

Beyond Scansion in Horatian Lyric Versification

‘...approaching a poem as a prosodist only begins with scansion.’

- Hall (2009) 5

This paper takes the Horatian asclepiad (the twelve-syllable line also called the lesser asclepiad, the most common of the four asclepiadean lines) as a case study of a kind of creative adaptation in Latin versification. (Though their meter gets less attention than sapphic or alcaic, 34 of the 103 *Odes* are in asclepiadean forms.) Horatian asclepiads are *metrically* more fixed than their Greek precursors, with a spondaic aeolic base and a nearly requisite caesura. However, Horatian adaptations, following a predilection in much Latin verse, create clever rhythmical interactions of accent and verse-form—exploiting especially (1) staccato accents on short syllables, (2) adjacent accents, and (3) rare expressive accents. The accentual rhythms within the scansion, i.e., the play of the language within the pattern of heavy and light syllables, discloses a sonic liveliness that belies a more cursory reaction to the bare metrical pattern.

Horace introduces a new lyric voice to a Roman audience in the parade odes (1.1-9) and four of the nine are asclepiadeans (1, 3, 5, 6). This paper briefly notes the significant accentual and rhythmical expectations for the asclepiad lines as they unfold in these four introductory asclepiadeans, then focuses on the last of these four, *Odes* 1.6 (*Scriberis Vario*, a *recusatio*, self-deprecatingly—perhaps ironically—refusing to compose a martial or epic poem for Agrippa). The developing accentual and rhythmical expectations prepare the audience for striking instances of expressive accent and rhythm in this poem. This paper builds on the earlier scholarship of Zinn (1940) and Luque Moreno (1978) on accents in Latin lyric, but especially the recent work of Becker (2010 and 2012), Pilon (2013), Cowan (2014), and, for the approach to versification (though not accent and rhythm), Morgan (2010).

This paper explores how Horace's adaptations of the asclepiad line and manipulation of concomitant accentual patterns provide engaging and even expressive acoustic contours. In their bare metrical pattern Horatian asclepiads are more predictable than the Greek models, but the accentual rhythms make the lines sing anew in their new language.

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