

## FLACCUS

The idea that ‘Horace repeatedly puns on his name’ has recently sprung up again.<sup>1</sup> *Flaccus* we are told means ‘limp’ and Horace uses his name to make various jokes about impotence. This is a load of cobblers.

The idea appears to have originated with Cruquius (Jacob de Cruque) in his edition of 1578.<sup>2</sup> It found favour with Kiessling in 1884 but was rejected by Kiessling and Heinze in 1914 and since has been repeatedly spotted and sunk.<sup>3</sup> Four points need to be made.

1. The basis for this assumption is false. The Latin word *flaccus* did not in fact mean (originally or at any point) ‘limp’ (a tendentious translation). *Flaccus* is of unknown etymology but seems to contain the same type of popular gemination that forms a number of adjectives denoting physical deformities, such as *brocc(h)us* ‘buck-toothed’, *lippus* ‘blear-eyed’, etc.<sup>4</sup> Like these, *flaccus* is *not* a free-floating adjective, meaning ‘limp’ or the like, which can be applied to any part of the body or anything.<sup>5</sup> It means ‘lop-eared’ (like a rabbit) and appears to occur exactly twice in all of Latin.<sup>6</sup> It is used only to describe animals and people, and refers only to the ears:

<sup>1</sup> William Fitzgerald, ‘Power and impotence in Horace’s Epodes’, *Ramus* 17 (1988), 176–91 at 190, n. 7; Charles L. Babcock, ‘*Si certus intravit dolor*. A reconsideration of Horace’s Fifteenth Epode’, *AJPh* 87 (1966), 413; Alberto Cavarzere, *Orazio: Il libro degli epodi* (Venice, 1992), 215–16; David Mankin, *Horace: Epodes* (Cambridge, 1995), 239–40 (who mistakenly cites Lucian Müller, *Q. Horatius Flaccus. Oden und Epoden* [St Petersburg/Leipzig, 1900], II.462, in support); L. C. Watson, ‘Horace’s Epodes: the impotence of *iambos*?’ in S. J. Harrison (ed.), *Homage to Horace: A Bimillenary Celebration* (Oxford, 1995), 188, n. 3, 195; D. West, *Horace: The Complete Odes and Epodes* (Oxford, 1997), 138.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Alludit ad adjectivum *flaccus*, quasi Horatius flaccidis et demissis auribus in re Venerea illi non satisfacisset; nam Flaccus ab auribus flaccidis mobilibusque deductum est’, cited from Christoph W. Mitscherlich, *Q. Horatii Flacci Opera* (Leipzig, 1800), 600, whose only comment is ‘ohel’

<sup>3</sup> Adolf Kiessling, *Q. Horatius Flaccus: Oden und Epoden* (Berlin, 1884), 417 ad *Epod.* 15.12: ‘spielt es mit dem Kontrast der Bedeutung, welche *flaccus* als Appellativum ursprünglich gehabt hat = *flaccidus*’. But in Adolf Kiessling and Richard Heinze, *Q. Horatius Flaccus: Oden und Epoden* (Berlin, 1914), 559: ‘ein Spiel mit der ursprünglichen Bedeutung von *flaccus* “schlaff” scheint mir dem Ethos der Stelle nicht angemessen; auch hat sich die Bedeutung des Wortes längst auf “schlappohrig” eingeengt, was mit *demissae auriculae* (sat. I 9, 20) keineswegs identisch ist’ (repeated in the 9th edn, 1958, 554). Other recent supporters of a pun include Robert W. Carrubba, *The Epodes of Horace. A Study in Poetic Arrangement* (The Hague, 1969), 76 and n. 114: ‘perhaps’; and Nicholas Horsfall, ‘Three notes on Horace’s Epodes’, *Philol* 117 (1977), 137–8.

<sup>4</sup> Not attested outside Italic (Osc. nom. prop. *Flakis*, as if Latin \**Flaccius*) and unlikely to be inherited Indo-European. See Alfred Ernout and Antoine Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* (Paris, 1967), 237; Alois Walde and J. B. Hofmann, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1956), 507–8.

<sup>5</sup> Incorrectly Watson (n. 1), 188, n. 3: ‘Sceptics object that by the poet’s day *flaccus* had become restricted [see Kiessling and Heinze, n. 3] to the sense “floppy-eared”. . . . *Flaccus* is, however, to be understood in its root sense of *languidus*.’ Watson helps make clear the predominant mode of argument: *flaccus* is equated with its derivative *flaccidus* (see below) which is glossed as *languidus*, which can be given erotic overtones. However, ‘buck-toothed’ is not the same as ‘projecting’, which does not equal ‘with an erection’.

<sup>6</sup> The adjective *flaccus* seems to have dropped from daily use and it is far from clear that *Flaccus*, as a proper name, would be instantly etymologically transparent in daily use. Weaver (P. R. C.) is current English; Webster (T. B. L.) is not. But see Pliny below.

Varro, *R.R.* 2.9.4 (of dogs). The other citation, Cic. *Nat. Deor.* 1.80, needs to be quoted in full: 'ecquos si non tam [as Roscius was] strabones, et paetulos esse arbitramur, ecquos naevum habere, ecquos deos silos, flaccos, frontones, captiones, quae sunt in nobis?' All these are proper names, and perhaps should be capitalized.<sup>7</sup> Pliny the Elder is absolutely clear about the meaning of *Flaccus* (*N.H.* 11.136): 'aures homini tantum immobiles. ab his Flaccorum cognomina' ('The cognomen Flaccus comes from ears'). The same connotation is largely true even of its derivatives *flaccidus* 'like lop-ears', *flacc-eo* 'to resemble lop-ears', *flacc-esco* 'to become like lop-ears', which describe ears or the leaves of plants and are only rarely used in any transferred sense.<sup>8</sup> Nowhere in all Latin literature are any of these words applied to any other part of the human body or used in any sexual sense.<sup>9</sup>

Now one could make the argument that just because they never were does not mean they never could be. Perhaps using *flaccus* to describe the unerect penis was just waiting to happen.<sup>10</sup> In English, one could, I suppose, in theory apply the word 'lop-eared' to other parts of the anatomy and have the Earl of Rochester soliloquize to his 'lop-eared' penis. But in fact he never did, and to the best of the *OED*'s knowledge nor did anyone else. In short, the adjective *flaccus* 'lop-eared' simply would not have conjured up the connotation 'impotent' in the mind of any Roman. *Flaccus* described people with jug ears, not men with erectile dysfunction. It was not obscene; it was obsolete.

2. The Romans could of course pun on names, especially the old, disreputable aristocratic names. Corbeill has given a detailed analysis of the circumstances.<sup>11</sup> It is a mistake, however, to believe that the full etymological sense of someone's name was present at all times and all places to the Roman reader. As you picked up this article it is unlikely that you thought 'Parker! Ha, ha, one who keeps a park!' We manage to

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Arthur Stanley Pease, *Cicero: De Natura Deorum* (Cambridge, MA, 1955), I.410 ad loc.

<sup>8</sup> So *flaccidus*: Colum. 6.30.5, Plin. *N.H.* 8.205, Veg. *Mulom.* 1.1.2, Paul. Fest. 231 (Lindsay): 'Plauti appellantur canes, quorum aures languidae sunt ac flaccidae et latius videntur patere', all of ears; Plin. *N.H.* 15.127 of leaves; Apul. *Socr.* prol., *Met.* 7.8 of cloth/canvas; Lucr. 5.632 of a whirlwind. *Flacceo*: Lact. *Orif.* 8.8 of ears; Accius *Trag.* 3, Afran. *Com.* 65, Apul. *Apol.* 25, Cic. *Q.F.* 2.14.4 of speech or mental notions. *Flaccesco*: Colum. 12.7.4–5, Vitruv. 2.9.2 of leaves; Cic. *Brut.* 93 of speech or mental notions; Pacuv. *trag.* 77 of waves. See *TLL* for citations.

<sup>9</sup> Non. 157 (Lindsay = 101 Müller): 'flaccet: languet, deficit. Lucilius lib. VII: "hic est Macedo, si †Agrion† longius flaccet"' (Lucil. 275 Marx = 294 Krenkel) might be sexual but the reading and context are uncertain. Note that even if this is a sexual scene, *flaccet* could not refer to the penis or mean 'becomes impotent', since even in Marx's reconstruction of the text, Macedo and Agrion are supposed to be *pueri delicati*, whose sexual service would not be to bugger Lucilius.

<sup>10</sup> Babcock (n. 1, and following him Mankin, 240) claims that Martial is making this pun at 11.27.1: 'ferreus es, si stare potest tibi mentula, Flacce'. This is cited out of the context which is not impotence but exaggerated disgust at a cheap mistress. Further, Flaccus is merely a filler addressee, who is never the object of mockery. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, *Martial: Epigrams* (Cambridge, MA, 1993) rightly does not even bother to translate it in 1.59.4. Martial uses the name (apart from the references to Horace) in twenty-one epigrams on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from poetry to lovers. He makes fun of other people's penises to Flaccus, not Flaccus' to other people (7.82, 9.33). There is debate whether the name refers to a single person throughout but most of the mentions of the name seem to refer to a specific friend with circumstantial detail (e.g., 1.76, 8.45, 9.55, 9.90, 10.48). See Peter Howell, *A Commentary on Book One of the Epigrams of Martial* (London, 1980), 242–3 and literature cited there; Shackleton Bailey, in the Index (with corrections). Further, since Martial's mother was a Flaccilla (5.34.1), Flaccus is perhaps supposed to be a relative.

<sup>11</sup> Anthony Corbeill, *Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic* (Princeton, 1996), 57–98.

read Richard Brilliant and T. P. Wiseman, John Crook and J. T. Hooker without being brought up short every time by the daily meaning of the adjectives and nouns from which their family names derive. Sometimes a name is just a name.

More significant than the times when an orator punned on someone's name are the times when he did not. It is absurd to think that Cicero could not mention Balbus, Crassus, and all the rest without raising a laugh from the audience.<sup>12</sup> More to our point, he made it all the way through a defence of a Flaccus (L. Valerius), mentioning his client by his supposedly comical *cognomen* some eighty-eight times, without once feeling the need to apologize for it. Horace mentioned Brutus 'Dummy', Captio 'Big-Head', Crassus 'Thicky', Crispus 'Curly', Lepidus 'Prince Charming', Luscus 'Cyclops', Paulus 'Tiny', Rufus 'Red', Varus 'Bowlegs'—I have probably missed a few—because these were their names. In other poets, not even Fred Ahl can discover a pun on *Naso*.<sup>13</sup> It is best to take the advice of Cicero, the prime offender in this sort of thing: 'interpretatio nominis habet acumen, cum ad ridiculum convertas quam ob rem ita quis vocetur' (*De Orat.* 2.257). The opposite is equally true: a name has no particular point unless the author explicitly draws attention to a joke made by its interpretation. The examples from Horace do not qualify (see below).

3. The third point is really a subset of the second and reveals an interpretive bias to which some classicists are prone: if a meaning of a word can be there, it must be there. All senses, however recondite, of every word must be present simultaneously to the reader, as if each word were a dictionary entry. This is not confined to obscenities, but if the modern philologist trolling through the *OLD* can discover (or assume) an obscene meaning to a word in Latin (or Italian), it must have been there in all cases. Two notorious cases may illustrate this tendency: the arguments that the *passer* of Cat. 2 and 3 is really Catullus' penis and that the *unguentum* of 13 is really Lesbia's vaginal secretion.<sup>14</sup> Despite Jocelyn and Adams's disposal of these things,<sup>15</sup> some ideas are just too dumb to die.<sup>16</sup> This notion that every putatively obscene meaning of a word must be present to the listener at every occasion is even more nonsensical when it comes to names. Even if certain words *do* have obscene meaning in certain

<sup>12</sup> See Corbeill (n. 11), 57, for this point: Cicero puns on Bambalio but does not fear mentioning Balbus. For the perjorative cognomina, see Iiro Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (Helsinki, 1965).

<sup>13</sup> Missing from the index to *Metaformations* (Ithaca, NY, 1985). Cavarzere (n. 1), 216, sees one at *Fasti* 5.375–7.

<sup>14</sup> The first originated with Pontanus, see Julia Haig Gaisser, *Catullus and his Renaissance Readers* (Oxford, 1993), 242–3. It was revived in modern times by E. N. Genovese, 'Symbolism in the *passer* poems', *Maia* 26 (1974), 212–15 and G. Giangrande, 'Catullus' lyrics on the *passer*', *MPhL* 1 (1975), 137–46. For the second, Robert J. Littman, 'The unguent of Venus', *Latomus* 36 (1977), 123–8. Judith P. Hallett, 'Divine unction: some further thoughts on Catullus 13', *Latomus* 37 (1978), 747–8 suggested instead that the *unguentum* served as a lubricant for (anal?) intercourse. See the sensible comments of R. S. Kilpatrick, '*Nam unguentum dabo*: Catullus 13 and Servius' note on Phaon (*Aeneid* 3.279)', *CQ* 48 (1998), 303–5.

<sup>15</sup> H. D. Jocelyn, 'On some unnecessarily indecent interpretations of Catullus 2 and 3', *AJP* 101 (1980), 421–41; J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore, 1982), 32–3; D. F. S. Thomson, *Catullus* (Toronto, 1997), 202–3; J. W. Jones, 'Catullus' *passer* as *passer*', *G&R* 45 (1998), 188–94.

<sup>16</sup> Yvan Nadeau, 'O *passer* nequam (Catullus 2, 3)', *Latomus* 39 (1980), 879–80 and id., 'Catullus' sparrow, Martial, Juvenal, and Ovid', *Latomus* 43 (1984), 861–8; Richard W. Hooper, 'In defence of Catullus' dirty sparrow', *G&R* 32 (1985), 162–78; Micaela Jana, '*When the Lamp is Shattered*': *Desire and Narrative in Catullus* (Carbondale/Edwardsville, 1994), 46–50, rejects a crude Freudian penis in favour of a subtle Lacanian phallus.

contexts, we can meet people named Dick, John, Peter, and Roger without dissolving in laughter.<sup>17</sup>

Here we may touch on the problem of methodology. To argue that the set of associations which a particular word or image (obscene or not) may have set up in the minds of certain modern scholars is not necessarily the same as that which occurred to the original audience involves the most difficult of tasks: proving a negative. Appeals to common sense are unlikely to avail, since what is at issue is precisely what constitutes common (to whom?) sense (which?).<sup>18</sup> All we can do is to point to the attested meanings of words. I want to offer a single example of the dangers posed by this sort of argument:

I have a gentle cock,  
Croweth me day.  
He doth me risen early  
My matins for to say . . .  
His eyen are of crystal  
Locked all in amber  
And every night he percheth him  
In my lady's chamber.<sup>19</sup>

I mean, come on! Gentle cock? Lady's chamber? (Just ignore all that stuff in the middle, as the interpreters of the *passer* poems are forced to do). What could be more obvious? Except that, of course, it isn't. For 'cock' in the sense 'penis' has nothing whatsoever to do with 'cock' the bird. 'Cock' as 'penis' develops from 'stop-cock', whose connection with 'cock' the bird is obscure, and did not acquire an obscene sense until the 1600s.<sup>20</sup> The original audience, some two centuries earlier, on hearing the word 'cock' simply could not have thought 'penis'. Nor did they think 'cock' of a rifle, or 'cock-boat', or 'hay-cock', or 'cockle shell', or 'battle', or 'nonsense'. No more could *flaccus* 'lop-eared' have meant 'impotent' to the readers of Horace.

4. Where, in fact, did Horace use his name *Flaccus*? Exactly twice, which does not add up to 'repeatedly'. Neither of these occurrences constitutes a joke on the name.

At *Epodes* 15, Horace berates Neaera for breaking her oath of a faithful, mutual love:

o dolitura mea multum virtute Neaera:  
nam si quid in Flacco viri est,  
nec feret adsiduas potiori te dare noctis,  
et quaeret iratus parem,  
nec semel offensi cedit constantia formae,  
si certus intrarit dolor.

O Neaera, you will suffer greatly because of my manhood,  
for if there is anything of the man in Flaccus  
he will neither endure for you to give night after night to a rival  
—infuriated he will find an equal partner,

<sup>17</sup> Even *redende Namen* soon cease to be *redende*. How rapidly in the theatre do we come to hear Justice Shallow, Sirs Toby Belch and Andrew Aguecheek, Nick Bottom, et al., as just the characters' names.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Jocelyn (n. 15), 426.

<sup>19</sup> R. H. Robbins, *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (Oxford, 1952), no. 46, 41–42 (Index 1299), text normalized. B.M. Sloane 2593 (f. 10b), early XV century.

<sup>20</sup> *OED*, s.v. 'cock' sb.1, entries 12a and 20; first attested in 1618.

nor will the resolution of a man once wronged yield to your beauty,  
now that unchanging indignation has entered.<sup>21</sup>

This does not mean 'You will be sorry, if Flaccus can get an erection'. Babcock seems to get the situation exactly wrong: 'Someone more capable of satisfying Neaera's constant demands is evidently replacing the more moderate and perhaps exhausted Horace.' He speaks of 'an insatiable Neaera and a prodigious new lover'.<sup>22</sup> Commentators have oddly misunderstood the situation and behind many of the assumptions lurks the Romantic figure of the lover (unwillingly) pure and chaste from afar. Horace is angry with Neaera, not because he isn't getting any, but precisely because he *is*. Horace wishes to dump Neaera because she has betrayed him, but fears he may be unable to do so, precisely because he has been having great sex with her and part of him still wants to. Her offer of more sex will not weaken his resolution to break with her (*nec . . . cedet constantia formae*). There is something here that Horace wants the reader to recall, but it is not an incorrect etymology of his cognomen. It is what has leapt to the mind of nearly every commentator,<sup>23</sup> and that is Catullus 8:

Miser Catulle, desinas ineptire,  
et quod uides perisse perditum ducas . . .  
nunc iam illa non uolt: tu quoque impotens noli  
nec quae fugit sectare, nec miser uiue,  
sed obstinata mente perfer, obdura.  
uale, puella. iam Catullus obdurat,  
nec te requiret, nec rogabit inuitam.  
at tu dolebis cum rogaberis nulla . . .  
at tu Catulle destinatus obdura.

The whole epode is a clear allusion to Catullus. Horace did indeed mean for *quid . . . viri* to awake the full etymological sense of *virtus*, but the manhood involved is not the ability to give multiple orgasms; it is the manhood of Catullus' *prefer, obdura*. Horace's *constantia* does not recall *indomito constantior inguine neruus* (*Epod.* 12.19);<sup>24</sup> it recalls Catullus' *destinatus*. *Virtus, constantia* do make use of the language of virility, but the virility is the strength to break off a love affair which in fact provided erotic but not emotional satisfaction.

<sup>21</sup> Note the moods and tenses: if there is any manhood—and there is (ind.), he will not endure, he will seek, he will not yield (fut.), even though he has been wronged (pf. part.), since resentment has already entered (fut. pf.). *Contra* Watson (n. 1), 195, who misses the force of *est* and labels the sentence 'highly provisional'. Mankin (n. 1), 241, rightly comments, 'The clause is usually taken to mean "if a sure (cause of) grief shall have come", i.e. if it can be proved that Neaera has been unfaithful. This would suggest that the matter is still in doubt.' *Contra* Mankin, however, *dolor* is not *cupido* (Lucr. 4.1067 does not show this) but 'a feeling of resentment, indignation' (*OLD* 3); so Porphyrio, ad loc.

<sup>22</sup> Babcock (n. 1), 414. *Possum* can, of course, mean 'get it up' and Babcock cites *Epod.* 12.15 (*potest*) in support, but his other citations show the correct meaning of 'more successful' as a rival in love (so already in Porphyrio ad loc.): so *Odes* 3.9.2 (*potior*), also 4.1.17 (*potentior*), 4.10.1 (*potens*). As in these passages, Horace tells us explicitly that the basis of the rival's success is beauty or money (lines 17–22), not sexual stamina. Mankin (n. 1, ad loc.) rightly compares *Sat.* 2.5.76, *Ep.* 1.5.27, and *Pl. Men.* 359, *Ter. Ph.* 533; cf. H.'s use of *impar* in *Epod.* 11.18.

<sup>23</sup> For example, Kiessling and Heinze (n. 3), 544; Victor Grassmann, *Die erotischen Epoden des Horaz* (Munich, 1966), 153 (who rejects a pun on *flaccus*: n. 70); Henri Hierche, *Les Épodes d'Horace: art et signification* (Brussels, 1974), 136 (cf. 112, 159); Cavarzere (n. 1), 215–16. Babcock, Fitzgerald, and Watson do not mention Cat. 8; Mankin only in passing.

<sup>24</sup> So Fitzgerald (n. 1), 190, n. 7, as if *constantior* by itself could mean 'with an erection'. One recalls the schoolboy howler 'Be strong, girl: now Catullus is hard.'

So why did Horace mention his name? Not to make a pun on 'lop-eared'. Partially out of 'Selbstgefühl'<sup>25</sup> and partially to balance his use of Neaera's name,<sup>26</sup> but mostly because Catullus so addressed himself in the poem to which Horace is alluding. Horace saying *nam si quid in Flacco viri est*, recalls Catullus saying *iam Catullus obdurat*. In each case the name, the third person, presents the woman's point of view: she will see that Catullus/Horace is resolute. And just as in Catullus 8, the girlfriend's grief is mostly a matter of the poet's wishful thinking.

What is odd about this interpretation of *flaccus* as 'impotent', 'weak', or the like is that Horace fails to rise to the occasion with a pun on his name in the two poems actually about impotence, *Epodes* 8 and 12.<sup>27</sup> However, it is claimed that he does so in the only other occurrence of that name, *Satires* 2.1.17–18:

nisi dextro tempore Flacci  
verba per attentam non ibunt Caesaris aurem

Here the punsters can be divided into two classes: those who limit themselves to imagining a joke on 'ear'<sup>28</sup> and those who imagine further puns on 'limp'.<sup>29</sup> The 'ears' seem to be on firmer ground but they have to stretch the Latin to make the pun. So Rudd: 'Only at a suitable moment will Floppy's words (*Flacci verba*) enter Caesar's pricked up ear (*attentam aurem*).'<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, that is not what *attentus* means, not here, not anywhere. *Attentus* means 'turned towards, attentive' and is used of ears, as well as eyes, minds, thoughts, and the listeners themselves. There is a perfectly good way to say 'pricked up' in Latin and, as it happens, it even scans. If Horace had wanted to make a point about the difference between the etymological associations of his name and the pricked-up ear of Caesar, he would have written *arrectam aurem*, along with Vergil (*A.* 1.152) and everyone else from Plautus onwards.<sup>31</sup> That is, the mere presence of the word 'ear' in the vicinity of the name Flaccus is not enough to make it a joke any more than the fact that Horace while 'bleary-eyed' (*lippus*) smears gunk on his eyes (*Sat.* 1.5.30) will awaken the full etymological force of Luscus (35). Further, note a curious double standard: Flaccus is a joke name but Caesar (for which a popular etymology existed) is allowed to be just a name.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Kiessling and Heinze (n. 3), and Grassmann (n. 23), citing Eduard Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro: Aeneis Buch VI* (1927; repr. Stuttgart, 1995) on *Aen.* 6.510 for the uses of the third person.

<sup>26</sup> Babcock (n. 1), 410.

<sup>27</sup> A contrast with poems where a poet really does talk about his own impotence is instructive: cf. *Ov. Am.* 3.7, *Tib.* 1.5.39–44, *Mart.* 1.46.

<sup>28</sup> Niall Rudd, *The Satires of Horace: A Study* (Cambridge, 1966), 125; Ernst Doblhofer, *Die Augustuspanegyrik des Horaz in formalhistorischer Sicht* (Heidelberg, 1966), 42–4; Horsfall (n. 3), though it is unclear what meaning he assigns to *Epod.* 15.12; Frances Muecke, *Horace: Satires II* (Warminster, 1993), 17, 104; apparently, Watson (n. 1), 188, n. 3. Vincenzo Ussani, *Le satire di Orazio* (Napoli, 1916), 86, 115 and *Le liriche di Orazio* (Turin, 1922), 1.41, for *Epod.* 15. Babcock (n. 1), 413, n. 26: 'in this instance no erotic intention seems appropriate despite the potential of the last line'; see n. 33.

<sup>29</sup> Fitzgerald (n. 1); Mankin (n. 1).

<sup>30</sup> Rudd (n. 28); Muecke (n. 28), 104: 'pricked'; Doblhofer (n. 28), 42: 'im wörtlichem Sinne . . . gespitztes Ohr', who wants to see a joke at every mention of the word 'ear' (43, n. 45, citing *Ep.* 1.18.70, *Sat.* 2.6.46); Fitzgerald (n. 1), 180, see below.

<sup>31</sup> As the technical opposite of *flaccus*, see *Col.* 6.29.2; of horses.

<sup>32</sup> From *caesaries* (Paul. Fest. 50.7 Lindsay); also 'a caeso matris utero' (Pliny *N.H.* 7.47; cf. *Non.* 566.25 Lindsay). Neither is historically correct, see Ernout and Meillet, s.v. *Caesar*, 84; Walde and Hoffmann, s.v. *caesaries*, 133.

It is rather harder to determine exactly what the critics who favour impotence wish to imply that Horace is saying.

'Except at the right time, Flaccus, [*sic*] / Words will not penetrate Caesar's pricked ear'. . . . Clearly, Horace is casting his own feelings of inadequacy or of confusion about his role in sexual terms. I do not think it fanciful to see sexual connotations in the statement that the words of Flaccus will not go through the ear of Octavian except at the right moment.<sup>33</sup>

Is Horace supposed to be saying that he wants to do Augustus in the ear, however metaphorically? This interpretation ignores the actual words of the poet. It is not a statement of literal or symbolic impotence. The 'right moment' does not depend on Horace's ability to get the job done but on Caesar's mood. Horace tells us explicitly he will indeed be up to writing about Octavian's justice and bravery. One should quote the entire passage (*Sat.* 1.2.16–20):

'attamen et iustum poteras et scribere fortem,  
Scipiadam ut sapiens Lucilius.'  
  'haud mihi deero,  
cum res ipsa feret: nisi dextro tempore Flacci  
verba per attentam non ibunt Caesaris aurem:  
cui male si palpare, recalcitrat undique tutus.'

This is not a poem about failure. Quite the opposite. As in every instance of *recusatio*, the poet has successfully accomplished what he set out to do. In the act of writing these lines, he has honoured Caesar without flattery. He has sung his heroic deeds, his justice and bravery, without irritating the recipient. Now turns out to be the acceptable time; the words of Flaccus have already made their way to the attentive ear of Caesar.

So again, why does Horace use his name here, and why the *cognomen*? Horace twice refers to himself as *Horatius*, without any obvious import to the *nomen* as distinct from the *cognomen* and simple metrical convenience should not be ignored.<sup>34</sup> One obvious answer is that *cognomina* are the more particular. There are a lot of *Horatii* and *Julii* around, fewer *Flacci* and *Caesares*. But the real reason lies in the contrast between the two *cognomina*, not that one is a joke-name and the other is not, but that one is a name of no particular importance and the other is the most distinguished name in the world. 'Caesar' is never anyone but Julius or Augustus and the contrast is between the two *cognomina*.<sup>35</sup> This has been the sensible explanation of most critics who have commented directly on Horace's use of his name until recently.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Fitzgerald (n. 1), 180–1 with n. 11. One wonders why nothing was made of *sine nervis* in line 2. Both 'penetrate' and 'go through' are incorrect and tendentious; *per auris* simply provides a different scansion to the more common *in* or *ad auris*. So Horace, *Ars* 180, Lucr. 1.417, 6.777, *Ov. Pont.* 3.4.19, *Sil.* 4.260, 11.177, *Verg. A.* 1.375–6: 'si vestras forte per auris / Troiae nomen iit', without any sexual overtones.

<sup>34</sup> *Odes* 4.6.44, the final line, imagined in the mouths of the chorus of the *Carmen Saeculare*, functioning as a sphragis. *Ep.* 1.14.5 to his bailiff: 'certemus, spinas animome ego fortius an tu / evellas agro, et melior sit Horatius an res'. 'Quinte' in *Sat.* 2.6.37 is in the mouth of someone pestering him with unwarranted familiarity.

<sup>35</sup> Horatius, *nomen*, and Caesar, *cognomen*, would have lost the parallelism.

<sup>36</sup> Franz Ritter, *Q. Horatii Flacci Opera. Satirae et epistulae* (Leipzig, 1856), II.130; Hermann Schütz, *Q. Horatii Flacci. Satiren* (Berlin, 1881), 139: 'So will er hier durch den Namen wohl seine Person hinter den viel beschäftigten Kaiser bescheiden zurückstellen'; Lucian Müller, *Satiren und Episteln des Horaz* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1891), 147; Kiessling and Heinze (n. 3, 1958), 182: 'Flacci, nicht mea, aus Bescheidenheit: ein unbekannter Flaccus und der mächtige Cäsar, welch ein Unterfangen!'

It is difficult to determine the exact social codes that governed the use of names in Rome.<sup>37</sup> Self-address is a special case and poetry need not follow the same conventions as orations or letters. However, on the situation in Cicero's letters that comes closest to what we find in Horace, Adams remarks:

In the letters of Cicero, where the requirements of informality cause single rather than double names [*praenomen* plus *nomen* or *cognomen*] to be employed as a rule in the vocative, it is usually *cognomina* which are used, whatever the relative status of writer and recipient. . . . It is of note that Caelius did not venture to refer to himself as *Rufus* in writing to the older man Cicero, though he always uses Cicero's *cognomen*. . . . Caelius' recognition of his inferior status prevented him from openly claiming for himself the *cognomen*.<sup>38</sup>

Here, too, we can simply note that Catullus refers to himself only as Catullus, Ovid as Naso, and Cicero as Cicero. Horace's tone is very similar to Cicero's in two cases of direct address: *Fam.* 2.4.1 (48 SB), 'Quid est quod possit graviter a Cicerone scribi ad Curionem nisi de republica?' and *Fam.* 6.10.3 (223 SB), to the same Trebianus whom Horace addresses in *Sat.* 1.2, 'Sed magni mea interest hoc tuos omnes scire, quod tuis litteris fieri potest, ut intellegant, omnia Ciceronis patere Trebiano.'<sup>39</sup> Horace's use of his and Caesar's *cognomina* in talking to Trebonius seems to underline the absurdity of such a claim of familiarity between Flaccus, not a particularly distinguished name in any case,<sup>40</sup> and Caesar, son of a god and ruler of the world.

Finally, it is claimed that readers do not even need the name before them. Apparently just a recollection that they are reading a collection of poems by Q. Horatius Flaccus (get it?) is enough to make puns out of the words *non mollis viros* at *Epod.* 1.10 and *imbellis ac firmus parum* at line 16, out of *mollis* and *inertem* in *Epod.* 12.15–17, and out of *mollis inertia* at *Epod.* 14.1.<sup>41</sup>

But this is nonsense. Even if *flaccus* meant 'weak'—which it does not—it is absurd to think that an encounter with a synonym for one of the meanings of a derivative of an adjective from which a poet's name is taken would instantly set up a pun in the reader's consciousness. We manage to read Bridges, Brooke, Browning, Burns, Butler, Crabbe, Gay, Gray, Hunt, Lovelace, Marvell, Pope, Smart, Swift, Wilde, and even Wordsworth without such specious concatenations obtruding. Rough winds do *shake* the darling buds of May without a pun on the author's name interrupting the reader's concentration on what the poem actually says.

The word *flaccus* meant 'lop-eared'. It was not applied to indicate a 'limp' penis. Quintus Horatius Flaccus used his *cognomen* exactly twice in his poetry. Both times it was to make a point, not a pun.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The best overview is J. N. Adams, 'Conventions of naming in Cicero', *CQ* 28 (1978), 145–66.

<sup>38</sup> Adams (n. 37), 154–5, and cf. 146, citing Cic. *Dom.* 22, where Clodius claims intimacy with Julius Caesar because he received a letter using only the *cognomina*, and analysis at 149–51.

<sup>39</sup> Also *Att.* 16.16c.1 (407c SB), 9.26.2 (197 SB); not including imagined address by others. Cf. the interesting variations of names in imagined dialogue at *Fam.* 3.7.5 (71 SB). Propertius and Tibullus, of course, lacked *cognomina*.

<sup>40</sup> And one that Horace has, of course, only because it belonged to the man who once owned his father, a fact that readers of *Satires* II would have known from *Satires* I.

<sup>41</sup> So Babcock (n. 1), 413, n. 26; Fitzgerald (n. 1), 180 and cf. 187. For Fitzgerald all the *Epodes* are really allegories of civil war. There is a failure to follow through: if these are all references to Horace's name, why does not the same apply to *mollis* at *Odes* 1.37.18, 2.9.17, 2.12.3 (contrasted with warfare) or the other twenty-three uses? To the other sixteen occurrences of *iners/inertia*? To the other five occurrences of *imbellis*? To the hundreds of occurrences of *vir*, *virtus*, etc.?

<sup>42</sup> My thanks to the Semple Fund of the University of Cincinnati and the reader for *CQ* from whom I have lifted a nice phrase.