

*Roma Capta, Anglia Capta: Conquest as a Metaphor for Reception in the Front Matter of
Thomas Hawkins's Odes of Horace, the best of lyrick poets*

Horace was all the rage in Britain in the 17th century. Most notably, Ben Jonson styled himself as the English Horace, using allusions to the Roman poet—and even putting him onstage as a character in his drama *Poetaster*—to explore the complexities of patronage, satire, and free speech in his own milieu (Martindale 1977; Money 2007; Moul 2009, 2010). But Jonson, who also translated the *Ars Poetica* and a few of the *Odes*, was not the only of his contemporaries to bring Horace into English. The 17th century saw an increase in translations of the *Satires* and *Epistles*, and in 1621 John Ashmore published the first collected translation of the *Odes* in English (Ogilvie 1981). This was followed quickly by another such collection, Thomas Hawkins's *Odes of Horace, the best of lyrick poets, contayning much morallity, and sweetnesse*, in 1625.

In this paper, I consider the front matter of Hawkins's collection, which contains seven poems by others praising Hawkins's translation. These encomia, three in English and four in Latin, offer a window onto contemporary attitudes toward English language and literature in comparison with their Latin counterparts: national pride intermingles with anxieties about inferiority; the boastfulness of the newcomer mixes with the zeal of the convert. In short, we see a blend of perspectives familiar from Rome's own engagement with Greek literature. As these English aristocrats sort out their conflicted attitudes toward their reception of Roman literature, they do it in terms that are themselves adapted from Roman literature.

Horace himself famously described Rome's relationship to Greek culture with the dictum *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes / intulit agresti Latio* (*Ep.* 2.1.156-57). This dynamic of mutual conquest, *mutatis mutandis*, appears several times in the front matter of Hawkins's

collection. For example, one of the poets, identified by the initials F.L., juxtaposes the statement that England is now “ruled” by the Muses (*Anglia nunc Musis dominatur*) with the claim that Rome has been “beaten” at its own lyric (*Lyrice victaque Roma suo est*). This might seem a surprising reuse of Horace’s formulation—England’s “defeat” of Rome, unlike Rome’s of Greece, can only be metaphorical—but I believe that the Horatian echo is there. The allusion serves to cast England as a new “Rome,” the latest in a proud cultural lineage that goes back to Greece. Another of these poets, J. Chapperlinus, employs a similar metaphor of cultural conquest, writing that the English Muse now produces verse that rivals Roman charm and does not fall short of her “captives” (*Anglia Romani jam prodit Musa leporis / aemula, nec captis excidit illa suis*).

Other writers frame the dynamics of mutual conquest differently by alluding to Rome’s historical conquest of Britain. G. Fortescue, for example, writes, “Wee whom the Romans held for dull, and weake, / Now teach their best of Poets how to speake.” These verses realign the terms of the Horatian formulation, making England in some ways the analogue of Rome and in others the analogue of Greece. Like Greece in Horace’s *bon mot*, the conquered nation of Britain gets its revenge in the cultural arena: Hawkins’s translation teaches Horace how to speak. Like Horace’s *agreste Latium*, however, Fortescue’s England acknowledges its role as a cultural parvenu.

In this paper, I examine these and a handful of other such instances from the encomiastic poems that open Hawkins’s edition, arguing that these 17th-century writers riffed on Horace’s famous line from *Ep.* 2.1 and found it a flexible model for expressing their debt to, and rivalry with, Roman literature.

Bibliography

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