

## Dick Pic for Fuscus: Flaccus' Mindful, Happy Seeds

There is something facetious about "*laetus*" in Epist. 1.10.50. If we combine what we know about Horace's use of hidden anagrams, as described in Oberhelman and Armstrong (1995), with the ecocritical acumen of Estok (2020), a botanical joke arises. Horace is not *happy* but *amused* at the fecundity of his "psychic husbandry" since he inserts a *simulacrum* (i.e., dick pic) of his penis into an anagram: [sa]P[i]EN[t]E[r], *Aristi* (Epist. 1.10.44). The joke at Fuscus' expense relies on what modern comedians call "a long walk." Horace furtively (*furtim*, Epist. 1.10.25) turns the screw through the misdirection of Stoicisms (e.g. Epist. 1.10.12) undermined by Epicureanisms (e.g., Epist. 1.10.13) which climax as a punchline rooted in a sexualized, botanical threat. This fig-splitting joke is hardly his first. Indeed, Horace again defends the reputation of his purest penis (*purissimum pene*<*m*>, Suet. Poet. 40.31) when he confidently asserts his ability to fill a void. Horace quips that "O! Flaccid's words will penetrate Caesar's aural orifice" (*Flacci / verba per attentam . . . ibunt Caesaris aurem*, Sat. 2.1.18-19).

On the one hand, philology may ally with ecocritical methodology. Accordingly, precedence for botanical innuendo in word games, as discussed in Hardy and Totelin (2016), provides contexts against which to apply the ecocritical approach of Sharkie (2017). Ecocriticism helps unpack the implications of Horace's eroticized vegetation. Horace's environmentally based humor is remarkably consistent with the ecological ethics in van Wensveen (2000). On the other hand, ecocriticism needs traditional philology to extricate Horace's environmental witticisms. Ahl (1985) furnishes methodologies for discovering Latin etymological word plays while Reckford (1997) shows that Augustus' own epistle (Suet. Poet. 40.39) engages Horace in word play, *iraSCI me tibi SCIto* (44). Asmis (1995) provides further insight into anagrammatic letter

play and the problem of pleasure in Epicurean poetics. As Fraenkel (1957) and McCarter (2018) argue, Horace tends to blur the line between erotic and poetic play which intersect with the pun on "*liber*" as book or boy in Epist. 1.20.1 where the "*liber*" will be fingered and abused (*manibus sordescere*, 1.20.11) once released to the publishers in Rome. Horace again pairs pederasty and the seeds of Epicurean poetics when he writes that "friendly teachers sometimes give boys cookies so that they learn their ABC's (*ut pueris olim dant crustula blandi / doctores, elementa velint ut discere prima*, Sat. 1.1.25-27).

This paper argues that Horace explicitly anagrammatizes *A-R-I-S-T-I* as *SA[p]I[en]T[e]R* (Epist. 1.10.44) according to conventional Epicurean poetics; likewise, Horace signs off with an implicit anagram of his own *nomen gentilicium*. M. Aristius Fuscus may gleefully (*laetus*, Epist. 1.10.44) claim "*Sapienter*" as his Stoic moniker once he grasps that the additional letters inserted into the anagram of his *nomen* spell penis (*P, E, N, E*). Horace reaffirms the botanical innuendo by twice repeating "*laetus*" (Epist. 1.10.44, 40). Significantly, "*laetus*" alludes to a description of copulating horses (*natura . . . laeta*, Lucr. 4.1200) which in turn recalls the fable of the horse and the deer (Epist. 1.10.34-38). Furthermore, Lucretius' exuberant "*natura laeta*" is a suitable complement to Horace's botanically threatening "*natura victrix*" (Epist. 1.10.25).

Notwithstanding the allusion, Horace ironically plays on two definitions for *laetus*: one means gleefully victorious while the other means botanically fertile. Horace laughs last since his psychic husbandry successfully inseminates the mind of Fuscus with the ABCs of Epicurean poetics. As in *Satire* 1.8 where a fig tree becomes objectified as Priapus' phallus in the garden of Maecenas, Horace concludes the letter to Fuscus by anagrammatically identifying himself with a tree that humorously threatens sexual violence.

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