



[Horace, Odes III.14.1-20](#)

Augustus's triumphant return

Name of the author: Horace

Date: 24 BCE

Place: Rome

Language: Latin

Category: Roman

Literary genre: Poetry

Title of work: Odes

Reference:

III.14.1-20

Commentary:

This *Ode* was written in honour of Augustus's triumphant return from Spain in 24 BCE. Augustus is compared to Hercules, who also came back from Spain via Rome as a victor, having slain the monster Geryon. Hercules was an extremely important figure in Augustan iconography, celebrated as *Hercules victor* or *Hercules invictus*. The *Ara Maxima*, which stood in the Forum Boarium in ancient Rome, and was the earliest cultic centre of Hercules, also commemorates the hero's arrival in Rome on his return from Spain (Virgil also discusses this in the *Aeneid* VIII.202-305). Hercules was also used as a model for the deification of Augustus. Ovid, for instance, tells the story of Hercules defeating the monster Cacus and the thanks he received in return from the Arcadians. Hercules's impending deification is assured (*Fasti* I.583-584), and it is argued by Molly Pasco-Pranger, for example, (Molly Pasco-Pranger, "Added Days," p. 264) that a typological link to Augustus is implied here, in much the same way as Hercules and Augustus are linked in *Aeneid* VIII (see Karl Galinsky, "Hercules in the Aeneid"). The laurel sought at the price of death (3-4) refers to the fact that while Augustus was away in Spain, he fell extremely ill at Tarraco, and was close to death – so much so that rumours reached Rome that he had in fact died. Livia, Augustus's wife, is described as rejoicing at the return of her victorious husband, and sacrificing to the gods, and the virginal girls of Rome will no longer struggle to find husbands, as the soldiers returning from battle with Augustus will provide a ready selection of husbands (10-11). Horace celebrates the fact that while Augustus is in power, he need not fear violence and unrest (13-16). However, this is another example of exaggerated praise for the princeps, for as Daniel Garrison points out, the *pax Augusti* was by no means something inevitable at this point, and the final section of the passage reminds of past troubles (i.e. the Social/Marsian War mentioned in verse 18, and Spartacus's slave revolt of 73 BCE), suggesting that there is always the threat of peace being broken (Daniel Garrison, *Horace: Epodes and Odes*, p. 316). Indeed, as Robin Seager points out, the flattery masks a clear undercurrent of fear that civil unrest will return. Religious observance by faithful women at home, and indeed the stable sanctity of marriage itself, protected Rome's soldiers while they were fighting in Spain (5-9), and Augustus's safe return ensures peace for now. If Augustus should die, however, something which Horace earnestly prays will not happen any time soon ([Odes I.2.1-52](#)), this peace would be put at tremendous risk (Robin Seager, "Horace and Augustus," p. 26).

Keywords in the original language:

- [corona](#)
- [festus](#)
- [Hercules](#)
- [Hispana](#)
- [laurus](#)



- [maritus](#)
- [mater](#)
- [mulier](#)
- [plebs](#)
- [victor](#)

Thematic keywords in English:

- [Augustus](#)
- [Hercules](#)
- [marriage](#)
- [Social War](#)
- [Spain](#)
- [triumph](#)
- [victory](#)

Bibliographical references: Seager, Robin, "[Horace and Augustus: Poetry and Policy](#)", in Horace 2000: A Celebration: Essays for the Bimillennium (ed. Niall Rudd ; London: Duckworth, 1993), 23-40

Pasco-Pranger, Molly, "[Added Days: Calendrical Poetics and the Julio-Claudian Holidays](#)", in Ovid's Fasti: Historical Readings at its Bimillennium (ed. Geraldine Herbert-Brown; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 251-274

Garrison, Daniel H., [Horace: Epodes and Odes: A New Annotated Latin Edition](#) (London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991)

Galinsky, Karl, "[Hercules in the Aeneid](#)", in Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid (ed. S. J. Harrison; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 277-294

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Rome will not surrender

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Text

[Horace, Odes I.2.1-52](#)

Appeal to Augustus

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