



[Horace, Odes III.3.37-72](#)

The expansion of Rome

Name of the author: Horace

Date: 1st BCE

Place: Rome

Language: Latin

Category: Roman

Literary genre: Poetry

Title of work: Odes

Reference:

III.3.37-72

Commentary:

The third *Ode* uses a significant amount of its space (verses 37 to 62) describing mythological events, including a speech given by Juno (her speech occupies verses 18-68, not all quoted in the present passage) on the destruction of Troy and her stipulations for the rise of the Roman people in Troy's place. This passage begins with Juno, the wife of Jupiter, describing "warlike" Rome's (44) appetite for expansion in no uncertain terms. In a speech which echoes that given by Jupiter in the *Aeneid* (1.257-296), she envisions Rome's "dreaded name" (45) spreading all over the earth, as far as Africa, Europe, and Egypt. Indeed, only the very ends of the earth, expressed with opposing climates of fiery sun and misty rain (55-56), should mark the boundaries of Rome's territory. The "exiles" of verse 37 are Aeneas, the mythical founder of Rome, and his fellow Trojans, who were exiled from their home after its destruction, and fated to wander in search of a new place to settle. The trampling by cattle of Paris and Priam's (two of Troy's heroes) graves reminds of the utter shame and destruction that Aeneas was forced to overcome before founding early Rome (40-42). The eastern conquest over the Parthians (Medi) in verse 44 is nothing more than exaggerated hope on the part of the poet, as far from quashing the Parthians and imposing laws upon them, Augustus took the diplomatic route with the Parthians, gaining back the ensigns won by king Phraates through negotiation, not war. The eagerness of Rome to expand, however, refers not simply to territory, but to knowledge and enquiry (54).

This imagined conquering, however, comes with a condition – the people of Rome (referred to in verse 57 as *Quirites* – a name taken from the ancient Sabine town of Cures) must not be overly pious or assuming of their power, nor allow greed to overcome them. They must leave aside undiscovered gold, which is better left buried than used for human gain (49-51). It is possible that Horace alludes here to the moral reforms of Augustus, which legislated against the excessive displaying of wealth, such as the laws passed in 22 BCE regulating the amount of money that could be spent on celebrations and festivities, e.g. weddings (Suetonius, *Augustus* 34) (see Daniel Garrison, *Horace: Epodes and Odes*, p. 297). More generally, however, there is a moral message for Roman imperialism; while imperialism itself is somewhat morally self-destructive, if the Romans can be strong enough to shun gold, and hide it away then there will be no boundaries to her success. As Ellen Oliensis argues, the use of *aurum* and *terminus* in verses 49 and 53 likely alludes to the golden temple that Terminus (the god of boundaries) will come to share with Jupiter on the Capitoline hill. The implication is that one should 'hide gold away' by consecrating it in a temple, for example, just as Augustus did. The princeps, therefore, is an example of morality in this regard (Ellen Oliensis, *Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority*, p.109). Should the Romans seek to rebuild Troy, Juno claims this will only bring disaster and a repeat of the city's destruction (60-62). Indeed, Juno vows that should Troy be rebuilt with Apollo's help, she will topple it time and time again (63-68). The moral of the story is that the Romans should let the past be, and not attempt to revive what is lost. Rather, they should continue to move forward. A comparison can be drawn here with the *Aeneid* XII.818-828, where Juno agrees to stop opposing Aeneas's quest, and endorse the union of the Trojans and the Latins.

The rousing subject matter of this passage, which imagines the glorious spreading of the Roman empire, is interrupted at the end, however, by the return of the poet's voice, claiming that such dire topics are not suitable, and begging the Muse to cease relaying the gods' conversations, which undermine the more pressing matters that



his poetry addresses (69-72).

Keywords in the original language:

- [aurum](#)
- [bellicosus](#)
- [Capitolium](#)
- [fatum](#)
- [humanus](#)
- [Ilium](#)
- [ius](#)
- [Medi](#)
- [nomen](#)
- [Pius](#)
- [Quirites](#)
- [sacrum](#)
- [triumphus](#)
- [Troia](#)

Thematic keywords in English:

- [Aeneas](#)
- [Augustus](#)
- [exile](#)
- [expansion](#)
- [fate](#)
- [gold](#)
- [Juno](#)
- [Parthians](#)
- [Roman greed](#)
- [Roman people](#)
- [Troy](#)

Bibliographical references: Oliensis, Ellen, [Horace and the Rhetoric of Authority](#) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

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

Other sources connected with this document: Text

[Virgil, Aeneid I.257-296](#)

Jupiter outlines the future descendants of Aeneas – Rome's great leaders

- [Read more about Virgil, Aeneid I.257-296](#)

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