

The Horatian Side of Sedulius Scottus

I propose an exploration of how the early medieval poet Sedulius Scottus (9th century CE) may have been influenced by Horace's *Odes* as a lyric poet. Sedulius Scottus has been studied in connection with Virgilian poetry as well as his likely self-chosen namesake Caelius Sedulius, but his lyric corpus has not been associated much with Horace. The *Carmina* of Sedulius Scottus reflect a departure from Virgil and Christian poetic conventions in his personal poetic voice, his inclusion of wit and good humor, and meta-poetic interests. These are features that are hallmarks of Horatian lyric, and it suggests that Sedulius Scottus was familiar with Horace in ways which prove central to developing his own lyric style.

The shared themes include meta-poetic concern over the author's poetic legacy, reverence for their mentor or sponsor, an interest in personal enjoyment and gentle self-effacement, and social mockery. Horace for example dedicates several poems to Maecenas and Augustus, including 1.1, 1.12, and 2.17; similarly Sedulius Scottus composes poems to or in honor of secular rulers and nobility, as well as the bishops Hartgar and Gunther (*Carmina* 1, 12, and 59). Horace is well-known for his poems celebrating wine and symposia, including 1.18, 2.10 and 2.11, 3.24); Sedulius composes poems about gatherings with music and drink as well, including C. 9, 32, and 76.

The stylistic attributes that suggest Sedulius modeled himself to some extent on Horace include some structural parallels in meter, uses of imagery, a personal voice of the narrator, as well as some of the narratives implied in the lyrics. Both poets invoke winter imagery (Sedulius c. 3, 7 - Horace 4.7) and compose poems to fountains (Horace 3.13 - Sedulius c.68), both write in the personal voice of a poet, and both poets make similar use of the Sapphic meters.

That Sedulius may have known and intentionally been modeling some of his poetry on Horace's *Odes* is probable not only because of the above parallels in content and style, but also because of his background in the Latin grammarians. Like many of his (probably) Irish colleagues, Sedulius Scottus wrote commentaries on major grammarians including Donatus and Priscian. There is also a manuscript containing some of Horace's lyrics that may have connections to either Sedulius himself or members of his scholarly community (Codex Bernensis 363).

Sedulius may have been influenced by Horace or Horatian style, but he also has his own clear attitudes, styles, and ideas that distinguish him from Horace. In addition to the Christian leanings of his poetry, Sedulius is also more openly accepting of some luxuries in life compared to Horace, at least in his poetry, Sedulius is also a little more directly biographical in his poetry than Horace who never names himself in his *Odes* (he does once in the Epodes), and Sedulius also write more directly as a member of a community as opposed to being a more individual poet like Horace.

Considering the poetry of Sedulius Scottus in the context of Horace's *Odes* in particular provides some insight into not only Horace's legacy and influence but also on how Carolingian Latin poets adapted their models to their own lives and times. Compared with some of his counterpart Christian poets, Sedulius Scottus manages to present a more balanced personal world that connects his sacred and secular lives, suggesting that it's perfectly possible to have both, making him unusual for his time; had he not had Horace as a model for combining the literary, personal, and outside worlds, he may not have been as successful as he was in achieving this feat.

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