There are, come to think of it, worse qualities in verse than being pleasant.

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THE MAZEPPA LEGEND IN EUROPEAN ROMANTICISM. By *Hubert F. Babiński*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1974. xii, 164 pp. \$12.00.

"There's something in a flying horse. . .," and though the author does not make the point specifically, Wordsworth's ejaculation is, in fact, the theme of this monograph. For it was the "flying horse"—to which, at the will of a jealous husband, Mazeppa was bound and on which he was carried, flying like the wind, across a wolf-infested steppe—that captured the imagination and kept the legend useful as its vehicle for so long.

The legend arose in the eastern borderland of Europe, in what is today's Ukraine, but reached its highest development in the West. Though the legend was widely known long before 1819, it took Byron's treatment in the long poem *Mazeppa* to give it genuine life. Babiński traces in great detail the use the romantics made of it, in both East and West, climaxing his study with a long analysis of the most conspicuous Polish *Mazeppa*, the drama in five acts by Juliusz Słowacki (1809–59). This drama, incidentally, just escaped presentation on the American stage by the Polish actress Helena Modjeska, who, from the very beginning of her American career in 1877, cherished the dream of giving Americans something Polish, in English, of course. To her, the Słowacki *Mazeppa* offered the most likely dramatic appeal to American audiences. Only the onset of age kept her from doing it, and thus offering the American public an antidote to the shenanigans of Adah Isaacs Menken in the Mazeppa role.

In his concluding chapter, Babiński makes a special case for the mystical-messianic aspect of the Słowacki drama. Here, he seems to be straining to make his point. To those familiar with the play, its appeal is principally its theatricality, as was seen in the brilliant anniversary production in Warsaw in 1959.

Babiński enriches his catalog of the uses to which the romantics turned the Mazeppa legend with a listing of works not only of literature but of art, from 1688 on. He might, with profit, have noted the musical works similarly inspired, for there is a considerable literature on this. In his list we find a portrait of Mazeppa by Norblin (1775), which according to reliable sources is not Mazeppa at all, but an unidentified peasant. Also we find the usual, but mistaken, attribution of the 1823 drama, *Mazeppa, or The Wild Horse of Tartary*, to Anon, whereas, according to A. H. Saxon (*Enter Horse and Foot*, 1968, p. 174), it was written by Henry Milner.

The work is a useful addition to Mazeppa literature. The bibliography is extensive and catholic—even strictly nationalistic studies are included. Unfortunately, the author is not always careful with the spelling of proper names. It is also a pity that the frontispiece, Vernet's *Mazeppa aux loups*, is so pallidly printed. A clear reproduction of this work would have captured and communicated far more effectively the perennial appeal of the legend to the romantic or any other imagination.

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