

Beyond Scansion in Horatian Lyric Versification
(What is Latin about Latin meter or Why asclepiads are not boring)

“... approaching a poem as a prosodist only begins with scansion.”

- J. D. Hall, *Seamus Heaney’s Rhythmic Contract*, 5

“... the misplaced accent’s call to attention”

- J. Longenbach, *The Art of the Poetic Line*, 101

I. Horatian Asclepiadeans, 34/103 odes (Sapphic 25/103, Alcaic 37/103)

“Who are the tutors I need?
 Well, Horace, adroitest of makers,”

- from W.H. Auden’s poem “A Thanksgiving”

Four versions of asclepiadean lines, with the number of each deployed in the *Odes*:

- twelve syllable asclepiad/lesser asclepiadean (509) — — — u u — — u u — u u
- eight syllable glyconic (255) — — — u u — u u
- seven syllable pherecratean (28) — — — u u — u
- sixteen syllable greater asclepiadean (32) — — — u u — — u u — — u u — u u

Five arrangements of asclepiadean lines, with the number of poems & lines/stanzas in the *Odes*:

- First Asclepiadean (stichic asclepiads: 3 poems, 86 lines, *perhaps* 21 stanzas + 2 lines)
- Second Asclepiadean (three asclepiads and a glyconic: 9 poems, 63 stanzas)
- Third Asclepiadean (two asclepiads, a pherecratean, and a glyconic: 7 poems, 28 stanzas)
- Fourth Asclepiadean (a glyconic and an asclepiad: 12 poems, *perhaps* 82 stanzas)
- Fifth Asclepiadean (stichic greater asclepiadeans: 3 poems, 32 lines, *perhaps* 8 stanzas)

II. Twelve syllable asclepiad / lesser asclepiadean

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | |
| • Greek pattern: | u | u | — | u | u | — | — | u | u | — | u | u | |
| • Horatian pattern: | — | — | — | u | u | — | | — | u | u | — | u | u |

III. Modern scansions of the twelve-syllable asclepiad

- G. Hermann *Elementa doctrinae metricae* (1816), 421-37:

u u | — u u — | — u u — | u u (aeolic base + two choriamb + iamb/pyrrhic)

IV. Ancient scansion of the Latin twelve-syllable asclepiad:

- Choriambic — — | — u u — | — u u — | u u

Marius Plotius Sacerdos (Keil VI.501/Morelli 265, Keil VI. 536-37/Morelli 265); Aphthonius/Marius Victorinus (Keil VI.108, 161, 172, esp 147/Morelli 265-66); Servius (Keil IV.465/Morelli 267), Servius (Keil IV.468/Morelli 267); Augustine *De musica* V.6.12 (Morelli 267); Priscian (Keil III.469/Morelli 267); Iulianus of Toledo 228, 146/Morelli 267; Diomedes (Keil I.519); Atilius Fortunatianus (Keil VI.295/Morelli 266)

- Antispastic u — — u | u — — u | u — u u

Atilius Fortunatianus (Keil VI.295/Morelli 266); Aphthonius/Marius Victorinus (Keil VI.167/Morelli 266); Aristides Quintilianus 36.6; Marius Plotius Sacerdos (Keil VI. 537/Morelli 265); cf. in Greek, Hephaestion x.3/33.5, Trichas 390.2.

- Dactylic — — | — u u | — || — u u | — u u

Marius Plotius Sacerdos (Keil VI. 537/Morelli 265); Aphthonius/Marius Victorinus (Keil VI.108/Morelli 265, VI.161/Morelli 266); Diomedes (Keil I.508-10/Morelli 266, and Keil I.518/Morelli 266); Atilius Fortunatianus (Keil VI.295/Morelli 266); Atilius Fortunatianus (Keil VI.295/Morelli 267, Keil VI.301/Morelli 267); Malleus Theodorus (Keil VI.590-92/Morelli 267); Iulianus of Toledo 228, 146/Morelli 267; Terentianus Maurus 2575.

V. Common pattern of Latin word-accent in the twelve-syllable asclepiad:

“It has to be living, to learn the speech of the place.”

- from Wallace Stevens’ poem “Of Modern Poetry”

(l)	(l)		/				/		/			
—	—	—	u	u	—		—	u	u	—	u	u
1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10	11	12

Regular variation with staccato accents on syllables 8 and 11 (at times with additional accents)

	/		/			
	—	u	u	—	u	u
	7	8	9	10	11	12

VI. Lines to tease and pore over—asclepiads in the ‘parade odes’ (1.1, 3, 5, 6): the focus today is the rare, surprising, perhaps expressive accent at the sixth syllable

- 1.1 (First Asclepiadean: stichic asclepiads)

— — — u u — || — u u — u u

- | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|--|-------------------|--|---------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Maecénas átauís | | édite régibus, | | <i>‘Maecenas, descended from ancestral kings’</i> |
| 2 | ó et praesídium (e)t | | dúlce decús méum, | | <i>‘both my guard and sweet adornment’</i> |
| | (...) | | | | |

- 1.3 (Fourth Asclepiadean: couplets of an octosyllabic glyconic and a dodecasyllabic asclepiad)

— — — u u — u u
 — — — u u — || — u u — u u

- 1 Síc té díua pótens Cýpri,
 2 síc frátres Hélenaē, || lúcida sídera, ‘So, the brothers of Helen, bright stars’
 (...)
 8 et sérues ánimae || dimídium méae. ‘and may you preserve half of my soul’
 (...)
 36 perrúpīt Acherónt(a) Hercúleus lábor. ‘Herculean effort broke through Acheron’
 (...)

- 1.5 (Third Asclepiadean: two dodecasyllabic asclepiads, a pherecratean, and a glyconic)

- 1.6 (Second Asclepiadean: three dodecasyllabic asclepiads and an octosyllabic glyconic)

— — — u u — || — u u — u u
 — — — u u — || — u u — u u
 — — — u u — || — u u — u u
 — — — u u — u u

- 1 Scribérís Várió || fórtis et hóstium ‘you will be written by Varius as brave and over enemies...’
 (...)
 5 Nós, Agríppa, nequ(e) haéc || dícere nec gráuem ‘We, Agrippa, [attempt] neither to tell of
 (...) these things, nor the heavy ...’
 17 Nós conuíuia, nós || proélia uírginum ‘We [keep singing of] banquets, [of] battles of young girls’
 (...)

VII. Closing Coda

“...or press an ear against its hive.”

- from Billy Collins’ poem “Introduction to Poetry”

“Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then, something.”

- from Robert Frost’s poem “For once, then Something”

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The third stanza of W.H. Auden “In Due Season,” for fun: an English accentual-syllabic twelve-syllable asclepiad, scanned:

Winter, | though, has the right || ténse for a loók | indoórs
 At our- | sélves, and with Fírst || Námes to sit fáce- | to-fáce,
 Time for | réáding of thoughts, || tíme for the trý- | ing-óut
 Of new | métres and néw || ré-ci-pes, pró- | per tíme
 To re- | fléct on événts || nóted in wárm- | er mónths
 Till, trans- | múted, they táke || párt in a hú- | man tále.

Horace *Carmina* I.vi (Second Asclepiadean stanzas)

	/ / / /	
	Scrībēris Variō fortis et hostium	— — — UU — — UU — UU
	/ / / /	
	victor, Maeoniī carminis ālite,	"
	(/) (/) (/) / / (/) /	
	qua[m] rem cumque ferōx nāvibus aut equīs	"
	/ / / /	
	mīles tē duce gesserit.	— — — UU — UU
5	/ / / / /	
	nōs, Agrippa, nequ(e) haec dīcere nec gravem	
	/ / / /	
	Pēlīdae stomachum cēdere nesciī,	
	(/) / / / /	
	nec cursūs duplicis per mar(e) Ulixēi	
	(/) / / /	
	nec saevam Pelopis domum	
	/ / / (/) /	
	cōnāmur, tenuēs grandia, dum pudor	
10	\ / / / / /	
	imbellisque lyrae Mūsa potēns vetat	
	/ / / /	
	laudēs ēgregiī Caesaris et tuās	
	/ / /	
	culpā dēterer(e) ingeni.	
	/ / / / /	
	quis Mārtem tunicā tēct(um) adamantinā	
	/ / (/) / /	
	dignē scrīpserit aut pulvere Trōicō	
	/ / (/) / /	
15	nigrum Mērionēn aut ope Palladis	
	/ / / /	
	Tydidēn superis parem?	
	/ / / / /	
	nōs convīvia, nōs proelia virginum	
	/ / / /	
	sectis in iuvenēs unguibus ācrium	
	/ / / (/) /	
	cantāmus, vacuī sive quid ūrimur	
	/ / / /	
20	nōn praeter solitum levēs.	