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.[1] 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 *sororum fila trium* at Horace *Odes* 2. 3. 15–16. Even though the phrase *fila sororum* cannot otherwise be paralleled before the Silver Age,[2] 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.[3]

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.[4]

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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*,[1] and it has received due comment from writers on comedy and numismatics alike.[2] The metaphorical use of the word μεσόκοπος by Cratinus and Xenarchus[3] seems to have gone unnoticed. The citation of the word from Cratinus explains it ἀρρενικῶς τὸν ἐπὶ μέσου ἡλικίας, and Edmonds, 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, νέᾳ, 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.*[2] (London, 1911), p. 373; H. Michell, *The Economics of Ancient Greece*[2] (Cambridge, 1953), p. 326; C. Seltman, *Greek Coins*[2] (London, 1955), pp. 138, 177 ff.; etc.
3. Cratin. Frag. 426 and Xenarch. Frag. 4. 9 (Kock).

metaphor. The process of coining used in the ancient world was such that by no means all coins reflected the same standards of execution. A flan carelessly put between two dies meant a coin that did not have on it the whole of the intended design. This was an inevitable consequence of such a method and is well attested by surviving examples. The concept of "centrally struck" as a numismatic metaphor would not, therefore, seem strange to an audience knowing nothing of machine-made money. The sense of these fragments changes accordingly, with the emphasis no longer on age, but on quality or exactitude. Such an emphasis fits in well with the main sense of the Xenarchus fragment, and may be translated by a colloquialism such as "spot on."

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