Text Setting in Verdi's Jérusalem and Don Carlos

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**Keywords**
Giuseppe Verdi, Jérusalem, Don Carlos
In the summer of 1847 Verdi went to London to supervise the premiere of I Masnadieri at Her Majesty's Theatre. This was his first premiere outside of Italy, and his second international trip of any kind. On returning home from London, Verdi stopped in Paris to visit his French publisher, Léon Escudier, and Giuseppina Strepponi, who had been teaching voice there since the fall of 1846. During this visit Verdi was approached by the Paris Opéra and asked to write a new work on a French text. Although such requests had come to him before, he had always been forced to refuse them, for a variety of reasons. For one, he was busy fulfilling Italian commissions and had no time for foreign theaters. In addition, he was not fluent in French and undoubtedly had reservations about composing a major work for Europe's leading opera house in a language with which he was not completely secure.

In these circumstances, one wonders why, in the summer of 1847, he suddenly agreed to accept the Opéra commission. He was, after all, still busy with other Italian commissions, and his French was no more fluent than before. The answer may involve a combination of factors. Verdi's poor French was dealt with by the fact that while writing the opera he would be living in Paris where he could easily get help from friends like Strepponi or from his librettists. Another impediment, his busy schedule, was removed through an agreement with the Opéra allowing the composer to reset an earlier Italian opera to a new French libretto. I Lombardi was selected for this transformation, and the job of adapting the drama and drafting the new libretto was entrusted to Gustav Vaëz and Alphonse Royer. Their work resulted in much more than a simple translation of the Italian libretto into French. While carefully designed to allow Verdi to reuse most of his earlier music, the new libretto, entitled Jérusalem, actually involved major changes in I Lombardi.

Verdi's work on Jérusalem represented a venture into compositionally uncharted waters. In Italy his exposure to French opera could only have been minimal. The chronicles of such opera houses as La Scala, La Fenice, and the Regio in Parma show that most French operas never reached the theaters of major Italian cities; and those few works that did (most notably Meyerbeer's Robert le Diable and Auber's

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1See his letter of August 1846 to Vincenzio Flauto in which he says, "If none other, the Grand Opéra of Paris would not disdain to open its doors to me, as I can show you with a letter from Pillet." Gaetano Cesari and Alessandro Luzio, eds., I copialettere di Giuseppe Verdi (Milan, 1913) 24.

2As of 1847 Verdi spoke French well enough to get by in Paris, but not until the 1860s did he feel comfortable enough to write an occasional letter to Escudier or Du Locle in French. Even then most of his letters to French-speaking friends were still written in Italian. This practice contrasts markedly with that of Giuseppina Strepponi, who, after she began living with Verdi, always wrote to the composer's French colleagues in their own language.

3Unfortunately, the fact that Verdi worked directly with his librettists means that there is no documentary evidence in the form of letters to indicate that he ever actually approached them for help. The presence of Strepponi in Paris at that time may well have been the decisive factor in his decision to write Jérusalem (eds.).

"Three of Verdi's most successful early operas (those predating 1846) had already been staged in Paris: Nabucco, 16 Oct. 1845; Ernani, 6 Jan. 1846; I due Foscari, 17 Dec. 1846. Only I Lombardi had not yet been mounted there. A photocopy of Verdi's contract for Jérusalem with the Opéra may be found in the archive of the American Institute for Verdi Studies at New York University.

La Muette de Portici) were always given in Italian translation. So while Verdi may have known some of the music of major French composers, he probably remained unfamiliar with the exact correlation of that music with its original French texts. The composition of Jérusalem raises the interesting question of how Verdi dealt with the actual mechanics of French text setting early in his career, and gives us the opportunity to discover what he thought about the effect of language on musical style. Ultimately an investigation of the subject may lead to a better understanding of the exact relationship between Verdi and the French grand opera tradition.

I

The primary concern of any composer attempting to set a versified text to music lies in the establishment of a system for the correlation of the stresses of poetic prosody with the natural accents of musical meters. In order to understand how a composer like Verdi approaches this problem we must know something about the basic principles of Italian and French versification.

In Italian poetry, individual words have stressed and unstressed syllables which, when taken in conjunction with the rules governing poetic meters, help to determine the placement of stress within a complete line of verse. Italian words show considerable variety in the location of their natural stresses. The usual rule is that multi-syllable words receive a stress on the penultimate syllable, as in the word amore. This is called the normal or piano ending. In many other words, however, the stress falls on the antepenultimate syllable, as in the word virgine. This type of word is said to have a druccio ending. Lastly, many words in the Italian language have a stress that falls on the last syllable, as in the word bel à or in words with a single syllable. These words have a tronco ending.

In all Italian poetry the final stress of a line (the penultimate syllable in a normal, piano ending) is called the primary accent, the heaviest stress, of that line. Other stresses are referred to as secondary accents. The difference between these two levels of accent is shown in scansion as follows: = marks the primary accent, — marks a secondary accent (~ marks an elision).

Stress within complete lines of Italian poetry is governed primarily by poetic meters (pre-existing patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables) which, in turn, are determined by the number of syllables in a line. In opera librettos some of the most common line lengths are quaternario (4 syllables), quinario (5), senario (6), septenario (7), ottonario (8), decasillabo (10), and endecasillabo (11). Lines with an even

6See Pompeo Cambiasi, ed., Rappresentazioni date nei reali teatri di Milano, 1778-1872 (Milan, 1872); Paolo-Emilio Ferrari, ed., Spettacoli dramatico-musicali e coreografici in Parma dall'anno 1628 all'anno 1883 (Parma, 1884); and Luigi Lianovosani (pseud. for Giovanni Salvioli) ed., La Fenice: gran teatro di Venezia; serie degli spettacoli dalla primavera 1792 a tutto il carnavale 1876 (Milan, 1878).

7The following summary of the rules of Italian versification is digested from Luciana Castelnaovo, La metrica italiana (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1979); Pier Enea Guarnerio, Manuale di versificazione italiana (Milan, 1913); and Robert Moreen, "Integration of Text Forms and Musical Forms in Verdi's Early Operas," (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1975). The rules of French versification are taken from Pierre Guiraud, La Versification, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1973); Léon E. Kastner, A History of French Versification (Oxford, 1903); and Jean Suberville, Histoire et théorie de la versification française (Paris, n.d.). I would also like to thank professor Nicholas Granito of the Manhattan School of Music for his generous advice on matters concerning Italian and French prosody.

8The subject of stress in language is itself a very complex one. Generally, stress results from the coordinated effect of three factors: the lengthening of a vowel (agogic accent), an increase in dynamic level (dynamic accent), and a rise of pitch in the voice (pitch accent). The relative importance of these elements in determining stress varies considerably from language to language. In classical Italian, stress is primarily the result of durational accent, while in French it is pitch accent that contributes most to the perception of stress.
number of syllables tend to have more regular metric patterns than those with an uneven syllable count. For example, an otonario may have the pattern \(-\cdot -\cdot -\cdot -\cdot -\cdot\) (stresses on syllables 1, 3, 5 & 7) or \(-\cdot -\cdot -\cdot -\cdot -\cdot\) (stresses on 1, 4, & 7) or \(-\cdot -\cdot -\cdot -\cdot -\cdot\) (only two stresses, on 3 and 7). Generally, once a strophe of lines with an even syllable count begins in one pattern, however, it does not change to an alternate pattern. Example 1 illustrates part of a typical otonario strophe from Verdi’s I Lombardi.

Example 1. Pagano’s cabaletta from No. 2, Act I, sc. 5, I Lombardi

\[\text{"O speranza di vendetta"} \]
\[\text{"Gia sfavilli sul mio volto"} \]
\[\text{"Da tant anni a me diletta"} \]
\[\text{"Altra voce non ascolto"} \]

Verses of uneven syllable count, on the other hand, show greater flexibility. A settenario line, for example, may have accents that fall on syllables 2 and 6; 3 and 6; 2, 4 and 6; 1, 4, and 6; or 1, 3, and 6; and poets may freely mix these different meters within any single strophe. Thus, the variety of stress patterns is significantly greater in strophes of uneven syllable count, as example 2 from I Lombardi demonstrates. Not only do we see

Example 2. ll. 5-8 of Oronte’s cavatina “La mia letizia infondere,” No. 6, Act II, sc. 2

\[\text{"Tante armonie nell’etere"} \]
\[\text{"Quanti pianeti egli ha"} \]

As far as prosodic flexibility is concerned, Italian poetry usually differs markedly from French. Primarily the difference involves the location and relative intensity of secondary accents. Stress in the French language results mainly from a pitch inflection that falls on the last spoken syllable of the final word in a line or phrase. (Mute endings of -e, -es, and -ent are not counted as final syllables.) Individual French words are usually said to have a stress on their final syllable, but in reality individual words have no perceptible stress when considered apart from a complete line or phrase to which they might belong. Within such word groups in French poetry, as in the spoken language, the primary accent falls on the final syllable of a line. But in French poetry, lines of more than eight syllables subdivide into two phrases (hemistiches) with a cesura and another primary accent at the end of the first phase. Beyond the fixed location of these primary accents little else can be said with certainty about stress in French poetry. The location of secondary accents is not determined by various pre-existing metrical patterns as in Italian poetry. Such concepts of versification are completely foreign to the French. Instead, the location of these accents is determined by internal syntactical relationships. That is to say, each hemistich is capable of further subdivision by lesser cesuras that mark natural breaks in the grammatical structure of the lines ending with tronco or sdrucciolo words are counted as though they had normal piano endings. Thus, lines of 6, 7, and 8 actual syllables may, depending upon the last word of the line, all be called settenario.

In the nineteenth century Victor Hugo popularized a division of the alexandrine (12-syllable line) into three main sections, each with its own primary accent. See Kastner, French Versification, pp. 91-94.

\[\text{"Ir secol cielo ed ergermi"} \]
\[\text{"Dove mortali non va."} \]

\[\text{here three different metric patterns, but we also see a combination of sdrucciolo and tronco lines adding to the effect of variety and unpredictability.}^{9}\]

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line. Each lesser cesura in turn creates a secondary accent of its own, and both the number and location of these accents change from line to line. As Kastner observes, "it is to this freedom in the disposition of the accents, other than that at the [medial] cesura and at the end of the line, that French versification owes one of its chief advantages—the multiplicity of possible rhythmical periods and combinations.”

Example 3 illustrates this variation in the placement of secondary accents in a few alexandrines from Racine’s Athalie.

Example 3.

Je viens selon l’usage antique et solennel
Célébrer avec vous la fameux sé journée
Où sur le mont Sinô la loi nous fut donnée.

Lines of eight syllables or less may also assume secondary accents according to the syntax even though there may be no medial cesura. Example 4 illustrates this possibility in a line from Verlaine’s Sagesse.

Example 4.

Qui ne chante que pour vous plaire

Although we may speak of secondary accents in French poetry, we must understand that they are of much less importance than in Italian poetry. In reality "the secondary accents, within the two hemistiches on which the variety of rhythm depends, are so slight as compared with that of the medial pause that they are rendered almost imperceptible."

This means that French poetry should generally be recited as a series of unstressed syllables leading to a primary accent at the end of each phrase or line. In music, of course, this theoretical ideal of only one accent per phrase cannot be realized because some of those remaining unaccented syllables will inevitably fall on strong beats of the musical meter and will thereby assume a stress that they might not otherwise deserve. A composer, then, is forced by the very nature of the medium in which he works to identify the secondary accents in his libretto (weak though they may be) and to somehow coordinate them with the strong and weak beats of his musical meter.

Although stress in French poetry gravitates naturally toward the irregular and flexible patterns seen in example 3 above, it is important to note that French poetry can also assume a regularity that duplicates the metrical patterns of Italian poetry. Verdi was well aware of this potential similarity and relied on it frequently in writing his French operas. On 16 June 1866, for instance, he wrote to Du Locle asking for "some small changes” in the libretto of Don Carlos. In reference to one strophe in the Act IV quartet he said,

In the following strophe for Eboli I need to have at least the first three lines separated and the accent to fall on the fourth and the eighth syllable. In order better to explain myself, here is an example:

Ou remords tristesse amère

Verdi’s final setting of these lines changes both the order and the prosody of these lines. (See Ursula Günther’s edition of the complete Paris version of Don Carlos [Milan: Ricordi, 1974] vol. II, pp. 470 ff.) He sets:

Mon pardon viendra-t-il des cieux.
Five days later he wrote to Du Locle again, this time asking for an additional strophe:

In order not to waste time, I have written this strophe in Italian; if convenient, translate it into French for me, conserving, of course, the accent and the rhythm.

Elisabetta

Pace, perdón dal cielo
Invoché per lei.
Pietoso Ei stenda un velo
Sui falli di costei

Eboli

Ah no; il perdón dal cielo
Chiamar non oserei.
Stender non puote un velo,
Són troppuj falli miei.

Further complicating this subject of prosodic theory is the fact that normal word stress in many languages, but especially in French, is capable of great elasticity. A principle that the French call accent oratoire allows normal stress patterns to be modified by the emotion or character of the person who is speaking. As Romain Rolland explained to Richard Strauss, for example, the word cheveux is normally stressed on the last syllable, but "when spoken by a man in love" the word may come out CHEveux. There are, according to Rolland, "a certain number of words which have an absolutely fixed stress: they form the skeleton of the language. The others are fluid and Protean; they obey and yield to circumstancs which are logical, psychological, etc." For the purposes of this study, however, the complexities of accent oratoire may be eliminated from consideration because, as we shall see, the irregularities of Verdi's French text setting are explained without resorting to such levels of linguistic subtlety.

II

Requests from Verdi to his librettists for French prosody modeled after Italian patterns suggest the process by which I Lombardi was to be transformed into Jérusalem. The inherent variety of stress patterns in French poetry, along with the skill with which Royer and Vaèz matched the line lengths of their new French text to the original Italian, allowed Verdi to adapt his earlier music to the new libretto. An example of such adaptation can be found in the corresponding arias: Giselda's "Salve Maria" (I Lombardi, No. 3, Act I, sc. 6) and Hélène's "Ave Maria" (Jérusalem, No. 2, Act I, sc. 2). The Italian poetry consists of eight lines of quinario doppio in which the primary accent falls on the fourth syllable of every quinario group and a secondary accent falls variably on either the first or the second syllable. Example 5 illustrates the first three doppio lines.

Example 5.

Salve Maria—di grazia il petto
T'empie il Signore—che in te si posa.
Tuo divin frutto—sia benedetto.

Notice that the secondary accent sometimes shifts in the second quinario group of each line. Verdi's setting of this text appears in example 6, from which we can infer several characteristic procedures of his setting of Italian texts: 19

1. Verdi consistently places the primary accents of the poetry on the strongest beat of the measure.
2. The placement of secondary accents is

16 Ibid. p. 164. Scansion marks are mine. There is no sign of these strophes in either the printed libretto of 1867 or in the score. The 7-syllable meter that Verdi wanted Du Locle to maintain is an unusual one in French poetry.

17 Richard Strauss and Romain Rolland: Correspondence (Berkeley, 1968) 46.

18 Ibid. p. 47.

19 As always, general procedures have their exceptions. Nevertheless, these characteristics are consistent throughout the vast majority of Verdi's Italian text settings.
Example 6.

less predictable. In four of the five instances in this excerpt they fall on either of the strong beats of the measure (1 and 3), but in measure 5 the secondary accent falls on the weak second beat while the unaccented syllable of _I'empie_ occupies the strong beat—an apparent reversal of the normal prosodic values of the text.

3. Unaccented syllables usually fall in weaker metric positions than do any of the accented syllables that surround them. (See m. 8 for a common exception to this practice.) Verdi's occasional disregard for poetic prosody (as outlined in item 2 above) is common throughout his Italian operas and should be interpreted as a sign not that he was careless with his text setting but rather that he preferred a certain freedom in his approach to poetic stress. Clearly he did not wish to be locked into an immutable system of prosodic laws, especially when he was trying to fit a particular text to a melody which he had already composed.20

Another example from _I Lombardi_ will serve to corroborate and expand these observations. Giselda's cabaletta "No giusta causa" (No. 9, Act III, sc. 9) is also in _quinario doppio_ meter, but the prosody of these lines is much more regular than in the previous example.

Example 7.

We know from Verdi's sketches for _Rigoletto_ and _La Traviata_ that he sometimes had whole melodies in mind before ever seeing a word of the finished libretto he was going to be setting. See Carlo Gatti, ed., _Verdi nelle immagini_ (Milan, 1941) pp. 64-65. See also the Introduction to Martin Chusid's edition of _Rigoletto_ in _The Works of Giuseppe Verdi, Series I, Vol. 17_ (Chicago & Milan, 1983) p. xviii.

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This motive assumes such importance as an integrative element in the cabaletta that the composer refused to alter it to fit the one line of poetry in which the secondary accent did not fall on the second syllable. What may be called Verdi's second operative principle comes into play at the point, m. 9, where the maintenance of rhythmic symmetry becomes a more important concern than exact poetic prosody. We also discover in this example that secondary accents frequently fall not only on strong beats, as observed earlier, but also on the strong part of weak beats. Here it is the fourth beat of each measure.

In example 6 we can see the French version of "Salve Maria" illustrated in parallel with the original Italian. Primary poetic accents are fixed by the rules of French prosody, but secondary accents are determined by grammatical syntax. In example 9 I have marked these syntactical cesuras in each line and located the secondary accents accordingly. Observe how closely this scansion duplicates that of the original text.
Example 9.

\[ \text{Ave Maria} \]
\[ \text{Ma voix te prec} \]
\[ \text{Taris mes pleurs} \]
\[ \text{O Vierge des doleurs.} \]

Note that the librettists have been careful in almost every case to place the primary accent on the fourth syllable of each line. Only in the last line is the fourth syllable not the primary end stress. Thus, the primary accents of both the Italian and the French texts coordinate most of the time. Even the location of many of the secondary accents is identical. However, some difficulty arises in the last two lines of the French where taris mes pleurs reverses the

Example 10.

\[ \text{Ta-ris mes pleurs O Vier-ge des do-leurs} \]

The reason for the switch of lines has to do with the subject of stress and its most effective placement. The line that Verdi might have written would have led to the major musical accent at the climax of the phrase falling on the relatively insignificant preposition des. While French prosody may not have been totally ruined by this slight irregularity, Verdi obviously did not like the effect it would have produced. In reversing the lines he managed to place the word des in a much less conspicuous position while reserving the long, high accent for the word taris. This simple solution to a minor problem demonstrates that Verdi, even in his first French opera, was well attuned to matters of stress in French texts. Does it also mean that he was stricter or took more care with his French declamation than with his Italian? I think not. What we have seen here is simply a case in which he was able to fix some poor declamation without having to make melodic or rhythmic changes in his original musical line. But his priorities begin to show in other instances where his new French text did not quite fit the earlier music. In those cases where the melody had been originally designed in rhythmically symmetrical phrase groups, he refused to break the regularity of the rhythmic pattern just to accommodate a French accent. Refer back to example 8 for an illustration from Hélène's cabaretta "Non, votre rage" in No. 3, Act III, sc. 5 of Jerusalem. This is the French version of Giselda's "No giusta causa." The persistent weak-strong beginning of every melodic phrase runs headlong into the word votre (m. 6) in which the natural word stress falls on the first syllable. As in I line. Verdi's autograph full score (film in Verdi archive) shows "Ave Maria," as does the Escudier piano-vocal score.

\[ ^{21} \text{In the printed libretto for the first performance (archive of the American Institute for Verdi Studies, film ML 49, V 48, vol. 11, no. 3) we find the words "Vierge Marie" in this opening} \]
Lombardi, Verdi’s setting ignores the normal prosodic values of the text by displacing the vo- of votre, a secondary accent, to the weakest position. In this particular instance the irregularity is compounded by the fact that mute endings in French poetry, which are voiced very lightly, are much weaker than the regular piano endings of Italian words (e.g. amore). Thus, the placement of these “mute” syllables in relatively strong metric or rhythmic positions produces a more noticeably unnatural effect than the similar placement of a feminine ending in an Italian word.

One does find occasions when Verdi is forced to change his original melody to accommodate the differing stress patterns of the new French text. In Pagano’s aria “Sciagurata” (I Lombardi, No. 2, Act I, sc. 4) Verdi originally granted himself the luxury of repeating a bit of text in the verse “tu nel colmo, nel colmo del contento.” (Example 11.)

Example 11.

In his analysis of the transformation of I Lombardi into Jerusalem, David Kimbell refers to the French version of this aria with the observation that “Verdi handles the French text with less freedom than the Italian, allowing himself nothing of the impassioned reduplication of words that one finds at “tu nel colmo del contento.” Kimbell implies that there is something stiff or academic about the French version, whereas in fact, the new nine-syllable French line automatically precludes its setting to the original eight-syllable melody unless the composer is prepared to create the kind of preposterous text setting illustrated in example 12.

Example 12.

Kimbell, p. 23.

22 "As a resonance, an echo of the preceding syllable, which vibrates, hovers, and gently dies in the air . . . " Romain Rolland, as cited in Richard Strauss and Romain Rolland, p. 32.
Thus, if there were a point at which melody took precedence over natural prosody in Verdi's French text setting, so too there was a point beyond which the normal poetic stresses of the language could not be distorted. That point seems to have been fixed by Verdi at a limit of a single reversal of a normal strong-weak or weak-strong syllable pair per line of poetry (in Italian) or per hemistich (in French). The reason example 12 is implausible is that this setting reverses the normal prosody of both *caché* and *la terre* in the same line—something Verdi tends to avoid.

### III

At this point one may ask if the special circumstances surrounding the composition of *Jerusalem* might have produced procedures for the treatment of stress different from those found when Verdi worked from an original French libretto. To check this possibility we need only look at Verdi's last French opera, *Don Carlos* (1867). Here the subject of musical prosody becomes more complex. As in *Jerusalem*, much of the poetry shows the French penchant for irregular stress patterns. The following lines (3-4) from Elisabeth's aria "Toi qui sus le néant" (Act V, sc. 1) are typical.

Example 13.

\[\text{Si l'on repand encore des larmes dans le ciel,}\]
\[\text{Porte en pleurant mes pleurs aux pieds de l'Eternel.}\]

Line 1 is comprised of two identical hemistiches that divide into groups of 2+4 syllables. Line 2 is different. The first hemistich divides into 1+3+2 syllables and the other into 2+4. This results in an AABA pattern to the internal division of these lines. Example 14 shows how Verdi chose to set the first line to two identical two-measure phrases. But the rhythm of these phrases is not determined by the prosody of the text, as one might expect. Rather, the rhythm contradicts the prosody in three places: the initial weak syllable of each hemistich is set on the strongest beat of the measure in both phrases; and in measure 4 the weak syllable *dans* also falls on the downbeat, displacing the primary accent *ciel* to a weaker metric position.

Example 14.

\[\text{Si l'on repand en-co-re des larmes dans-le ciel,}\]
\[\text{Porte en pleurant mes pleurs aux pieds de l'E-tner-nel.}\]

While perhaps not as awkward as some of the prosody we have seen, these four measures do represent a situation in which Verdi sacrifices normal prosody to rhythmic-melodic symmetry. But in the very next phrase he throws aside all consideration of melodic symmetry and gives the second line a much more natural musi-
cal prosody, creating in the process one four-measure phrase with an asymmetrical, non-repetitive rhythmic organization. Within a space of only eight measures Verdi has shown us two extremes of melodic style based on differing relative priorities of text prosody and melodic shape. This variety of melodic style is not found in Jérusalem and seems to indicate a new interest on Verdi’s part in the creation of a more idiomatic prosody for the frequently irregular stress patterns of French poetry.

I say “seems to indicate” because the relationship between melodic asymmetry and the proper setting of French texts with irregular prosody may not be of a cause-and-effect type, but may be coincidental. Support for this view may be found in other Verdi melodies that are equally as irregular in their rhythmic or phrase structure as line 2 of example 14, but not because of the poetic prosody of the text. The following lines of Philippe from his duet with Rodrigue at the end of Act II (Tableau II, sc. 6) contain two six-syllable hemistiches each.

Example 15.

J’ai de ce prix | sanglant | payé | la paix

du monde;

Example 16.

Philippe

J’ai de ce prix sanglant payé la paix du monde

Ma foudre à terrasse l’orgueil des novateurs

Budden talks about asymmetrical melodies like those of example 16 in his article “L’Influenza della tradizione del grand

Opéra francese sulla struttura ritmica di ‘Don Carlos.” 24 He hypothesizes that Verdi was creating in Don Carlos a new

kind of liberated French melody, and attributes the new rhythmic freedom to the suppleteness of the French language and its "relative lack of tonic accent." The problem with Budden's theory is that it confuses suppleness with variety. Certainly French poetry contains a large variety of possible stress patterns, but this does not mean that the prosody of any particular line is supple enough to be interpreted in several different ways. Yes, some unaccented syllables may, in their musical setting, have to take on secondary accents in order to avoid the impossibly long series of weak syllables characteristic of French poetry. But these secondary accents are determined by grammatical syntax; and since this syntax is not something that can be reinterpreted at will, the stress patterns of French poetry are really just as fixed as those of Italian poetry. The difference is mainly that Italian stress patterns are fixed before the fact, so to speak, by poetic meters, while French stress patterns are fixed after the fact by syntactical relationships. In any case, we can find nothing inherent in the French language, per se, that allows Verdi to set the first half of each line in example 15 in rhythmic parallel. If one invokes, as does Budden, the relative weakness of secondary accents in French poetry as a justification for situations like these, then one would have to admit the possibility of any kind of metric placement for secondary accents. But as we have seen, Verdi's treatment of these accents is, on the whole, more predictable and methodical than this and gives no indication of having been governed by such prosodic license. In short, we cannot use language as the raison d'être for this new liberated melodic style. Verdi could easily have done the same—and did according to Budden—with Italian texts.

Looking back from Don Carlos to Jerusalem, we see that the actual mechanics of Verdi's French text setting did not change from his first to his last contact with that language. Rather, the procedures that guided him in the setting of French librettos were identical to those that governed his setting of Italian verse. They may be summarized as follows:

1. Primary accents should fall on the downbeat.
2. Secondary accents should normally fall in metric positions stronger than those occupied by the unaccented syllables to which they are related.
3. Exceptions generally occur when the retention of rhythmic-melodic symmetry is critical for the musical-dramatic character of a number. In other words, musical considerations sometimes take priority over textual considerations.
4. Normal prosody tends not to be distorted more than once in a line of Italian poetry or in a hemistich of French poetry.

As his letters to Du Locle, quoted earlier, show, Verdi insisted that some of the poetry of Don Carlos be constructed with an Italianate regularity to accommodate a particular melodic idea he apparently already had in mind. Clearly these were not the desires of a man who felt his music had to conform to every nuance of the French language. Rather, the creation of an effective musical prosody became for Verdi a deli-
cate process of balancing the often conflicting demands of poetic stress with the existence of independently conceived melodic structures. The fact that this balance was achieved using the same system of operating procedures for both French and Italian librettos, and that changes of melodic style in Don Carlos cannot be attributed to these procedures, should be sufficient proof that Verdi’s French text setting was not significantly affected by any unique characteristics of that language.