Abstract

Lord Byron's *Mazeppa* (via Henry Milner's 1831 adaptation) and 'Monk' Lewis's *Timour the Tartar* (1811) had a decisive, although at times elusive influence on Victorian playwrights such as Gilbert Abbott à Beckett, John Oxenford, Francis Burnand and H. J. Byron, second cousin to the poet. The presence and representation of the Tartars on the nineteenth-century British stage will be explored through an examination of this influence. It will be argued that Lord Byron and 'Monk' Lewis worked not only as major turning points in the construction of the Tartars in nineteenth-century Britain, but also as links between the 'high-brow' world of Romantic poetry and the 'low-brow' landscape of Victorian popular entertainment – both enhancing existing racial stereotypes around the Tartars and the East more generally.

Keywords: Mazeppa, Tartars, Byron, exotic, stereotype.

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In his *The Mazeppa Legend in European Romanticism* (1974), Hubert F. Babinski considers two main bodies of works related to the life of the Cossack Hetman Ivan Stepanovych Mazepa (1639-1709): what he terms the 'Eastern legend', which (mainly for lack of translations) had little or no influence on the West; and the 'Western legend', the impact of which has been, on the contrary, highly influential. Lord Byron's *Mazeppa* has had a seminal role in shaping the 'Western' legend, although the episode in Voltaire's *History of Charles XII* (1731) on which the poem was based[1] has resulted, in the end, in diverting the attention from the actual historical frame of Mazeppa's life. Whilst, then, 'Westerners' were already 'so unclear about that part of the world and its inhabitants that some thought Mazeppa was a Tartar',[2] Byron's *Mazeppa* has further contributed to the establishing of a myth that is as powerful as it is, however, historically inaccurate. While in 'Portraying Mazeppa's endurance in exile, … Byron sets up a number of interactive oppositions',[3] such oppositions ('man and horse, home and wilderness, life and death')[4] are not exclusively Byron's inventions, but stereotypes of the Tartars that the poet had absorbed through his reading of Richard Knolle's *The Generall Historie of the Turks* (1603) – allegedly one of his favourite books[5] – and were in general circulation through the recent staging of 'Monk' Lewis's *Timour the Tartar* (1811).[6] Both the poem (via Henry Milner's adaptation) and the play have had, in their turn, a decisive, although at times elusive influence on Victorian playwrights – Lewis and Lord Byron working, as I will argue in this essay, not only as major turning points in the construction of the Tartars in nineteenth-century Britain, but also as links between the 'high-brow' world of Romantic poetry and the 'low-brow' landscape of Victorian popular entertainment.

There are two main traditions in staging the Tartars in Britain. One is centred on the figure of Tamerlane, from Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* to Chamberlaine's burlesque *Timour the Tartar; or, The Swell Belle of the Period* (1869) via Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane* (1703), as well as such titles as Gilbert Abbott à Beckett's *Timour the Cream of all the Tartars* (1845) and John Oxenford and Shirley Brooks's *Timour the Tartar! Or, the Iron Master of Samarkand-by-Oxus* (1860). The other is the Mazeppa legend, with Byron's *Mazeppa* (1819) and, tangentially, Robert Etty's *The Cossack: A Poem* (1815) and Canto VI of Shelley's *Revolt of Islam* (1817) as its foundational texts. Soon after the publication of Byron's poem, however, the Tamerlane tradition was 'surpassed' by that of Mazeppa, with a far higher number of plays dedicated to the Hetman than to the Marlovian hero being produced on the nineteenth-century stage. Such plays include *Mazeppa; or, The Wild Horse of the Ukraine!* (1823); the never performed *Mazeppa* (1826) by John Howard Payne; Henry Milner's *Mazeppa; or the Wild Horse of Tartary: A Romantic Drama in Three Acts* (1831); H. J. Byron's burlesque extravaganza *Mazeppa!* (1858); the burlesque *Mazeppa* (1866); a farce by Francis C. Burnand, *Mazeppa; or, 'Bound' to Win!* (1885); and, eventually, F. Cooke and W. R. Waldron's drama *The New Mazeppa* (1890), only to mention

the most relevant.[7] While this does not imply a hierarchical relationship between genres (dramatisations of *Mazeppa* being, as we shall see, very much independent from the poem), it is important to stress the relevance of Byron's poem in creating a character that, superimposed on the existing myth of the Tartars, ended up rejuvenating what was to prove one of the liveliest and longest-lasting tropes in nineteenth-century British theatre.

But who are the Tartars? The ambiguous implications of the term go back to long before the Romantic era, the name 'Tartar' broadly referring to the nomadic peoples of northern and central Asia. In the early modern period, as Chi-Ming Yang has shown in his recent *Performing China: Virtue, Commerce, and Orientalism in Eighteenth-Century England* (2011), the term 'Tartar' was 'often conflated with Saracens, Moors, or Turks, all neighbouring threats to Western Christendom',[8] a notion that was to stay with nineteenth-century constructions of the Tartars. Historical treatises such as Spencer Perceval Butler's *The Causes of the Turkish Invasion of Europe* (1853) continued to merge the Tartars with the Turks, both included by Butler under the equally vague term 'Mongol'. In line with the racial theories of his time, Butler also believed that 'climate, scarcely less than soil, helps to form the characters of nations,'[9] and that the Mongols, because of the harsh climate of their land, as well as their 'roving habits', were to be characterised by 'a capacity for enduring the extremities of cold and hunger ….; an unrivalled dexterity in riding; and the faculty … of combining for purposes of the chace [sic] or war in bodies of many thousand men'.[10] These features were also ascribed to the Tartars on stage, both traditions, that of Mazeppa and that of Tamerlane, portraying them as skilled horsemen, people with a natural disposition for war, as well as with a capability for enduring extreme conditions.

The trope of the Tartars offers a fascinating journey into nineteenth-century theatre, as its articulation is representative not only of British theatrical history from the Georgian to Victorian times, but also of the way non-European peoples were portrayed on stage throughout the century. Like the Zulus, the Japanese or the Native Americans, the Tartars were presented so as to satisfy a taste for the picturesque and the exotic, a few recurring features speaking for their culture and customs. The vagueness of 'Tartary' meant that the particular trope of the Tartars stood on the threshold between the Near and Far East, the former prevailing in nineteenth-century theatrical productions, where the Tartars were associated in particular with the Turks.

Such association was not devoid of meaning, since Turks had been, since long before the nineteenth century, 'represented as the demonic antagonists of Christians'[11] – 'Oriental' characters more generally being 'regularly stereotyped as Muslim despots'.[12] The protagonist of Lewis's melodrama was similarly constructed 'not as a Marlovian conquering hero, nor as the moral ruler of Rowe's oft-performed Whig play … but rather as a petty tyrant and Napoleonic usurper – in other words, as an oriental bogeyman'.[13] At Covent Garden (where Lewis's drama was first performed in April 1811)[14] the fascination with the Orient had just been confirmed, earlier that year, by an equestrian adaptation of Colman's *Blue-Beard; or Female Curiosity* (1798), which anticipated both the 'oriental' quality of *Timour the Tartar*, and the play's spectacular use of horses.[15] Such was the success of both performances that another play, George Male's neglected *Baghvan-Ho; or, The Tartar Tartar'd* (also known as *One Foot by Land, or One Foot by Sea, or the Tartars Tartared*), also performed at Astley's in 1811,[16] capitalised on their fame with a plot that in 'a kind of Frankenstein-meets-the-Wolfman combination, included both Timour and Blue Beard as villains',[17] sealing their 'oriental' connection by featuring 'a Turkish procession'.[18] It is therefore hardly surprising that Cassimer/Mazeppa in Milner's play should be wearing, twenty years later, '[w]hite Turkish shirt and trousers' and a '[l]ong plain Turkish robe'.[19]

Theatrical representations of the Tartars in Victorian times also consistently swung between outdoor settings that presented the 'typical' Tartar landscape as bare and challenging, and indoor settings that were characterised by yet more oriental features. Accuracy was needed in both stage directions and actual performances; as in 'illegitimate theatre', in which, as Jane Moody has it, 'Palm trees, Moorish arches, and castles with bulbous, onion-shaped towers, concisely evoked a portmanteau dramatic orientalism',[20] so in post-1843 drama a few and rather vague stage directions

were sufficient to convey a sense of 'exotic' grandeur. A '[r]ude Tartar Landscape' in Scene 2, Act 2 of Milner's play (p. 29), the 'splendid chamber' of Act 2 of *Timour Cream of Tartars*[21] or the 'Tartar Landscape' in Scene 4 of the anonymous burlesque *Mazeppa* (Royal Victoria Theatre, 19 February 1866)[22] are good examples of these minimalistic directions. The 'movements towards realism of setting and towards a certain historical accuracy'[23] that had come to characterise nineteenth-century theatre was therefore contradicted by theatrical representations of the Tartars, with plays set in non-European landscapes more generally showing little accuracy.

Of all the characteristics ascribed to the Tartars, the association of foot and horse was to prove particularly influential, with Lewis's *Timour the Tartar* – 'a mere pantomime equestrian spectacle'[24] in the words of Henry Crabb Robinson – playing a crucial role in sealing that marriage between Tartars and equestrian drama that would lay the basis for the success of *Mazeppa*.

To be precise, Lewis did not actually wish his drama to be perceived exclusively as equestrian;[25] in the Advertisement to the Lowndes & Hobbs edition, he wrote on the contrary that it was Harris 'who prest me very earnestly to give him a *Spectacle*, in which Horses might be introduced; But having myself great doubts of the success of these New Performers, I constructed the Drama in such a manner, that by substituting a combat on foot for one on horse-back, the Cavalry might be omitted without injury to the Plot'.[26] The opening remarks to the Lacy's acting edition also go in this direction when they state that the assistance of the horses was 'not wholly indispensable'.[27] The same remarks, however, also highlight that 'The principal performers (the horses!) enacted wonders,'[28] their presence undoubtedly playing a significant aesthetic role in the closing scene, where the disposition of characters at the fall of the curtain is as follows:

Horses

Soldiers Soldiers

Agib, Zorilda
Abdallah, Timour, overthrown
Oglou

Horses Horses

As is well known, *Timour the Tartar* was commissioned by the managers at Covent Garden in an attempt to compensate for the huge losses suffered by the theatre after the Old Price Riots of 1809. The employment of the horses – although attracting criticism from those who objected to equestrian drama not only *per se*, but also as a symbol of the 'decline' towards the 'illegitimate' that the employment of Astley's horses meant for the patented theatre – was generally welcomed by 'roars of approbation'.[29] In short, as Saxon writes, the appearance of horses and riders at Covent Garden had two main contrasting effects: firstly that 'the theatre had the most profitable season in its history …. In the second place, by embracing the cause of "illegitimacy," both John Philip Kemble and his partner Henry Harris laid themselves open to the most violent and sarcastic censure which their numerous critics could muster.'[30]

While it may be true, then, that 'Critics have not adequately noted the way Mazeppa's horse becomes [in Byron's poem] an extension and amplification of his own physical being,'[31] such an extension and amplification certainly did not fail to attract the attention of playwrights in a theatrical context that had already embraced the physical and the spectacular. The focus on the body in its many manifestations ('a wet horse, lost wits, dark eyes, and a foreign mistress' as Phillipson has it)[32] is arguably the most notable element that Byron, an enthusiast of the most bodily of genres, the pantomime,[33] left for others to interpret and reinvent in their own *Mazeppa*. In other respects,

dramatisations of the poem bear more resemblance to Henry Milner's version than to Byron's work itself.

Milner's *Mazeppa* may indeed be considered the one that established the theatrical legacy of Byron's poem, whilst at the same time considerably altering its meaning. The juxtaposition between Poles and Tartars would remain in later adaptations of *Mazeppa*, which revolve around more or less the same recurring characters as those provided by Milner.[34] More than in following Byron's poem, Milner was interested in making space for the equestrian performances, which were, according to the introduction to the Cumberland edition, 'without parallel in the annals of horsemanship' (p. 8). In character with much nineteenth-century drama, Milner's *Mazeppa* furthermore included references to forms of entertainment other than the theatre, such as the circus or ethnological displays. Like much of both Georgian and Victorian theatre, his play thus acts as a sort of catalogue of what was fashionable at the time. In Act 3, for example, a group of Tartars is employed for a festival because, in Drolinkso's words, 'These are jovial fellows, innocent as lambs; for a mouthful of broken victuals they'll dance such dances, and show us such singular manœuvres and evolutions – I mean it to be the principal feature of the whole festival' (p. 46). This kind of scene allowed for yet more equestrian tricks, but they also tried to meet the audience's growing taste for the spectacular and the exotic. In the eighteenth century the Tartars, however savage, also 'typically incarnated the martial virtues of Western antiquity'.[35] In contrast, in the nineteenth century much 'scientific' understanding of whatever people were indeed considered Tartars identified them as unequal to their European counterparts. The Tartars thus came to be portrayed as 'barbarians', as the character Olinska (for all her love for Cassimer/Mazeppa) defines them in Scene 1 of Act 1 (p. 15). As Tony Voss has observed, 'The legend of the aristocratic and transgressive romantic artist has been displaced into the bourgeois narrative of comic romance, setting intrepid hero against both bumbling clown and treacherous villain and heightening the contrast between Polish (European) sophistication and pride and Tartar (oriental) mystery, energy and honour.'[36] Whereas an orientalised perception of the East and the Tartars already characterised Byron's poem, the fascination with the Orient is here taken further. The class discourse, although not disappearing – Cassimer is eventually saved by the shepherdess Oneiza, as Mazeppa is, in the poem, by the 'Cossack maid' – is shadowed by a contrast between characters that is mainly racialised.

The relationship of Milner's play to Byron's poem is, as mentioned, far from linear, with critics holding different views especially on the two earliest stage versions of the poem, *Mazeppa; or the Wild Horse of the Ukraine!* (1823), and Milner's drama, which have generally been regarded as independent. This critical debate is worth mentioning here at length, as it provides useful insight into the way a study of sources that does not limit itself merely to the playtext, but also examines ephemera such as playbills, can offer valuable information that otherwise may go unremarked.

For Hislop and Richardson, as *Mazeppa; or the Wild Horse of the Ukraine!* 'has not been preserved in either manuscript or printed form',[37] the connection between Byron's poem and Milner's play must be provided by a French play, *Mazeppa ou le cheval Tartare*,[38] performed at the Cirque Olympique, Paris, on 11 January 1825[39] – although A.H. Saxon claims, compared to its French source, the structure for Milner's play 'is tighter and contains more sensational elements'.[40] In relating American performances of *Mazeppa* to their British counterpart, Raoul Granqvist also indicates the performances of 1823 and 1831 are basically independent from each other,[41] as does, more recently, Frederick Burwick in his *Playing to the Crowd* (2011). Other critics, Maurice Disher among them, are on the contrary more inclined to consider Milner's drama as a revival of the earlier performance at the Coburg, with Saxon in particular going as far as to suggest that the playbill for the 'entirely new hippodramatic romantic spectacle' of 1823 already featured Milner as its author. One look at the playbill[42]is indeed enough to prove Saxon right, and other critics who regard the production as anonymous wrong.[43] The playbill, true enough, does not state any author before or after the main title, reminding audiences instead of the fact that *Mazeppa* is indeed a dramatisation of Byron's poem. But at the foot of the playbill, after the description of scenery and incidents, it is

stated that 'The pieces written by Mr. H. M. Milner' will be produced 'under the immediate Direction of Mr. Le Clercq'.

The playbill therefore situates Milner *before* Chandezon and Cuvelier, and while this does not imply that there was no influence of the French play on Milner's 1831 piece, this must be considered as the result of two concurring sources: the 1823 production of *Mazeppa*, and Chandezon and Cuvelier's drama of 1825, with due changes.[44] In its turn, Milner's play would have given rise, according to Disher, to yet another title, *Mazeppa, and the Wild Horse; or, the Child of the Desert*, of which there is no trace in Allardyce Nicoll's bibliography (nor anywhere else), but which Disher declares 'not a new piece but an adaptation of *Mazeppa; or, the Wild Horse of Tartary* dramatised from Byron's poem by H. M. Milner, the regular playwright of the Coburg'.[45]

The proliferation of titles, as well as the influence of French drama, makes these early dramatisations of Byron's *Mazeppa* an exemplary case of nineteenth-century theatrical practice. The increasing competition between venues, as well as the demand for yet more spectacular productions contributed to dramatists relying heavily on previous performances and/or texts in order to produce new titles at very short notice. The case of *Mazeppa* is furthermore typical in two other respects, that of the long run of successful productions, and the association between certain roles and their performers: a Mr Cartlich played Mazeppa more than 1500 times,[46] while Thomas Frederick Robson (Thomas Robson Brownhill, 1822?-1864) played both Mazeppa and Timour (the former in H. J. Byron's burlesque extravaganza, the latter in Oxenford and Brooks's version) while employed at the Royal Olympic.[47] It was, however, as is well known, another performer, the American Adah Isaacs Menken (Adah Bertha Theodore Menken, 1835-68), who profited most from her association with the role of Mazeppa. Menken's 'sex appeal'[48] would in its turn prove fundamental in making *Mazeppa* a favourite with audiences of the 1860s, who just could not wait for 'when she was lashed to the back of the horse in flesh-coloured tights and sent galloping wildly towards Tartary'.[49] When trying to justify what was not an obvious role, 'The Menken', as she was commonly known, would 'burst into a paean of praise for her present author, the great and noble poet Lord Byron, with whom she had always felt so close an affinity ... pointing out that both she and the aristocrat poet were rebels and lovers of liberty'.[50]

The decidedly eroticised association of (wo)man and horse soon became the most remarked upon topic of dramatisations of Lord Byron's poem; in 1844, after watching an unspecified performance of *Mazeppa* (possibly Milner's), Henry Crabb Robinson observed in his diary that the most memorable effect was produced by 'Mazeppa bound naked to the wild horse'.[51] The ride towards/through Tartary (or any other location that productions may have deemed appropriate to titillate the audience's taste for the exotic) also proved the best excuse for the use and perfecting of panoramas on stage. The one in Milner's play 'show[ed] the scenery which the wild horse bearing Mazeppa passes through as it runs for days from the Dnieper River to Tartary, the horse galloping on a treadmill in the stage as the panorama unrolled the other way'.[52]

The focus on the spectacular that Mazeppa's ride in particular allowed for was ultimately cited, in Victorian times, as evidence of the general decline of good taste on stage. An exception was the burlesque extravaganza *Mazeppa!*[53] of Henry James Byron (second cousin to Lord Byron), which premièred at the Royal Olympic on 27 December 1858[54] and was later revived at the Royal Strand on 26 October 1864. Notwithstanding its steed being nothing more than 'a wooden piebald from Lowther Arcade',[55] it received explicit praise in the *Athanæum* for its 'superiority in point of elegance … compared with some recent coarse attempts'.[56] Francis Burnand's *Mazeppa, or Bound to Win!*, in which '[The mock horse on which Mazeppa is sent on his path across the steppes is scarcely more absurd than the docile quadruped which used to be driven across the back of the stage at Astley's',[57] was on the contrary mentioned as evidence of the fact that 'If burlesque so styled is to regain its hold upon the public, it must be when it is reduced to its *proper* dimensions and is relegated to the place it formerly held in an entertainment.'[58] At stake here is not only the need for better productions, but the very fate of theatre – genres such as the burlesque, the farce and the

pantomime still being regarded, at the end of the century, as vulgar, aimed exclusively at the 'people', and therefore to be relegated back to their pre-1843 status.

As the century progressed, both the Tamerlane and the Mazeppa traditions drifted apart from their original sources, the grandeur of Tamerlane and the tragedy of Mazeppa sliding increasingly towards the farcical and the grotesque. The widely spread massive use of puns was central to this process.[59] The juxtaposition of Poles and Tartars provides an especially juicy occasion for puns, with predictable wordplay on the Poles[60] and the Tartars:

> 'A ROCKY AND A VERY PRETTY PASS. In this Scene the *cream* of Tartars turns *sour*, proves himself anything but the *cheese*—the Milk-maid walks her *chalks*, leaving the *Khan* upon the *steppes*—The Volpas!—'AGAIN HE URGES ON HIS WILD CAREER!'—The fat King falls to thin-king, and asleep—The long lost chee-ild Mazeppa!—Delirium!' (p. 3).[61]

Onomastic puns are in particular so successful as to inform both stage and page, with tables of characters offering all sorts of digression on names' possible implications, so as to entertain the reader almost as much as the spectator, as in the following example from Oxenford and Brooks's extravaganza:

> Timour (*which means iron (hence his savage irony), also, in domestic conversation called, for short, Kiam-ram Koth-ed-din Gurgan Saheb-kiran Jihangir, which means Sultan Timour the Fortunate (as he is in having such a drama written on him); the Axis of the Faith (which he is supported with his axes, to say nothing of his swords); the Great Wolf (indeed he did take almost every place except Quebec); the Master of his Time (and also the Master of his Mint), and the Conqueror of the World (if intentions count for facts)—the Mongol Hero. He also had the alias of Timourlenk, or Tamerane, which means lame Timour, though he never halted when he could fight instead).*
> …
> Sanballat *(sans ballad, sans speech, sans everything)*
> …
> Zorilda *(who might be called 'a bouncing Amazon,' (Shakespeare) from her martial habit and her other habit of telling amazing bouncers; but it is much more pleasant to say)*. (p. 2)

The use of songs was also a notable feature of Victorian dramatisations of *Mazeppa* and further contributed to distance them from their Georgian sources. As David Mayer has written, 'music, just as melodramatic incidents, characters, and dialogue, could be readily assembled from ready-made parts, even as mosaics are fashioned from ready-cut chips of coloured tile';[62] this process, far from informing melodrama exclusively, also widely affects performances of *Mazeppa.* Popular songs in particular came to be widely employed independently on their original context or meaning, working as pieces of news for audiences, just as they shed light for us today on what was considered fashionable or relevant. Some of them, as is the case with the 'Garibaldi march' at the end of Scene 2 of the anonymous 1866 burlesque *Mazeppa*, which followed by two years the immensely successful visit of the General to England, are simply dedicated to people who had recently been in the news. Others, such as the concerted piece 'When Daylight's Going' or the duet of Abner and Mazeppa of Byron's burlesque extravaganza (pp. 25 and 34) were taken from Italian opera (*La sonnambula* and *Ernani* respectively), just as recurring references to *Norma* or *Lucia di Lammermoor* also appear in other notable productions of the period, such as Robert Brough's *Camaralzaman and Badoura* (1848)[63] or *The Overland Journey to Constantinople* (1854).[64]

In yet other cases, as with the music for the 'Tartar Acrobatic Chorus' in Burnand's *Mazeppa*, taken from the repertoire of the Mowhawk Minstrels,[65] it is black-face minstrelsy that offers a source of inspiration. This aspect is yet to be thoroughly investigated in relation to the myth

of Mazeppa, although it casts full light, as I will argue shortly, on the general interpretation of the Tartars on the nineteenth-century stage as 'backward' or 'primitive'.

More than other references to contemporary culture, the employment of themes or lyrics from black-face minstrel groups touring Britain in the second half of the century is significant of the fairly straightforward, but at the same time complicated nature of the 'exotic' on the Victorian stage. On the one hand, the process of simplification that underlay the 'portmanteau orientalism' characteristic of so much Georgian drama also affected representations of non-British peoples and cultures on the Victorian stage. As mentioned, this process implied a consistent lack of accuracy in reproducing costumes and/or settings, and, indeed, a consistent suspension of disbelief when it came to accepting certain visual features as faithfully representative of given cultures. The details of some of these performances even verged on the ridiculous, as when a llama and a zebra were introduced in one of the various performances of *Mazeppa* at Astley's,[66] or when audiences of Cooke and Waldron's *The New Mazeppa* found 'seventeenth century costumes mixed up with modern infantry uniforms'.[67] On the other hand, different degrees of exoticism were employed on stage, so that stereotypes accompanying the theatrical representation of the French, the Italian or the ancient Egyptian may have involved higher accuracy in reproducing settings, or a wider knowledge of their habits and customs than happened with, say, the Zulu, or indeed the Tartars. Furthermore, some exotic 'types' were perceived as sharing certain characteristics, with the Irish and the 'Negro' being notoriously combined or interchanged in caricatures and texts.[68]

The association of the Tartars, Mazeppa in particular, with blackface minstrelsy therefore reveals the degree of 'savagery' or exoticness ascribed to them, and it is unsurprising that a play such as Charles White's equestrian burlesque *Mazeppa* (1866) should be published by Brady as an 'Ethiopian drama' and performed in blackface, with Abder Khan as a 'boss white-washer of Jamaica' and Mazeppa as Satinette,[69] the various puns being centred on 'the traditionally accepted eccentricities and shiftlessness of the American Negro'.[70]

No less importantly, the trend to incorporate references to contemporary people or events that has already been noted for Georgian theatre becomes a progressively all-informing feature of Victorian plays, in which anachronism was consistently employed to create a bridge between the timeframe of the plots and the actual world of the spectator. A downside of this process was that the consistency of plot and characters was sacrificed to accommodate yet more and more references to the latest news. This is true for both the Tamerlane and the Mazeppa tradition. In Oxenford and Brooks's *Timour the Tartar!* (Royal Olympic, December 1860) – the plot of which, reduced to a few scenes, follows almost pedantically that of Lewis's melodrama – the protagonist's father, Oglou,[71] is for instance seen reading the *Spiritual Magazine*, and references to the United States are scattered in lines such as the following: 'From Georgia? Well, I never heard a finer./You might as well have said from Carolina.'[72] As had happened with Milner's play, ethnological displays continued to provide a saucy source of inspiration for later versions of *Mazeppa*: in Act 2 of Burnand's farce the Count is said to be 'in search of "curios," and projetsc [*sic*] combining business with pleasure …. Encouraged by what he has heard of the success of the "Japanese Village," it has occurred to him that a Tartar Troupe and Tartars' Village, all complete, would be a "big thing." He looks forward to the success of "The Tartaries".' [73] Another telling example is to be found in the song 'Odds and Ends; or, The New Industrial Exhibition', which mentions, amongst others, the Industrial Exhibition at Alexandra Palace (1880) and 'General' Tom Thumb (Charles Sherwood Stratton, 1838-83), the most famous midget of his time:

The notion is great, and I have an idea,
But there's such competition;
I'm starting an exhibition.
'Industrial Exhibition' gay,
With no admission fee, sir;
To start it I'm the man! I'm a

‘Chevalier d’industrie,’ sir!

Chorus.

…

To-morrow we shall married be,
For there’s no opposition;
My wife secure, I’ll take her on tour
With me and my exhibition.
If she her feelings can’t repress,
And the bus’ness thinks below her,
I’ll advertise a real Polish Princess,
And at sixpence a head I’ll show her.

Odds and ends, &c.

Then tricks with hats, and acrobats,
Who keep their limbs so pliant;
A woman who’s fat, a singing rat,
And an Australasian giant.
Pianos for sale on every scale,
Where players may try their digits,
And a real Tom Thumb, from New York just come,
And a party of genuine Midgets.

Odds and ends, &c.

In one court there will be sport
And implements of tillage;
’ll show’em all a Tartar caught
In a genuine Tartar village.
If difficulties are in my way
With which I cannot grapple—
If the genuine Tartars will not stay—
Then I’ll get’em from—hem—Whitechapel![74]

Odds and ends, &c. (pp. 23-5)

Commented [JN1]: Should this be I’ll?

Commented [TM2R1]: No, that is how it is in the original.

The overall combination of these three elements – puns, songs and references to the latest news – makes for contradictory and incongruent pieces, with Victorian versions of Timour and Mazeppa working towards the dismantling of their Georgian sources. The last of the series, Cooke and Waldron’s *The New Mazeppa* (Morton’s, Greenwich, 24 March 1890), shows only ‘a superficial resemblance to the tale that the Hetman of Cossacks told to Charles of Sweden by the camp fire’,[75] while Francis Burnand’s *Mazeppa; or, ‘Bound’ to Win!*, the only piece to my knowledge that openly mentions both Lord Byron’s poem and Milner’s play as its sources, rapidly proceeds to deconstruct and satirise them, as aptly shown by the following two passages from Act 1 and Act 2:

Olinska soon appears on the scene. Byron has described her;

‘And yet I find no words to tell

> The shape of her I love so well;
> She has the Asiatic eye,'
>
> The audience will kindly take notice of Olinska's Asiatic eye. Which eye is Asiatic, and which European, is entirely at their option. (pp. 4-5)
>
> Casimir arrives. Horse well broken in by this time. His rider is stiff and weary after his unwonted exercise.
> In the old original melodrama this situation was finely treated by Mr Milner. Mazeppa … exclaimed 'Again I stand erect, again assume the godlike attitude of freedom and of man,'— which is an appropriate quotation to be remembered by anyone, unaccustomed to fox-hunting, after a long run. On such an occasion the 'godlike attitude of freedom and of man' is indeed a luxury, and in some instances, for some considerable time a necessity. (p. 19)

What then is the legacy of Georgian performances to their Victorian counterparts, and what is the impact of specific sources such as Lord Byron's poem on the Mazeppa tradition? On the one hand, Georgian plays provided the contents and indeed the mood for later productions; as early as 1811, at the patent houses 'Oriental drama had come to symbolise the usurpation of dramatic culture based on language, rhetoric and rationality by a spectacular, illegitimate theatre.'[76] On the other, the sparkling richness of illegitimate theatre would have progressively been substituted in the second half of the century by a theatre that instead of presenting, like Lewis's *Timour the Tartar*, 'alternations of love, revenge, hope, despair, red-fire, terrific combats, processions, banners, music, and horses',[77] provided audiences with tales, like Oxenford and Brooks's, that had 'moralised this spectacle into a thousand puns'.[78] Such moralisation was mainly due to the progressive gentrification of theatre later in the century, when, alongside Mazeppa's ride, as Voss argues, 'bourgeois expectations required other narrative elements …. : the young page at the royal court becomes a foundling; adultery becomes courtship, romance and true love; …. The stage *Mazeppa* is a "lost child" story, of family and social instability, characteristic of the age of Dickens.'[79]

The long line of performances inspired by Lord Byron's poem, however, as well as the presence of the character Mazeppa outside the theatre (in the circus, for instance),[80] testifies to an overlapping of the 'popular' and the 'elite' that has otherwise been repeatedly dichotomised by criticism when dealing with the history of theatre in the Romantic age. This is the case with Nicoll, whose volumes on nineteenth-century drama, although providing us with the most invaluable bibliography of sources so far, are heavily affected by the at times snobbish judgements of Georgian and Victorian theatre, above all as far as the 'illegitimate' is concerned. While 'the romantic poets all took themselves too seriously,' (p. 60) which is what prevented them from writing successful dramatic pieces,[81] seeking for 'serious' talent – as happens when he wonders why the talented men of the time did not 'pen works of a *truly* permanent value' (p. 59; emphasis added) or when he affirms that 'the *true* dramatist is born, not made,' (p. 70; emphasis added) – is what prevents Nicoll himself from appreciating all the nuances of this theatre.

It is mainly thanks to Jane Moody and her seminal *Illegitimate Theatre in London* (2000) that a more balanced reading of Georgian and, indeed, nineteenth-century theatre as a whole is now possible. As she writes in the introduction, 'The theatre's virtual absence from Romantic scholarship is not hard to understand, for the sights, sounds and smells of a mass cultural public do indeed pose an uncomfortable challenge to that idealist history of Romanticism which has privileged imagination, solitude and critical self-consciousness over the claims of the body, the institution and the market'.[82] That the claims of the body and the market are particularly informative regarding the Mazeppa tradition is, however, primarily due to Lord Byron, in whose poem, as Phillip Anderson has written, 'There is merely the enforced experience of looking harder and deeper at physical and circumstantial actuality.'[83] The focus on the body also contributed to the establishment of a link between the 'high-brow' world of Romantic poetry and the 'low-brow'

character of Victorian productions. While, as Phillipson again writes, 'In Mazeppa's bondage, man and animal form a kind of centaur' that 'embodies an uneasily coexisting pair of attributes, lust and nobility',[84] this centaur, with its tragic yet also grotesque and ridiculous potential, is what Victorian playwrights inherited. Whereas, in exploiting the association between foot and horse, dramatisations of the poem end up depriving it of its deeper meaning, at the same time they also, albeit unwillingly, further its aesthetics. Such aesthetics already had, in the specific case of *Mazeppa*, a subverting potential: as Anderson has observed, 'Byron creates, in his title figure, an anti-Romantic hero whose early life, central story, and overall character constantly engage with Romantic conventions but only in order to offer a sharply critical assessment of and serious non-Romantic alternatives to those conventions.'[85]

On its part, in narrowing the distance between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' theatre, Lewis's *Timour the Tartar* anticipated the mongrelisation that would be characteristic of later Victorian re-visitations. The relevance of Lewis's melodrama, however, also goes in two further directions: first, in subverting the Tamerlane tradition, Lewis unconsciously prepared the ground for the success of dramatisations of Byron's *Mazeppa*, based as they both are on the equestrian element; and, second, Lewis's melodrama also moved the Tartarian world closer to the spectacular nature of 'illegitimate' theatre, thus opening the floor for all the following portraits of the Tartars.

None of the authors that I have mentioned here were interested in understanding who the Tartars 'really' were. But in conveying the stereotype of a nation of 'wild' yet altogether admirable people, both Byron and Lewis served as a transition towards Victorian entertainment, providing us in the process with materials for a more complex understanding of Romantic culture.

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[1] In Voltaire's words, Mazeppa 'had been brought up as a page to King John Casimir, and had got a little learning at his Court. On the discovery of an intrigue with the wife of a Polish nobleman, the latter had him tied, stark naked, to a wild horse, and set him free in that state. The horse, which had been brought from Ukrania, returned to its own country, carrying Mazeppa with him half dead from hunger and fatigue. Some of the peasants gave him relief, and he stayed a long time among them, and distinguished himself in several attempts against the Tartars.' Voltaire, *Voltaire's History of Charles XII, King of Sweden*, transl. Winifred Todhunter (London-New York: J.M Dent and Sons, and E.P. Dutton and Co., 1908), p. 157.

[2] Hubert F. Babinski, *The Mazeppa Legend in European Romanticism* (New York-London: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 5.

[3] Mark Phillipson, 'Alteration in Exile: Byron's Mazeppa', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 58:3 (2003), 297.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] Babinski, *The Mazeppa Legend*, p. 6.

[6] Unless otherwise stated, all venues and dates for performances are taken from Nicoll's bibliography. Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama, 1660-1900*, vol. 4, 'Early Nineteenth-Century Drama, 1800-1850' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) [1952-9]. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page numbers will follow in brackets.

[7] Ten burlesques on Mazeppa are also identified by Booth. Michael R. Booth, *English Melodrama* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965), p. 99. To the Tartars more generally are also dedicated Francis Talfourd's *Leo The Terrible: An Entirely New and Original Æsopean Burlesque in One Act* (1850), Charles Dance's *The Victor Vanquished: Comedy in One Act* (1854), Nitram Wilsey's *The Cream of Tartar: Ching Chang Fou; or, the Prince, the Princess, and the Mandarin* (1863), H. J. Byron's *Mazourka; or, the Stick, the Pole, and the Tartar* (1864), and Edward Stirling's *Trapping a Tartar: A Serio-Comic Drama* (1864). Boucicault's *Mimi: Romantic Drama in Three Acts* (1873 and 1881) also features a Mazeppa; no manuscript of this play appears to have survived, but a playbill and a programme (1873 and 1881 respectively) held at the University of Kent Special Collections reveal that the character Mazeppa was introduced in 1881, the 1873 production only featuring a 'Salope, an Equestrian Artiste'. Dion Boucicault, *Mimi: Romantic Drama in Three Acts* (1873), Kent Special Collections, GB 1089 UKC/BOUC.

[8] Chi-Ming Yang, *Performing China: Virtue, Commerce, and Orientalism in Eighteenth-Century England, 1660-1760* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), p. 34.

[9] Spencer Perceval Butler, *The Causes of the Turkish Invasion of Europe* (Cambridge-London: John Deighton, 1853), p. 11.

[10] *Ibid*., p. 13.

[11] Richmond Barbour, *Before Orientalism: London's Theatre of the East, 1576-1626* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 5.

[12] Felicity A. Nussbaum, 'Between "Oriental" and "Blacks So Called", 1688-1788', in Daniel Carey, Lynn Festa (eds), *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 151.
[13] Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 99. As noted by Joseph Irving, Lewis's play indeed includes a whole repertory of well-chosen suggestions: 'An Oriental influence is especially evident in the one scene in Zorilda's chamber within the castle with its draped alcove, the curtains of which are drawn up with golden cords; the flight of steps with the balustrade; the numerous lighted lamps; the flowers in vases; the pile of cushions under which Agib hides. The imprisonment of Agib is suggestive of the numerous Gothic imprisonments, and the joust between Kerim and Sanballat is a distinct effort toward medievalism.' Joseph James Irving, *M. G. 'Monk' Lewis* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), p. 94.
[14] With following performances at Astley's, 1829, and Drury Lane, 1831.
[15] A quotation from *Blue-Beard* ('I see them galloping! I see them galloping!') is also inscribed on the cover of the manuscript for Lewis's play. *Blue-Beard* was a highly successful production: '[a]udiences were entranced by a succession of memorable scenes, including the Satrap's picturesque procession through the hills, and the wonders of an articulated skeleton.' Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, p. 70.
[16] According to Nicoll the play was performed at this venue in 1811, while Saxon suggests the play was first performed at the Olympic Pavilion in January 1812. A. H. Saxon, *Enter Foot and Horse: A History of Hippodrama in England and France* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 95.
[17] *Ibid*.
[18] *Ibid*.
[19] Henry M. Milner, *Mazeppa: Romantic Drama in Three Acts* (London: John Cumberland, 1831), p. 9. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page numbers will follow in brackets.
[20] Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, p. 98.
[21] Although the manuscript at the British Library does not mention any author, this is probably à Beckett's play. The manuscript reveals identical details for the performance, which had its première at the Princess's with a licence dated 22 March 1845. The title seems to have been changed from a previous *Timour the Tartar: Redressed*, where 'redressed' has later been cancelled, and the whole title eventually substituted by *Timour Cream of Tartars*. Gilbert Abbott à Beckett, *Timour the Cream of All the Tartars*, British Library, Additional MS 42983 fos 330-52.
[22] *A New Burlesque Entitled Mazeppa*, British Library, Additional MS 53048 O.
[23] Nicoll, *A History*, p. 37.
[24] Robinson, Henry Crabb, *The London Theatre, 1811-1866: Selections from the Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson* (Eluned Brown, ed., London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1966), p. 35.
[25] Irving, *M. G.*, p. 92.
[26] M. G. Lewis, *Timour the Tartar: A Romantic Melodrama* (London: Lowndes and Hobbs, 1811), p. 1.
[27] M. G. Lewis, *Timour the Tartar: A Romantic Melodrama* (London: n.p., 1850), p. 5.
[28] *Ibid*., p. 8.
[29] Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, p. 71.
[30] Saxon, *Enter Foot*, pp. 89-90.
[31] Phillip B. Anderson, 'The Rime of the Ancient Horseman: Byron's *Mazeppa* and the Anti-Romantic Hero', in William D. Brewer (ed.), *Contemporary Studies on Lord Byron*, (Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), p. 67.
[32] Phillipson, 'Alteration in Exile', 292.
[33] See Andrew McConnell Stott, *The Pantomime Life of Joseph Grimaldi* (Edinburgh-London-New York-Melbourne: Canongate Books, 2009), pp. 231-4.
[34] On the Polish side: the Castellan of Laurinski; Premislas, or the Count Palatine; Rudzoloff, or the Chamberlain of the Household; Drolinsko; Olinska, daughter of the Castellan and secret lover to Mazeppa; and Agatha, her nurse. On the Tartars' side: Abder Khan, King of Tartary; Mazeppa/Cassimer, his son; Thamar, a conspiring Chieftain; Kadac and Koscar, two Tartar Shepherds; and Oneiza, a Shepherdess.
[35] Yang, *Performing China*, p. 35.
[36] Tony Voss, 'Mazeppa-Maseppa: Migration of a Romantic Motif', *Tydskrif vir letterkunde*, 49:2 (2012), 116.
[37] John Howard Payne, *Trial without Jury and Other Plays*, eds Codman Hislop and W. R. Richardson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 165.
[38] Léopold Chandezon and Jean-Guillaume-Antoine Cuvelier, *Mazeppa ou le Cheval Tartare* (Paris: Chez Bezou, Libraire, 1825).
[39] Chandezon and Cuvelier 'acknowledge their indebtedness to Byron; but they introduce important changes, for their heroine at the opening is unmarried, and their hero, a Tartar Prince, eventually marries her.' *Ibid*.
[40] Saxon, *Enter Foot*, p. 181.
[41] Raoul Granqvist, *Imitation as Resistance: Appropriations of English Literature in Nineteenth-century America* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995).

[42] I am indebted to Micah Hoggatt at the Harvard Theatre Collection for finding me a copy of this playbill at very short notice, thus allowing me to verify Saxon's claim whilst writing the present essay.
[43] Nicoll also seems to ignore the contents of the playbill, as the production of *Mazeppa; or the Wild Horse of the Ukraine!* is listed under Unknown Authors.
[44] Whilst the 1831 production only featured Poles and the Tartars, the playbill for 1823 also lists some Russian characters, and Mazeppa's ride is set, rather than along the course of the Dniepr, against the backdrop of the Carpathians.
[45]M. Willson Disher, *Greatest Show on Earth; as Performed for over a Century at Astley's (afterwards Sanger's) Royal Amphitheatre of Arts, Westminster Bridge Road* (London: G. Bell and Sons Publishers, 1937), pp. 116-17. The success of Milner's play can be best appreciated when considering its lasting presence in the repertory of theatres outside London; as 'Lord' George Sanger writes in his autobiography, in 1854 *Mazeppa* was still 'a novelty then in the provinces', so that in a city like Liverpool the play still attracted considerable attention. Apparently, at some point Sanger himself played Mazeppa, although in which circumstance exactly is not specified. 'Lord' George Sanger, *Seventy Years a Showman* (London-Toronto J.M. Dent and Sons, 1926), p. 230.
[46] Saxon, *Enter Foot*, pp. 186-7. See also Disher, *Greatest Show*, pp. 120-1.
[47] Voss, 'Mazeppa-Maseppa', 117.
[48] Booth, *English Melodrama*, p. 98.
[49] *Ibid*., p. 99. See also Babinski, *The Mazeppa Legend*, p. 1.
[50] Wolf Mankowitz, *Mazeppa: The Lives, Loves and Legends of Adah Isaacs Menken* (London Blond & Briggs, 1982), p. 12.
[51] Robinson, *The London Theatre*, p. 173.
[52] Michael Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910* (Boston-London-Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 64.
[53] Henry J. Byron, *Mazeppa! A Burlesque Extravaganza in One Act* (London: Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays, 1865 [1858]).
[54] This is according to Clement Scott, but the manuscript also states the request for the licence for the play was submitted on 20 December 1858. Nicoll reports instead the 26th of December 1859 for the première. Clement Scott, *The Drama of Yesterday and Today*, 2 vols (New York-London: Garland Publishing, 1986 [1899]).
[55] *Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette*, 1 January 1859, p. 3.For the Lowther Arcade see also https://londonstreetviews.wordpress.com/category/81-lowther-arcade-nos-1-25-and-king-william-street-west-strand-nos-1-28/.
[56] *Athanæum*, 5 November 1864, n.1932, p. 606.
[57] *Athanæum*, 14 March 1885, n.2994, p. 386.
[58] *Ibid*.; emphasis added.
[59] Byron's *Mazeppa!* is a notable case in point, as 'the hero describes his equestrian experience in a speech studded with puns, which is terminated by the descent of a vulture on the expected prey', *Norfolk Chronicle*, p. 3. The quote refers to the production starting at the Royal Olympic on 27 December 1858.
[60] 'Poles (not Sticks)' (Burnand, *Mazeppa; or, 'Bound' to Win!*) or 'Poles, by no means Sticks' (Oxenford and Brooks's *Timour the Tartar!*) are typical examples.
[61] Puns become characteristic also of theatre reviews; as Frederick Robson, playing Mazeppa in Byron's piece, was quite short, it seemed only too right to have given him the part of the 'lost infant ... brought up to the stature and functions of a page by Castellan of Laurinski, an "Upright Pole".' *The Norfolk Chronicle*, p. 3.
[62] David Mayer, 'The music of melodrama', in David Bradby, Louis James, and Bernard Sharratt (eds), *Performance and Politics in Popular Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 51.
[63] Robert Brough, *Camaralzaman and Badoura; or, the Peri Who Loved the Prince* (London: National Acting Drama Office, s.d. [1848]).
[64] Robert Brough, *The Overland Journey to Constantinople, as Undertaken by Lord Bateman, with Interesting Particulars of the Fair Sophia* (London: Thomas Hailes Lacy, s.d. [1854]).
[65] The group performed at Berner's Hall in 1874, and then continuously and successfully between 1876 and 1900 in what is today Islington Palace. See the *Illustrated London News*, 18 April 1874 p. 375, and the Theatre Trust page on Islington Palace: http://www.theatrestrust.org.uk/resources/theatres/show/3068-islington-palace. See also Richard Anthony Baker, *British Music Hall: An Illustrated History* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books Ltd., 2014), p. 198.
[66] Saxon, *Enter Foot*, p. 187.
[67] *Dundee Advertiser*, p. 5
[68] See Perry L. Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Washington D.C.-London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1971).
[69] Saxon, *Enter Foot*, pp. 188-9.
[70] *Ibid*., p. 189.

[71] As with Milner's play and the Mazeppa tradition, Lewis's melodrama also provides the main characters for later plays: alongside Timour, his father Oglou, his sister Liska, the rival chieftain Sanballet or Sanballat, the princess Zorilda and the captive Selima.
[72] John Oxenford and Shirley Brooks, *Timour the Tartar! Or, the Iron Master of Samarkand-by-Oxus: An Extravaganza* (London: Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays, 1860), p. 16. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page numbers will follow in brackets.
[73] Francis C. Burnand, *Mazeppa; or, 'Bound' to Win!* (London: H. Blacklock and Co., s.d.), p. 23. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. Page numbers will follow in brackets. The Japanese Village had just been installed in Knightsbridge, London, where it would remain until 1887. It featured not only artefacts but also real people, from whom Gilbert and Sullivan asked for advice while writing *The Mikado*.
[74] The reference to Whitechapel is particularly interesting, as it refers to the habit of obtaining exotic performers not from abroad (although some of these performers may well have been presented as non-British) but from the poorest areas of London, as well as other cities. For example, 'Lord' Sanger writes that when in Liverpool he looked for 'savages' in 'some dreadful slums, where in half an hour I engaged eight wild men and two savage women.' Sanger, *Seventy Years*, p. 233).
[75] *Dundee Advertiser*, 20 May 1890, p. 5.
[76] Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, p. 73.
[77] *Daily News*, 27 December 1860, p. 3.
[78] *Ibid*.
[79] Voss, 'Mazeppa-Maseppa', 118.
[80] See 'Lord' George Sanger, *Seventy Years a Showman* (London-Toronto, 1926), p. 230.
[81] 'The lyric mood may exist alongside the dramatic, as Shakespeare and Webster testify, but the dramatic mood depends ultimately on a sense of humour. […] Both tragedy and comedy depend upon the ability of the author to forget for a moment his own petty loves and woes, or so to transform these that they become universal. This the romantic poets, because they were always thinking of themselves, failed to do.' Nicoll, *A History*, p. 61.
[82] Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*, p. 3.
[83] *Ibid*., p. 69.
[84] *Ibid*., pp. 307-8.
[85] Anderson, 'The Rime', p. 59.