

with Fabrice's withdrawal at the end of the novel as a symbolic castration—the Abelard and Héloïse bit. A few incidents such as this Saint Jerome episode are offered as evidence of Stephens' thesis, but only halfheartedly, for we learn that Fabrice's "turn toward serious religious belief and later retirement is only occasionally hinted at, and then, ambiguously" (p. 277). A footnote to this evasive comment refers us lamely to an opinion of Margaret R. B. Shaw, who wrote the introduction to the Penguin translation of *La Chartreuse*. Significantly, there is no reference anywhere in the critical apparatus to Bardèche, Brombert, Hemmings, Levin, Prévost et al., or to any Stendhal critic at all.

There is no *fin amors*, no courtly love, no *virgin* becoming the *Virgin* for Fabrice del Dongo. Fabrice does experience a passionate and "sublime" love, does discover his identity through that love, does find immense relief in knowing that the *luoghi ameni*, the earthly paradises, exist for him, too. Certainly there is a good measure of Romantic angelism in Stendhal's depiction of love; certainly the spirit of *La Chartreuse* is ethical, but that spirit is resolutely secular.

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Measuring Language Patterns

To the Editor:

Though I am sympathetic with the views on perception of Boomsliter, Creel, and Hastings ("Perception and English Poetic Meter," *PMLA*, 88, 1973, 200–08), I am troubled by a number of points in their provocative article. First: I am skeptical about the validity of their experiment in unled choral reading upon which everything else depends. They believe that in such reading "each speaker must use the pattern that he *expects* the others to impose. Dramatic variations in timing are inhibited; faithfulness to basic timing patterns is increased" (p. 201). But how can anyone know that this is the motive for the results obtained? May we not with equal plausibility assume that the tendency toward equal timing is a result of group behavior—that each member of the group, trying to "keep together" with the others, instinctively hits on regular timing as the only way in which this can be achieved? Even if only one or a few of the group does this, would not he (or they) tend to lead the less confident of the group, either emphatically or subliminally? Once the tendency toward equal timing has begun, it would of course continue. Indeed, would not the authors' speaking "the first two or three words to get everyone together" (p. 201) have the same effect?

Even assuming the validity of the experiment, I do not think the right inferences have been drawn from it. What we have are "objective measurements" which are supposed to reveal subjective processes. But are such processes unequivocally thus indicated? I doubt it.

The accent blocks tend toward equivalence, but they are clearly more unequal than equal. I do not see that we can infer much from this. In order to make inferences about what the readers are "doing" to the verbal material, we would first have to know precisely the degree of objective *disorder* in that material. But we do not know this; we only know the ways in which various readers might construe it. There is, therefore, no objective standard against which to measure the performance of the choral readers. Furthermore, the fact that the accent blocks are mostly not equal is quite as significant as the fact that some are, or that there is an approach to equivalence.

I think that the authors have fallen into the trap of using objective, "scientific" timing for a psychological phenomenon—for an esthetic process that occurs in virtual, not real, time, and for which real time is irrelevant. We have, alas (or, perhaps, hooray!) no objective means for getting at truly subjective processes. There is only introspection.

I should say, finally, that the authors do not seem to make a clear enough distinction between meter and rhythm—a distinction that is, to my mind, crucial for understanding the process of "double audition" and the way in which rhythm arises. This is perhaps why they draw the wrong inference from a few of my own remarks (p. 205). My references to Platonic Ideas and to meter as an "ideal norm" do not imply that a sing-song child's reading is better than that of a skilled reader. "Ideas" and "ideal" are used descriptively, not evaluatively. Any reading that comes close to mechanical equivalence will virtually destroy a poem's rhythm. It is precisely the *departures* from the norm which make for significant rhythm. These departures cannot be precisely measured. Getting them right depends upon one's rhythmic sense, a faculty that human beings (and bears) seem to possess. It is a special sort of sensibility that enables poets to make rhythm out of metered language and enables readers to respond to it.

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Messrs. Boomsliter, Creel, and Hastings reply:

We wish to thank Schwartz for clarifying his use of the term "ideal norm." His explanation places us firmly on the same ground.

The questions he raises in his letter reflect a view

typical of many literary scholars who are understandably dubious about efforts at measurement in an artistic area. Schwartz raises questions first of all about unled choral reading. He asks whether the resulting pattern is not an artifact of group recitation rather than an expression of the speakers' understanding of how their language is patterned. To us, as technical students of speech production, such an artifact is inherently impossible. Speech production requires that motor organization be prepared in advance, in terms of an anticipated pattern, and on a basis of meaning. In experimental terms, although solo and group speakers do not perform identically, they do use the same schematic patterns. The variations shown by solo speakers are reasonable variations at understandable points; they are not the product of different systems or of lack of system. Neither is group performance driven by a starting signal. For the experimenter to say "A bird . . ." and then leave the chorus to its own devices cannot establish a pattern any more than the starting shot directs a runner's feet. It merely gets people started together. In our experiments, the result of a starting hand wave is the same as the result of a few starting words.

Accent patterns hold tenaciously. The accents are not optional decorations to be chosen or not at the whim of a speaker. Syllables draw accent because they carry governing meanings. And, as David Abercrombie says in his valuable "A Phonetician's View of Verse Structure" (*Studies in Phonetics and Linguistics*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1965) the accents are "unmistakably isochronous"—evenly spaced in time—and a speaker who used another pattern would seem to be speaking a foreign dialect.

One of Schwartz's objections to the derived data is this: "The accent blocks tend toward equivalence, but they are clearly more unequal than equal." We simply do not comprehend this; therefore our only answer can be to state plainly what the case is. Equivalence, that is, "equal value" of accent blocks is our hypothesis. The blocks do not cover exactly equal amounts of time in either solo performance or choral performance. But they are closer to equal in the choral performance. What is clear to us is that the durations are, by statistical measures and by the most straightforward inspection, close to equal in the individual performances as shown in Figures 2 and 4 of the article, and closer still in both choral performances (Figures 5 and 8). Figures 5 and 8 contrast in the predicted way with the corresponding solo performances (Figures 4 and 7). That is, the choral performances exhibit greater regularity of durations. This tendency toward regularity or equality is a confirmation of the hypothesis of equivalence.

The measurements, which were made from start to start of accented syllables, do not show precisely equal

timing because English timing is not from start to start of accented syllables. English speakers do their timing from beat to beat of accents. We have work in progress to investigate this, as we reported in the article (p. 206). Our procedure, most of it developed since we wrote the article, is to let the speaker locate the beat for us. We ask him to recite in time to an electronic metronome. His words and the location of the metronome blip are then measured from an acoustic spectrographic record. In the syllable "scratch," for example, we find that the beat can come as late as two-thirds of the way through the syllable. As these data develop we will be able to clear up some spurious irregularities that come from measuring from the wrong points.

The matter of "rhythm" versus "meter" is a vexed one because the terms have been used in more than one way. To us "meter" normally refers to the pattern of beats and "rhythm" refers to the same thing. But the term "rhythm" has also been used to mean (1) the pattern made by the particular succession of prosodic elements that the poet chooses, notably variations in successions of stressed and unstressed syllables; (2) the further variations that a performer imposes on the poet's particular realization of the metrical scheme. We refer to both of these matters rather extensively in the article, and have tried to distinguish them rather sharply.

Schwartz says: "Any reading that comes close to mechanical equivalence will virtually destroy a poem's rhythm. It is precisely the departures from the norm which make for significant rhythm." We think that the role of departures is illustrated by Snell's measurements of "Blow, Bugle, Blow" which we cited. Using a dramatic performance by a professional elocutionist, she found timing variations that cannot be impeached. Measuring from points inside the syllables would make only small differences, since her readers used expressive pauses which are much longer than syllables.

Here we come to the subjective factors. We do experience the dramatic version as a dramatic variation of what is subjectively identified as the simple pattern. We would not agree with Schwartz's term "objective disorder." This is "varied order." The elocutionist was a skilled reader. Although his style has gone out of fashion since 1919 it was a recognized system of embellishment. Each elocutionary device had a meaning that was understood by listeners.

We would call this reading "varied" rather than "disordered." If the same proportion of departure from pattern were introduced at random it would produce disorder, and would be a liability. This much disorder would certainly produce the effect of foreign dialect, as Abercrombie says. But the dramatic variations do not do so—they are an asset. Equally, we would not agree that a chant in mechanical equivalence

lence virtually destroys a poem's pattern. Instead, it correctly represents the fundamental pattern, which is the mind's tool of memory and management. But we agree that it is less rich than a normal reading because it lacks the additions we regularly make by expressive purposeful variations in speaking.

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Distance in Wordsworth's *Prelude*

To the Editor:

John T. Ogden's article (*PMLA*, 88, 1973, 246–59) on Wordsworth's poetic technique of distancing in *The Prelude* is interesting and helpful in understanding parts of this poem. But I think his thesis must be significantly qualified if we are, indeed, to view this technique as a means by which to "throw light on the workings of the imagination."

Certainly temporal distancing is operative throughout the retrospective poem, and, as Ogden says, allows the poet to gain perspective and transform the objects into "something new and extraordinarily meaningful." But *spatial* distancing is not the primary mode at all stages in the growth of the poet's mind, and, in particular, is not dominant in the childhood descriptive scenes. Ogden's thesis applies best to those scenes he quotes so frequently from Book VII, "Residence in London," where there is a need to mold an unresponsive urban milieu into imaginative vision. But many of the childhood scenes, among them some of the well-known "spots of time," evince more the power of proximity, where the poet is almost engulfed by the imposing landscape.

Nor do these childhood scenes which illustrate the power of proximity signal a failure of imagination. Imagination can be seen operating whether distancing urban or public scenes, or interpenetrating with nearby or impinging scenes. The matter is not so simple.

The Book I scene of the boy hanging above the raven's nest serves as an example of the power of proximity. He is hanging "by knots of grass / And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock." He is "Suspended by the blast which blew amain, / Shouldering the naked crag." The characteristic spiritual communication expressed in terms of the "strange utterance" of the wind comes as a result of the threatening and proximate landscape. There is no attempt in the writing of this passage to gain perspective through spatial distancing. The reader is forced, through the detailed

images, to experience the event in the person of the boy on the cliffs.

Another, quieter, scene that illustrates the power of proximity is the depiction of the boy waiting for the horses to carry him home for a vacation (Book XII [1850]; this scene was in the early 2-book *Prelude*, but Wordsworth later transferred it to Book XII). Interestingly, in this case the boy is sitting on a hill overlooking two roads, but it is not the distant scene that is indelibly etched in his memory, but the deceptively simple, nearby one: he is "half-shelter'd by a naked wall"; on his "right hand was a single sheep / A whistling hawthorn on [his] left," and they are called "Companions." Little can be seen at a distance because of a mist that gives only "intermitting prospect." When the associative link has been forged between the scene and the death of his father—admittedly an example of temporal distancing—it is to the companionable and protectively close images that his mind reverts in later years to "drink / As at a fountain."

Further instances of the importance of proximity in *The Prelude* could be cited, but I think the point is clear. Ogden is right when he says that the poet sometimes gains perspective through spatial distancing, but this is not the whole story and it does not fully explain Wordsworth's imaginative mode of operation. In conclusion, I will cite a fragment from the Christabel Notebook which was not incorporated into *The Prelude*—though many passages from this notebook were—but which was part of the early autobiographical impulse of 1798–99 that matured into *The Prelude*. This fragment is interesting because it juxtaposes distance and proximity, and indicates that both can be, at different times, modes of imaginative activity:

Long had I stood and looked into the west,
Where clouds and mountain tops and gleams of light,
Children of glory all []
Made one society and seemed to be
Of the same nature; long I stood and looked
But when my thoughts began to fail, I turned
Towards a grove, a spot which well I knew,
For oftentimes its sympathies had fallen
Like a refreshing dew upon my heart;
I stretch[ed] myself beneath the shade
And soon the stirring and inquisitive mind
Was laid asleep; the godlike senses gave
Short impulses of life that seemed to tell
Of our existence.

(*Poetical Works*, v, 344)

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Mr. Ogden replies:

Proximity does have an important effect in Wordsworth's imaginative view of nature, though I contest