240)

This is the focal point which allows us to draw a parallel between the two relationships, thus forming the triangular system: woman-man-horse, all bound together. The third link between the woman and the horse can only be deduced and again only exists as a speculative analogy, a potential parallelism.

Line 240 is actually extremely important for its semantic saturation of the motif of the bond: ‘which link the burning chain that binds’. Not less than three words (‘link’, ‘chain’, ‘binds’) belong to the same paradigm of bondage. It seems premonitory of the time when,
further down the text, Mazeppa describes himself being attached to the horse by the henchmen. Indeed, in both relationships, the link is ‘burning’ and the subject is passively submitted to the will of others.

However, there is a distinction between the notions of ‘look’ and of ‘vision’. In the notion of ‘look’, there is an exchange between two active principles, belonging to the realm of reality, while in the ‘vision’, there is only one active subject which acts upon its real or fantastic object almost in a predatory way. Once the scene of love-at-first-sight has occurred, the rest is merely a game with a predictable outcome. But in this game, the look still has its role to play:

I watched her as a sentinel
[...]
Until I saw, and thus it was
That she was pensive[...]

(l. 262-265)

It is also important to notice that this link through the look operates without any action of the will. Happiness comes for those who let themselves fall.

But if one look made love, another one will undo it. This is how Canto VIII begins:

For lovers there are so many eyes, l. 318
And such there were on us[...]

The two lovers are surprised by ‘some lurking spies’ (l. 325). The link established between them by their exchanged looks will be destroyed by the look of a third party. Mazeppa’s pitiful love story finishes on a new double admission of helplessness. On the one hand, the young man cannot defend himself against the troop of armed men sent by the cuckolded husband, while on the other hand the narrator ‘feels’ but cannot ‘depict’ the
husband's rage (l. 357). The breaking of the loving bonds which attached the page to his lady will throw him into new bonds, the chains of a more acrimonious relationship. In any case, the notion of bondage remains unchanged.

3) The double structure of the poem, circular and linear

At the other end of the mad race narrated by the hero, Mazeppa, in his death throes, is saved by a young Ukrainian girl. She delivers him from the grip of death but this is maybe to fall into a new type of bondage.

Mazeppa dying of exhaustion on his dead horse had lost consciousness at the end of Canto XVIII. He can no longer see nor speak. Almost miraculously, he regains consciousness in a bed. One would expect that the first sensorial perception that he received would be auditory. But it is a visual one. Once again, it is an exchange of looks which brings him back to life:

I woke - where was I? - Do I see A human face look down on me? [...] And is it mortal yon bright eye, That watches me with a glance? (l. 796-802)

It is difficult to imagine more perfect symmetry. Even the staccato rhythm of the l. 796 can be compared to the one of l. 232, although one is a tetrameter and the other a trimeter:

'We met - we gazed - I saw, and sighed', (l. 232).
Then the following lines show us the speechless dialogue of the two looks watching each other:

A slender girl, long haired and tall,
Sate watching by the cottage wall.
The sparkle of her eye I caught
Even with my first return of thought;
For even and anon she threw
A prying pitying glance on me
With her black eyes so wild and free;
I gazed, and gazed, until I knew
No vision it could be. (l. 806-814)

Once again, the look is explicitly opposed to speech, as if the former (the look) was ineluctably and inextricably linked with life, women, happiness, reality, while the latter (the speech) was only the expression of death, misery, fiction and...horse! Mazeppa tries to speak to the girl, but he is too exhausted, drained of strength, and she advises him not to try:

She smiled - and I essayed to speak,
But failed - and she approached, and made
With lip and finger signs that said,
I must not strive as yet to break
The silence [...] (l. 819-823)

The analytical frame described by Babinski is now becoming more complex. We have a whole series of sequences fitted into each other. The first sequence obviously shows the presence of the narrator, as described by the author, the old Mazeppa accompanying and entertaining the downcast King in the bleak introduction and in a more optimistic conclusion. Another confirmation of the symmetry at this level is found in the lines 855-856, the mention of the horses grazing on the morrow beyond the Borysthenes echoing the lines 115-116. Then there is the narration of the past, much lighter in tone, with a double feminine presence, and
moments of reflection. Then, only at a third level framed by the second one, appears the mad race, with the darkest scenes reminiscent of the ‘black novel’ of Monk Lewis or Mary Shelley. The question can be asked whether, within that third level which represents the centre of the poem, there is a fourth one, a centre of the centre, a metaphorical ‘black hole’ comparable to the Hugolian abyss. If it is indeed the case, then a very strong circular structure, almost like a target, offering a succession of alternating light and dark atmospheres would be outlined. The return of the feminine presence is the strongest element of this circular structure which might be particularly well suited to illustrate the sudden changes of fortune, from positive to negative and back to positive. This circularity of destiny is, after all, Byron's explicit subject in this poem: ‘What mortal his own doom may guess?’. Everybody thought that Mazeppa was sent to meet his death and there he is, not only saved but loved once more. The message for the King, for Byron himself and for his readers is not to despair, even in the worst situations; the wheel of fortune may well turn for the best.

So, at a deeper textual level, the interweaving of the sequences embodies the archaic conception of a repetitive temporality, the Platonic eternal return, like the ripples produced by a stone thrown into the still water of universal continuum. This implies that the focus of the text should not be expected at the beginning of the text, nor at the beginning of the race, where the primal events of a causalist logic appear, but at the centre of it. This move away from a causalist logic would also imply the denial of any relevant value or notions such as sin, guilt and punishment. These notions would become meaningless in this new context.

Nonetheless, this reading of the deep structure of the poem must not contradict a more straightforward ‘surface-reading’. Its dynamic linearity cannot be denied and it is easy enough
to appreciate the continuous movement of the frenetic race, straight to the finish.\(^3\) Except for the crossing of the river which bears a central and unique meaning, the ride has the linearity of a shot arrow. It is a trajectory, a logical progression with a beginning, a development and an end: a happy end for the man, a more tragic one for the horse. It thus fits into the idea of progress which Babinski identified. The ‘surface’ linear structure is no less real than the ‘inner’ circular one, but one must try to understand the modalities of their coexistence. In any case, there we may be able to read a first correspondence between the inner double structure of Byron’s poem, linear and circular, and the general structure of the *Text of Mazeppa* as a whole in the way we have began to read it: with its horizontal transfers from one text to another, illustrating the Deleuzian line of flight, and its vertical deepening offered by each version of the myth. The two different planes of consistency would thus apply both at intertextual and textual levels.

Previous commentators have already noticed how much Byron enjoyed wrong-footing his readers in order the better to surprise them. This is particularly true for *Don Juan* but also applies to *Mazeppa*.\(^4\) The apparent contradiction between the linear and the circular structures proceeds from the same will as the antisystematic basis revealed by McGann in Byron’s works. This contradiction actually subsumes a dialectical rapport between continuity and fragmentation. The very fabric of the text finds its existence in these passages, changing from one stage to another, within a dialectic of bonds and breaks, links and splits, tying and

\(^3\) "Il s'agit d'une suite de tableaux liés les uns aux autres par le rythme galopant sans cesse soutenu par les appels "Away, Away" qui entretiennent l'illusion d'une interminable et frénétique chevauchée", Bailbé, 'Mazeppa', p. 23.

\(^4\) 'Byron had begun *Don Juan* while this tale was in the process and the antisystematic basis which supports that work from the beginning may have carried over to *Mazeppa*', McGann, *Fiery Dust*, p. 184.
severing. This is how its dynamism works, and the contradiction feeds its (dis)continuous becoming. The energy of the text springs from this intrinsic contradiction in the same way as the successive peripeteia, alternating moments of happiness and moments of despair, maintain the suspense in the plot.

For example, the amorous binding of the two lovers immediately followed Theresa's description and this connection is soon to be broken. In the same way, in the very brief Canto IX, the description of the furious stallion precedes the painful binding of the man to the horse which also will ultimately be broken:

To me the desert-born was led:  
They bound me on, that menial throng  
Upon his back with many a thong;  
They loosed him with a sudden lash.  
Away! away! - and on we dash! - (l. 369-373)

This time, the unfortunate man-animal couple displays a total lack of will, and the power of the third 'oppositional' party, represented here by the count's henchmen, is absolute. But it is important to notice that the mad race has now started as if it were structurally triggered by the new change of fortune as much as by a causality represented by the henchmen. This is how Byron infuses the text with energy and dynamism, by creating a series of successive ruptures which projects the text into an agonistic future, animated and perpetuated by dual conflicts. The text as much as the ride will continue until these conflicts are resolved, by the death of a protagonist or by the rest of another. Lévi-Strauss considers that one of the functions of the myth is to explore all the possibilities of passage from duality to unity and vice-versa; it is certainly this kind of exploring process which is at play in Byron's

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5 ‘Comment produire la dualité [...] à partir de l’unité, ou plus exactement à partir d’une image assez ambiguë de l’unité pour qu’on puisse concevoir que la diversité en émerge? [...] La dualité peut-elle se résorber dans l’image approchée de l’unité par quoi on la représente, ou offre-t-elle un caractère irréversible, à tel point que l’écart minimal entre ses termes doive fatalement s’élargir?’, Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Histoire de lynx* (Paris:
4) Man and animal fusing into one being: the being of the centaur

Right at the beginning of Canto X, the rider loses control over his external motor activity. In opposition to this, the expressions of his passive physical perceptions are increasing:

Away! away! - My breath was gone,
I saw not where he hurried on: (l. 375-376)

Mazeppa can breathe no more (so he can no longer speak nor shout either), he can see no more. In the following pages the reader beholds the rapid disappearance of any visible signs of humanity, collective and individual around the hero: ‘The last of human sounds’ (l. 379), ‘No trace of man’ (l. 435), and at the same time he witnesses a radical modification of the ‘look’ (which was previously defined as an exchange and a communication and is now turned into a ‘vision’), and of the voice, of speech, being denied any existence by the thunder of the hooves (l. 389-390). But as the hero is deprived of the ability to speak, the narrator’s voice itself becomes omnipresent, invading the consciousness of the reader-listener to a point of fusion, where the two become one. Conversely, the references to the sense of touch are on the increase and this sense becomes for Mazeppa a major means of communication and perception. 

Plon, 1991), pp. 299-300. And ‘[...] toute unité renferme une dualité, et [...], quand celle-ci s’actualise, quoi qu’on désire et quoi qu’on fasse, il ne peut y avoir d’égalité véritable entre les deux moitiés’, ibid., p. 92.
with the (reduced) external world. This allows Byron to describe with the utmost realism
the sensations of the two bodies tied to each other with ropes:

They bound me to his foaming flank:
[...]  
And I could neither sigh nor pray;
And my cold sweat-drops fill like rain
Upon the courser's bristling mane;
[...]  
Meantime my cords were wet with gore,
Which oozing through my limbs, ran o'er;  
(l. 415-461)

Thirst (l. 462), cold (l. 489), pain accompany these expressions together with frequent
mentions of body fluids. It is now through touch that Mazeppa communicates with the horse.
A link between touch and vision can also be found in the 'close-up' vision, while the 'remote'
vision is progressively deprived of any objects.

The ride is given rhythm by the periodic recollection of the cords which maintain
Mazeppa on the horse's back. Except for the first attempt to loose himself which frees his
neck, each subsequent effort Mazeppa makes, or even the idea of one, equals a new turn of
the screw for his tortured body, and consequently a new stage in the exacerbation of internal
physical sensations:

My bonds forbade to loose my hold  
(l. 490)

[...] For I was fastly bound
My heart turned sick, my brain grew sore,
And throbbed awhile, then beat no more.  
(l. 540-542)
The look is changed into vision, a faculty endowed with hallucinatory potential, but
this vision is also generally degraded when the subject is brought to the brink of
unconsciousness:

The skies spun like a mighty wheel;
I saw the trees like drunkards reel.
And a slight flash sprang o’ver my eyes,
Which saw no farther. He who dies [...] (l. 544-547)

It is remarkable that at the very limit of life, it is still the sense of vision which
dominates, since it is its disappearance which implies the loss of consciousness and the
approach of death. All the other senses were already confused long ago, but it is when this one
disappears that the idea of death appears, like a blackout at the core of the text.

The climax of the poem is now reached. It may be the most important moment of the
ride. The external world has all but disappeared. The perspective of death is looming, and
Byron embarks on one of his beautifully meditative passages which maintains the suspense.
What comes next? The crossing of the river, the stone in the water, the initial splash at the
centre of the centre from which emanate all the ripples of the circumferential events, the
passage which Manning, McGann and others consider a baptism.

This passage is essential not only to perceiving the underlying circular structure of the
poem, not only to understanding Mazeppa’s metamorphosis, but also to appreciating the
function of the horse in this metamorphic process, for it is here that the horse, as in the ancient
traditions, fully accomplishes its role as symbolic vehicle. It is only with the help of the animal
or the animal part in man that man can approach consciousness of his death. The soulless
animal presents man with the perspective of the disappearance of his own soul, while the two
bodies are on the verge of fusing, merging into one. The centaur is essentially a material creature, a chimera which confronts man with his own materiality.

At the heart of this confrontation with death, Mazeppa's identity resists. He is striving to wake up but cannot bring his senses back to the surface. He feels as if he was on a plank at sea, driven by the waves. What is most extraordinary is that, owing to Mazeppa's half-consciousness, this passage offers a double-reading, simultaneously symbolic and real, internal and external. On the one hand, Mazeppa thinks it is death approaching through the pulse of the liquid element which is in himself. He sees his 'undulating life' (l. 357) passing away (a most wonderful expression which can remind us of the *strigilae* - the waves of eternal life - adorning the sarcophagi of late Antiquity). On the other hand, he really is in the middle of the water since his horse is crossing a large and powerful river: 'The wild horse swims the wilder stream' (l. 582). This is allegory at its best. Obviously, Byron found the idea of the river-crossing in Voltaire, where it already had structural and thematic importance, but he exploits and develops the motif by linking it to the idea of death and by placing it at the very centre of the mad race. After this, nothing will be the same again.6

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6 It is worth remembering here what Bachelard says in *L'Eau et les rêves* (Paris: Corti, 1942), although nowhere does he refer explicitly to a large river: 'L'eau est ainsi une invitation à mourir; elle est une invitation à une mort spéciale qui nous permet de rejoindre un des refuges matériels élémentaires', p.76; 'Un des caractères qu'il nous faut rapprocher du rêve de purification que suggère l'eau limpide, c'est le rêve de rénovation que suggère une eau fraîche. On plonge dans l'eau pour renaitre rénové', p. 197; 'Dans l'eau, la victoire est plus rare, plus dangereuse, plus méritoire que dans le vent. Le nageur conquiert un élément plus étranger à sa nature', p. 218; "Byron pourrait être l'objet d'une étude similaire. Son oeuvre abonde en formules qui relèvent d'une poétique de la nage'', p. 228. Maurice de Guérin also establishes a strong link between his *Centaure* and the motif of the water: 'Je me délassais souvent dans le lit des fleuves. [... ] Je m'oubliais ainsi au milieu des ondes, cédant aux entraînements de leur cours qui m'emmenait au loin et conduisait leur hôte sauvage à tous les charmes des rivages. Combien de fois, surpris par la nuit, j'ai suivi les courants sous les ombres qui se répandaient, déposant jusque dans les vallées l'influence nocturne des dieux! Ma vie fougueuse se tempérait alors au point de ne laisser plus qu'un léger sentiment de mon existence répandu par tout mon être avec une égale mesure, comme, dans les eaux où je nageais, les lucres de la déesse qui parcourt les nuits'', Guérin, *Centaure*, p. 3-4. Although the atmosphere is far more serene in Guérin's text than in Byron's poem, one may notice in both the feeling of abandonment and oblivion, and the obscurity surrounding the subject.
Only a thin line separates life from death and this line will not be crossed, for the water brings a kind of refreshment to the poor tortured human being - and renewed strength (although very temporarily) for his mount. But it is a very different life, it is an evanescent life, a life undergoing a process of dissolution. All the combinations which have been previously outlined find their pivot here, around the wavering of life and death: ‘I felt the blackness come and go’, or more exactly it is in between the ‘come’ and the ‘go’ that the circular and the linear, the dark and the light, the man and the woman, the man and the horse, the proper and the figured, find the articulation of their dialogue. It is the focal point of symmetry. An instance of nothingness in the water that the horse is crossing. But it is not a total symmetry. For a total symmetry, an absolute repetition of the inverted same would mean a closure, and a victory of the circular upon the linear, thus preventing any further progress. It is a repetition with a difference, a clinamen as Harold Bloom understands it after Lucretius, and this clinamen operates as much between the two sections of the ride as between Byron's and Voltaire's text. In the succession of texts, the crossing of the river is repeated with a difference. In both crossings, death is a presence and potentiality averted only by the efforts of the horse who saves the man, but in the second one, a metaphysical dimension is added by Byron who has certainly not overlooked the importance of the word ‘rebaptised’ as Babinski claimed.

After this, thoughts and feeling are coming back (l. 569) and the ride is resumed. But it is no longer a fight. After this passage through the ‘black hole’, the liquid nothingness, Mazeppa has understood that the fight is in vain. He carries the mark of death with him. For

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him and for the horse, it will now be a common abandonment, a common disappearance, a
common liquefaction in the universal being, not for worse, not for better, but for the absence
of value. All the second part of the race is now to orchestrate this dilution of the two lovers in
pain, rider and mount almost one being; the acme is passed. The reader witnesses a descent
not into Hell but into Nature.

The blood starts to flow again in the veins, but thick and cold. The vision comes back
but veiled (l. 570-578). The symmetry is warped. Because of his constant concern with the
counter balancing and surprise, where Byron sees too much symmetry and balance, he
destroyes it. When there is too much destruction and chaos, he re-establishes equilibrium. There
is no exclusive logic. On the one hand he indeed announces a rebirth and a revival, on the
other hand the ride remains a race towards death and annihilation. The other and the same co­
exist but with a discrepancy; this is why he can write:

The waters broke my hollow trance,
And with a temporary strength
My stiffened limbs were rebaptized
[...]
A haven I but little prized
For all behind was dark and drear,
And all before was night and fear. (l. 587-596)

Even if he fears it, there is a haven. Everything is temporary in this Byronian world:
fiction and reality, equilibrium and disequilibrium, symmetry and asymmetry, identity and
disparity, woman and horse. Nothing is permanent. The only thing which matters is to be
conscious of where one momentarily stands in this ever-changing present, the flow of time, in
other words, to be conscious of which ‘horse’ one is riding at any precise moment.
From Canto XV onward, the man-animal fusion is to progress quickly but it will be fulfilled only by their common dissolution into Nature. We have just witnessed a rebirth, but an inverted birth, a birth which announces a return to Nature, to indifferentiation. This is the opposite of a birth considered as an individualisation, as a progress towards a self-assertive identity. The first signs of this inverted revival are the wetness, the weakness, the staining of the horse: ‘glossy skin’, ‘dripping mane’ (l. 601), ‘reeling limbs’, ‘reeking flanks’ (l. 602):

...slack and slow
the drooping courser, faint and low,
All feebly foaming went. (l. 625-627)

The horse and man share a common weakness:

We gain the top...

My limbs were bound, my force had failed
With feeble effort still I tried
to send the bonds so starkly tied, (l. 605-633)

Once more this movement is part of a succession of contraries: ‘We gain the top’ (l. 605); it seems ‘like precipices in our dreams’ (l. 608). After the climb comes the fall. This weakness is explicitly compared to that of a newly born baby (a ‘new born tameness’, l. 632); they are all the more weak in that, we are told, a sick child would still be more powerful than either horse or rider (l. 629-631). In fact, since Mazeppa's limbs are bound to the animal (l. 633), they are as one. The figure of new birth applies to them both, equally.

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This trend can be fruitfully compared to the Freudian death drive and this is certainly what the horse is undergoing at the end of his tragic career: a return to the pre-birth indetermined state of pure matter.
The physical stage of the new-born has a corresponding mental stage which itself reaches the deepest parts of the imaginary, to the point of hallucination. Mazeppa expresses the wish to meet some will-o'-the-wisp (ignis fatuus, l. 619) that would remind him in some way of the human dimension, from which he is more and more estranged. For the rationalist Byron this is an admission of helplessness, a sign that reason is escaping his hero, reduced to clinging to an apparition, a phantom illusion of humanity, in order not to lose entirely his grip on his own identity.

In this dehumanising process, animality reemerges stronger than ever, the animal with all its instinctive, multiple, anonymous wildness. This is what the herd of horses represents. In the first part of the race, the wolves had been acting as a natural extension of the henchmen, and represented a degradation of collective humanity. The process of dehumanisation had already started, but was still part of the initial triggering of the race; the wolves' function was to intensify the dynamic of the ride. Now, at the end of the race, these thousand horses bring out the same signification, on the other side of the river.

5) After fusion, separation

During the crossing of the river, both the humanity of Mazeppa and the animality of his horse had been singled out and on an equal footing, while all the other signs of natural animality were absent, having not yet reappeared. The two parts of the centaur were equal for a moment. Now it is the turn of the animality to take over and to unfold. The herd of wild horses represents the victory of collective animality. They act as a broken mirror, a multiplied
reflection of the stallion carrying Mazeppa, which can now collapse with a neigh of acknowledgement, of fulfilment. It has achieved its return. It has gone back to its own liberating image and can get rid of this 'passion' of the taming, in the Christian sense. Its task is accomplished. It was wild when the men captured it. To tie Mazeppa on it was a denial of its wildness, it became enslaved. The ride, if not the man, broke it, but still it constantly endeavoured to go back to the wild. This effort cost it its life, but this does not matter, for it is now dissolving in the wider life of the herd, of Nature. Through its meeting with the herd, its return is consumed. The energy of the gallop has found its goal. It is spent. This is where Babinski and McGann are wrong when they speak of the 'death' of the horse. It is in fact subsumed into its natural and living species: the herd.

The black stallion coming to welcome Mazeppa's horse back may be seen symbolically as an image of death or a representation of the avenging father, if we follow Mannings's psychoanalytical interpretation; however, structurally, it is only its exact opposite, its negative as on a photographic film, its reflection in the mirror. So once again, the dynamic operator of this inversion is the race itself, with the crossing of the river as a pivot.

Meanwhile, what is happening to Mazeppa, to the man-part of the centaur? One may expect that the 'developer' of the inversion will be once more a vision, but an inverted vision. It will no longer be the human subject contemplating a natural object, but a natural subject watching - seeing him, a human object not far from losing all its humanity, tied to its animal communion, the horse-part of the centaur.

First of all, Mazeppa hears a neigh (l. 669) and a thudding of hooves. Immediately after, he sees the horses coming (l. 673). As for Theresa and for the young Cossack maid later
on, the voice tries to relay the vision, only to be immediately denied: ‘I strove to cry - my lips were dumb’ (l. 675). The structures of the meetings are of the same type. It is as if the speech endeavouring to establish contact could endanger the presence which the vision testifies. Sight bears witness to a presence - real or oneiric - while speech can only bear witness to an absence, passed or fictitious. Memory, depending on whether it resorts to one or the other of those faculties, succeeds or fails. In both cases, memory is essentially a private experience and can be communicated to others only through a visual ‘lesson’, which is the narration of a story fundamentally reduced to a ‘make-see’.

Byron describes the horses through the human eye which he shares with Mazeppa, but then sight ‘descends’ to the horse. It is its turn to see its brothers and seeing them revitalises it for an instant: ‘The sight re-nerved my courser’s feet’ (l. 688). But this is just enough for the horse to acknowledge their presence with a neigh before collapsing. In a way, equine speech is not submitted to the same limitations as human speech, it does communicate the essential, the soul. It is now the turn of the other wild horses to take over in this chain of vision. What do they see? First of all a fallen horse, then a man attached to it. This is the opposite of the previous movement which went from the man to the horse:

[...] They saw him stoop,
They saw me strangely bound along
His back with many a bloody thong. (l. 695-697)

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9 By this expression, ‘make-see’, translating the French faire voir, I mean that Byron, through Mazeppa’s redemptive narration, does not aim at communicating ideas, except during a few short meditative passages destined to provide both rest and suspense from the action. Contrarily, his imagination is essentially epic and pictural. His speech cannot be trusted as main vector of expression for an unworthy humanity. Instead, he has to resort to the inner animality in man - which is essentially material and endowed with visual expressivity - to convey his message. As already said, it is the horse which entrusts man with the ability to speak - to tell visions. This is that sort of expressivity that I would like to call the ‘horse-speech’ of man. Hence the sustained interest of this story for painters can be explained.
The inversion is fulfilled. With their hooves and with their eyes, the horses were indeed abandoning the man, but they welcome the stallion's last breath of vitality. They are there to receive it. They have split in two this kind of Platonic couple which could be called a centaur instead of an androgyne. They have left the human part and taken away the horse-part. It is away from the human eye that they are fleeing, one could say 'naturally' for this animal vision cannot exchange any look with the man for there is no common spiritual ground. For them, the man is a foreign body, impossible to understand and opaque.

And backward to the forest fly,
By instinct, from a human eye. (l. 707-708)

Can we say now that there is nothing left after this except two bodies, one animal and one human, one dead and one alive, in which the herd cannot confidently recognise a fellow-companion? The centaur would then not be split, but simply left to rot. This would mean that nothing else is said in the text and that there is basically no poetic aim other than that of putting conflicting structures together for the sake of trying to harmonise them - and then once this harmonisation is achieved, trying to disharmonise them again. But when Byron announces that it is the first and the last race for this horse (l. 694), he not only establishes a fact relevant for the individual animal in question, but also reassesses the closed circular structure of his poem.

It is also important to notice that the free wild horses, with their floating tails and their flying manes are compared to the waves of the sea (l. 685); this reinforces their iconic link
with the motif of the water, during the crossing of the river and, more especially with the image of the waves of life. This suggests that they are indeed the extension of this baptismal water carrying the spirit of their mate into a new life, post mortem from a human point of view, but not from a natural point of view, since everything goes back to nature, especially animality which originally belongs to it.

6) Mazeppa momentarily reclaiming his independence

Now, after the departure of the horse, what is left of the dying centaur, of the dissolving couple? This is no longer a man and a horse, two consciousnesses and two bodies on the way to a merging. This is one consciousness and two bodies: ‘The dying on the dead’ (1.715). The horse's essence, which is motion, has left with the herd. It used to react to the slightest movement of Mazeppa, but now the man is attached only to a corpse, a hip of fast-rotting flesh with which, to his despair, he is going to mingle: ‘I thought to mingle there our clay’ (1.765). There is no real distinction between the two bodies. They are made of the same clay. One is simply more inert than the other. Both bodies belong to the same natural realm.

The memory of the images of ravaged battlefields from Canto XII are reactivated: the leaves stiffened by blood (l. 475), the crows piercing the cheeks of the unburied skulls. These images are of course reminiscences of Voltaire's text (l. 478-48) as much as Byron's own souvenirs of his visits to various recent battlefields in Spain, Greece or Belgium. This is also a way to efface human society altogether by reducing it to a few poor remains going back to
brute matter. Finally, it is also the announcement of what is to happen to the hero agonising alone.

The link between the man and the horse is not actually broken (after all, the ropes are still there), only its nature has changed. On the one hand it is getting more tenuous, on the other it is getting more material, terribly material. As far as the horse alone is concerned, it is delivered from a weight which was imposed on it, and to which it never became accustomed: ‘Relieved from that unwonted weight’ (l. 711). To some extent, the death of the horse is the sign of its refusal to become tame, to become civilised; the horse dies because it never accepted to become a man. But, meanwhile, what is happening to its rider? First of all, the awareness of a cyclical time comes back in force, now that the dynamic support of linear time is gone:

And there from morn to twilight bound,
I felt the heavy hours toil round. (l. 718-719)

Next, Mazeppa abstracts himself from his material condition, leaving behind his body still attached to the remains of his mount, freeing himself from all material bonds through sheer despair. He launches into a long moral meditation upon death and the respective attitudes of debauched or poverty-stricken people towards it. This is the second interruption of the narrative fiction at the approach of death; in terms of the text’s coherence, it is not one of the most successful, for we recognise Byron’s own voice much more than Mazeppa’s. When death approaches, it is time for speech to take over from imaginative vision. The rider/narrator is trying to liberate himself, but his essence is to think; he is working out his attempt through a separation of the mental from the physical.
This separation can happen only in successive stages; here it seems that a
discursive stage precedes the symbolic stage in a return to the roots of the speaking being,
especially a compound of body and soul. It is a negative process for Mazeppa's consciousness,
striving to separate itself from his own body still tied to the body of the horse, and stripping
itself of all his corporeal parts. Then it is the turn of the symbolic level to be taken to pieces
and pulled apart. It is really, for this consciousness, a question of deconstructing the centaur as
a symbolic complex, in order to achieve liberation: a dismantling of all the elements which had
ensured both the durability of the race and the perpetuation of the text. All this is done in
order to negate mental individuality as much as common corporality, in order to annihilate
oneself and the suffering which is inseparable from that self, in order to re-unite with
indistinguishable nothingness. For Mazeppa, it is a question of letting the death-drive reaffirm
its rights over him.

7) Mazeppa close to losing his mind but unable to reach individualisation

After one last recall of the physical chains ('Still I lay/Chained to the chill and stiffening
steed', l. 763), sight takes over from conceptual thoughts, and turns its attention towards a
totally oneiric sky in which a single bird is flying, a symbolic bird, a black bird, a crow, a last
piece of the work of the symbolising vision, a last exchange between a consciousness and its
phantasmagoric universe. To some extent, could this bird not be the equivalent of the black
stallion from the previous canto? Could it be a symbol of Mazeppa's death while the black
stallion was a symbol of Mazeppa's horse's death?
But in this case, why establish a correspondence between a bird and a man when previously the correspondence was between two horses? Is it because a bird is a conventional representation of human soul? Or is it not more because this bird is the symbol of the symbolic faculty in man, for it is this that Mazeppa is now trying to get rid of? The rational part of his consciousness has already gone, having exhausted itself in the previous meditation upon death. At this stage, with so little strength, to speak is to lose, to shed. And has this bird not a common point with the horse in the wind, which takes away not only the weight of the bodies but also the ideas of the mind?

The wind is an important factor in the text, helping to stress the dynamic of the ride (‘Upon the pinions of the wind’, l. 424). In this respect, it is closely linked to the horse (Hugo will not forget this connection). On account of its speed, the horse is usually related to the wind, for example in expressions such as: ‘a horse as fast as the wind’. Some nations considered the horse to be son of the wind. But in the text, conversely, the wind appears to result much more from the speed of the race, hence it is the wind which would rather be the son of the horse, the product of its speed.

Although Byron speaks of the icy winds descending from the Siberian steppes, stripping the forests (l. 467), and describes a blizzard of snow overwhelming the peasant on his threshold (l. 512-516), on no occasion is the wind giving true resistance to the progress of the ride. It opposes no more resistance than the branches of the forest which could have lacerated and pierced Mazeppa’s body like bundles of spears but do not (l. 487-488). The wind is thus nothing more than the sign of the speed, and the horse effectively produces it with its racing and certainly cannot be qualified as ‘the son of the wind’ here. So this ‘airy’ faculty of
the horse can well be one of the common denominators with the crow, flying around, twirling slowly, hesitating to land (l. 773). Thus we could see this bird as an extension of the horse and the final animal alter-ego in the necessary coupling of the man and the animal. Mazeppa is freeing himself from all earthly bonds; this includes his animal complement. All that remains of Mazeppa’s identity now is his share of the symbolic function of Pegasus. As symbols, for us, only the wings remain, the black wings of the black stallion filtering the last glimmers of the twilight. Then, the relationship between the man and the bird, although minimal, would be of the same order as previously between the man and the horse: it is a painful mutual bondage, but one which is unavoidable and necessary. The major parts of physical and mental identities have been shed. The link has become very volatile and tenuous, but is still there. One last motion of the hand (l. 777), scratching the sand (l. 779), clearing his throat (l. 780) in a last effort to speak (l. 781). Any minute attempt by Mazeppa to declare that life is still there is enough to trigger an immediate reaction from the bird, and so to perpetuate the movement a little longer. This is a striking reminder of the consequences that Mazeppa's tiniest actions had upon the horse earlier on. Everything is diminishing, but everything is still there. So it is possible to conclude that the crow is indeed, after the horse, more than the agent, the last vehicle for man's suffering. It is more than its successor, it is its prolongation.

In Canto XVIII, the last one of the mad race, a consciousness is progressively depriving itself of any earthly bonds in its final efforts to disappear. This will allow it to stop speaking, and beyond this to stop seeing, for the ‘telling’ is subordinate to a ‘making-see’. This explains the minimalism and sublimity of Mazeppa's last perceptions: a light, a few internal sensations, a sigh, which provide the exact symmetrical counterweight of ‘My breath was gone’ and ‘I saw not’ at the start of the race. These last moments preceding death,
wonderfully wrought by Byron as an ever more feeble chain of signs, are indeed the
closure of the linearity, but not of the circularity. In the linear causalist logic, what follows is
the natural consequence of the centaur's death: the reappearance of man. For some
commentators, it is the achievement of a superior state of mind. For others, it is the admission
that the fault is not totally punished, that the sinner can get away with it. But if we do not look
at this chain of events with the same causalist logic in mind, and, if we do not take into
account moral values, what we see happening is just the perpetuation of a bondage. Mazeppa,
after having been bonded by love to Theresa, had been bonded by hate to the wild horse. Now
that he is freed from the horse, he finds himself in a renewed bondage with the Cossack maid.
The androgyne succeeds the centaur, but the individual remains subordinate to the couple;
another message presented by the poem is that no truly independent being can exist.
C/ A POET CALLED HORSE

We have seen in the previous section how the trend to analogical fusion between man and animal that Babinski had pinpointed and called a metaphor, could not be separated from another trend to fusion, through love, between man and woman. To some extent, one was the negative substitute for the other. This thematic parallelism had strong implications for the structure of the text, which thus appeared dual and conflicting. I have also hinted at the fact that, if speechless communication through glances was sufficient between a man and a woman in a time of happiness, the necessity to speak, in fact to ‘tell the vision’ appeared in a time of suffering, and was somehow supported by the horse, the vehicle for the narration. The presence of the horse was the condition allowing the expression of a negative state. As far as happiness and suffering were concerned, it was noticeable that one was the immediate consequence of the other and so the race was only one episode in a succession of alternating happy or painful moments. But this could be understood only if one looked at the structure of the text with a non-causalist and non-exclusive logic in mind, allowing the circular to exist beside the linear, and removing any moral idea of sin. Only rhythmical recurrences of happiness and suffering within the bondage of the individual to another being could exist in this context. The articulation between ‘substitution’ and ‘consequence’ deriving from this dual logical structure has clearly to be borne in mind since it necessitates the maintainance of a kind of double-vision and double reading of the text.

We had also perceived the efforts of the horse to go back to the Ukraine as a possible staging of its instinct to deny any ‘taming’, that it is to say its refusal to enter the realm of
human consciousness. This would mean that it is the horse's own nature which rejects the possibility of being endowed with a soul and prefers to remain in the more neutral state of brute matter. However, the denial of soul does not preclude the possibility of supporting speech or even, more precisely, poetic expressivity, since we have noticed that, to a large extent, it was the presence of the horse which gave Mazeppa the possibility to speak and tell his tale. This implies that the faculty of speech, and poetic expressivity, is ultimately more subordinate to matter than to Divine grace. Henceforth, it is the disjunction between the conscious subject and its own inherent matter which really produces suffering and speech is the sign, the expression of this suffering, in parallel with the fact that the horse is the vehicle for the subject to re-establish contact with this matter. It might be fruitful to compare this drive back to matter (and silence!) to Freud’s categories defined in *Beyond the pleasure principle*: if the loving relationship represents an effort of the libido towards the constitution of the androgyne, it is indeed dominated by the pleasure principle and this principle dominates the end of the text. On the other hand, the mad race towards the constitution and ultimate deconstruction of what I called the centaur would represent an effort on the part of the death principle to take the subject back to the initial inanimate state. It would take the form of a ‘return’ as Freud expresses it.¹

The race of the horse can thus be understood through this notion of ‘return’, and this animal would then embody the instinctual energy from within the unconscious. Its choice and its modalities remain to be explained. What is also not clear yet is the internal reason for the

¹ "[...] it must be an old state of things, an initial state from which it is striving to return by the circuitous paths along which its development leads. If we are to take it as a truth that knows no exception that everything living dies for internal reasons - becomes inorganic once again - then we shall be compelled to say that "the aim of all life is death" and, looking backwards, that "inanimate things existed before living ones", Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1974), p. 32.
rupture of the man-woman relationship. Why suddenly is there this diffraction between the drive towards androgyny and the drive towards ‘centaurness’? In other terms, why is pain born from pleasure? And why a horse instead of a woman?

All this needs to be analysed while also bearing in mind the other level of the understated analogy - the allegory between the general dynamic process of the ride and the creation of the text itself. In our perspective of poetic ontology, understanding clearly the link between the two levels is of the greatest importance. Drawing a parallel between the already mentioned letter of Byron to his friend Thomas Moore and some of Freud's own comments on the functioning of the relationship between the ego and the id may help.

1) Byron's narcissism at the origin of Mazeppa

The most determining event in Byron's life at that time and from which his exile and all the subsequent poetry derives (The Prisoner of Chillon, Manfred and Mazeppa) is the famous episode of incest with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh by whom he had a daughter, Medora. We know that his subsequent unfortunate marriage with Annabella Milbanke was partly an attempt to forget his too 'dangerous liaison' with Augusta. The strangest fact is that his affair could have perfectly well remained secret without any of its dire consequences. However, according to his biographers, Byron could not help publicising it, finding in his open admission a kind of perverse pleasure through the ambiguous conjunction of defiance and remorse. This was

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something which he wanted at the same time to exhibit and to reject. It is from this that his reputation for infamy stems, together with his reputation for depravity. So, to a large extent, Byron himself is the cause of his downfall.

According to du Bos and other biographers, there is no apparently strong father figure in Byron's youth. Byron hardly knew his father who was living in France and he was mainly brought up by his somewhat rowdy and extrovert mother. During the period of incest, Byron's main confidante and figure of authority was Lady Melbourne, who did all that she could to divert the poet from his fatal passion.\(^3\) The fact that Byron was most of the time either left to himself or under the influence of some strong feminine personality might indicate that the reading of his Oedipal complex is not as straightforward as the text itself appears to show. At a textual level, it is likely instead that the two Oedipal situations, one at the beginning between Mazeppa, Theresa and Falbowsky opening the conflict and one at the end, between Mazeppa, the Cossack maid, her mother and 'sire', resolving the conflict, essentially inscribe the tale in a conventional pattern which would legitimise the fiction in the larger frame of stories of sin and redemption. This would not necessarily interfere with a deeper psychocritical reading of Byron's Oedipal complex. The presence of the Cossack father at the end would simply be a question of textual symmetry. The effect of this would be to hide the 'real' psychological configuration. At the purely textual level, there is certainly a lesson to be drawn from a limited study of the case of Byron's incest, which has already been extensively studied by his biographers, in order to gain a better understanding of the modalities of the race and the man-animal relationship. It seems extremely likely that Byron's narcissism, understood as the chief cause of his incest, could also be one of the major triggers for the existence of the poem itself.

\(^3\) 'La rupture avec Augusta avait été obtenue par Lady Melbourne', du Bos, Byron, p. 140.
Du Bos maintains that Byron's love for his half-sister is engendered by an extremely strong and almost consciously proclaimed love for himself. What Byron loves in Augusta is himself and what Byron wants at the same time to exhibit and to reject is himself. So Byron's incest would seem to be rooted in a powerful narcissism. *The Bride of Abydos* was written in an effort to resolve the internal crisis provoked by the incest and we can legitimately support the idea that *Mazeppa* was written in an effort to come to terms with the exile following the public scandal which had been caused by the incest. If the loss of Theresa in this poem corresponds to the loss of Augusta subsequent to his exile, what is left to Byron is a return to a re-invested narcissism which would be staged and exemplified by the man-animal relationship.

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4 'À l'origine, ce que Byron aime donc dans Augusta, c'est l'inceste; ce n'est point bien qu'elle soit sa soeur, mais parce qu'elle l'est, qu'elle l'attire, le fascine, le fixe, va lui devenir indispensable. Nous sommes ici au plus loin de la fetalité externe que je définissais au début, de la fetalité que repousse avec horreur l'homme sur lequel elle fond, à laquelle par-dessus tout cet homme souhaitait pouvoir se soustraire, au cœur même en revanche de la fetalité provoquée, voulue, triomphalement étreinte et proclamée [...] et, si Augusta est la seule femme qu'il ait aimée, c'est précisément parce qu'en l'aimant il se rassemblait tout entier sur lui-même et sur sa race', du Bos, *Byron*, p. 124.

5 The notion of narcissism has been developed considerably since Freud. He himself, as summarised by Laplanche and Pontalis in their *Vocabulaire de la psychoanalyse*, distinguished between a primary narcissism and a secondary one: 'Pour Freud, le narcissisme primaire serait caractérisé par l'absence totale de relation à l'entourage, par une indifférenciation du moi et du ça, et trouverait son prototype dans la vie intra-utérine dont le sommeil représenterait une reproduction plus ou moins parfaite', pp. 261-263. 'L'idée d'un narcissisme contemporain de la formation du moi par identification ou à autrui n'est pas abandonnée mais il est alors nommé narcissisme secondaire', pp. 263-265. Some analysts like Bela Grunberger, *Le Narcissisme*, (Paris: Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 1975) have tried to extend the concept of primary narcissism to the dimension of an *instance* thus playing a crucial and permanent role in the process of the building up of Ego, or the Self depending on the theory: 'Aussi le narcissisme devrait, à mon sens, être reconnu comme facteur autonome dans le cadre de la topique freudienne et promu au rang d'instance psychique au même titre que le Ça, le Surmoi et le Moi', p. 135.
2) The mad ride as a narcissistic regression

Grunberger interprets the initial myth as it is found in Ovid and Pausanias and remarks that in the latter, the nymph Echo is mentioned as Narcissus' sister. Later on, Grunberger explicitly relates narcissism and incest. For him, the incestuous wound protects the subject from the narcissistic wound which is the initial trauma of the birth. Mazeppa being deprived of Theresa's presence in the same way as Byron was deprived of Augusta's presence sends him into a narcissistic regression which attempts to bring the subject back to his primary narcissistic stage, the intra-uterine life. The race would then become the equivalent of what Grunberger metaphorically calls 'La plongée abyssale', the dive into the abyss, and one might wonder if the crossing of the river with its turbulent waters is not a distant memory of the amniotic fluid. This echoing of the waters of the maternal womb would reinforce the value of the baptism which Byron explicitly mentions and would put it into the category of narcissistic regression. Narcissistic regression is not a stable state and the human condition prevents

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6 ‘Narcisse s'était détourné des tentations de l'amour charnel; il refusait la quête amoureuse des deux sexes et parmi ses objets refusés, on devine derrière la nymphe Echo (qui, d'après la version de Pausanias, était sa soeur ou sa mère, qui était également une nymphe). Ce qui le fascinait devant la surface de l'eau était - derrière sa propre figure - le retour dans l'eau amniotique de la régression narcissique profonde. On peut cependant ajouter à cela que pendant qu'il contemplait sa propre image reflétée dans l'eau il était heureux, sa mort étant liée aux assauts répétés d'une sexualité objectale dont il projetait les sources au-dehors’, Grunberger, *Narcissisme*, p. 40, note 1.


8 ‘La plongée abyssale constitue non seulement un plaisir narcissique et une maîtrise correspondante, mais aussi une sorte de fusion primitive archaïque avec l'inconscient lui-même, fusion archaïque vécue sur un mode de sublimation spirituelle’, Grunberger, *Narcissisme*, p. 234.
someone from being a single autonomous self. This explains why Mazeppa has to pass
from one bondage into another, but his ordeal procured him at least a glimpse of what the pre-
natal state was and an understanding of death which would change his life for ever.

So the feminine presence is denied to Mazeppa because an incestuous, intrinsically
narcissistic impulse lurks hidden behind his first attempt to reach entirety via a ‘normal’ loving
relationship. Because he is tied, Mazeppa is condemned to impotency but his libido is still
there. The sexual impulse is still there and the instinct towards completeness is still there. The
only solution for him is the ‘calling of the horse’, illustrating what Freud called libidinal
‘viscosity’. This ‘calling of the horse’ represents an even stronger narcissistic regression than
the incestuous affair, but on a fictional mode. It also represents a temporary victory of the
instinct of death as Freud understood it: a drive towards the undifferentiated state and the
inanimate.

Grunberger considers that the unconscious plays a complementary role in the effort
towards a fusional prototype realising the narcissistic integrity. This narcissistic integrity is
symbolised in the unconscious by the image of the phallus which transcends sexual
differentiation. So the phallic image expresses integrity in all its aspects. At the beginning of
Mazeppa’s impotency, the negative stage when he is deprived of any fulfilment, both
narcissistic and objectal, it is possible to conceive of the horse intervening as a substitute
representation for the phallus. While in Voltaire, it was essentially an external agent, here it

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9 This notion of ‘viscosity’ illustrates the faculty of the libido to shift its fixation from one object of desire to
another. Once the investment is established, the viscosity ensures a smaller or greater flexibility of


11 ‘L’image phallique représente dans l’inconscient les mouvements dialectiques de la maturation pulsionnelle se
becomes the main support allowing the desire to persist. If the horse does not represent desire itself, it seems to be its essential vehicle. This fracture, this diffraction in the course of desire does not go without an increase in pain because it entails a separation, the breaking of a previous bond. Being split is painful, but trying to reunite with oneself is even more painful since it develops in the subject a consciousness of the irremediable loss of his other half from the moment of birth. This is where the relationship is described by Byron in quasi-erotic, sado-masochistic terms and it is certainly at this stage that the fusion between the rider and his mount appears most clearly and is at its most effective.

3) The absence of stable state in the metamorphic process undergone by Mazeppa

However, this baptism in the maternal waters is only a passage and the narcissistic regression cannot remain as it is. After the dive, there is a surge, a rebirth. So ultimately for Mazeppa, the whole process equates to a metamorphosis. How this metamorphosis proceeds from regression and how the horse becomes the support for the metamorphosis, having been the support for the regression, this remains to be determined.

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12 It is of course possible to interpret in psychoanalytical terms the masochism pervading the story of Mazeppa, both in Byron and in Hugo, especially if one considers with Freud and Sacha Nacht that the primary erotic masochism represents the remaining testimonial of an early alliance between the death instinct and the erotic drive. In the case of Byron, it would be particularly linked to his strong narcissism understood as the frustrated wish to return to the state of undifferentiated matter. According to Nacht in his book Le Masochisme (Paris: Payot, 1965): '[Le masochisme] est encore un Narcissisme mais à sa manière malheureuse', p. 97. It is also interesting to notice that the figure of the horse is often present in the 'animalistic' forms of masochism: 'Une grande prédilection des masochistes "animalistes" va au cheval: l'homme se fait chevaucher, parfois harnacher par sa maîtresse, et les coups de cravache ne doivent jamais lui manquer', p. 41. It seems that this animal, once again thanks to its dual nature, both strong and weak, wild and tame, 'masculine' and 'feminine', is particularly well suited to symbolise the inversion of values which is implied in secondary masochism (as the expression of an inverted sadism). However, I would rather look at the suffering undergone by both Mazeppa and the horse in Byron's poem in terms of unresolved duality, and therefore not in terms of self-inflicted pain which is true masochism. In the case of Hugo's 'Mazeppa', the suffering more exclusively felt by the man has certainly something to do with the approach of the sublime, and is therefore more a poetic expression of the fear and terror felt by the subjectivity nearing its own suspension or annihilation.
It is fundamentally a phenomenon of reversion succeeding an experience of the limit. Mazeppa could not go further without losing his life. After the river-crossing, the death drive is counteracted and changed into a paradoxical life drive. This is why it is wrong to talk about death for the horse as much as for Mazeppa in the territory beyond the river. The only thing we have to clarify is our definition of the word ‘life’. When the mental, symbolic disjunction of the centaur takes place, the horse achieves its radical fusion into the universal being of his species, while Mazeppa is to be redeemed and will reach a new equilibrium by a return to his own species. These are two different types of ‘life’, one natural, the other social. This achievement is made possible owing to the passage through nothingness (the descent into Hell of Homer, Virgil and Ovid), the understanding via the experience of suffering and a sacrifice of social realities. A temporary dehumanisation process is essential for the consequent acceptance of the return to humanity, providing the initiated with a background distancing which helps him to make his choice en toute connaissance de cause, and with the satisfying knowledge that he can withdraw again if necessary.

Guy Rosolato in his article on narcissism explains how this mental configuration can induce such a mechanism of reversion. According to him, negative narcissism uses the death drive as a tool for dynamic and conceptual regression towards the cancellation of the subject. Once a limit in this cancellation has been reached, equating to the sacrifice of social reality, a reversal of the trend is possible and the subject can re-ascend, but to a new state of consciousness.\footnote{‘On peut décrire un narcissisme du négatif, qui use de la pulsion de mort comme d'une possibilité d'annulation dynamique et conceptuelle en tant que régression radicale à partir de quoi, grâce au sacrifice d'une réalité (sociale), un renversement, une remontée deviennent possibles [...]. Ainsi on peut rattacher au narcissisme toute opération mentale qui se représente comme mort et résurrection, passion soufferte et béatitude de l'extase, descente aux enfers matriciels et naissance', Guy Rosolato, 'Le Narcissisme' in Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse, 13 (Paris, Gallimard, 1976), 7-36 (p. 17). Rosolato's brackets for the word 'social' are full of significance here, and work more as an emphasis than a subsidiary addition.} The importance of the crossing of the river pinpointed by McGann, Manning
and myself is thus confirmed. Both parts of the centaur undergo a metamorphosis but the 
results for each are radically different. They are even diametrically opposed for it is indeed the 
dissolution of the horse into its initial matter which allows Mazeppa to rejoin his human, 
therefore social and mental state. This is where the dialectical function of the ‘centaur’ lies.

This double motion implies that there is a correspondence between the structural level 
of the text and the inner level of the centaur complex (considered as rider and horse in a 
fluctuating relationship moving from fusion to dissolution). It shows that symmetry works in 
Mazeppa both horizontally and vertically. Everything in this poem is based on an agonistic 
duality, a duality which is continuously sought and denied. This is because the dialectic 
relationship with the double encompasses a desire for unity within similarity which cannot 
satisfy the subject and a desire for unity within complementarity which is threatening because 
of the presence of alterity. The immortality of the subject (hero and author) as much as the 
perpetuation of the text are at stake. Now it is possible to understand why, paradoxically, the 
horse and its rider find their respective completeness at the very moment of their disjunction.

As Rosolato puts it: ‘la menace de l’abolition de l’objet de soi-même conduit à une unité de soi 
dans le mouvement même de sa propre division. Le narcissisme serait donc la passion du 
moment qui englobe l'unité et ce qui en menace le maintien: l'abolition, la division et la 
séparation. Et la relation au double en représente les tensions’. Inevitably, suffering and 
ecstasy are strongly linked as tension mounts towards reduction of the tension.

\textsuperscript{14} ‘Tout processus psychologique qui accomplit une métamorphose se fait selon un mouvement pendulaire entre 

\textsuperscript{15} Rosolato, \textit{Narcissisme}, p. 18.
Above all, the asymmetrical structure of the ride and of the whole poem, which
Byron has exploited so well in order to create an effect of surprise (although not sufficiently
theatrical for the taste of his 19th-century public), precisely reflects the structural, external
projection of the inner duality of its hero encapsulated in his metamorphic process.
Henceforth, the structure of the whole text becomes part of the centaur complex, a larger
reflection of the centaur. The text becomes the centaur itself. By further extension to an even
wider scale (like ripples in the water), the poem and its author become entangled like two
parts of a giant centaur. The centaur is the Text, and if one accepts the fact that the text
creates the author as much as the other way round, if one applies this dialectic of reversal to
its limit, if one considers that the horse is the vehicle for such a creation, then one is obliged to
say that what used to be called ‘Byron’ is in fact a poet called ‘horse’.

4) The specular image of the hero necessarily a horse

The fact that the specular image of the hero has to be an animal and the reason why
this animal is a horse have now to be justified and explained.

In the text, the obvious support of the man submitted to a dehumanisation process is
an animal. By being attached to a wild horse which is somehow his double, Mazeppa is
projected into his own animality. Within the couple, his alter-ego is rather an ‘alter-ego
animal’. But why? The narcissistic regression, with its drive towards the deeper layers of the
self where the frontier between the body and the unconscious is blurred, reveals the animality
of the human being in question. Grunberger has no doubts about that and if one looks at Freud's theory of the instinct in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, one sees that he also makes numerous references to the realm of animality to which his notion belongs. Thus, it seems well established that, when a man is confronted with the symbolic representation of his double during the process of narcissistic regression, this representation will spontaneously be an animal. But why a horse then?

By recollecting what has been established earlier in this thesis about the double nature of the wild horse which was essentially dynamic and impossible to guide, it might be possible to find an answer to this question. Freud himself has established an explicit analogy between the horse and its mobility on the one hand, the unconscious or the id, seat of the pulsion seen as energy on the other. It is now once more relevant to compare this Freudian analogy to what Byron writes in his letter to Thomas Moore, and especially to the sentence 'But though easy to mount, he is the devil to guide'. In this letter, Byron uses the continued metaphor of riding to talk about a particular poetic style, difficult to master. This poetic style is difficult to master because it gives a large place to an inspirational force which can be understood as a direct expression of the unconscious. 'It is easy to mount once it has been broken' means it is easy to let the messages from the unconscious flow, once the doors of repression have been broken open, but it is far more difficult, if not totally impossible, to control it after that.

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16 'Si nous voulons apprécier à leur juste valeur les effets de sa chute dans le monde, nous devons tenir compte du fait qu'en dehors du trauma que constitue l'interruption de son état narcissique primitif, l'homme passe pour ainsi dire, en naissant, du règne animal au règne humain. (2) (note 2: Il semble bien que le narcissisme primitif dont nous essayons de dégager l'essence, soit, entre autres, l'expression d'un certain aspect de l'animalité)', Grunberger, *Narcissisme*, p. 335.

17 'It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure if external forces [...], an expression of the conservative nature of living substance. On the other hand, we soon call to mind examples from animal life which seem to confirm the view that instincts are historically determined', Freud, *Pleasure Principle*, pp. 30-31.
The dynamism of the horse is also undeniably present in Byron's mind when he chooses to use the figure of the horse for his poem. Du Bos quotes a sentence from Byron's *Journal* in which the poet explicitly equates energy with animality: 'I like energies - even animal energy - of all kinds and I have need of both mental and corporeal'.

Byron takes precautions to differentiate between various types of energies, mental or corporeal. For him, animal energy seems to be only one kind among others, one which we can suppose is related to corporality. Du Bos jumps to conclusions and at once amalgamates the mental and the corporeal into a global energy for which he invents the neologism of 'animalisme' without really defining what he means by this. He locates this new concept at the root of being, and not only of this being, but also at the root of the expression of being itself. Du Bos's 'animalisme' could well be understood as another term for the sexual drive of the libido, or a wider conception of a still undifferentiated instinct of life. Furthermore, Du Bos specifies that this 'animalisme', this 'énergie de l'expression' is the major feature of Byron's genius. The fact that du Bos establishes a distinction between Byron and his genius, endowing the latter with this animalistic energy of expression would tend to confirm the Hugolian reading of Byron's poem which will be dealt with in the next part of this thesis, but for the moment, one can conclude that no animal but the horse would be better suited to Byron's purpose of embodying his own animalistic energy.

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18 'L'énergie de l'expression, telle est à mes yeux la faculté maîtresse du génie de Byron, et nulle part elle ne s'affirme plus souveraine que dans ses *Journaux* que je tiens, par excellence, pour ses chefs-d'œuvre. "I like energy - even animal energy - of all kinds and I have need of both mental and corporeal." J'aime l'énergie - même l'énergie animale - de toutes les sortes, et j'ai besoin d'énergie mentale et d'énergie corporelle. L'animalisme - un animalisme humain de la grande espèce - est ici à la racine non seulement de l'être, mais de l'expression elle-même; et lorsque, ainsi qu'il advient dans un *Journal*, la faculté joue sans arrière-pensée quelle qu'elle soit, sans autre destination que de libérer sa force, en vertu de cet animalisme l'acte d'écrire semble procéder à la fois d'une énergie mentale et d'une énergie corporelle qui l'une et l'autre alors s'y satisfait', du Bos, *Byron fatalité*, p. 157.
The well-known French saying 'Comparaison n'est pas raison' must not be forgotten nor the fact that parallelism does not mean identity, but it would now seem legitimate to establish a series of equivalences between the poet, Mazeppa and the Ego, and his poetry, the horse and the id. The articulation at play between them is of the same type at the metapoetic level, at the fictional level and at the psychoanalytical level. If one considers that the text, the horse and the id are really the dominant forces, the demonic forces (the devil), it is no longer enough to see them as simple vehicles but also as directing powers, sanctioning the inversion of master and slave.

Thus the horse is not only the vehicle for the narcissistic regression which the text is staging; it is not only the specular image of the hero within the centaur complex, but it is, metaphorically, the centre of this complex, the fundamental drive which allows the poetic expression to surface. In other words, the horse is the (re)presentation of Byron's genius.

Although the horse is the (re)presentation of this corporeal energy which not only creates the text, but literally forces it to exist, the process of representation itself, the metaphorical 'twist' which the unconscious operates has to be understood in terms of (psychoanalytical) sublimation. For Freud, sublimation is essentially a displacement of the

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libido seeking to achieve completeness (which is uniting and binding) via a different way to the
‘normal’ objectal way of sexuality.20 Freud also explicitly establishes a link between the act of
sublimation and the narcissistic trend. The ‘diffraction’ or warped transfer from the ‘happy’
binding of Mazeppa and Theresa to the painful binding between Mazeppa and the horse could
then be viewed in the same way as a forceful ‘twist’, and an imposed sublimation. The
metaphorised energy provided by the horse becomes an energy of displacement in two ways:
displacement inflicted on the man in his course towards regression and eventual
metamorphosis; displacement inflicted on the narration from the moral level of the
affaire de moeurs to the symbolic level of the gothic ride. The ride would be a second attempt, this time
through sublimation, to reach integrity.21 This phenomenom of sublimation becomes at the
creative level the correspondence of the symbolic regression at the textual level.

If the symbolic horse stands for the part destined to ‘fill’ the narcissistic wound in
and through a dynamic process taking its rider through all the stages of instinctual regression
then maturation and represented in the unconscious by the phallic image, it stands

20 It seems a plausible view that this displaceable and neutral energy, which is no doubt active both in the ego and in
the id, proceeds from the narcissistic store of libido - that it is desexualized Eros [...]. If this displaceable energy is
desexualized libido, it may also be described as a sublimated energy; for it would still retain the main purpose of Eros
- that of uniting and binding - in so far as it helps towards establishing the unity, or tendency to unity, which is
particularly characteristic of the ego. If thought-processes in the wider sense are to be included among these
displacements, then the activity of thinking is also supplied from the sublimation of erotic motive forces’, Freud, Ego,
pp. 34-35.

21 Jeanine Chasseguet-Smirgel, in her book Pour une psychanalyse de l’art et de la créativité (Paris: Petite
Bibliothèque Payot, 1971) and more especially in the chapter ‘Réflexions sur le concept de réparation et la hiérarchie
des actes créateurs’ also posits a link between narcissism, integrity and sublimation, but she does not deal with the
passage from instinctual drive to conceptual thoughts in material terms: ‘Seul l’acte créateur dont la fin est la
représentation de Soi, implique l’existence de décharges pulsionnelles qui lui confèrent la dignité de sublimation’,
p. 91. ‘En fait il s’agit au moyen de l’acte créateur, d’accoéder à l’intégrité en passant par un faisceau de décharges
pulsionnelles sublimées’, p. 100.
also for the body of the creator who is trying to reunite his self through words. Before this stage, the disjointed subject is still speechless, without the ability to express his incompleteness (this is why the 'look' or glance is so important in the previous stage, the attempt to reach unity, androgyny via the binding to the woman in an effort towards objectal sexuality). The horse as an iconic figure at the junction of the two worlds where the diffraction occurs and articulating the two types of displacements, provides him with words. For the words belong fundamentally to the corporeal. So the horse really provides Mazeppa with the material he needs to tell his story and the horse again is the condition for Byron to express his genius, for the horse is his genius.

A Byron without genius had previously existed. Byron is not (a) genius. He is endowed with it. The genius is something that Byron has been given owing to a particular configuration of facts and events. The animalism dwelling at the root of the speaking being and enabling him to express himself can be revealed to this being, or it can remain concealed. The horse needs to be summoned in order to ensure this revelation. It depends on the opportunities and on the understanding by the author of the necessity to accept his own weakening to allow the breaking open of the doors of the repression, the doors of the stables and the subsequent surge of the expression. The old myth of Pegasus as metaphor of poetic inspiration within the Byronian Text is thus re-legitimised, thanks to the related and transitory figure of the centaur. In spite of appearances, and despite the author's conscious or unconscious will to hide this fact, Hugo's intuitive reading of Byron's Mazeppa was right. The horse, which is at the same time a figure and a body, is the real rider. It controls the reins of
expression. The poet is guided. It is he who is the true vehicle for the horse which stands between body and language. The poet is ridden by symbols between things and words.

As soon as the current of energy flows between them, there he is, well saddled and neighing, writing.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{22} Although Deleuze and Guattari would probably disagree with the use of the word 'symbol', for them there is no doubt that such an energetic inversion is 'real', as we have seen in the quotation given in note 1 of the chapter 'The centaur complex', Part II, 'Byron, the first extension', p. 78. In saying that the author needs to be submitted to a phenomenon of 'deterritorialisation' in order to produce, and that the poet's writing is a direct product of an inversion, I am hardly metaphorical. Mazeppa, for Byron, is the staging of his creative process, in more than metaphorical terms. It is Byron's living through his 'becoming-animal' which enables him to write Mazeppa. I am only applying to a theory of writing in Byron's text the type of demonstration that Deleuze and Guattari proposed in their study of Kafka, \textit{Kafka, pour une littérature mineure} (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1975).
PART III: HUGO, THE TAKING OFF

A/ INTRODUCTION: THE FLIGHT FORWARD

We now recognise the fact that Hugo is the legitimate follower of Byron and that his own 'Pegasus' bases the possibility of its soaring on the Byronic 'centaur'. More overtly, another type of sublimation is at stake in the Hugolian version of the myth; one which is closely linked to an enhanced perception of the notion of genius. But whatever the difference in perception between Byron's and Hugo's considerations of this notion and its poetic use, the need for both writers to assert their authorial identity and achieve a vision of their creative persona remains the same. Before analysing Hugo's perception of genius, its nature and function, we must examine the contextual and intertextual graftings of Hugo's text onto Byron's in the same way as we did it with with the Voltaire-Byron relationship. This is proved to be more complex because of the presence of a supplementary fold: Pichot's translation into French of Byron's Mazeppa.

1) The passage from one text to another ensured by a mistranslation

'Away! - away!', the narrator shouts at the end of the ninth canto of Byron's Mazeppa to express the abruptness and the fury colouring the start of the mad race. 'Away! - away!' he
repeats at the beginning of the tenth canto, and once again three lines later. We find these words echoed on two more occasions at the beginning and in the middle of the eleventh canto. Repetition of the imperative coupled with exclamation brings strength to the narration, literally carrying the reader away with it, capturing his or her attention in a dynamic chain of sounds. Our subjectivity is captivated by the double exclamation. Its suddenness deprives us of time for reflection. Effectively suspending rationality, it prevents us from considering the narrated event, from thinking through it. We participate in the action via a reading which estranges us both from the body and from the reasoning mind. But the text is to provide us with a new body (a ‘body without organs’ as Deleuze and Guattari would call it\(^1\)) while maintaining the suspense of reason. There is no discursive process here. In repeating his double cry five times, the narrator uses a technique of oral recitation belonging to the epic genre and engages us in the rhythm of the gallop. Our freedom of thought has been suspended in the impetus of the race in the same way as Mazeppa's breath is suspended by its speed. From now on, readers estranged from our own minds, we are compelled to participate in the epic tale at a much more primal level, involved in energetic communion with the text.

This simple word ‘away’ repeated ten times is extremely important for it is the ‘hook’ catching the reader’s attention (and the listener’s if one considers that Mazeppa is telling his tale) at the beginning of the mad race. Surprisingly, we know from varied sources that Hugo neither read nor understood English, reading Byron's text in Pichot's translation.\(^2\) In this translation, the word ‘away’ which might have been straightforwardly translated by ‘(au) loin’

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\(^1\) "Un CsO est fait de telle manière qu'il ne peut être occupé, peuplé que par des intensités... Rien à voir avec un fantasme, rien à interprêter [...]. Matière égale énergie [...]. Le CsO, c'est le champ d'immanence du désir, le plan de consistance propre au désir", Deleuze et Guattari, Mille Plateaux, pp. 187-191.

\(^2\) "Byron a été avec Shakespeare tout ce que Victor Hugo, dans sa jeunesse, a, de son propre aveu, pratiqué de la poésie anglaise. Encore ne les a-t-il connus que par des traductions: il ne savait pas la langue et l'ignora toujours", Estève, Byron, p. 299. See also note 2 of the same page 299.
does not appear as such. At the end of the eleventh canto of Pichot's version, we find: ‘Nous volons’, this expression being repeated at the beginning of the twelfth canto. Then once more, this time in the imperfect, it appears at the beginning of the thirteenth canto. The only notion of distance is given by a single ‘loin’ in the fifth line of the twelveth canto. This is typical of Pichot's prosaism which blunts the sharpness of Byron's style. Also the full force of the English imperative is all but lost in translation and Hugo is not able to recognise it and maintain it in his own reading.

Hugo was aware of this problem of a weakening of the original text and was not satisfied with Pichot's version. He certainly tried to refer to the original text in spite of his own inability to read English. The words ‘Away! - away!’ appear in English in the epigraph of his own poem, after the inscription to his friend and painter Louis Boulanger who had already illustrated the story with two of his paintings. Hugo thus revealed the double source of his inspiration, visual and textual, but denied this value to the French version by Pichot. This is hardly surprising if we remember what Hugo had said about the contemporary French translation of Shakespeare which he preferred not to read for fear of reading Letourneur instead. Such a remark demonstrates Hugo's distrust of any attempt at poetic translation.

3 For some obscure reason, Pichot decided to cut Byron's fourth canto into three different ones, which explains then the difference of numerotation.


5 Louis Boulanger, Supplice de Mazeppa, 1827, donated to the Rouen Museum by M.H. Gaugain. This is the painting which belonged to V. Hugo. ‘Le tableau de Louis Boulanger a servi de modèle à V. Hugo pour son poème des Orientales, au même titre que le Mazeppa de Byron, que V. Hugo avait lu dans la traduction de Pichot [...]. Ce tableau de Louis Boulanger nous présente au premier plan Mazeppa, que de vigoureux domestiques s'efforcent, non sans mal, de ligoter sur un cheval blanc, l'oeil en feu, la crinière flottante’, Bailbé, ‘Mazeppa’, pp. 20-21. Another painting by Boulanger shows Mazeppa on his dead horse. This painting can be seen at the Musée Magnin, in Dijon. However, as this study is purely literary and textual, I will not deal with the pictural iconography.

6 Estève, Byron, p. 299.
What Hugo undertook in *Les Orientales* was an interpretation of the myth of Mazeppa rather than a transliteration of it. Indeed, this transliteration would have been impossible, given Hugo’s ‘strength’ as defined by Harold Bloom. Hugo’s ‘Mazeppa’ was to be a voluntary misreading of Byron’s. This is well illustrated in Hugo’s appropriation (and misunderstanding) of the double exclamation. Instead of translating ‘Away! - away!’ by ‘Au loin! - au loin!’ (or even ‘Va-t-en! Va-t-en!’) which would indicate that a clear distancing is occurring as the French words take us immediately into the distance, Hugo puts in his epigraph: ‘En avant! en avant!’ The idea of distance, of spacing, has receded in order to enhance the idea of movement. At the same time, the reader’s subjectivity which was upheld in Byron’s poem is now put in forward motion which is no longer rhythmic but semantic. Indeed the repetition does not appear in the body of the text, but is coined outside its global rhythmical pattern although not outside its context. We are drawn, literally pulled ahead in our reading of the succeeding lines. The Byronic ‘Away! away!’ which endorsed lyrical expressiveness is here transformed into a Hugolian ‘En avant! en avant!’ which is contextual, referential and rooted in the epic. Reading Hugo, and contrarily to what happens with Byron’s text, we remain in control of our own subjective mental activity by the fact that this double exclamation is chiselled out and perceived outside any syntactical chain (but remains inside a semantic one). However, we are also forced into an interpretation of the author’s will to signify, this time without the mediation of a narrator’s voice.

Hugo does not altogether reject Pichot’s own misreading of the Byronic text. Indeed in the English text, there are many mentions of the wind produced by the speed of the race and at least one mention of bird’s wings (‘Away! away!, my steed and I/ Upon the pinions of the

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7 Bloom, *Anxiety Influence*: ‘Strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative spaces for themselves’, p. 5, and ‘[...] for really strong poets can read only themselves’, p. 19.
wind. All human dwellings left behind’, l. 423-425). The link is both metonymic and
metaphoric but, unlike in Hugo’s text where the figure is developed into a complete visionary
allegory, nowhere in Byron’s is it actually said that Mazeppa and his stallion are ‘flying’. Byron
is in general economical with metaphors and it is therefore through Pichot’s own generalisation
that the metaphor of the flight (‘Nous volons’) is amplified in the textual chain. Hugo accepts
this inheritance and develops it into the continued metaphor of the winged horse which ‘runs’
throughout his poem and produces the most obvious poetic outcome: the allegory of Pegasus.
From Byron to Pichot, then from Pichot to Hugo, there occurs a reinforcement of the
figurative function of the text. It is certainly this increased figurality which will provide the
semantic and rhetorical ground for the commentary of a metapoetic nature (i.e. poetry about
poetry itself) which will follow in the second part of the poem.

2) Hugo’s omission of Pichot and his appropriation of Byron

By starting with this brief comparative analysis of a particularly acute intertextual
phenomenon, the central issue is clearly outlined: Hugo, as a ‘strong poet’, pays tribute to his
illustrious predecessor Byron. ‘To pay tribute’ here signifies to carry out a sacrifice which, on
the surface only, diminishes Hugo’s own originality. He does this in order to rid himself of any
idea of indebtedness which Hugo could not accept to live with, or rather to write with. By the
same token, he acknowledges the fact that his text, and therefore his inspiration, is embedded
in a pre-existing textual chain. Byron had done just the same when using Voltaire’s quotations
as epigraphs of his own text. But in this explicit surface-process, one link has disappeared.
Hugo has avoided referring openly to Pichot’s text. Whatever the literary quality (or rather its
lack of literary quality, according to both Byron and Hugo) of this missing link, the
importance of its omission must be acknowledged. There is much evidence that Hugo does
draw the major part of his inspiration from Pichot's text. While such a traditional analysis of
sources is valuable as basic groundwork, it must not prevent this study from rising to a higher
intertextual level. In effect, Hugo's misreading of Pichot essentially works by way of
hyperbolic developments and an increased figurativeness but also, to some extent, by way of
displacements and condensations, as in the dreamwork. As already briefly mentioned, it is
possible to consider these textual phenomena of appropriations and transformations,
displacements and condensations, as very close to what Bloom calls clinamen and tessera.

Byron did not go beyond 'a certain point' or had 'failed to go far enough' in Hugo's
mind, to take up the Bloomian expressions, because he strove to distance himself from his
characters and thus to undermine public feelings. This is mainly why he avoided charging his
text with any metapoetic message. Hugo's 'Mazeppa' sprang from a possible disenchantment

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8 Sigmund Freud, chap. VI 'The Dream-work', in The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. by James Strachley (London: Penguin Books, 1976): 'Each elements of the dream's content turns out to have been "overdetermined" [...]. Not only are the elements of a dream determined by the dream-thoughts many times over, but the individual dream-thoughts are represented in the dream by several elements [...]. The elements of the dream are constructed out of the whole mass of dream-thoughts and each one of these elements is shown to have been determined many times over in relation to the dream-thoughts', pp. 388-389. Also, 'It thus seems plausible to suppose that in the dream-work a psychical force is operating which on the one hand strips the elements which have high psychical value of their intensity, and on the other hand, by means of overdetermination, creates from elements of low psychical value new values, which afterwards find their way into the dream-content. If that is so, a transference and displacement of psychical intensities occurs in the process of dream-formation, and it is a result of these that the difference between the text of the dream-content and that of the dream-thoughts comes about [...]. The consequence of the displacement is that the dream-content no longer resembles the core of the dream-thoughts and that the dream gives no more than a distortion of the dream-wish which exists in the unconscious', p. 417.

9 '1. Clinamen, which is poetic misreading or misprision proper [...]. A poet swerves away from his precursor, by reading his precursor's poem as to execute a clinamen in a relation to it. This appears as a corrective movement in his own poem, which implies that the precursor poem went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved, precisely in the direction that the new poem moves. 2. Tessera, which is completion and antithesis; I take the word not from mosaic-making, where it is still used, but from the ancient mystery cults, where it meant a token of recognition [...]. A poet antithetically 'completes' his precursor, by so reading the parent-poem as to retain its terms but to mean them in another sense, as though the precursor had failed to go far enough', Bloom, Anxiety Influence, p. 14 (the tessera would be a reminder, in our view, of the Freudian displacement, implying at the intertextual level several series of metonymy, while the clinamen would cover both displacement and condensation through a type of metaphorical motion).
with his predecessor's poem. Regardless of, or oblivious to Byron's overt aims, he thought that something should be corrected or something else added or emphasised. This is why he endeavoured to write his own version. Also, when studying the intertextuality of Hugo's 'Mazeppa' within the pre-existing textual chain, the fundamental duality of his indebtedness must be borne in mind. On an explicit and 'ideological' level, Hugo must be considered in relation to Byron. On an implicit and more 'material' level, Hugo must be considered in relation to Pichot. It was Hugo's own choice to enhance one and deny the other for reasons of self-glorification and Romantic policy. However, this choice of emphasis must not be misleading. I shall therefore strive to apply in this analysis the two Bloomian categories of clinamen and tessera, which seem to be particularly relevant in both relationships, for Hugo is at the same time both swerving from and completing or correcting Pichot's translation and Byron's poem through this translation. Only once the intertextual ground is clearly delimited will it be possible to examine the line of flight of the Mazeppa myth within the wider scope of Hugo's works. This will make a reassessment of the Hugolian notions of inspiration and genius possible. This reassessment also keeps Byron closely within the argument, as these notions are at the heart of the Hugo-Byron relationship and should ultimately provide the key to understanding Mazeppa's textual myth.
B/ FROM BYRON TO HUGO: A WILLED MISREADING

Before examining the relation between Hugo's poem and Pichot's translation of Byron's *Mazeppa* in more detail, it is crucial to understand how Hugo perceived his own position in this line of flight\(^1\) or influence which started with Voltaire, continued with Byron and Pichot, and was prolonged by Hugo. The period which interests us covers approximately ten years, between the start of the Byronic fashion in France with the first translations of Byron in 1818-19 and Hugo's writing of his own version of Mazeppa in 1828. Estève's book certainly provides the best account of Byron's influence at this time, demonstrating that the Byron-Hugo relation was far more agonistic than could be imagined and that the French poet clearly did not submit blindly to the Byronic fever raging around him.

Although it is true to say that the general concept of Hugo's *Les Orientales* stemmed from a fashion introduced by Byron's oriental tales such as *The Giaour* or *Lara*, Hugo's idea of re-writing *Mazeppa* came also from the paintings shown at the salon of 1827 and from the mimodrame written by Cuvelier and Léopold *Mazeppa ou le cheval tartare*, staged at the Franconi equestrian circus in January 1825. The collection *Les feuilles d'automne* published

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\(^1\) This notion of 'line of flight' (ligne de fuite) is drawn from the theories of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari as developed in their book *Mille Plateaux*. It applies at several levels of reading, within the texts (the flight of the horse) and in the relations between the texts. It can be understood as a dynamic displacement or diffraction from one situation to another and has to be perceived for its energetic, that is to say creative, value. ‘Les territorialités sont donc de part en part traversées de lignes de fuites qui témoignent de la présence en elles de mouvements de déterritorialisation et de reterritorialisation’, *Mille plateaux*, p. 72. I consider that these notions are invaluable in so far as they allow the reader to devote more attention to dynamic motions, taking better account of the energetic dimension of any act of creation, and *a fortiori* a series of acts of creation in the literary domain.
two years later (1831), for example, owes much more to a Byronic sense of despair than
Les Orientales themselves.

1) Hugo’s first literary encounter with Byron

The first textual confrontation between the two writers occurred when Hugo was
given the task of writing Byron’s obituary in La Muse française in June 1824. At that stage,
Hugo clearly knew very little about Byron and in fact seized this opportunity to state his
theoretical and political position in the contemporary debate between Classicism and
Romanticism. Byron is there only as a pretext, his article being a good example of militant
literature, and, in fact, most of what is actually relevant to Byron was copied from an article
about Lara written by Vigny in 1820 in Le Conservateur littéraire.

In his article, Hugo strives to unify the two opposing factions within French
Romanticism at this time: the Christian monarchist right-wing and the sceptical liberal left-
wing. Those two factions corresponded to two different types of inspiration, but both were
opposed to the old Classicism dating back to the time of the French revolution and the
Napoleonic era. Hugo names the two literary forerunners of these tendencies, Chateaubriand
and Byron respectively, showing that they stand for two complementary sides of the same
Romantic movement. Chateaubriand represents the ‘good’ side of Christian charity and

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3 For this, see Estève, *Byron*, p. 300.
imaginative mysticism while Byron would be heading à son fort défendant a ‘satanic school’ which in fact corresponds to a large extent to what Nodier had called the ‘école frénétique’.4

Such a Manicheism is typical of Hugo’s way of thinking and his taste for antithesis has often been related to his dualistic metaphysics. For him, the writer’s function is fundamentally to be in-between realms, as a ‘connector’, a link or catalyst for mutual understanding and harmony. For psychocritics such as Baudoin, this dualism is due to Hugo’s profoundly ambiguous feeling towards his father.5 For more contemporary critics, such as Susan Guerlac, dualism and antithesis are used voluntarily by Hugo to illustrate the basic ambivalence of language as representation.6 Hugo’s systematic choice of antithetic discourse would then proceed from an aesthetic system based on dialectics. What is certain is that, in Hugo’s ‘Mazeppa’ where these stylistical postulates are to be applied, and as was also the case in Byron’s poem, the figure of the horse will stand at the junction of two fields, straddling once again two literary genres, as the indispensable element which vehicles the meaning from one area to another.

In his article on Byron appears an early version of the argument later exposed in the Préface de Cromwell written in 1827 less than a year before ‘Mazeppa’. In this preface where

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4 Max Milner, in his book Le Romantisme, I, 1820-1843 (Paris: Arthaud, 1973), shows how Nodier took up this expression from Southey who had employed it to qualify Byron’s poetry. It then became what Nodier coined ‘le genre frénétique’.

5 Charles Baudoin bases almost all his analysis of Hugo’s genius, his Zwang and what Baudoin calls his ‘complexe de la poursuite’ on the ambivalent feelings that the poet had towards his father, in Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972), p. 130.

6 ‘Hugo links antithesis or exaggeration both to antinomy and to antiphrasis. Himself accused of a simpleninded use of antithesis in representation, Hugo suggests here that exaggeration and antithesis are to be found within language itself’, Suzanne Guerlac, The Impersonal Sublime, Hugo, Baudelaire, Lautréamont (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 31.
Hugo lays the foundation for the new Romantic aesthetics, Chateaubriand's works reflect the notion of the *sublime*, while Byron's works correspond to the notion of the *grotesque*. Hugo's personal aim is to place his own creation at the junction of the two styles, in order to produce something which matches his conception of *genius*, his own *genius*.

However, what is most relevant for our study in the text published in *La Muse française* is firstly the way Hugo posited himself in relation to his *own* representation of Byron, and secondly the way in which he saw the Byron-Voltaire relationship. Hugo establishes a link between himself and Byron mainly through their common position as creators. This status works in parallel with Nature's action and overtakes it in producing a 'second family': 'La nature lui avait donné une famille, la poésie lui en crée une seconde'. This new family allows mutual understanding beyond time and space. The creators share a community of thoughts which make them an elite isolated from their original surroundings. This notion of 'elite' which at the same time isolates the poets from the rest of the world and links them together by some kind of invisible chain is the premise of the notion of genius which Hugo subsequently develops. A few lines later, Hugo denies equating himself with Byron's genius, for his ego has not yet attained the confidence that will induce him to place himself next to Shakespeare and Aeschylus forty years later. However, the denial is mainly rhetorical and the seed is there. There is common ground between Byron and Hugo because they share the same level of inspiration. This does not mean that Hugo perceives his own work as belonging exclusively to the grotesque genre. We have seen that, in this respect, his aim is

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7 'La poésie née du christianisme, la poésie de notre temps est donc le drame; le caractère du drame est le réel; le réel résulte de la combinaison toute naturelle de deux types, le sublime et le grotesque, qui se croisent dans le drame, comme ils se croisent dans la vie et dans la création. Car la poésie vraie, la poésie complète est dans l'harmonie des contraires', Victor Hugo, 'Préface de Cromwell', *Critique* (Paris, Laffont/Bouquins, 1985), p. 16.

8 Hugo, 'Muse', *Critique*, p. 459.
even higher and if he reaches it, he will thus overtake Byron himself. What they share is chiefly a commonality of view and status which places them on an equal footing. Their correspondence is quantitative, not qualitative. Towards the end of his eulogy, Hugo formulates the loss he feels at the death of Byron in a most striking way, especially if one considers that he had read hardly anything by Byron and had never met him before: ‘Quand on nous a annoncé la mort de ce poète, il nous a semblé qu’on nous enlevait une part de notre avenir’.⁹

Although Byron's persona is still important, ‘Byron’ is also here a figure of thought (more than of speech), the personification of a literary genre. On the one hand indeed, this ‘part d’avenir’ stands for all that the real Byron would have written if he had continued to live, and in his case the formula is nothing but a neat rhetorical way of expressing a conventional feeling of loss. On the other hand, the ‘notre’ reinforces the value of ‘belonging’ of ‘Byron’ to Hugo.¹⁰ If ‘Byron’ is nothing but one particular aspect of Hugo’s own creation, his death deprives Hugo of a part of his own creative potential. It is an event which produces in him a feeling of absence. Whatever the real Byron has already written or could have written if he had lived, Hugo sees it as his personal creative duty to compensate for this loss. He has to recreate an absent ‘Byron’ as he sees him, a body of work which could be fictionally attributed to Byron within his own work. This is what Bloom would call a case of apophrades, the ‘return of the dead’: a situation ‘as though the later poet himself had written the precursor’s

⁹ Ibid., p. 459.

¹⁰ Hugo is also used to talking about himself in the third person singular: ‘L'auteur de ce livre...’, or the first person plural: ‘Nous prétendons...’.
characteristic work'.\textsuperscript{11} It is from here that the future collections, Les Feuilles d'automne and Les Orientales, will stem.

Also following this view, Hugo creates the figure of ‘Byron’ to place himself in a position which encompasses all the various aspects of creation, past and future, as he sees it. He thus puts himself at the centre of the chain he is describing. Finally, this ‘notre’ includes us readers in that meaningful chain, as if we were also to participate in the re-writing of the myth which is to take place. The whole creative event becomes present to us, becomes ‘our’ present and ‘our’ future. We belong to the same line of flight, soon to be forced to mount the wild horse ourselves.

\textit{2) Hugo’s use of Byron to sever himself from Voltaire’s influence}

What can we discover about Hugo’s vision of the Byron-Voltaire relationship? We have seen in the second part of this thesis how much Byron was generally indebted to Voltaire from the point of view both of style and ideas.\textsuperscript{12} Moreover Escarpit has shown how Byron’s works can be situated at the frontier between the 18th and the 19th centuries. Against all odds, Hugo, in his article of \textit{La Muse française} denies this influence. His intention is clearly to sever the already established link between Byron and Voltaire.\textsuperscript{13} It is fairly obvious here that Byron's

\textsuperscript{11} ‘\textit{Apophrades, or the return of the dead}, [...] the poem is now held open to the precursor, where it was open, and the uncanny effect is that the new poem’s achievement makes it seem to us, not as though the precursor were writing it, but as though the later poet himself had written the precursor’s characteristic work’, Bloom, \textit{Anxiety Influence}, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{12} ‘Il [Byron] se rencontre en ce point avec Voltaire, et il y a tout lieu de croire que l’accord n’est pas purement fortuit. Dès la première heure, les lecteurs français ont fait le rapprochement: on peut dire qu’il leur a sauté aux yeux. “Il a bien lu Voltaire, disait Chateaubriand, et il l’imite souvent”’, Estève \textit{Byron}, p. 36.

\textsuperscript{13} ‘Qu’on ne s’y trompe pas: c’est en vain surtout qu’un petit nombre de petits esprits essaient de ramener les idées générales vers le désolant système du siècle dernier [...]’. D’ailleurs on ne recommence pas les madrigaux de Dorat après les guillotines de Robespierre, et ce n’est pas au siècle de Buonaparte qu’on peut continuer Voltaire’, Hugo,
persona is not Hugo's concern, in spite of some elements of truth in his appreciation. Hugo has, once again, a rather ambiguous position towards Voltaire, in turn admiring him and disparaging him.\textsuperscript{14} This denial has to be understood within the broader political context of the article. Byron is once again used here for the sake of the argumentation and what Hugo wants to do is to split any possible connection between himself, as the leader of the Romantic school, and the spirit of enlightenment which produced the subsequent revolutionary turmoil. His aim is to prove the genuine originality of the new school.

Hugo, however, seems to base his argument on a rather specious point: the difference between Voltaire and Byron dwells in the different natures of their humour, or irony. Voltaire, according to Hugo, has not 'suffered' as much as Byron and this fact would explain this difference of nature. This ignores that Voltaire had been beaten, put in jail twice and sent into exile. Byron was never treated like that. Also at a deeper level, how could two different writers' affects be compared and quantified? More validly, what can be read through Hugo's specious argument might well be a double difference between the eighteenth century laughter, dry, ironical, blasphematory and materialistic and the Romantic laughter which he himself studied and practised in his theatre: a darker, more melancolic type of irony, falling short in front of universal suffering.

\textsuperscript{14} An example of Hugo's ambiguous feelings towards Voltaire is found in André Maurois, \textit{Olympio ou la vie de Victor Hugo} (Paris, Hachette, 1954), p. 75: 'A Voltaire, qu'alors il admire, il fait ce reproche: "Voltaire mérite donc un reproche grave; ce beau génie écrit l'histoire des hommes pour lancer un long sarcasme contre l'humanité [...]. C'est fin, brillant luisant, poli, joli, c'est monté en or, c'est garni de diamants, mais cela tue"'. (One can find this quotation in Victor Hugo, 'Fragments de critique. - Journal d'un jeune Jacobin de 1819', in \textit{'Littérature et philosophie mêlées'}\textsuperscript{,} \textit{Critique}, (Laffont/Bouquins, 1985), p. 68.).
This laughter would also be more 'poetic', in the Romantic terms of a grotesque nature on the verge of the sublime. Estève summarises this difference between the two types of laughter quite well and remarks that Byron always drops his cynical mask in the end to reveal pure passion.\(^{15}\) This is why Hugo considered Byron a greater poet than Voltaire (this is not difficult) and also why Hugo does not want to follow Voltaire's path.

3) Hugo's ultimate aim: to build his own persona

What is even more necessary to the argument is to examine Hugo's conception of literary history and to see how he perceived the evolution between Voltaire, Byron, and eventually himself. In a paper published in 1834 in *Littérature et philosophie mêlées*, but written sometime between 1823 and 1830, Hugo expresses his idea about the succession of the centuries and his conception of historical evolution.\(^ {16}\) The conclusion is rather striking and explicitly situates Voltaire and Byron on the two sides of an abyss: the French Revolution. The value of the word 'abîme' in Hugo's lexicon is well-known. Its significance was to increase over the years. The abyss is the place in which divine mystery dwells. In diving into the abyss, the visionary poet penetrates God's intentions. At this stage of Hugo's philosophical

\(^{15}\) 'Chez Byron, la raillerie n’est qu’une feinte par laquelle il essaye de donner le change à lui-même et aux autres. Au moment où on s’y attend le moins, le ricanement s’interrompt et la passion éclate, d’autant plus irrésistible qu’elle a été plus contenue. Colère, attendrissement, remords, désespoir, aspiration sans cesse renaissante au bonheur et à l’amour, elle découvre brusquement, sensible et douloureuse, le véritable fond de l’homme. Le cynique laisse tomber le masque, et le grand poète apparaît', Estève, *Byron*, p. 37.

\(^{16}\) 'Heureusement, et c’est là que nous voulions en venir, le même lien est loin d’enchaîner le dix-neuvième siècle au dix-huitième. Chose étrange! Quand on compare notre époque si austère, si contemplative, et déjà si féconde en événements prodigieux aux trois siècles qui l’ont précédée, et surtout à son devancier immédiat, on a d’abord peine à comprendre comment il se fait qu’elle vienne à leur suite; et son histoire après la leur, a l’air d’un livre dépareillé. On serait tenté de croire que Dieu s’est trompé de siècle dans sa distribution alternative des temps. De notre siècle à l’autre, on ne peut découvrir la transition. C’est qu’en effet, il n’en existe pas. Entre Frédéric et Buonaparte, Voltaire et Byron, Vanloo et Géricault, Bouchet et Charlet, il y a un abîme: la Révolution’, Hugo, *Critique*, p. 166.
development, it is merely a gap, or more significantly a hiatus, an articulation between two strata of the world.

Indeed, for Hugo, progress is not continuous but proceeds by leaps. In a much later text, he will clarify this conception, again referring to Voltaire but in a slightly negative way. In *William Shakespeare*, Hugo's most imposing theoretical treatise, he explains that he sees three historical stages of evolution, each one linked with or characterised by the appearance of some great human genius. The first stage of barbarism is closed by Homer. The second, described as 'Gothic' is closed by Shakespeare. Finally, the third stage - the monarchic stage - was historically closed by the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century and is still waiting for its genius to be revealed as ... Hugo himself! In this Hugolian perspective, Voltaire is compared to Saint Paul for his alacrity, energy and verve. However, this particular work was written nearly forty years after the period which interests us. Any non-chronological extrapolation has to be eliminated as the text in question in this study, 'Mazeppa', could only present the first germinations of ideas which were to be developed in the years to come; with preliminary caution, the fully developed ideas can only help us to understand retrospectively their premises.

For Hugo, as shown in this paragraph of *William Shakespeare*, there is a solution of continuity between the different eras of human history, and especially between the 18th and the 19th centuries with the huge fracture of the French Revolution. He uses two words there


18 There is a debate around Hugo's literary evolution. Some critics deny any real modifications of his ideas throughout the years, only a deepening of them. This is for instance the case made by Charles Villiers, *L'Univers métaphysique de Victor Hugo* (Paris, Vrin, 1970): 'il n'y a pas d'évolution dans la pensée de Hugo, depuis les *Odes* jusqu'à la *Dernière Gerbe*, seulement un approfondissement constant des mêmes doctrines', p. 281. However, these views appear to me rather reductionist, refusing to take into account the richness of Hugo's evolutive maturation.
which are particularly relevant to our problematic (‘enchaînement’ and ‘transition’), but only to deny them any validity in the case of his own indebtedness to predecessors. This is a device to affirm his own independent greatness as unequalled genius; however, these observations lead us to some important preliminary conclusions.

Hugo consciously refuses to perceive a chain of influence between different authors representative of different historical moments. He recovers or ‘reconstructs’ Byron only in so far as the displaced and distorted image of the English poet can be useful for the building up of his own creative personality. As far as direct predecessors are concerned, Hugo works as a predator. They quickly become part of his own textual complex. More distant precursors, like Voltaire, are there to be contradicted. Their value is essentially antithetic. Then again, by offering a sort of negative image of what Hugo as a creator must become, they help him to build up his own image as creator. They are all bricks, positive or negative, for the building of his own persona, the personal vision of an author-to-come. However, in spite of Hugo’s own denial, he does belong, along with Voltaire and Byron, to this textual chain which transcends any kind of literary evolution.
The Hugo-Pichot relationship is a relationship which Hugo denied but which represents an important link in the textual chain. Estève tells us how Hugo used Pichot’s text:

Tout cela Victor Hugo l’a pris à son modèle, mais il le resserre à sa guise, le réfracte à travers son imagination, l’accommode à son dessein. L’interprétation symbolique lui appartient en propre. Elle a surgi à ses yeux sous la forme antithétique, entre les lignes de la traduction Pichot [...]. Il a ajouté au texte du poète anglais dans le premier cas [Mazeppa] une idée [...]. En imitant, il invente.1

The task is thus to read in between those lines or, rather, in between Pichot’s translation and Hugo’s own version. Estève notices that Hugo had taken a model from Pichot’s text, but that ‘[il] le resserre à sa guise, le réfracte à travers son imagination, l’accommode à son dessin’ (my italics). This ‘resserrement’ and this ‘réfraction’ are similar to the Freudian mechanism of condensation and displacement active in the dreamwork, but at the intertextual level. The predecessor’s text is thus analogous to the unconscious stock of images and symbols which feed the dreams of the subject. This parallelism appears legitimised by the extensive comparison of the process of dream and the process of poetic creation that Hugo continued throughout his life, but developed in his text Promontorium somnii.2 The ‘accommodement’ could be seen more particularly in the extensive hyperbolic developments given by Hugo to some specific motifs. With these techniques, Hugo produces a new text by placing himself

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‘in-between’ the works of his predecessors and his own future creation. His inspiration would thus partly operate as a distorting prism, the type of phenomenon which I named a ‘diffraction’.

Paradoxically, when dealing with such an egotistical author as Hugo, there are some grounds for talking in terms of a disappearance of the subject. Estève mentions that in an anonymous but enthusiastic article about Les Orientales published by Le Mercure du XIXème siècle in 1829, a significant difference between Byron and Hugo had already been drawn. For Byron, the Orient provided only a frame for the expression of the self and its passions; conversely, Hugo used a depiction of the Orient mainly to hide behind. Byron had had a direct contact with the Orient through his travels, while Hugo’s descriptions were purely fictional. So the difference between the two authors lies in two opposing literary strategies. It is much more a question of positioning the authors differently vis-à-vis their respective texts than a question of giving a true and legitimate account of the real Orient. These antithetical characteristics imply another difference between the two texts. Indeed, Hugo’s version tends to be at the same time more imaginative (or figurative) and more ‘impersonal’, that is less humanistically psychological, than the Byron-Pichot version. We are able to observe in Hugo’s poem a de-subjectivisation of the creator, treated in a much more symbolic way within a figurative mode of creation. The diffraction, or displacement, will lean towards a de-personalisation, or distancing of the writer-narrator.

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3 Estève, Byron, note 2, p. 303.

4 For an account of Byron’s travels and stay in the Orient, see André Maurois, Don Juan ou la vie de Byron (Paris: Grasset, 1952).
1) The unfolding of the textual layers

When one begins reading Hugo's poem itself, one is at once struck by the first word, rhetorically an anacolouthon: 'Ainsi'.\(^5\) It works as another token of recognition given by Hugo to the preceding text. This adverb provides the reader with the real edge of the tessera while at the same time, it allows Hugo to free his own text from the preceding part of the story and go straight to the real issue: the mad race. Henceforth, a blank is left there to be filled by the reader who needs to read the Byron-Pichot's version if he wants to understand the reason for Mazeppa's predicament. Of course, in the contemporary context in which Hugo is writing, most of his readers knew Pichot's translation or, at least, had heard of the story. This blank hint is one more discreet, but most efficient, sign of Hugo's acknowledgement of his own inscription in the textual chain.

Hugo's poem is composed of two parts. The first, the longest with seventeen strophes, follows the narration of the race which started at the 9th canto in Byron and at the 11th canto in Pichot. In Hugo's poem, everything which comprised the introducing and concluding frame of the other versions is eliminated. Only the last two strophes of Hugo's first part echo the Byronic commentary about the difficulty of deciphering human fate. Using the future tense, these strophes show the reversal of fortune which Mazeppa had to undergo, ultimately for his greater glory. The second part of the poem, much shorter with only six strophes is a metapoetic commentary added to the first part. Most strikingly, it starts again with the same adverb: 'Ainsi' which now works as anaphorical of the first one but does not form an

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anacoluthon any longer since the previous part it refers to is there, *in praesentia*. The
metapoetic content is induced by a single word: ‘génie’ which is the real double clinamen
between the first narrative part and its commentary, and between Byron's explicit
interpretation of Mazeppa's story and Hugo's personal understanding of it. Henceforth, it is
not three versions of the story which have to be put into a comparative perspective
- Byron's English text, Pichot's translation of it and Hugo's poem - but four versions. Indeed,
the two parts of Hugo's poem works as two different modes of interpretation of the textual
myth provided by Byron's poem: one as a fictional staging, the other as a discursive comment.
The two versions have to be analysed separately.

2) *The first part of Hugo's poem as a 'dream-reading' of Pichot's translation*

Again, to some extent, the relation between Hugo's first part and Pichot's translation
operates in the same way as the relation between the dream-contents and the dream-thoughts
described by Freud. This first part of the poem offers a Hugolian grotesque treatment of the
race. Some motives are given the same importance as in Pichot's text, like the passage at the
beginning with the henchmen, which also corresponds to the description of Boulanger's
painting belonging to Hugo at that time. Others are kept and mentioned, albeit reduced in
importance, such as the crossing of the river, or displaced, such as the passage with the herd
of wild horses. However, the displacement inflicted on the passage about the wild horses by
Hugo and the fact that they now follow Mazeppa and his stallion, instead of attending the
stallion's death, operates as a condensation, as previously defined. The horses in Hugo would
be the equivalent of both the horses and the wolves which follow the mount and its rider in
Byron-Pichot (but the capacity of harassment of the wolves will be transferred to the birds).
Many other details and the impression of speed and dizziness are retained, for example in the
lines:

[... ] grands chênes,
Villes et tours, monts noirs liés en longues chaînes,
Tout chancelle autour d’eux,

or

Il voit courir les bois, courir les larges nues,
Le vieux donjon détruit [...]

The hypnotic rhythm of the gallop is also maintained through numerous repetitions.
The cosmic visions of the sky, the globular sun, the succession of nights and days are
respected fairly scrupulously. Finally several important features are not only kept but
extensively developed into new clusters of images.

The first is the double motif of fluid and fire, already present in Byron-Pichot but
strongly reinforced here. This motif bears powerful sexual and even sado-masochistic
connotations. To start with, the horse is described as a compound of water (‘nourri d’herbes
marines’, l. 4) and fire (‘[.. ] fait jaillir le feu de ses narines/ Et le feu de ses pieds’, l. 5-6),
while Mazeppa himself is continuously described as in a process of liquefaction (‘La sueur sur
le front, l’écume dans la bouche/ Et du sang dans les yeux’, l. 11-12; ‘[.. ] son sang rougit la
chaude arène’, l. 50; ‘[.. ] toujours son sang coule et ruisselle’, l. 56; ‘Ses yeux brûlés de
pleurs’, l. 90).

The two together, fluid and fire, in an elementary and dynamic process of fusion,
produce an atmospheric imagery of storm, fire ball, thunder and lightning. Within this fusional
process, Hugo has kept the Byronic idea of the man struggling to free himself from his bonds,
tightening them even more and spurring the animal into an even more frenzied run. He has moreover added to it a reptilian vision where the man and the bonds merge together in a kind of confused mass of knots, coils and limbs: ‘Quand il s’est dans ses noeuds roulé comme un reptile’ (l. 7); ‘Sur ses membres gonflés la corde se replie, / Et comme un long serpent resserre et multiplie/ sa morsure et ses noeuds’ (l. 52-54).

It is hardly necessary to recall the sexual connotations of such a lexicon in French: ‘noeuds, membres gonflés, long serpent, morsure’. All these words are endowed with erotic meanings, as Hugo was certainly well aware. Also the word ‘croupe’ attributed to horses and, metaphorically, to women bears strong connotations and reinforces the idea of sexual relationship hinting at a possible fusion between man and horse. But at this stage of the relationship and in spite of the fact that it is the horse which dies, hence undergoing the ultimate suffering, the man is on the passive suffering side, as if he had to be punished for his erotic and creative urge. While in Byron, the eroticism which triggered the ordeal was explicit, in Hugo this idea belongs to a non-dit anterior to the beginning of the race and to the text. Hugo exerts here a kind of censorship, fairly frequent in his texts, which works to the advantage of the duality at play between the erotic desire and the creative urge, underlining their kinship.

Another enhancement of the fusional process between man and animal is created at times by a syntactic ambiguity particularly visible in the use of the possessive adjective. In the tenth strophe, for example:

Le cheval, qui n’a senti ni les mors ni la selle,
Toujours fuit, et toujours son sang coule et ruisselle,
Sa chair tombe en lambeaux; (l. 55-57)

(my italics)
Hugo is obviously talking about Mazeppa's blood and flesh, as the logic of the ninth strophe implies. However, from a strictly syntactical point of view, it could be the horse's blood and flesh he is talking about.

The second feature that Hugo has considerably developed is the theme of the flight which derives from the 'Nous volons' of Pichot, while it was almost absent from Byron. Hugo introduces it in the first part, mentioning it twice before systematically exploiting it in the second part: 'Et l'homme et le cheval [...] Volent avec les vents' (1.14); 'Leur course comme un vol les emporte' (1.28). The soaring effect it gives to the mad race is there not only to prepare the reader for the second even more allegorical part, but also to link the man-animal couple to the third motif strongly predominant in this first part: the harassing flock of birds.

Hugo introduces this motif of the flock of birds at the end of the tenth strophe, with the crows succeeding the horses. He thus re-establishes the link with the Byron-Pichot version. However, in that previous version, there was only one crow and for Byron this bird could be interpreted as a negative figure of Mazeppa's own soul. Hugo uses here a plural as an amplification which gives the birds the function attributed to the wolves in Byron. The word 'meute' metaphorically used for the flock of birds in the 13th strophe confirms this impression. It fuses the function of harassment with the aerial dimension dominating the poem, in agreement with its propensity to express a progressive but continuous soaring.

The cosmic vision of the sky at dusk, with an ocean of clouds and the sun as the golden wheel of the 8th strophe displays the glorious dimension of this poetic soaring. The vision of the flock of birds which Hugo is now to develop stands for the dark antithetical side of the soaring. If Hugo had just before given us a vision of the sublimity of the poetic impulse, he is now displaying the grotesque counterpart of that same impulse.
The 11th strophe is extremely visual, in the fashion of the contemporary Romantic prints by Delacroix, Boulanger, Granville and others. It presents a series of six types of birds which are all supposed to follow Mazeppa and his horse. Although their common denominator is their taste for flesh, they appear as a fairly random collection. They resemble something of a gallery of caricatures and could be interpreted as a hidden literary satire, with the different birds representing some of the personalities on the literary scene who were attacking Hugo at that time. Positioning himself as the leader of the young Romantic movement and identifying himself as Mazeppa in this poem (this is very discreetly indicated by the three mentions of the forehead, ‘le front’, typical of the Hugolian lexicon of self-identification), Hugo would thus take his own hidden revenge upon his literary opponents. Following the same logic, the herd of horses would then become Hugo's Romantic followers and disciples.

However, these birds also represent the forces which are forbidding the mythical couple of man and horse to approach the sky. As well as being instrumental in Mazeppa's ordeal, they are the antagonistic third party, le tiers oppositionnel, which tries to prevent the man from reaching a higher status. Although here the values are reversed, the birds are pulling down the rider and his mount exactly as Saint Michael's legions of angels had been pulling Satan down and banning him from heaven: ‘Le cheval tombe aux cris de mille oiseaux de proie’ (I. 82). This gives Mazeppa a truly Promethean dimension.

Hugo was fond of Aeschylus' plays. He wrote extensively about the Greek dramatist and nicknamed Shakespeare, Aeschylus II, only just stopping short of calling himself

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The vision of the great bald vulture ‘Qui fouille au flanc des morts, où son col rouge et chauve/ Plonge comme un bras nu!’ (l. 65) is clearly reminiscent of Aeschylus’ play: Prométhée enchaîné. For Hugo, this was probably a good way to remind his reader of the Promethean dimension of Mazeppa and of his function as a modern redeemer through artistic suffering. What is less certain is if Hugo, when writing it, was aware of the erotic if not obscene dimension of the image, as revealed by Baudouin.

Beyond any relative judgement of taste, this obscene image of the vulture’s bald head penetrating dead bodies can shed light on the mysterious question of the 12th strophe: ‘Qui donc là-haut déploie/ Ce grand éventail noir?’ (l. 71). An answer cannot be fully given until the second part of the poem is examined. However, it is already obvious that those birds do not act by themselves and are more the emissaries of a greater force which has decided to inflict this ordeal on the hero.

As Guerlac has clearly demonstrated, the grotesque and the obscene are themselves part of a greater Sublime which encompasses the preliminary opposition between the grotesque and a lower sublime. Hugo has often linked the Promethean figure to a Job figure, and in spite of all their darkness and horror, these birds are part of a superior will which dwells beyond the differentiation between good and evil. The intuition of such a

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8 ‘Shakespeare l’Ancien, c’est Eschyle’, Hugo, Critique, p. 305.


10 ‘The contrast between grotesque and sublime has moved inside the Sublime as an inner tension, one that gives it priority over the self-identity of beauty’, Guerlac, Impersonal Sublime, p. 18.

11 The clearest mention of this Hugolian equivalence between Job and Prometheus is found at the end of the chapter entitled Sub re in Les Travailleurs de la mer (Paris, Gallimard/Folio, 1980), p. 369, in which Gilliatt is compared to those two mythical figures together, but the equivalence is also developed at length in William Shakespeare.
presence in the non-dit, in the silent background of the text, explains from a different angle the absence of an introduction to the race in the poem.

Hugo in this case does not need any longer to resort to the narrative device of the jealous husband. By the same token, the woman-figure, so important in the Byronic configuration, is no longer necessary. It is as if femininity was encompassed within the Mazeppa-horse couple, which henceforth endorses as a whole the value of a submissive, suffering, ‘feminine’ type of passivity, whilst its masochism is completed by a sadistic super-ego acting through the intervention of the birds of prey. Thus, at that stage, the man-animal fusion is almost complete, a fusion which has much larger dimensions than in the Byron-Pichot’s version.¹²

Hugo has also drawn one more feature out of two totally different elements from the Byron-Pichot version which he has fused owing to his extraordinary verbal alchemy. In Byron, the theme of vision was paramount; it was almost the last sense which linked Mazeppa to the external world and to life, but the theme of the flight was only suggested. Hugo has linked this theme of vision, absolutely crucial for the understanding of his own poetics to the dynamic theme of the race via the verbal sequences: ‘Ils vont’ and ‘Ils volent’. Indeed, Hugo operates a kind of phonic and semantic glissando throughout his poem. Right at the beginning of the first part, Hugo places Mazeppa in the position of witness of his own ordeal through seeing: ‘[…]
Mazeppa, qui rugit et qui pleure,/ A vu […]’. This is a way to emphasise the visual as the main sense through which his hero will remain in contact with reality, for Hugo could have simply described the scene in a direct way, making us the first witnesses of the events. Then, after the

¹² This is owing to a much greater and continuously reinforced presence of the third oppositional party - le tiers oppositionnel - in Hugo than in Byron.
launch of the race through a fulgurant metonymic cry which fuses all the actions of the
henchmen, of the horse and of Mazeppa himself ('Un cri part'), he introduces the theme of the
flight: 'Volent avec les vents'. But the real rhythm of the race is given by the repetition at the
beginning of strophes four and five of Pichot's expression: 'Ils vont'. This is echoed in the
seventh strophe by the repetition of 'Il voit'. It is as if the homophony 'vu', 'volent', 'vont',
'voit', exemplified the equation between the 'seeing' and the 'flying', between _le voir_ and _le
vol_, through the catalytic action of the movement, of the 'going', _l'aller_.

Further down in the first part, Hugo continues to endow Mazeppa with this ability to
see: 'son oeil s'égare', 'il les voit', 'grand à l'oeil ébloui', and make this sense Mazeppa's
predominant contact with the external world. But it is in the second part of the poem only that
Hugo fully exploits this equation between dynamism and vision. The configuration seeing-
flying is in fact the major textual link between the first part and the second part which we can
now start analysing and comparing with the first one, as its diffraction.

3) The second part as a sublime metapoetic commentary of the first part

Quite purposefully, Hugo writes the first three lines of the second part as a syntactic
and semantic anamorphosis of the first three lines of the first part:

(I) Ainsi, quand Mazeppa, qui rugit et qui pleure,
A vu ses bras, ses pieds, ses flancs qu'un sabre effleure,
   Tous ses membres liés [...]

(II) Ainsi lorsqu'un mortel, sur qui son dieu s'étale,
S'est vu lier vivant sur ta croupe fatale,
   Génie, ardent coursier [...]


The diffraction of meaning between the two parts is considerable. However, the second part does work as a mirror image of the first one. As such, it brings out its symbolic dimension. The initial story would not foster any explicitly metapoetic meaning without its specular counterpart and would remain purely imaginary, an allegory whose interpretative key is missing. Through this bi-partitional structure, Hugo gives a new perspective to Byron's story in the very textual fabric of the poem.

In this second part, Mazeppa as specific hero of the tale has disappeared. Instead, there is an anonymous but exemplary mortal. This mortal can be understood as a figure of the poet, although this is not explicitly enunciated. This anonymity superficially denies the man any embodiment as source of creation nor any active, creative role. His struggle is said to be vain and soon he becomes totally passive. The 'a vu' is even transformed into a 's'est vu' (l. 104). The man is an instrument played with in someone else's hand. At the same time, a kind of answer is given to the question of the first part: unique mention of a god, '[...] sur qui son dieu s'étale' (l. 103) somehow answers the 'Qui donc là-haut déploie/ Ce grand éventail noir?'. This implies that the second part is going to be an interpretation of the first one which, on its own, remained exclusively on the level of the mythical account, or at worst at the level of the epic fable with the final moral.

The first part was an obscure, fantasmatic and satiric account of the story. The second makes sense of it and brings sublime reason to it. The reflexive 's'étale' is the corresponding predicate to the large black opening fan of the first part. But while in the first part, the fan was a metaphorical representation of the birds 'acted' by a superior entity, it is now this entity
which spreads itself over the hero. Thus at a rhetorical level, the motion goes from metaphor to metonymy, increasing the participation of this superior entity in the drama.

Furthermore, the possessive ‘son’ and the absence of capital ‘D’ for ‘dieu’ limit the application of the notion to a purely personal level. Hugo is not talking here about the universal God of humanity as a whole, but about a particular god whose power and function only apply to his singular, anonymous individual. To some extent, the anonymity of the mortal rubs off onto his god as well. If one considers that this mortal is the poet, his god will necessarily be the god of poetry, the god of literary creation, but Hugo tries to hide his own identity as writer of a poem about the making of poetry and this is the reason for such an anonymity. Although the mortal and his god are exemplary, they are not the symbols of humanity in relation to the divine as a whole. They are exemplary of a specific category of people: poets, in relation to a particular and limited aspect of ‘godhood’, and the divine as support for poetic creativity.

Whilst the human hero is depersonalised through the disappearance of his name, together with the ‘de-capitalisation’ of his god, the horse is conversely now named as the personified allegory of Genius. Genius, through the horse, has become the real focus of the poem and Hugo addresses it in the second person. This is where a crucial swerve occurs between the first and the second part. Indeed, while the ‘il’ of the first part characterised the poem as belonging to the epic genre, the ‘tu’ of this second part turns it into a drama.¹³

¹³ Goethe distingue les “modes” poétiques [...] et affirme: “Il n'y a que trois authentiques formes naturelles de la poésie: celle qui raconte clairement; celle de l'émotion exaltée; et celle préoccupée du subjectif: épopée, poésie lyrique, drame.” On peut interpréter cette formule comme se référant aux trois protagonistes de l'énonciation: il (épopée), je (poésie lyrique), tu (drame), Ducrot-Todorov, Dictionnaire, p. 198-199.
In this case, the displacement also affects the literary genres, moving from a monologic structure to a dialogic structure (even if the genius does not speak for itself). There is thus a drastic difference in the types of enunciation between the two parts. In the first part, there was an external, invisible narrator talking about a fusional couple man-animal. The status of this narrator was fairly secure as the absent voice of narration. In the second part, the narrator himself dialogues with the figure of the horse as personification of genius. It is as if the narrator was giving the key to understanding of the story to ‘genius’ itself. This means that genius is unable to understand its own participation in the myth, nor can it express itself. The narrator hereby becomes genius's voice at the same time as he is talking for and about his own representation: the tortured involuntary rider. So the split is no longer here between the narrator and his characters, as in the first part which belonged to the epic genre, but between the narrator and the genius he is talking to and the human character as a symbol of the narrator.

The reader witnesses a fragmentation of the representation operating at the same time on the metapoetic level and on the fictional level: the ‘author’ is split into the narrator's voice and his genius via the dialogical structure, while at the same time this voice is describing the events in which his symbolic human double is involved, together with the allegorical figure of genius as a horse. It is as if the function of this dialogical structure was to compensate for the symbolic split occurring within the writer's own personality, viewed both as narrator and as fictional hero. This structure also reinforces the narrator's participation in genius and in the whole creative process. It works as a return of his indirectly reinforced presence in the mimetic process, after having orchestrated his disappearance from this process at an earlier stage.
4) The horse as genius taking the rider to a higher level of consciousness

So genius as the winged horse figure is now taking its rider 'out of the real world' (l. 107). This moving out of reality, which equates to a moving out of the first part (in so far as this first part represents reality!), represents a jump into sublimity. All the gory and grotesque aspects of the previous description of the race have been eliminated. The fantastic birds have been changed into impure spirits or are felt only as wings flapping against the rider's forehead. The deserts, mounds and seas are still there, but this time seen from above in a fashion similar to Goethe's Faustian flight. The cosmic aspects present in the first part are not only preserved but very much emphasised. This second version is essentially a development of the double theme of vision and flight introduced in the first part, positing once again the flight as the preliminary and paramount condition for the vision. It is also very much a leap from low to high style and altogether a spiritualisation of the story. The descriptions are far more abstract and conceptual. The rider and his mount are going through 'all the fields of possibility' and 'the worlds of the soul'. They drink from 'the eternal river' and see an 'ideal horizon'. To a large extent, the mortal 'attached alive' onto his courser is taken beyond the frontiers of mortal life into the realm of eternity.

This flight is frightening firstly because of the height to which it brings the passive subject. Fear and pain are no longer created by the imaginary horror of a sado-masochistic nature, but by the sublimity of the dimension in which the rider is taken away. Hence the question: 'qui peut savoir [...]?'. No one indeed, because the hero's consciousness is taken beyond the discursive power of words, precisely in this sublime dimension which Kant has
defined as both a suspension of discursivity and of mimesis. This time, there is no longer a tiers oppositionnel, the third oppositional party pulling the rider and his mount down as the flock of demonic birds were doing in the first part. It is the steep incline of the race, its elevation and pace, its overall sublime dimension which is pulling the rider down (‘Chaque pas que tu fais semble creuser ta tombe’, l. 136) - which seems to pull him down. But this is only a potential threat seen only from the external viewpoint of the witness not participating in the sublime ascent.

The last sentence of the second part is again a fulgurating summary of the whole cursus: ‘[...] il court, il vole, il tombe/ Et se relève roi’. One could add: parce (par ce!) qu’il voit. In any case, the nature of this second fall is now very different from the first one. In the first part, it was the horse which was falling: ‘Le cheval tombe aux cris de mille oiseaux de proie’, dragging down his rider at the same time. In this second version, the winged horse cannot fall as it is precisely the vehicle for the spiritual elevation. It is by being submitted to the overwhelming power of the flight (‘sous ton vol qui l'accable’) that the rider, in an dialectical and temporary fashion, falls in order to rise again. But what exactly is the nature of this second fall?

This fall can be only of one nature and the newly risen king can reign only over one thing: the kingdom of language. In Kantian terms, writing a poem about the sublime elevation of poetic inspiration is necessarily falling from private sublimity into public taste. Discourse

14 ‘Le sublime est ce en quoi s'écrase l'imagination. Kant parle de stupeur, résultant de l'incapacité de l'imagination à saisir le tout à partir des parties. Le sublime est donc une totalité échappant à l'esprit’, Kant, Critique de la faculté de juger, trans. and ed. by Alexis Philonenko (Paris: Vrin, 1993), note 1, p. 130. (I shall use a French edition of Kant's work for two reasons: a) although no one is exactly sure if Hugo had read Kant or not, it is better not to introduce a linguistic distortion between the understanding of the French poet and the concepts of the German philosopher. b) I find the commentary of Philonenko particularly clear and useful regarding the application of these concepts to the reading of Hugo.)
cannot implement non-discourse. The mimetic involvement of poetry as writing is necessarily at one and the same time a fall and an assumption of poetic inspiration. The fallen writer is the ‘king’ of the readers and in order to become their king, he needs to fall, otherwise he would not write. This is his agony, in the etymological Greek sense of the term as struggle for existence, as poet in this case. This is why it is so painful.  

In her commentary on this poem, Barineau remarked that since the 16th century, representation of poetic inspiration by the symbol of the winged horse Pegasus has been common in European literature. However, she could not find a single occurrence of the symbol which involved both passivity and suffering for its rider-poet. The passivity of the man who is after all not a poet until he has undergone the trial of the race is inscribed within the logic of de-personalisation of the writer inhabited by inspiration as Hugo understood it. This aspect will be further analysed when the nature and origin of the notion of genius are examined. The reason for the suffering invoked by Babinski in his concluding chapter does not seem to apply in this poem as there are no traces of messianic function in the role of the poet at this stage of Hugo’s poetic evolution. This will appear only later on. However, if in the first part the

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15 For Hugo, the dialectics of the sublime motion implies the poet's final victory after his double motion of ascension and fall ('il court, il vole, il tombe/ Et se relève roi'), but this final victory does not erase altogether the fear, anxiety and suffering of the preceding fall. This sublime fall is the true cause of the torturing ordeal undergone by Mazeppa, in so far as it provides the subject with a consciousness of his mortal condition. This is what Michel Deguy firmly establishes in his article 'Le grand-dire', in Le Sublime, ed. by Deguy (Paris: Belin, 1988): 'La condition mortelle et le moment de périr sont en jeu avec le sublime. [...] Il est sublime le point gagné, d'éphémère immortalité, la parole adverse arrachée à la mort, où le tout du devenir-périr se laisse rassembler. A la fois il appartient à la courbe mortelle, et la surmonte, surplomb tangent comme un point remarquable de rebroussement, sommet pinéal où le corps s'unit à l'âme, s'y suspend; utopie d'apesanteur infinitésimale comme au pic labile du saut le plus haut. Nul ne reste "en l'air", et du sublime la rechute est fatale', p. 17 (my italics).

16 Barineau, Les Orientales, p. 139.

17 'The Romantics were extremely interested in liberators who could deliver nations from political oppression, an interest prompted no doubt by their contemporary history and political idealism. Such liberators, the Romantics felt, had to be tried and refined by suffering in order to be purified for their messianic task', Babinski, 'Afterthoughts' Mazeppa Legend, p. 149.
suffering is essentially physical and produced by the friction of the race (against the *tiers oppositionnel*), in the second part, moral suffering is predominant. Pain in this context has a purifying value. In the text, pain is often linked with fire and it can be considered that fire is an important adjuvant in the metamorphic process which endows the ‘seeing’ with visionary powers.

In the logic of this interpretation though, suffering necessarily comes out of the conflict between two opposite drives: on one hand the temptation to reach sublimity while riding the flying horse; on the other the attempt to express this sublimity with words, which entails the mimetic fall. Suffering then has no real function other than being the sign of the split between those two levels, the place of the *wound* at the very edge of the *tessera*. Pain comes, as in Byron, mainly from the consciousness of this split, here between the *phusis* of the inspired poet and the *technè* of the writer, the other half of his creative *persona*. In this way, for Hugo, in the first part of his poem, torture is not genuinely inflicted by the ‘real’ grotesque world since this world is nothing but the agent of a superior will.

This interpretation also helps to understand the nature of suffering in the Byronic version of the tale where it is a fundamental quality of the man-animal relationship embodied in the centaur complex. It is over-simplistic to describe it in terms of sado-masochism, for this notion does not take into account the fusional and metamorphic aspects of the relationship. Both beings in question are inflicting pain on each other without any desire to inflict it and without drawing any pleasure from it. The pain is essentially the direct consequence of the conflicting desires to fuse and to split *at the same time*. These desires represent the efforts to ‘remain’ the same in the closing of the individual and to ‘become’ the other in the opening of
the couple. Thus, here again, the pain is the sign of the wound of an unsatisfied ‘becoming’. Let the ‘becoming’ happen and the pain will disappear.\footnote{This is why I cannot agree with Baudoin when he introduces the notion of sado-masochism in his analysis of the Hugolian Zwang (‘Comme nous le remarquions tout-à-l’heure à propos d’Hernani, la situation est ici facilement renversée. Qui est le cheval? qui est le cavalier? Tantôt le poète est en proie au “génie”, tantôt il est le génie, et tout le drame humain est sa proie. Alors l’attitude “masochiste” s’est convertie en attitude “sadique”’, Baudoin, \textit{Psychanalyse}, p. 134, note 2). In no way does becoming genius imply becoming a sadist, even if the act of writing can, to some extent, be compared to preying on the world’s matter as is the case in the infant’s primal sadistic drive. Deleuze and Guattari are certainly closer to my understanding of Mazeppa’s suffering (and the horse’s!) when they say: ‘Le cheval, et le maître-dresseur, la maîtresse, ne sont pas des images de mère ou de père. C’est une question complètement différente, un devenir-animal essentiel au masochisme, une question de forces. Le masochiste la présente ainsi: “Axiome de dressage - détruire les forces instinctives pour les remplacer par les forces transmises”. En fait, il s’agit moins d’une destruction que d’un échange et d’une circulation’, Deleuze et Guattari, \textit{Mille Plateaux}, p. 193 (my italics). And: ‘De même, on dirait moins de bêtises sur la douleur, l’humiliation et l’angoisse dans le masochisme si l’on voyait que ce sont les devenir-animaux qui le mènent, et pas l’inverse’, ibid., p. 317.}

In order to understand fully the origin of the suffering in Hugo’s poem, it is necessary to explain the exact nature of this god who spreads himself over his worshipper and above all the varied aspects and provenance of this genius which is seen as an active and dynamic force of transformation. Already at this point, Hugo’s originality begins to surface. What was an initiatory journey for Byron’s Mazeppa becomes in Hugo a total metamorphosis. From a neutral anonymous character, Mazeppa is changed into a poet, a king ruling over his own story, and thus over his own creation. This is what allows Babinski to be so eulogistic about Hugo’s version:

\begin{quote}
It is in Hugo’s final stanza that all the ideas, still not coherent in any one image or symbol by the French Romantics at this time, fuse into the grand symbol of Mazeppa - artist [...] . Hugo’s Mazeppa is the culmination of the legend. It appears afterwards in Europe and America, but it never surpasses Hugo’s working of the material.\footnote{Babinski, \textit{Mazeppa Legend}, p. 72.}
\end{quote}

However, the nature and the essence of this genius embodied by the horse remains to be outlined.
D/ THE PEGASUS COMPLEX

A single word remains to be analysed, but one which represents the true place of the *clinamen* between the two parts of Hugo’s poem, and also, more crucially, between Hugo himself and all his precursors. As such, in historical terms, this word can be considered as the textual equivalent of the word ‘revolution’. The word is *genius*. Simultaneously, it links and severs, providing the real hiatus or articulation between the two textual complexes - the ‘centaur complex’ and the ‘Pegasus complex’ - within the same textual chain. Owing to its profound ambiguity, its reading provides a sight of the *clinamen* in action. It is for this reason as well as for its theoretical importance in the study of the Romantic views on poetic creation that such a word must be examined in depth.

1) The three meanings of the word ‘genius’

The word ‘genius’ is commonly understood in three different ways.¹ The first one which would appear to be the most ancient meaning is the Latin equivalent of the Greek *daemon*. In this sense, the genius is a tutelar divinity accompanying a mortal during the course of his life and advising or inducing him indifferently to good and bad actions. It would work there as a moral or spiritual double of the subject, to some extent similar to the Freudian

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super-ego. It would be its mythological translation, expelled from the subject in the (antique) objectivity of the external world.

However, even in imperial Latin, ‘genius’ was often understood figuratively as ‘inclination’ or ‘gift’, which indicates a re-introduction of the notion of genius into the subject, henceforth a re-subjectivisation of the concept. This evolution may have occurred under the influence of the word ‘ingenium’ which meant ‘natural quality’. Indeed the two words share the same etymology ‘gen’ which makes ‘genius’ related to the physical nature of the being in question. It explains how, by extension, the word ‘genius’ came to mean the totality of the particular distinctive features which form the proper nature of a thing or a person. At this stage, it is important to notice that the words ‘origin’ and ‘originality’ also share the same etymology. This allowed Voltaire to define the word ‘genius’ as such:

> Le terme de génie semble devoir désigner non pas indistinctement les grands talents, mais ceux dans lesquels il entre de l’invention. C’est surtout cette invention qui paraissait un don des dieux, cet ingenium quasi ingenium, une espèce d’inspiration divine.²

Finally, through metonymic extension, already existing in Voltaire though with its greatest development among the Romantics, the word ‘genius’ came to describe no longer the gift, the ‘talent’, but the creator himself.

These three different meanings can easily be found in Hugo’s works and have undergone a particularly interesting evolution throughout his career. They all add their meaning to the image of the horse as a figure of genius displayed in the second part of Hugo’s poem and elsewhere. It is thus necessary to examine Hugo’s work beyond the limited frame of

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his poem 'Mazeppa'. However one must be wary of the chronological dimension of the study. Indeed, some of the conclusions which might be reached in such a way cannot be fully applied to 'Mazeppa' unless one is aware that, for Hugo, the poem represents only a first stage in the genesis of the concept, its early premise.

Once a clear picture of the value of this word 'genius' within Hugo's works is achieved, we shall be able to deepen our understanding of the aesthetic dimension of the concept in 'Mazeppa'. Only then can the figure of the running horse as an allegory for genius and poetic inspiration in the broader frame of the textual chain be fully appreciated.

2) Genius as the expression of a compulsive force of flight

Although outdated in many respects, Baudoin is certainly one of the Hugolian critics who has devoted most time to the notion of genius and to the figure of the horse in Hugo's work. In the chapter 'Le Génie et l'exil' of his Psychanalyse de Victor Hugo, he links the notion of genius and its corollary figure to a 'complexe de la poursuite'. Where, in my view, he fails is that he has not situated this complex in an evolving perspective, although many of his insights are still relevant and informative. He links the thematic figure of the horse with the 'complexe de la poursuite' which according to him would express a feeling of fear when facing the image of the terrifying father, which would provoke the subsequent flight. In numerous

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3 'Ainsi apparaît chez lui un rapport inattendu, mais très instructif, entre la vocation poétique et le complexe du proscrit. La force impérieuse que le poète appelle son génie, qu'il pourrait appeler son “daemon”, et qui le contraint à créer, cette force qui est bien à sa manière un Zwang, est un aspect de la force primordiale et véhément qu'il nous représentait tout à l'heure par l'image de la chevauchée (“poursuivie et poursuivant”), et qui se rattache au motif de la fuite devant le Père', Baudoin, Psychanalyse, pp. 132-133.
poems like ‘L’aigle du casque’, ‘Le petit roi de Galice’, ‘Le Hibou’, ‘Toute la lyre’, ‘Insomnies’, Baudoin notices that the motif of the flight from the terrifying father is represented by a frenetic race. The horse would then be the figurative support for the corporeal expression of this fear, the ‘body’ of the fear through which this fear is empowered and enacted.

Of course, this is viewed in causal terms, but following the Freudian notion of a libidinal economy, this imagery of the flight and the race would find its energy in a primary compulsion which Baudoin calls the Zwang. This obsessive and compulsive force would be represented at its best in a text written only a year after ‘Mazeppa’: Hernani.

Je suis une force qui va.
Une voix me dit: Marche! et l’abîme est profond,
[ . . . . ]
Où vais-je? Je ne sais. Mais je me sens poussé
D’un souffle impétueux, d’un destin insensé.

The link which Baudoin thus establishes between the flight and the mad race allows him to point out two distinctive features of the motif which are particularly relevant to our problematic: the energy and the ambivalent violence. One recognises also the sado-

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4 ‘Dans les deux cas, le motif de la fuite devant le Père, ou de la poursuite du Père est donc figuré par la chevauchée effrénée’, ibid., p. 128.

5 Ibid., p. 130.

6 Baudoin notices here (p.131) that the rhyme ‘poussé-insensé’, far from being an artificial device, is conversely of the utmost significance. It is also found in Marion de l’Orme (‘Que veux-tu donc? Sais-tu qu’à me suivre poussée/Tu vas cherchant l’exil, la misère, insensée?’). I shall understand this ‘poussée insensée’ not uniquely with the meaning of a mad, insane, force, but rather as a force literally ‘without sense’, a force which has lost (or has never had) direction and meaning, a force dé-sensée for the ‘force qui va’ does not know where it goes nor what it means.

7 ‘A considérer toutes ces variantes sur le thème de la chevauchée, on ne peut se défendre de la conviction qu’une poussée intérieure aussi violente doit être nourrie par de puissantes sources, et bien positives, d’énergie. A coup sûr, de forts instincts sont ici en jeu. Cette peur est aussi un désir, cette poursuite implacable est évidemment appelée [...]. Le poursuivi éprouve une sorte d’ivresse à être malmené par le persécuteur. C’est ainsi qu’il finit par s’identifier avec lui, par “l’introjecter” (‘Suis-je en fuite? Est-ce que je poursuis?’). On reconnaît ici l’ambivalence à l’égard du père’, ibid., p. 136.
masochistic aspect present in both the Byronic and the Hugolian versions. Furthermore, the horse quite 'naturally' embodies the libidinal energy in action and is instrumental to the suffering that the poet-hero inflicts on himself as punishment for his desire. Following this interpretation, the non-dit of the Hugolian pre-text to Mazeppa can now be understood in a third way, as the (absence as) sign of the repressed figure of the father. It would be the figure of this terrifying father which is represented in the second part of the poem by the god without capital letter - 'capital-less' (which also means 'headless' and 'figure-less' but certainly not altogether absent) because absent and singular to every being, the private father of - in this case - the poet. Now, in ontogenetical terms, the father is the genitor, so it becomes normal that the figure of the father-as-genitor-as-god-of-poetry is nothing more than the origin of genius, its 'natural' pre-existence, and there is nothing divine nor particular sinful about all this. Genius would be nothing else than the expression of the 'god-father' of poetry. However, if we accept Baudoin's interpretation, Hugo's effort to incorporate genius in his own persona, his creative identity, would equate to a way to disarm the power of the terrifying father, to make it his own through poetic alchemy. He would then be able to use this power for the benefit of his artistic production.

* The term 'expression' can be confusing and requires clarification here. Indeed, what we call 'god-father of poetry', stretching Hugo's pantheon to its extreme limits, is nothing else than an essence, or 'soul' if we follow Hugo's own lexicon, waiting to be activated, or to be put into existence via the textual myth. In that case, there is no intrinsic difference between the genius and that essence of poetry which it expresses.
3) Genius as the expression of a subversive social energy

Without referring to psychoanalysis, Max Milner has also outlined the particularly energetic aspects of Romantic creation. Energy plays a dominant role in most thinkers or writers of the time, like Maine de Biran, Stendhal, Balzac, Hugo himself of course, and, according to Milner, it is the ‘unleashing of instinctive powers’ which attracted so many artists to Shakespeare and Byron (‘le symbole de l’énergie humaine’). It is moreover remarkable that most artists who tackled the Mazeppa myth were young men full of ambition and dynamism (social as well as sexual). Milner explains that the previous two generations had been able to shed their overflow of energy into the political and military turmoil of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. Conversely the youth of the Restoration was faced with a smothering social atmosphere which offered no outlet for satisfying a thirst for action and a longing to transform the world. The only opportunity for these desires to be expressed was in staging gratuitous, instantaneous and violent displays of energy. This resulted in what Milner calls ‘une esthétique du choc’ which aimed not only at expressing youth’s excess of inner energy but also, quite consciously, at tearing the reader from himself through images of horror in order to bring him to deeper (or higher) levels of self-awareness. Nodier, in imitation of...

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9 Milner, Romantisme, pp. 115-118.

10 ‘Ce qu’il [l’artiste] doit retrouver en lui-même, ce n’est pas les archétypes éternels de la nature, mais le secret de ses puissances vitales’, ibid. p. 118. Let us remember that Byron was twenty-nine years old and Hugo twenty-six when they wrote the poems which we are studying.

11 ‘La violence n’est que la forme extrême du dynamisme de l’artiste romantique lorsque celui-ci se heurte aux contraintes d’un monde qui s’oppose au déploiement de son énergie [...], son besoin d’expression l’amène à cultiver les moyens les plus efficaces pour extérioriser les forces qui animent son génie créateur’, ibid., p. 125.
Southey’s expression ‘satanic school’ describing Byron’s poetry, used the expression ‘genre frénétique’. Hugo’s ‘Mazeppa’ very obviously falls into that stylistic category.

Milner also understands that the Romantics perceived this violent expressivity as a means of narrowing the interval between the moment of inspiration and the finished work of art, and between the creating subject and the created object at a deeper level. This could also bring the reader into direct contact with the creative surge, bypassing the subjectivity of the author. The violent torturing ride would then be an ideal medium for this purpose, an experience in which the creating mind is alienated from his own subjectivity through speed, terror and suffering. Once again here, the horse as figure of genius is instrumental to such an experience. The ecstatic condition in which the poet puts himself in order to produce striking and powerful works of art could be compared to a ‘productive wound’ that he inflicts to his own subjectivity.

4) Genius taking over the creator’s will

There is yet another way of seeing the horse-genius relationship according to Baudoin who outlines a process, consciously elaborated by Hugo, taking the exemplary poet from pursuit into exile and from exile to vision. Based on this development, Hugo makes a causal link between ‘la force qui va’, what Baudoin calls the Zwang, and Hugo’s inspiration, and thus his genius viewed as a horse. This is particularly clear in these extracts from ‘Insomnie’:

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{12}} \text{‘Faire de celle-ci [l'œuvre] une sorte de surgissement absolu, dans lequel le geste créateur de l'artiste est sans cesse visible’. ibid., p. 127.} \]
Il faut, rêveur nocturne en proie à l'esprit sombre
Gravir le dur sentier de l'inspiration,
Poursuivre la lointaine et blanche vision,
Traverser, effaré, les clairières désertes,
Le champ plein de tombeaux, les eaux, les herbes vertes
Et franchir la forêt, le torrent, le hallier,
Noir cheval galopant sous le noir cavalier.\(^{13}\)

and from ‘Toute la lyre’:

Ténèbres, suis-je en fuite? est-ce que je poursuis?
Tout croule; je ne sais par moment si je suis
Le cavalier superbe ou le cheval farouche;
J'ai le sceptre à la main et le mors dans la bouche
[...]
L'Esprit fait ce qu'il veut. Je sens le souffle énorme
Que sentit Élisée et qui souleva
Et j'entends dans la nuit quelqu'un qui me dit: va.\(^ {14}\)

When Hugo wrote those poems, he had himself experienced the reality of exile; this was not yet the case in 1828 when he wrote ‘Mazeppa’. However, it is clear in reading ‘Mazeppa’ that the loss of control and the feeling of estrangement from oneself that the creator undergoes during the moment of creation was already known to him. In those two extracts, the inversion illustrating this loss of power during the creative surge is vividly depicted. The poet falls prey (‘en proie à l'esprit sombre’) to his genius who is in control (‘L'Esprit fait ce qu'il veut’) and he is literally as well as literarily ‘ridden’ by it. He is the black stallion galloping beneath the black rider - his genius. The inversion of the rider and his

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mount that we had detected in Byron's poem, leading us to the conclusion of 'a poet called horse' finds its confirmation here together with its emphasis.

This inversion occurs during and is triggered by the self-inflicted flight which is a pursuit, a chase driving the poet into exile. At the same time, this inversion, implying estrangement, loss of power and the transformation of the poet into a horse (and eventually into genius itself) is the medium which endows the poet with (compensating) visionary power (in the Hugolian and Romantic sense). The description of this faculty of seeing is very close to that experienced by primitive shamans during their trances. This is how and when the 'flying' becomes the 'seeing' as it is formulated in the second part of Hugo's Mazeppa. It can then be considered that the sight, in order to become 'inner' and active, has to be 'outer' and passive to start with. The images of external nature have to come to the (becoming) visionary poet and be submitted to the transforming force of his internal nature in order to become his own inner visions and subsequently be artistically represented. The poet is thus not much more than a place of transit for the vision which is transmitted from its source to the reader. This process can be effected only in a place where the 'hollow' poet stands, or rather the poet has to put himself in that place and become that hollow place. This is where this word, so important in Hugo's metaphysical lexicon, intervenes: the 'abyss' ('l'abîme'), the dark place (dark because beyond knowledge; no notion of evil here) where the high and the low fuse and where God's will as much as Nature's truth can be understood, not through rationality but through the vision in/of the dark ('la vision de l'abîme'), which is an almost hypnotical meditation and certainly an experiencing of and beyond the limit of consciousness.
In ‘Le Hibou’, we read: ‘Toutes les forces sont les chevaux de l’abîme’. The articulation of this well-established and well-favoured configuration ‘poète-génie-cheval-abîme’ is thus typical of the Hugolian creation. The ‘inspiration’ can then be understood as the transforming current of energy which runs through this configuration, alternately turning one into another and fusing them all in an enacting of the essences. It explains how the abyss can speak through the poet and how the poet becomes the abyss itself, at work. All this can happen only using the textual device of the figurative concept: the genius-as-horse, which is in charge of fusing together the abstract, spiritual world and the concrete, natural world, in a process which Bachelard coined: l’imagination matérielle. The poet is then inhabited by what I metaphorically called the ‘dark hole’ which appearance we had witnessed in Byron’s crossing of the river. This inner dark hole is also the place of his poetic ‘wound’, in so far as an awareness of its presence is highly painful. For the poet’s subjectivity, to put himself in this situation of transit and let the forces of inspiration pass through him towards textual production equates to a self-inflicted wounding (which is not, however purely masochistic because it is neither an expression of the death drive nor an inverted form of sadism, a transformation of the natural aggressivity by fear).

Thus we can see the birth of the two meanings of the word ‘genius’ closely intermingled and working their way through the Hugolian text: the first meaning of genius as daïmon separated from the poet is there, already and simplistically present in ‘Mazeppa’ via the ‘tu’, the second person to which the second part of the poem is addressed; and the second

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16 For a detailed account of this notion by Bachelard, see the introduction, ‘Imagination et matière’, to his book L’Eau et les rêves.

17 ‘C’est cette transformation de l’agressivité par la peur qui constitue l’essence même du masochisme’, Narcht, Masochisme, p. 88.
meaning, genius as natural endowment presented via the figure of the horse which Hugo introjects in order to turn it into the essential condition of his creation. As far as those two meanings are concerned, ‘Mazeppa’ does offer an early version of a textual complex which Hugo will exploit, develop and refine throughout his life.

5) The linking of the figure of the centaur and the figure of Pegasus in two later poems

However, the third metonymic meaning of the word ‘genius’ as the poet himself, elevated as king in the last line of the poem, requires further explanation. An even later version of the Pegasus complex illustrates quite explicitly this third meaning in the two texts used as prologue and epilogue of the collection Les Chansons des rues et des bois: ‘Le Cheval’ and ‘Au Cheval’.¹⁸

Both poems offer an extremely elaborated development of the Pegasus complex and are typical of late Hugolian poetics. They were written partly in 1859 and partly in 1865, respectively thirty-one and thirty-six years after ‘Mazeppa’. In spite of this lapse of time, most of the features are already present although embryonic in ‘Mazeppa’ alongside other major themes and motives which appeared later in his life.

Although born from the sea (‘né de la mer’), the nature of the wild (‘indompté’) horse is essentially fiery (‘Aux brûlures que leur ont faites/ Les étoiles de son harnais’, ‘Son flanc ruissellant d’étincelles’, ‘Ayant dans ses naseaux le souffre’, ‘puissant faiseur d’étincelles’

etc...). It is flying over the dark abysses ('Dieu fit le gouffre à son usage', 'Il vole, il plane; il a l'amour/ De se ruer dans les ténèbres', 'Ce sombre cheval des abîmes', 'Tes pieds volants', etc...). Some picturesque details remain, such as the towers and the vultures, but here endowed with greater value. One can even find some reminiscences of the Byronic horse: ‘Quand il part l'idée est sa cible’ (Pichot: ‘dont les membres paraissaient doués de toute la vivacité de la pensée’; Byron: ‘Who look’d as though the speed of thought/ Were in his limbs’), as if Hugo for this purpose had re-read Pichot or even tried to decipher Byron himself. More importantly, the horse, as in ‘Mazeppa’, is the condition for vision (‘Sa prunelle sauvage et forte/ Fixe sur l’homme, atome nu,/ L’effrayant regard qu’on rapporte/ De ces courses dans l’inconnu’, ‘Et l’âme du monde en ses yeux’, ‘[…] et je ne vois/ Rien sur terre après ta sortie’, ‘Quand, l’œil plein de vagues effrois,/ Tu viens regarder l’invisible’, ‘On entrevoit partout au loin/ La fuite obscure des suaires’, ‘Faisant subitement tout voir’) together with the condition for transformation (‘Plus d’un sur son dos se déforme’, ‘Va! pour vaincre et pour transformer,/ Pour que l’homme se transfigure,/ Qu’il te suffise de fermer/ Et de rouvrir ton envergure.’). The horse even allows the writer-rider to merge with it in the same type of partial metamorphosis which was revealed in the lineaments of the Byronic version, again proving the existence of a common point between the centaur complex and the Pegasus complex:

Pourtant sur ton dos garde-moi,
[...]
Je veux de telles unions
Avec toi, cheval météore,
Que, nous mêlant, nous parvenions
A ne plus être qu’un centaure.21

19 Pichot, Mazeppa, Canto XI, p. 103.
20 Byron, Mazeppa, l. 361-362, p. 355.
An obvious sublime element (‘Au delà de l’esprit humain’) is present in these two texts as in the second part of ‘Mazeppa’. Also, at a formal level, if one considers that the poems ‘Le Cheval’ and ‘Au Cheval’ are two parts of the same text (some strophes written in 1865 were included in the first poem written in 1859), the parallel with ‘Mazeppa’ is then further enhanced by the fact that ‘Le Cheval’, like the first part of ‘Mazeppa’, deals with the horse in the third person, making it relevant to the epic genre, while ‘Au Cheval’, like the second part of ‘Mazeppa’, addresses the horse itself in the second person, and makes it relevant to the dramatic genre (following the definitions of these two genres on p. 149).

This parallelism could indicate a double structure, at the same time epic and dramatic, recurrent in Hugo’s works as soon as some sort of metapoetic issue is at stake. Hugo in these cases would never resort to the lyrical expressivity of the ‘je’ in order to show that the inward looking self alone cannot achieve a clear view of its own creative process. This process could be enlightened only either through descriptions of epic dimension to show the glory of the task and its social (or even religious) function or through the dramatic form of dialogic discourse which resitutes and enacts creative activity within a living dialectic. This change from epic to drama would also display a transformation of the creative self, after the moment of creation, which would bring this self closer to the fictional reality just created, making it more ‘real’ for him and for the reader; the writer then has the reader embarked on a much more vivid and convincing form of theoretical discourse, but a form which can be achieved only at a second stage, after having gone through the epic, near-mythical, narrative display. In this Hugolian

22 This would also be in agreement with the sublime dimension which implies, as already seen, a suspension of the subjectivity.
system, the epic genre would then be the best suited to express the moment of poetic surge, while the dramatic genre would be used to communicate *a posteriori* the time of reflection.

6) The 'becoming-genius' of the poet

On reading this selective and summarised depiction of some of the features present in the poems 'Le Cheval' and 'Au Cheval', one might think that they are straightforward, faithful duplicates of the poem 'Mazeppa', bridging nearly forty years of writing and denying any kind of literary evolution. This is far from being the case, as for 'Mazeppa' we have insisted on the facts that the issue at stake was purely metapoetic - the text being solely devoted to the problematic of poetic creation in its own right - and that the writer-rider had lost total control over his act of mounting the metaphorised genius.

A re-reading of the two later poems shows how far Hugo has moved in his conception of the creative process and of its function. The first striking point is that now the poet is in constant control over his mount. It is even his predominant skill in 'Le Cheval':

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Je l'avais saisi par la bride:
Je tirais, les poings dans les noeuds,
Ayant dans les sourcils la ride
De cet effort vertigineux.
[...]
Il n'est docile, il n'est propice
Qu'à celui qui, la lyre en main
Le pousse dans le précipice,
Au delà de l'esprit humain.
[...]
Pensif, j'entraînais loin des crimes.
Des dieux, des rois, de la douleur,
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Ce sombre cheval des abîmes
Vers le pré de l'idylle en fleur.
Je le tirais vers la prairie.

[...]
Moi, sans quitter la plate-longe,
Sans le relâcher, je lui montrais
Le pré charmant, couleur de songe,
Où le vers rit sous l'antre frais.

And in ‘Au Cheval’:

Je t'ai quelques temps tenu là.

The ‘je’ and the ‘moi’ are constantly reiterated and emphasised. The horse is still wild, but the artist is now much more than the tortured victim of the early days, he is much more than a falsely modest groom: he is the omnipotent horse-breaker. This is a major difference, one which changes the whole scene. The horse is still the figure of inspiration, of the fluid and thunderous energy running through any act of creation, but it is no longer the figure of genius, for the poet has become genius himself. The text ‘Le Cheval’ says it explicitly in its fourth strophe:

Tout génie, élevant sa coupe,
Dressant sa torche, au fond des cieux,
Superbe, a passé sur la croupe
De ce monstre mystérieux.

Hugo, full of his own importance and glory at this stage of his life, places himself in these two texts as a genius equal to Orpheus, Aeschylus, André Chénier or Virgil.

A second point which is more fully developed in the second poem, ‘Au Cheval’, is that the mission of the horse has also changed, or rather expanded. It is no longer just a question of poetic creation, but also of social activism. Pegasus, the horse as inspiration, is now endowed with a function, and poetry bears an almost messianic duty (thus confirming here Babinski’s intuition, although at later stage in Hugo’s life).
Tâche de renverser les tours,
Les geôles, les temples athées,
Et d’effaroucher les vautours
Tournoyant sur les Prométhées.

The task of Pegasus is now to establish the reign of justice and equality; the doctrine of
‘l’art pour l’art’ has been problematised,23 and poetry has become a weapon in the fight for
progress against the evil forces of obscurantism and oppression. Of course, the whole body of
doctrine of Hugo as a faithful militant is much more subtle and nuanced than this brief account
can show, especially in its religious and metaphysical dimensions, but this transformation of
Pegasus’ attributions and duties nonetheless exemplifies Hugo’s deep evolution over the years.

This change will become even clearer when we examine Hugo’s essay on genius in the
‘Margins’ of his William Shakespeare, for, in this work, ‘genius’ appears endowed with a
broader meaning beyond the animalistic figure of the horse. This existence will help us to
understand the more recent aspects of the ‘non-evolutive’ evolution of the literary myth of
Mazeppa. The third meaning of the word ‘genius’ as metonymic appropriation (if not
alienation) of genius by the poet - the poet as genius will indeed become predominant.

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23 As one can see in ‘De l’utilité du beau’, Victor Hugo, Critique, p. 581: ‘L’art, à la seule condition d’être fidèle à sa
loi, le beau, civilise les hommes par sa puissance propre, même sans intention, même contre son intention.’
E/ THREE GENIUSES IN ONE NATURE

We have outlined the modalities of the existence of genius under its three main meanings in relation to the horse-figure which can be considered as a partial allegorical figure for these meanings in Hugo's poetic evolution over the years. Apart from developing the symbol of Pegasus, the winged horse, in connection with his conceptions on poetic inspiration, Hugo also embarked upon an abstract, objective and quasi-theoretical reflection on the notion of genius during the years 1863-64 when he was preparing his book on Shakespeare. Focussing on the idea of the poet as genius, the work looked very much like a hijacking of the concept to boost the ever increasing egotism of the creator. However, the corresponding deepening of Hugo’s thoughts on the subject may also explain the noticeable difference in the ideological content between the two texts devoted to Pegasus which were respectively written before and after this period. A reading of the chapters of *William Shakespeare* and the marginal texts devoted by Hugo to the notion of ‘genius’ will help us to complete our understanding of his conceptions not only on the modalities but also on the origin of ‘genius’, an area which has up to now remained rather confused.

1) Genius endowed with a social role

In the fragment entitled: ‘Les génies appartenant au peuple’, Hugo clarifies and spells out the moral shift inflicted on the notion of ‘genius’ which became noticeable in reading ‘Au
cheval’. It is quite certain that the composition of that poem was strongly influenced by the
ideological content of such a text:

Pour l'homme de génie, il faut quelque chose de plus, car il est homme, plus génie. Pour lui, la fonction doit être héroïque. Elle doit se faire mission. Elle doit être dirigée par la vertu.

[...]
La vertu propre au génie, c'est la haute exigence. C'est un tracé du devoir empiétant sur le sublime.

[...]
Une immense bonne intention, en fait de devoir vouloir le trop, au besoin un peu de folie dans le sacrifice; c'est là une loi pour le génie. On n'est l'archange qu'à ce prix.

[...]
Qu'est-ce que le génie si ce n'est pas une plus grande ouverture du cœur?

[...]
Le génie est avant tout une bonne volonté, le perpétuel épanouissement du chaos en ordre [...].¹

(my italics)

These quotations show how wide is the gap separating this ‘un peu de folie’ from ‘la poussée insensée’ of thirty years earlier: the span of a life-time’s experience. When Hugo wrote ‘Mazeppa’, genius seemed the key to the sublime, or at least a textual key as it opened the second part of the poem. It hereby opened the door of a supra-consciousness allowing the poet to approach the (positive) meaning of the abyss. By 1863, genius has become the ‘path of duty encroaching upon sublimity’, although it has kept the characteristics of sublimity with its grandeur, its elevation, its immensity. Hugo then describes genius as a ‘good intent’, or a ‘good will’, directed by virtue and endowed with a moral mission. This new vision of genius seems difficult to reconcile with the early one and might even appear as its negation. Hugo in his maturity seems to have shed the enthusiasm of his beginnings and has institutionalised still further his own image. This is partly true, but the full reality is yet richer and more complex. In

¹ Hugo, Critique, pp. 587-596.
this trajectory, the third conception of genius is found almost totally reversing the first and establishing that now society stands for nature in the text. Hugo implements such a reversal by substituting a concept of finality for a concept of origin. Genius is no longer considered as the origin of poetic inspiration embedded in nature; it is, on the contrary, a highly socialised aim that the poet must strive to reach, as we can see in ‘Les génies appartenant au peuple’. This new conception possesses a philosophical background which needs to be understood in order to fully appreciate such an evolution.

2) A Kantian reading of Hugo’s conceptions of genius

Already in the 1820’s and 1830’s, Kant had been widely read and vulgarised by Victor Cousin. Although it is not known if Hugo had read a translation of the German philosopher, a Kantian reading of Hugo’s theories around ‘genius’ seems justified by the appearance of Kant in Hugo’s poem ‘L’Ane’ and by the use other critics like Charles Villiers have made of such philosophical readings in order to overcome some of the difficulties and apparent contradictions in Hugo’s views.

At the end of his introduction to La Critique de la faculté de juger, Kant drew up an analytical grid which can be used as a basis for a new interpretation of Hugo’s concept of ‘genius’. Kant distinguished the ‘good’ and the ‘beautiful’ together with the ‘true’ as different

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2 Hugo, Critique, p. 587.

3 ‘Il faudra attendre l'enseignement [...] de Victor Cousin pour qu'une place soit faite à la pensée de Kant’, Milner, Romantisme, p. 45.

transcendental concepts. He also distinguished between transcendental principles such as the principle of finality in nature and metaphysical principles such as practical finality.\(^5\) If one extends Kant’s distinctions, one may be able to consider the transcendental principles as *subjectively understood*\(^6\) and the practical principles as *objectively understood*.\(^7\) However, the application of such principles can be limited on one hand in the field of nature for its non-subjective and non-objective dimension. On the other hand, both the extensivity of the self into a ‘cogito plural’, a universal subjectivity which is very much the realm of imagination and art for Kant, and the exertion of objective reason which is the realm of freedom, moral values and science also limit the exertion of the mind to the application of transcendental principles.

Between these different fields of application lies the subjectivity which is applied by the Faculty of judgement. Finally, what matters most is that Kant distinguishes between three different applications, one of ‘Entendement’ which is Nature, the second of the ‘Faculté de juger’ which is Art, and the third of Reason which is Freedom.\(^8\) Further on in his aesthetics, Kant makes a distinction between the Beautiful and the sublime in so far as the Beautiful is limited and perceived by subjective means while the sublime is unlimited and perceived by

\(^5\) ‘le principe de la finalité de la nature [...] est un principe transcendantal [...]. En revanche, le principe de la finalité pratique, qui doit être pensée dans l’idée de la détermination d’une volonté libre, est un principe métaphysique’, Kant, *Critique de jugement*, p. 42.

\(^6\) ‘Or ce concept transcendantal d’une finalité de la nature n’est ni un concept de la nature, ni un concept de la liberté [...], c’est un principe subjectif de la faculté de juger’, ibid., p. 45.

\(^7\) ‘on entend, en effet, par la première la faculté de juger la finalité formelle (que l’on nomme aussi subjective) par le sentiment de plaisir et de peine, et par la seconde la faculté de juger la finalité réelle (objective) de la nature par l’entendement et la raison’, ibid., p. 55.

\(^8\) For a complete exposition of this schema, see the table at the end of the introduction of the edition by Philomenko (p. 60).
objective means. So what also matters is that Kant links the Beautiful to the exercise of ‘Entendement’ and the Faculty of judgement, and the sublime to the exercise of Reason.

This distinction springs from a logical reflection carried out on the passive perception of the spectator/reader facing the spectacle of nature or a work of art. The conclusion drawn when examining the (supposedly) active perception of the creator of a work of art could be radically different. Indeed, it could present exactly the opposite view-point. This is what we now need to outline.

For Kant, genius is an innate faculty of the mind, given by nature. To define it as talent or a natural gift, he resorts to the same common root with the word *ingenium*; genius springs thus from the arbitrariness of nature, from a place where neither the subjectivity of the judgement of the self nor the objectivity of its reason are found. Kant defines ‘originality’ as the first property of genius. For this very reason, Kant later continues to insist on the fact that genius cannot be transmitted and that one genius cannot imitate another genius; genius as a faculty can be only an ‘exemplary inheritance’. By the same token, Kant stresses that nature...
gives the basic rules to art through genius, but these rules cannot be imitated by another
genius ('Le génie est totalement opposé à l'esprit d'imitation'). However, another set of
'lower' but elaborated rules, directed by taste, is conveyed through the technicality of the art.
The confusion between the two types of rules can be eliminated if we consider that the first
type, founding the work of genius, non-transmissable and as such 'non-artistic' because innate,
concerns only the material of the work of art, while the second type, purely artistic, therefore
transmittable and controllable, deals with what Kant calls the form. The first type would
appear beyond the limit of subjectivity and would be given to 'Entendement', while the second
type would work within the limit of subjectivity and be given to the faculty of judgement.

3) Genius and the sublime's common ground

Kant does not establish any explicit link between genius and the sublime but at least
two points show that they are closely related apart from the fact that the chapters devoted to
genius are included in the section on sublime.

The first common point can be revealed through the fact that an active genius is limited
in the way that it cannot be improved. In his chapters on the definitions and properties of the
sublime, Kant repeatedly affirms that the subject facing a sublime spectacle is struck by his
own powerlessness, his own limits in the attempt to perceive such a height. Both the man

\[^13\] Ibid., pp. 208-209.

\[^14\] 'Pour le génie l'art s'arrête quelque part, puisqu'une limite lui est imposée au-delà de laquelle il ne peut aller', ibid.,
p. 206.

\[^15\] 'Est sublime ce qui, par cela seul qu'on ne peut le penser, démontre une faculté de l'âme, qui dépasse toute mesure
des sens', ibid., p. 127. Philonenko comments in his notes that the sublime is 'what imagination is crushed by' and
that the sublime is 'a totality escaping the mind', (note 1, p. 130).
endowed with genius and the subject affected by a sublime spectacle thus feel their limit in front of the unlimited. Only the directions from which this limit is reached are diametrically opposed to each other. Indeed, in the case of the creator inhabited by genius, and although this has to be relativised by the very nature of the creative act which takes over the creator’s will, the creator remains active and to some extent productive; the sublime motion springs from his own inner being. In the case of the spectator-reader, and only from a traditional view-point which would not take into account the active role of recreation that the reader undertakes, the subject of the sublime remains passive and submitted to an external motion.

The second major common point is, for both, their relation to Nature. For Kant, what is revealed in the sublime is not the object but a disposition of the mind, since it does not exist intrinsically in the natural object but only as an emotion affecting the subject and recognised as such (and this is what makes it relevant to the indeterminate concept of Reason for him). In spite of this, the very fact that this disposition of the mind is characterised by a suspense of its faculty proves the temporary disappearance of its own subjectivity and sends it into direct contact with brute natural matter (this is what gives rise to a feeling of fear and pain comparable to the one attributed to genius by Hugo). Since for Kant ‘[le] sublime dans l’art est, en effet toujours soumis aux conditions d’un accord avec la nature’ and since Philonenko also notes that the absence of formal finality pulls the sublime towards nature, the link between the sublime and a genius belonging to the realm of Nature cannot be denied. One may therefore consider that both genius and the sublime find their origins in or are triggered by Nature. In that respect as well, genius would be the exact equivalent, from the so-called

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16 ‘Le sublime ne doit pas être cherché dans les choses de la nature mais seulement en nos Idées’, ibid., p. 126.
17 Ibid., p. 119.
18 Ibid., note 2, p. 130.
'active' point of view of the poet, of the sublime seen from the supposedly 'passive' point of view of the reader.

Both the writer-actor and the spectator-reader, through the intervention of genius or in the emergence of the sublime, are made aware of their limits - an experience which is frightening and painful - and overtaken by the infinite energy of brute nature coming as much from within the subject as from the objects outside him. We can therefore deduce that both genius and the sublime request nature's exercise to appear and belong to a first layer of application where neither man's subjectivity nor his objectivity apply. A second layer, closely linked to the first one, is where subjectivity comes into action and this is the level of art, of the feeling of the beautiful and of the exercise of taste. The third layer remains the same as in Kant's table, representing the third level of objective reason and freedom. However, it has to be stressed that these three layers must not be perceived as static, but are highly dynamic and evolutive and that they show trajectories much more than fixed partitions between separate categories. Each stage, each meaning of the word 'genius' is involved in the continuous process of becoming another meaning, and the trajectory thus revealed encompasses all nuances from vision to figure and from symbol to concept, from the reality of the galloping horse to its iconic function in a continuous line of flight.19

19 My understanding of the terms 'layers', 'trajectory' and 'becoming' are very close to what Deleuze and Guattari call plateau, plan de consistence, ligne de fuite and devenir: 'Un plateau est toujours au milieu, ni début ni fin. Un Rhizome est fait de plateaux. Gregory Bateson se sert du mot “plateau” pour désigner quelque chose de très spécial: une région continue d'intensités, vibrant sur elle-même, et qui se développe en évitant toute orientation sur un point culminant ou vers une fin extérieure', Mille plateaux, p. 32. 'Un plateau est un morceau d'immanence', ibid., p. 196. 'Une ligne de devenir a seulement un milieu. Le milieu n'est pas une moyenne, c'est un accéléré, c'est la vitesse absolue du mouvement [...]. Le devenir est le mouvement par lequel la ligne se libère du point, et rend les points indiscernables', ibid., p. 360.
4) The three Hugolian meanings of genius completing each other

I shall now strive to apply this grid of reading on to the Hugolian text, considering that the three different meanings for the word ‘genius’ which Hugo developed in different texts at different times correspond to the three Kantian applications of Nature, Art and Freedom and that the creative act corresponding to the faculty of judgement is exerted by genius as talent.

Most remarkably, Kant himself, in order to illustrate his views concerning genius, also resorts to the comparison with the horse: ‘Ils croient que l’on parade mieux sur un cheval bondissant furieusement que sur un cheval de manège. Le génie ne peut donner qu’une riche matière aux produits des beaux-arts’. Philonenko adds: ‘Dans un produit de l’art on rencontre la matière (par exemple un cheval) et la forme qui l’accompagne (le dessein) et qui est, pour ainsi dire, le véhicule’ (my italics). If one understands the ‘form’ as the textual representation in the poem, the word ‘véhicule’ is then highly appropriate and corresponds to my interpretation of the rhetorical function of the figure of the horse. In Kant’s view, deeply rooted in Classicism, this comparison is derogatory, since he stresses the importance of

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20 Here is the complete quotation: ‘Il faut en effet que quelque chose soit conçu en tant que fin, puisqu’autrement le produit ne saurait être attribué à l’art; ce serait un simple produit du hasard. Or des règles déterminées, dont on ne peut se libérer, sont indispensables pour mettre une fin en œuvre. Mais comme l’originalité du talent constitue une part essentielle (mais ce n’est pas la seule) du caractère du génie, des esprits superficiels s’imaginent […] croient que l’on parade mieux sur un cheval bondissant furieusement que sur un cheval de manège,’ Kant, Critique jugement, p. 208.

21 Ibid., in note 1, p. 212.
established sets of rules in order to control the originality of genius and produce artistic beauty.

Genius, in the first two meanings of 'daïmon' and 'talent', is fundamentally constituted of a mix of matter and energy. Once again, they are embodied by the figure of the horse. The conjunction of natural matter and genuine energetic impulse is expressed by Kant through the term 'soul'. Although a difference exists between Kant's and Hugo's understandings of this word, the two conceptions are very close and someone like Charles Villiers maintains that Hugo has been strongly influenced by the ideas of the German philosopher.

In Kant as well, the horse-figure may thus be read as the very image of the impulse of the 'poetic soul' borne by the phusis, which needs to be controlled by the art as techne in order to produce beauty. What Kant adds is that this tension is directed towards principles which find their motivation 'higher up' in human reason. As Philonenko puts it; ‘L’âme au sens esthétique est ce qui inspire l’esprit d’une manière finale, en le dirigeant de manière ultime...’

22 'L’âme, en un sens esthétique, désigne le principe vivifiant en l’esprit. Ce par quoi ce principe anima l’esprit, la matière qu’il applique à cet effet, est ce qui donne d’une manière finale un élan aux facultés de l’esprit, c’est-à-dire les incite à un jeu, qui se maintient de lui-même et qui augmente les forces qui y conviennent. Or je soutiens que ce principe n’est pas autre chose que la faculté de la présentation des Idées esthétiques; par l’expression Idée esthétique, j’entends cette représentation de l’imagination, qui donne beaucoup à penser, sans qu’aucune pensée déterminée, c’est-à-dire concept, puisse lui être adéquate,’ ibid., p. 213 (my italics).

23 ‘A partir de là, c’est vers Kant que se tourne le métaphysicien dans sa recherche de la réalité objective, et il lui emprunte sa distinction célèbre entre noumène et phénomène’, Villiers, Métaphysique Hugo, p. 52. ‘Hugo identifie l’âme de l’homme au noumène kantien car, invisible et inaccessible aux sens, elle répond ainsi aux conditions requises, et il identifie par la même occasion la matière palpable dont nous sommes tous faits au phénomène’, p. 53. ‘Le troisième corollaire est que l’esprit aussi est matière puisque noumène kantien, mais matière nouménale’, p. 55. ‘Nous prenons au sérieux la matérialisation systématique que fait Hugo de toutes les abstractions et nous laissons remarquer à la distinction kantienne entre noumène et phénomène, mais nous ne sommes pas le premier à attirer l’attention sur elle’, p. 85.
vers la liberté'. The logical outcome of the first two stages is the third one, where Freedom, in a typical dialectic fashion, takes over as an exercise of moral values deduced by reason.

This third stage would correspond to the third layer of meaning of the word 'genius' as it has been outlined in the extracts of Hugo's 'Le génie appartenant au peuple'. Once we understand this process, the contradictions in Hugo's evolution disappear. The third stage, genius as the poet himself, devoted to the good cause of the people and social equity, logically results not from a quest for perfection, but from, or rather through, the sheer aimless dynamism of the first two stages, the 'poussée insensée' as revealed by Baudoin.

5) Each version of Mazeppa's story as an experience of extremes

Now, retrospectively and before concluding, other passages from Hugo's *William Shakespeare* and 'Les traducteurs' may be read as reverberations of Kant's theories.

The origin of genius as innate is found in the same (non-) place in Kant and Hugo: the unlimited or the infinite, both perceived by each writer in different ways. For Kant, the unlimited appears as an attribution of Nature, while the Idea of God as 'infinite' is reached through elevated intellectual power and action of the mind. Hugo fuses the idea of the unlimited and the concept of infinity by making the latter dwell in the 'abyss', which is the place where God is most deeply perceived. In this respect, Hugo's god is viewed more as an origin which can be reached through a voluntary 'effort of return' ('la plongée dans l'abîme').

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24 Kant, *Critique jugement*, note 1, p. 213.
While Kant’s thinking aims at a disengagement from matter, Hugo strives to engage with it in order to reach its source: God.  

Hugo’s direction of thinking may be different from Kant’s, but its main consequences are very similar: the approaches to infinity pull the poet towards a consciousness of the sublime: ‘Dans le poète et dans l’artiste, il y a de l’infini. C’est cet ingrédient, l’infini, qui donne à cette sorte de génie la grandeur irréductible’.  

This sublime grandeur brings to the poet an awareness of his limit, and this is what is frightening. It is this approach to the extremes which produces his suffering. That is what often makes genius awesome and feared by the common people. Hugo says that the man of genius has to bear a crown of thorns, indicating its messianic function by this comparison with the Christian symbol of suffering. This may provide another explanation of Barineau’s remarks: pain and lack of control also dwells in the context of genius linked to the sublime, and especially within its third meaning, the socialised genius who endures pain as the price to pay for ensuring the progress of civilisation and humanity. It would be the most characteristic

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25 ‘Il y a ici bas un pontife, c’est le génie.

Sacerdos magnus.
L’Art est la branche seconde de la Nature.
L’Art est aussi naturel que la Nature.
[...]
Le poète est lui-même trépied. Il est le trépied de Dieu. Dieu n’a pas fait ce merveilleux alambic de l’idée, le cerveau de l’homme, pour ne point s’en servir. Le génie a tout ce qu’il lui faut dans son cerveau. Toute sa pensée passe par là. La pensée monte et se dégage du cerveau, comme le fruit de la racine. La pensée est la résultante de l’homme. La racine plonge dans la terre; le cerveau plonge en Dieu.
C’est-à-dire dans l’infini’, Hugo, Critique, pp. 261-263.


26 Ibid., p. 295.

27 Ibid., p. 283.
symptom of this messianic function. The expulsion of an excessive load can also explain the violence and the suffering felt by the subject submitted to the genial surge of inspiration.28

The fact that genius itself cannot be perfected is its other most characteristic feature. For being confronted with/infinite height (or depth) and being given once and for all as innate, genius is an absolute. Hugo considers this as the basis of the opposition between art and science.29

Although both Kant and Hugo reassert the limits of man endowed with genius, we can clearly see here that Hugo pulls art towards genius, and thus entrusts it with a positive value. Kant, on the contrary, distrusts genius as is noticeable in the comparison with the furiously galloping horse which bears a strongly negative value. But if Hugo stressed the predominance of genius over techne in the work of art, he was bound to find himself confronted by the same problem that Kant had regarding artistic tradition. Kant developed a distinction between two different sets of rules, one material, given and untransmittible, the other formal, wrought and transmittible, which was for him the real basis of the work of art as producer of beauty. Hugo

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28 This active sublimity can also be translated as an excess: ‘Ces génies sont outrés. Cela tient à la quantité d’infini qu’ils ont en eux’, Hugo, Critique, p. 288. This excess can fruitfully be compared to Schopenhauer’s description of genius which also rests on the idea of excess: ‘Pour que le génie se manifeste dans un individu, cet individu doit avoir reçu en partage une somme de puissance cognitive qui excède de beaucoup celle qui est nécessaire pour le service d’une volonté individuelle; c’est cet excédent qui, devenu libre, sert à constituer un objet affranchi de volonté, un clair miroir de l’être du monde’, Schopenhauer, Le Monde comme volonté et comme représentation, trans. by André Burdeau (Paris: P.U.F., 1966), ‘Modalités et condition du génie’, p. 240.

29 ‘La science est perfectible; l’art non [...]. La beauté de l’art, c’est de n’être pas susceptible de perfectionnement [...]. Sublimité, c’est égalité [...]. La science est une échelle [...]. La poésie est un coup d’aile [...]. La poésie est immanente. Il n’y a ni hausse ni baisse dans l’art. Le génie humain est toujours à son plein’, Hugo, Critique, pp. 294-296.
solves the same problem by resorting to his favorite device: antithesis.\(^{30}\)

In this way, Hugo achieves the powerful vision of a chain of states of genius (or being-genius) in which he can inscribe himself as one of its last avatars, falling short of electing himself as Aeschylus the Third (following the second Aeschylus, Shakespeare). Literary history is turned into a metaphysical scene where the three stages of genius - daïmon, talent and poet - are all represented at the same time, in the same *punctum temporis*. The repetition of successive genial surges offers us the paradoxical conception of a 'non-evolutive' evolution that is crucial to this thesis. What Hugo says about this chain of genius applies also, at the textual level, to the Mazeppa mythical chain. If one considers the appearance of the figure of the horse as an embodiment of the surge of poetic inspiration, innate matter animated by expressive energy, each text is an equal repetition of the previous one in the continuum of the tale. Each text is an appearance of genius in the story of genius forever repeating itself. The only differences each time are minor diffractions, drifts occurring outside any idea of progress.

In this drifting, the horse becomes a figure of undirected, senseless transmission, the vehicle for a (non-Darwinian) literary heredity. It becomes not only a figure of the surging genius, but also the bridge which links each one of these surges, each one of these revolutions. Each of its appearances is vertical whilst its gallop remains horizontal. The horse is the bridge over the abyss, over infinity, as much as the expression of this abyss and of this infinity. As

\(^{30}\) 'Tout recommence avec le nouveau poète, et en même temps rien n’est interrompu. Chaque nouveau génie est abîme. Pourtant il y a tradition. Tradition de gouffre à gouffre, c’est là, dans l’art comme dans le firmament, le mystère; et les génies communiquent par leurs effluves comme les astres. Qu’ont-ils de commun? Rien. Tout. [...] il n’y a point pour le songeur solution de continuité. [...] Nier que les génies survenants puissent être les pairs des génies antérieurs, ce serait nier la puissance continuante de Dieu. [...] Stimulation, c’est presque création; oui, ces génies qu’on ne dépasse point, on peut les égaler. Comment? En étant autre’, ibid., pp. 302-303.
Hugo puts it, this ‘bridge’ is immanent to poetic creation and works, as ‘une effluve’, an exhalation or emanation of the god of poetry which is brute matter and ex-pressed energy.

By the same token, such a vision of non-evolutive literary history questions the value of source studies, for, if one follows Hugo in this respect, each surge of genius is unique and cannot be compared. Each textual complex - the centaur complex or the Pegasus complex - represents the whole trajectory in itself, and encompasses the whole signification of the literary myth. If there is no continuity between each creative surge, it is then possible to understand why Hugo strove to separate himself from his possible sources of influence - Voltaire, Byron, Pichot - while ambiguously acknowledging them at the same time. Such a vision subverts any attempt to search for answers to the Mazeppa question in the literary sources. These sources would not help us to appreciate the grandeur and wealth of experience in the Mazeppa myth. In this respect, Babinski was right when saying that Hugo’s achievement is ‘the culmination of the legend of the wild ride’. What he did not predict is that many other culminations were bound to follow, and that such an assumption would cast serious retrospective doubts on his opinion that ‘After Hugo’s poem, the French had little to say about Mazeppa’.  

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31 Babinski, *Mazeppa Legend*, p. 73.
MAZEPPA'S HORSE: CONCLUSION

A/ THE DRIFT AS LINE OF FLIGHT

When one considers the series of texts or folds as a dynamic development, the conception of a chain as the linking of a series of fixed meanings no longer applies in so far as the possible influences would remain mono-directional, developing the evolution in a chronological order of succession. The advantage of considering the series as a line of flight as Deleuze and Guattari conceive it is that it also accounts for the reversibility of possible influences. Thus Byron's reading of the Voltairian text modifies the nature of that first text, adding further dimensions which existed potentially without being necessarily activated. This is what happened when Byron decided to extract the three passages he chose to put as epigraph of his own poem. This choice was crucial as the initial trigger of the line of flight, for it distorted both the Voltairian text and the appearance of his own poem given by the title: Mazeppa. Here, the reader was witnessing the birth of the horse as the main object of the Text of Mazeppa. Thus the first grafting was at once a distortion and a reverberation, a reverberation understood as a selective echo which modifies the sign it takes up all along its repetitions. The Voltairian text, book four of the Histoire de Charles XII, became a tragedy which required the presence of the horse as the main tool to implement fate. The horse was the agent of fate and this is the idea which Byron took up, distorted and amplified. In this textual case, it worked in exactly the opposite way as the one defined by Freud as a condensation in the dream-work. While the condensation of the dream-work operates a shrinking of the huge
latent content drawn from the reality of the subject into the brief explicit content of the
dream, the Byronic mad race became an explicit amplification of a reduced latent content pre­
existing in the Voltairian text. However, the Histoire de Charles XII did work as the
unconscious latent reality which came to feed Mazeppa with its tragic material. The horse bore
the same ambivalent and painful complementarity to man in the Histoire de Charles XII and in
Mazeppa.

By the same but reversed token, the explicit lesson drawn by Byron from the Voltairian
tragedy (i.e. that one cannot guess one's own destiny) was used as a cover for the repressed
latent content of Byron's Oriental tale. His aim was in reality much more far reaching than
simply the exemplification of a moral lesson; a meditation on the necessity and nature of
human bonds was stealthily included in the message, together with an attempt to perceive the
animalistic and energetic reality at work within the human subject.

The epigraph as grafting thus worked as the nexus between two texts whose explicit
and implicit contents oppose each other in inverted symmetry: while in Voltaire the painful
man-animal relationship and its mechanistic purpose in war was explicit and the use of the
horse as tool for the unfolding of human fate implicit, in Byron, the unfolding of human fate
became the explicit content while the deepened analysis of the man-animal relationship and its
purpose became implicit. In this process of inversion, the figure of the horse is textually
projected in man and becomes part of his animalistic nature, in connection with his creativity.
It is the result and the exposition of this projection that I named the 'centaur complex'.

It is this process that appealed to Hugo in his reading of Byron's version, but the
textual link between the two is more contorted because of the partial and wilfully silenced
presence of Pichot's translation, and also because of the number of strata which started
accumulating one upon another.

Byron's perception of Voltaire was relatively straightforward and marked by respect.

At the authorial level, Hugo's relationship to his predecessors became more complex.

Hugo rejected the filiation from Voltaire to Byron in order to enhance his own
connection with the English poet. At the same time, he had the firm intention of surpassing
him. His theoretical reflection on the nature and strategies of writing was more developed and
more apparent than his predecessors; thus the variation of his interests inflicted a second
distortion on the Text of Mazeppa. With the help of the French version of Byron's *Mazeppa*
and the repetition of the metaphoric 'Nous volons' included in it by Pichot, Hugo inscribes in
the Text of Mazeppa the traditional figure of Pegasus in order to serve his own metapoetic
purpose.

This figure of Pegasus is contaminated by an apparently sado-masochistic atmosphere
in which the man-animal relationship bathes originating mainly from the acute consciousness
of the inner duality at work within the subject. Indeed, the pain and the suffering involved are
nothing more than the result of the conflict between two tendencies both aiming at a feeling of
completeness but in different ways and pulling the subject apart: on one hand the will to be
unique, singular and independent from any bonds, while on the other hand the recognised
necessity to belong to someone else complementing the subject with its alterity, basically the
eternal conflict between the Same and the Other. When this conflict takes place exclusively
inside the subject, it is his own deep animalistic nature which stands for the Other within.

We are thus confronted at the beginning of the Hugolian text by a double grafting. On
one hand, Hugo claims allegiance to Byron in order to subvert his literary purpose at will
(from 'Away' to 'En avant' and from biographical fate to poetic mission), on the other hand
Hugo hides his indebtedness to Pichot whom he does not consider as a creator as such (perhaps quite rightly so even if the status of the translator as creator can sometimes be argued) in order to gain a better free-hand on the French version of Byron's *Mazeppa*.

The absence of a third grafting, a textual reference to Mazeppa's initial 'sin' can be explained by the general knowledge of the context of the tale at that time, but it also signifies a repression exerted by Hugo on the sexual dimension of the story in order to bend it more towards his literary interpretation. He wanted to deal with the creative drive of genius and inspiration which he distinguished from what would be called a century later the libido. However, this silencing working as a repression can also be required to allow the writer taking up the story in his turn to produce something new. The explicit content of the previous text has to become latent in the mind of the successor in order to give way to a new explicit content, itself loaded with a new latent content waiting to be exploited by a third party.

Once Hugo has established these initial graftings on his predecessors' texts, the rest of the first part expands in a parallel relation to Byron's poem with an emphasis on the grotesque and an accentuation of the man-animal fusion (the 'Pegasus complex'). This first part works as a grounding for the second part which is antithetically sublime and will stage the almost complete dispossession of man's will under the influence of his genius. This time, Hugo establishes the link between the first part and the second part on the basis of a comparison ('Ainsi...') which is also an echo of the initial grafting between the first part and Byron's poem. However, to some extent, the conceptual gap between Hugo's second part and his first part is wider than between his first part and Byron's version of the story.

The repetition of the 'Ainsi' gives the impression that both the Hugolian parts stem directly from the Byronic version, but at different points and in different directions. Hugo's first part and Byron's version are both narrative while Hugo's second part is a conceptualised
allegory commenting upon the narration. So Hugo could be seen commenting on Byron as much as on himself. This causes a major rift in the continuity of the series and supports a ‘vertical’ vision of the line of flight with different branchings, strata or plateaux as Deleuze and Guattari would say, more than a ‘horizontal’, linear and unidimensional one. The textual linearity is thus drastically broken by the soaring of the horse into the realm of symbols, and once again one cannot perceive the prior text in the same way as before reaching this stage, nor can one see them as regularly succeeding one another any longer. The process is not successive but cumulative. Thanks to Hugo, the reading of genius as an inner animal inhabiting man’s consciousness imposes itself even on the Voltairean text as much as on the Byronic text.

But one further inversion occurs:

Whereas in Voltaire, the horse was the site of an inherent weakness alongside its strength, a weakness which helped man’s own weakness to be transmuted into strength, in Hugo, it is the genuine strength of the horse as genius which weakens the man. It is only in the last line of the second part where Hugo meets Voltaire, that, as with a magic wand, man’s profound weakness is suddenly transformed into ultimate poetic strength. What happens to genius then? It disappears. Having accomplished its mission, it returns to where it came from, within man himself, lying deep in his animalistic nature.

A point is then reached where it is no longer possible to consider as a comparative series the textual chain staging the myth of Mazeppa. This chain does not work as a continuous system either when the writer’s act of writing it or when the reader’s act of reading it are taken into account as a re-enactment of the myth. Each creative act works as a whole encompassing all the others, before and after it. In other terms, as Kant and Hugo had understood it as far as genius was concerned, the true creative act stands outside any kind of affiliation between them.
If the textual chain offers a case of literary evolution, it will not be in terms of affiliation but in terms of alliance. Hugo's 'Mazeppa' allies itself in two different ways to Byron's *Mazeppa* as well as in another way to Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII*, and Byron's *Mazeppa* allies itself to Voltaire's version as much as to Hugo's through Pichot's translation. According to this perspective, it becomes wrong to continue to consider those texts in a way which would establish an exclusive order of precedence, as none of them has any predecessor or successor; one does not come before or after the other. They all occur in the same present which is not a present of narration but a *present of creation*. This is when each act of creation, by Voltaire, by Byron and by Hugo works simultaneously in the same instance of surging, in the same line of flight, within the same plane of consistency.

This is when the story strikingly becomes a myth, because the writer while writing his own version or the reader while reading it has embarked upon an act of (re-)creation which enables him to live it as his unique becoming-horse. If one considers that the horse, as defined in this thesis, and redefined in the following part of this conclusion is already present in the writer and the reader, this act of becoming-horse equates to a *return* to the animal within. In no way can this be seen as a narcissistic regression any longer as it is an outward act (*acte d'extériorisation*) for the writer or the reader, this time projecting his own materiality, his own worldliness in the world outside. A narcissistic regression would imply an isolation and a separation of the subject from the objectal world while at this stage here it is all about an instance of fusion of the subject with a global objectality to which he also belongs. This act of creation is also an act of reunion or an alliance between the text-to-come and the horse-within the writer or the reader. In that respect, the man is forever tied to his horse, for his own benefit, and even if it does not appear as such, the horse is still there, waiting to be called, as the silent sign of man's desire to mount it or to be mounted by it.
Once the relationship or lack of relationship between the texts has been established, what kind of permanent position does the horse hold in this web? How do its functions as binding force and as surging force operate within each text, between each text and how do they articulate in relation to each other?

In Voltaire, Mazeppa's story offers one instance among others in which the horse as a textual agent displaces man from suffering to salvation, thus ensuring the unfolding of the historic tragedy. At first sight, one could say that the horse appears there endowed with a purely mechanistic role, thus following Descartes' opinion, but owing to the preliminary inventory of the conceptions surrounding this animal deep in the human psyche, it can be said that this is far from the reality of Voltaire's perception and use of this animal. Effectively, its textual use matches the ambivalence - strength and weakness, boldness and shyness, wildness and submissiveness - attached to most human perceptions of this animal. It bears a strong, initially negative charge which is an echo of its archaic value as messenger of death, herald of wound or erasure, in all cases bearing traces of an inherent 'hollowness'. At this early stage of the chain, it is totally separate from man and still very close to what the traditional conceptions attributed to its 'reality'. The initial negative charge is converted into a positive one when transmitted to man, henceforth presenting the first case of an inversion which will become the rule further down the chain. The man thus put in relation to the horse is perpetuated in his fictitious life as hero, or in his narrative expression as narrator, his discursive creation as
writer, and in his reading as reader. So, already in Voltaire, the horse appears as the
essential condition for speech to occur and for discourse to continue.

It is on the intuition of this first inversion and of the importance of the role of the horse
for man's expressivity that Byron bases his Oriental tale. The moral about destiny that he drew
from the tale was only a subsidiary key-issue destined to hide much more important
biographical and metapoetic matters which he was tackling and trying to resolve with the help
of his creative production. There, the dual nature of the horse, both external and internal to
man was first emphasised. The initiatic journey that the couple underwent in the form of what
I named the 'centaur' exemplified the transitional status of man, submitted to any reverse of
fortune, for better or for worse. But also, Byron's narcissism, thus formulated, helped him to
accept his own deeply animalistic nature and also the necessity for any being to belong to
another being. It is a denial, both for the horse and for the man, of their freedom and
independence as narcissistic individuals, but, as far as the man was concerned, the experience
helped him to acquire a superior knowledge which made him accept the bondage, once he was
aware of its necessity (hence the loving relationship between the old hetman and Bucephalus).
This lesson implied also the acknowledgement of the impossibility of any closure since any
new stage cannot be stable but remains only as a transition opening onto another stage. In
*Mazeppa*, the regression could not last and was the necessary preliminary stage for a
transformation. As far as the horse was concerned, we saw how, if its individuality was denied,
it was effectively being absorbed into the general category of its species. This absorption
occurred in two ways, first its corporeality was taken away through his 'voice' by the whole
herd, then its soul was taken away by its negative image represented by the black stallion.
The dual structure of the Byronic text, both linear and circular, began to show that, while at an horizontal level there is a continuous linkage from one horse to another, from one version of the story to another, from one author to another, at a vertical level, each horse, each version, each author inhabited by his creation epitomised all the possibilities of the creative surge of genius. Now, by ‘genius’, I mean the role or stance that man temporarily adopts in order to be in agreement with his own natural creative energy put in action.

Hugo in his turn achieved a third level of clarification when he recognised the full independent dimension of the symbolic horse, no longer animal-machine to be exploited, wounded, killed or erased, no longer specular image of our inner animality having to tackle external fate, but pure energy taking the creator over its limit into sublimity, ultimately transforming him into what he has always been, sending him back into his own productive reality. This process to be operated has to take the form of a new couple, explicitly expressed by Hugo later on in his work by the figure of Pegasus, which, more than a mythical figure, is the representation of a relationship, or a complex in my own terms.

All this does not mean that the two previous writers, Voltaire and Byron, had not reached the same goal, since the line of flight described here is in no way an evolutionary process towards an illusory progress in humanistic expressivity. They simply did not formulate it in those terms. However, the potential was there even if it had not been staged in the same explicit way at the textual level.

It is certainly true that at one level, figurativeness is on the increase while the line of flight follows its course from one text to another. It is also true that the authorial consciousness is slowly but steadily dispossessed of its will, moving from an assertive and self-controlled objective rationality (Voltaire) to a subjectivity putting itself at stake in a painful
questioning (Byron), and then to its final disappearance into the phantasies of a creative unconscious (as the Romantics could perceive it), just before... the self-glorification of this authorial consciousness (Hugo). There the French poet temporarily closes the system for a while. This could be considered as an evolution, but this evolution is aimless and should be understood with the meaning of a temporary, fugitive configuration in the air, like a dance: a circumvolution more than an evolution.

At this level, when the texts follow each other, operating one conceptual jump after another, the horse as binding force does not only work as a token of recognition, as a sign which repeats itself in order to reassure by its presence the writer or the reader that they are still holding the same thread. The horse stands also in the hiatus between each text, as a potential impulse waiting to be re-activated, waiting to be ‘called’. The horse stands there, in between spaces, as the sign of a silent inner absence which needs to be filled (a wound which needs to be healed). The horse is also a figure of the interstitial desire of the becoming-author of the man, writer or reader. It is even more than a figure; it is the reality of this hollow and active desiring for plenitude and completeness. So, at the deepest intertextual level, the nature of the horse as binding force is also ambivalent, full and empty as it was wild and tame, strong and weak, and the horse draws its force precisely from this articulated ambivalence. This is how one can see it there at the same time as a bridge and as the absence of a bridge.

At another level, when the strata are layered one upon another, each stratum hiding the one it is covering underneath, the horse activates itself as the ‘surging’ force, which has been described as fundamentally physical, an energy of production which can be described as an instinctual drive, a sublimised libido or simply a will-to-live as a speaking being. The horse becomes then the condition for the voice to come into existence. It is this voice, the chant, the
song of existence, and, to take up Merleau-Ponty’s expression, the ‘logos of the natural world’ which is within ourselves. This is no longer a process of representation enclosed in a causalist logic, it is our own body which forms us as minds of language. The animal, here a horse, somewhere else a bee, a heron or a seal, is the corporeal strength which forms us, which shapes us and speaks us. The merit of such texts as those studied here is that they help us to reveal the nature which speaks in ourselves and help us to return through writing and reading to this nature, our nature, which speaks through ourselves, to ourselves, of ourselves.

To conclude, with Merleau-Ponty again, ‘Il y a un logos du monde sensible et un esprit sauvage qui animent le langage’. The language fuses from within the human body, not as a positive causality of the mind, but in between the words, as a wild spirit, before sedimenting in positive, cultural and artistic products. This is what the horse is and what it helps the texts to do. There is no doubt that all three writers concerned, Voltaire, Byron, Hugo, each in their own way, when writing their own version of the Text of Mazeppa, let this wild spirit gallop from the most inner part of their animalistic nature, through their creative/created persona, towards their future readers. They were transmitting the témoin, the sample core from one bore hole to another, from one black hole to another, from one wound to another which, in turn, would be filled and healed. ‘Mazeppa’, is it not the name of the horse?

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2 Ibid., p. 290.
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