

tribe character of the whole section (revealed by the second-person address to the imaginary opponent and the rhetorical question in line 973) and with Lucretius' practice elsewhere, e.g., 1. 704 ~ 692, 918, etc.

Probably neither interpretation should be rejected outright. The ambiguity looks deliberate. The word-play in this passage takes place at several levels, sound (*fuga-effugium*) as well as meaning and reference. Lines 980-83 are, as Bailey has pointed out (p. 763), an amplification of the only Greek version of this argument known to us, that of Archytas (47 A 24 D.-K.); perhaps the expansion was partly motivated by the opportunity for word-play which it offered.

One last point. D. West, *The Imagery and Poetry of Lucretius* (Edinburgh, 1969), p. 48, makes much of the idea that the picture of a

spear thrown beyond the boundary of the universe was suggested by the Roman custom of declaring war by hurling a spear over the enemy's frontier; this explanation is attributed to Bentley by Munro, on the authority of Wakefield (I can find no mention of it in the 1823 or 1835 editions). However, the authorities who report this custom refer to the weapon used by the fetial as a *hasta* (Livy 1. 32. 12; cf. Serv. *ad Aen.* 9. 53), while Lucretius uses the more general word *telum*; the original legionary *hasta* was not primarily meant for throwing.<sup>3</sup> This does not suggest that the *fetialis hasta* was uppermost in Lucretius' mind when he wrote these lines.

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3. For the difference between *hasta*, *pilum*, *hasta amentata*, etc., see Klingmüller, s.v. "Hasta," *RE*, VII (1912), 2502, and Fiebiger, *ibid.*, 2504 f. If West is right in asserting that *contortum* in line 971 implies the use of the *amentum*, this would

tend to confirm my point. The question may seem pedantic, but as West himself rightly insists, it is to its concreteness and precision of detail that Lucretius' imagery owes much of its vividness.

### DESULTOR AMORIS IN AMORES 1. 3

The metaphor of the promiscuous lover as a *desultor amoris* (*Am.* 1. 3. 15) is one of the most striking in Ovid's *Amores*, and it is therefore of some interest to students of Ovid's style to assess its originality. As the commentators have noted (Paul Brandt *ad loc.*; A. E. Housman *ad Manil.* 5. 85), the *desultor* image can be traced back to Homer (*Il.* 15. 679), who compares Ajax, as he leaps from one Greek ship to another to keep off the Trojan attackers, to a trick-rider (ἀνὴρ ἵπποισι κελητίζειν ἐν εἰδῶς) entertaining the crowds on the roadside by leaping from horse to horse. But there is no need to suppose that Ovid had Homer in mind rather than the Roman circus-riders described, for example, by Livy (44. 9. 4 = 169 B.C.) and Varro (*Rust.* 2. 7. 15). It is clear from these passages that the *desultores* were established in the Roman circus by the earlier second century B.C., and that for the Romans the word *desultor* was a technical term needing no further explanation or qualification.

Transferred uses of the word *desultor* in

and before Ovid's time are rare. Livy (23. 29. 5) describes Numidian cavalry at the battle of Dertosa (215 B.C.) leaping from tired horses to fresh ones *desultorum in modum*, but this is a fairly easy transfer from one kind of horseman to another. Cicero (*Mur.* 57) speaks of Postumus changing his candidature from the praetorship to the consulship *quasi desultorius* (sc. *equus*) *in quadrigarum curriculum*; here the transfer is more striking, but the point is rather different: Cicero speaks not of the leaping of a rider from one horse to another, but of the intrusion of an (inferior) *desultorius equus* into a four-horse chariot race. In comparison with these two similes Ovid's metaphorical use of the image stands out; it can be matched only by Messalla's reference (Sen. *Suas.* 1. 7) to the political trimmer Dellius as a *desultor bellorum ciuiliū*. In view of Ovid's known connection with the circle of Messalla (*Pont.* 1. 7. 27-28, etc.) it seems likely that these two *desultor* metaphors are not unrelated, and this raises the question which prompted the other.

We cannot establish on historical grounds which of the two came first. For Messalla's remark the *terminus post quem* is Dellius' final desertion from Antony to Octavian just before Actium (Sen. *loc. cit.*) and the *terminus ante quem* is the death of Messalla himself in A.D. 8. For Ovid's poem the limits are ca. 25 B.C., when he may be assumed to have begun writing the *Amores*, and the last decade of the century, which is the time of the publication of the second edition.<sup>1</sup> We might suppose that Messalla's remark was made within a few years of the battle of Actium, when it would have had most point, and that his *desultor* metaphor thus preceded Ovid's, even if *Amores* 1. 3 was one of Ovid's earliest poems; but this is a mere supposition, which needs some confirmation.

An interesting link between the two *desultor* metaphors is provided by Horace. The couplet following the one in which *desultor amoris* occurs (i.e., *Am.* 1. 3. 17–18) contains the phrase *fila sororum*, referring to the threads of the Fates. For this the editors (see Brandt *ad loc.*) quote as a parallel *sorum fila trium* at Horace *Odes* 2. 3. 15–16. Even though the phrase *fila sororum* cannot otherwise be

paralleled before the Silver Age,<sup>2</sup> we should hesitate to assert that Ovid had Horace's phrase in mind, but for one fact: *Odes* 2. 3 is addressed to none other than Dellius. Either this is a remarkable coincidence, or it suggests that Dellius was already known as a *desultor* before the composition of *Amores* 1. 3. For the likeliest explanation of the echo is that Ovid had Dellius in mind when he coined the phrase *desultor amoris*, and that he therefore, consciously or unconsciously, continued with a phrase borrowed from Horace's Ode to Dellius.<sup>3</sup>

If this is so, the credit for perceiving the metaphorical possibilities of the *desultor* belongs to Messalla, and, though its application to the lover remains an effective and striking one, the novelty of Ovid's image is to that extent diminished. But the searcher for originality in the imagery of the *Amores* has other places in which he can look. The description of Corinna's hair as "like the color of cedar when its bark has peeled" (*Am.* 1. 14. 12) might be a good point to begin.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See A. Cameron, *CQ*, XVIII (1968), 320–33.

2. In the Silver Age it becomes quite common, together with *fila sorores*: cf. Luc. 6. 703, 9. 838; Stat. *Theb.* 1. 632, *Silu.* 1. 4. 123; Sil. *Pun.* 3. 96, 17. 361; Mart. 11. 36. 3–4.

3. For Ovid's familiarity with Horace's poetry, cf. *Trist.*

4. 10. 49–50; other clear echoes of Horace in *Am.* 1 are at 1. 8. 51, 1. 12. 13–16, 1. 15. 42.

4. Cf. Lee's note *ad loc.* I am grateful to Professor E. J. Kenney for his comments on a draft of this article.

## A MISUNDERSTOOD COIN METAPHOR IN CRATINUS AND XENARCHUS

There are several instances, within the comic corpus, of poets obtaining their effect by the use of metaphors from coins or various aspects of coin manufacture. Of these the most famous is the sustained metaphor in Aristophanes' *Frogs*,<sup>1</sup> and it has received due comment from writers on comedy and numismatics alike.<sup>2</sup> The metaphorical use of the word *μεσόκοπος* by Cratinus and Xenarchus<sup>3</sup> seems to have gone unnoticed. The citation of the word from Cratinus explains it *ἀρρενικῶς τὸν ἐπὶ μέσου ἡλικίας*, and Ed-

monds, LSJ, and Boethe accept the explanation that this is an allusion to middle age. Kock and Meineke decline to comment. This view may seem to be borne out by the use of the word in a fragment of the middle comedian Xenarchus, who says, in describing a list of women, *νέα, παλαιᾷ, μεσοκόπῳ, πεπαιτέρᾳ*. Middle-aged for *μεσοκόπῳ* would make sense here: so it has always been taken.

It seems, however, to add to the meaning, both here, and, by analogy, in the fragment of Cratinus, to consider this as a numismatic

1. Ar. *Ran.* 718 ff.

2. Cf. the editions of the play. Also B. V. Head, *Hist. Num.* (London, 1911), p. 373; H. Michell, *The Economics of*

*Ancient Greece*<sup>2</sup> (Cambridge, 1953), p. 326; C. Seltman, *Greek Coins*<sup>2</sup> (London, 1955), pp. 138, 177 ff.; etc.

3. Cratin. Frag. 426 and Xenarch. Frag. 4. 9 (Kock).