

Horace's *Odes* 4.1: Moderation, Mortality, and *Tempestivitas* in Support of Augustan Rule

Horace's introductory ode in Book 4 has baffled scholars, because it does not seem to correlate with the rest of the poems in the book. Most of the odes in his final book feature heavy Augustan propaganda, while the odes in Books 1-3, though still laudatory of the emperor, were less exuberant about Augustus' rule (Benario 1960). S. Bradshaw (1970) argues that Horace uses *Odes* 4.1 as an apology: that is, since he is no longer in his prime, Horace is unable to write as well as he once did, nor is it appropriate to cover the material he once did as a younger poet. On the other hand, Mitchell (2010) argues that we should interpret the speaker's voice of 4.1 as the voice of Augustus, instead of the voice of Horace; thus, we may solve the problem of the ode not predicting the subject matter of the rest of the book. Although it is debatable whether one should interpret the ode in Augustus' voice, Mitchell justifiably states that it is important to keep Augustus in mind when reading any of Book 4's odes.

This presentation argues that Horace uses *Odes* 4.1 to recall specific themes he has established in Books 1-3, such as moderation, mortality, and *tempestivitas*. In other words, 4.1 features themes that correspond more with Horace's previous odes than with the book it is introducing; therefore, the ode functions as a way to link Horace's first three books to Book 4. Moreover, by introducing these themes in the first ode to Book 4, I argue that Horace is intentionally applying them in support of Augustus' rule. The first ode ought to be taken as an overarching introduction to Book 4 as a whole, so when Horace alludes to specific themes in 4.1, he applies them to the rest of the book; and since Augustus is such a prevalent topic in the rest of the book, we should apply these themes to Horace's view of Augustan rule.

For instance, Horace includes the theme of *tempestivitas*, “the right time,” when he evokes Venus, and asks her to focus on a young man, Paulus Maximus; in doing so, the poet seems to shun love, because it is inappropriate for a man his age. Horace explicitly refers to the right time for love when he asks Venus: *si torrere iecur quaeris idoneum*, “if you seek an appropriate liver to scorch” (4.1.12). Although the time for love has passed for Horace, since he is already in his tenth *lustrum*, it is the right time for love for Paulus Maximus, because he is still young. It is appropriate, therefore, for him to indulge in the pleasures that Horace alluded to in his earlier work. I argue that Horace deliberately sets up *Odes* 4.1 in a way that excludes himself, in order to establish that there is a right time for everything, and thus he still follows the ideals he did when he wrote the first three books of *Odes*. Horace uses the theme of *tempestivitas* in the introduction so as to apply it to the fourth book of *Odes*, and therefore to claim that the time is right for Augustus.

This presentation seeks to illuminate why the first ode of Book 4 stands out, in that the explicit themes of Horace’s last book of odes are so vastly different from what he had previously written, and how the ode functions as a bridge between Horace’s earlier work and his new book. Although 4.1 may initially seem irrelevant to the rest of the book, the ode reintroduces Horace’s key themes, and these themes should be kept in mind when reading the following poems that are primarily used to exalt Augustus.

Bibliography

Benario, Janice M. (1960). “Book 4 of Horace’s *Odes*: Augustan Propaganda.” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 91: 339–352.

Mitchell, Elizabeth. (2010). "Time for an Emperor: Old Age and the Future of the Empire in Horace *Odes* 4." *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici* 64: 43–76.

S. Bradshaw, A. T. von (1970). "Horace, *Odes* 4. 1." *The Classical Quarterly* 20: 142–153.