Classical Literary Careers and their Reception. Edited by Philip Hardie – Helen Moore. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2010. ISBN 978-0-521-76297-7. XII, 330 pp. GBP 60, USD 99.

The subject of this book are the "literary careers" of certain Roman (rather than 'Classical') authors. The individual contributions deal with the question how certain career patterns were transformed into models and how these models were reflected and reshaped by the authors themselves and in later times. The articles in this book can be described as belonging to a relatively new field of literary studies, namely the so called "career criticism" which originated in the 1980's. In the beginning, "career criticism" was mostly applied to English literary studies, but more recently ancient authors have also been discussed. This book consists of selected papers delivered at the Second Passmore Edwards Symposium on Literary Careers, held in September 2004 in Oxford, together with two articles commissioned for this volume.

In the introductory chapter, the editors of the book, P. Hardie and H. Moore, define the concept of a literary career as a conscious literary construction by the author himself. When an author intentionally comments upon his earlier texts and on himself as a writer, and shows or expresses that he has a certain mental relationship with earlier (or contemporary) literature, when he, in short, has ambitions to place himself somewhere on the literary map, he can be said to have a literary career. Furthermore, the sign of a decent literary career is the progression from one genre to another (preferably from humble topics via didactic writings towards grand epic) and in its ideal form it follows the patterns of the Roman *cursus honorum*. The poet to whose career everyone is compared is, of course, Virgil. His literary career, the so called *Rota Virgiliana*, is the most admired and aspired to model for a writer from antiquity through the Renaissance to the 18th century. As for the relationship between a literary career and an author's real historical biography, they do not need to be identical but an author usually adds components from his factual life to his literary life, thus creating a desired literary image of himself. In their introduction, Hardie and Moore do not, however, offer the reader a number of simple definitions but instead ask such questions as: who actually decides whether a writer has a career? Is it the writer himself or the reader, who is inclined to see patterns in an author's production?

As we can see, a "literary career" is a fascinating but not a simple concept, and one can ask whether there is a genuine need to separate "career studies" (even on a conceptual level) from other literary and historical studies. The given parameters of the definition (an ample enough preserved production, including different genres, etc.) limit the number of potential candidates among the ancient authors, and exclude many important ancient writers. In this collection, not a single Greek author is included although according to its title it deals with "classical", not just Roman careers. The case of Aristophanes is admittedly touched upon briefly in the introduction, but one wonders whether Plato's or Aristotle's literary careers would not be worth discussing. Callimachus certainly would be a suitable subject for career studies, if only more than the fragments that we now have had been preserved.

With slight reservations concerning the concept of "career criticism" itself, it must be said that the Roman writers included here are discussed in a most interesting way. Besides the discussions of Virgil (Michael C. J. Putnam), Horace (Stephen Harrison), Ovid (Alessandro Barchiesi and Philip Hardie), Propertius (Stephen Heyworth), Juvenal (Catherine Keane), Cicero and Pliny the Younger (Roy Gibson and Catherine Keane), there are allusions to many others. All the articles are indeed impressive specimens of "career criticism", as they tend to

discuss not just details regarding individual authors, but rather the authors as representatives of the phenomenon. Besides Virgil's vertical pattern there are also other possibilities. Horace's career pattern is said to be mixture of the vertical and the horizontal: starting from iambics and hexameters of low *sermo* style and ascending to lyric but then ending his career with the *sermo* style of his last epistles. Lucilius, on the other hand, could be said to have consciously chosen an anti-career and refused to follow a *cursus honorum*. Propertius' career is also somewhat limited by the poet's unwillingness to write about much else than Cynthia, and this was obviously a conscious choice. Ovid, who was extremely ambitious and self-conscious as a poet (all his poems seem to communicate with each other) explores all the genres that are expected from a career, but in a twisted sort of manner. As A. Barchiesi and P. Hardie (and N. Krevans in Chapter 10) point out in their article, Ovid can be seen as creating a parallel to the Virgilian career but also as making fun of it.

As mentioned above, all the chapters on the Roman authors are captivating and worth the reader's attention. I would especially like to point out Nita Krevan's (= K.) article with the flamboyant title "Bookburning and the Poetic Deathbed". In this chapter, K. opens an interesting side perspective on career studies by discussing the supposed events around Virgil's deathbed. Several sources state that the dying poet wanted to have the *Aeneid* burnt, but those guarding the manuscript (Tucca and Varius) refused to fulfil his request; Augustus himself took every action needed to save the jewel of Roman literature and thus contributed to the birth of the Virgilian career model. Whether Virgil's request was seriously meant or whether it was instead intended as a gesture of exaggerated modesty, remains unanswered. However, K. lucidly points out that this last wish of having one's literary work (or part of it) destroyed can be observed as a later much repeated pattern (the same can be said of other aspects of the *rota Virgiliana*). The author argues that the idea behind the scene might be to produce a *deus ex machina* who at the last moment stops the catastrophe, just as Jupiter saves Aeneas' fleet (5, 604–99), in Virgil's case the saviour being of course Augustus. K. shows two parallels to this pattern from the early 17th century, the poets George Herbert and Sir Philip Sidney, who both at their deathbed expressed their wish that part of their production be destroyed, if it did not meet the standards of those other works which were left behind, and in doing so were clearly conscious of the Virgilian model (K. also lists a number of other writers who have made the same request). K. cleverly adds an Ovidian twist to this motif of burning books by the dying poet. She suggests that Ovid's description of burning the *Metamorphoses* in the beginning of the *Tristia* can be seen as a variation of the scene at Virgil's deathbed: for Ovid, expulsion from Rome means death and his last poem was to be destroyed. This of course turns out to be not true, but Ovid manages to make the point. K. puts Virgil's alleged dramatic behaviour in a fascinating framework, but quite amusingly also points out that this was not the norm in early Imperial Rome: on the contrary, writers like Petronius, Seneca and Lucan were reported to have done the opposite, keeping writing until the last moment.

The reception of ancient literary careers is discussed in chapters which touch upon later poets: Dante, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Milton, Marvell, Dryden, Goethe, Wordsworth and Borges. Without going into details, all these articles can be described as offering professionally, yet also entertainingly formulated views on the discussed writer's careers and show how models from classical literature were interpreted and in many cases reinvented. In his article, "Did Shakespeare Have a Literary Career?", P. Cheney (= C.) surprises (at least this) reader by answering that, according to a strict interpretation of the definition "literary career", he did not

have one. What he had was a professional career serving the commercial needs of the stage: Shakespeare was more of an actor and a businessman in the world of theatre than a poet rising on the ladders of literary achievements. But, as C. argues, if the definition of "literary" is widened, Shakespeare can also be said to have given a new meaning to the concept of career, and is today considered one of the finest examples of those who have had a literary career.

All in all, this book covers many aspects concerning the relationship between a writer's actual life, his production and literary life in general and can be recommended to all those wishing to consider new perspectives on literary studies.

Tiina Purola

JAMES J. O'HARA: *Inconsistency in Roman Epic. Studies in Catullus, Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid and Lucan.* Roman Literature and Its Contexts. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007. ISBN 978-0-521-64139-5. XIV, 165 pp. GBP 45.

In this short but perceptive study, James J. O'Hara attempts to discuss and analyse the incongruities and inconsistencies that were typical of Latin epic. Cambridge's *Roman Literature and Its Contexts* is a series that aims at introducing new perspectives and encourages discussion about classical Latin literature. Therefore, O'Hara's approach is not strongly argumentative but rather essay-like and speculative. He scrutinises competing perspectives, conflicting attitudes and a plurality of voices in Roman epic from text-specific and theoretical viewpoints, guiding the reader towards a deeper understanding of the complexities within the poems.

Epic is a literary genre that has been burdened (more so than many others) by expectations concerning unity of content. It is a kind of poetics that has been considered to offer consistent messages and promote a coherent ideology. Roman epics – particularly those from the imperial era – have been studied as representing a single philosophy and value system and, for a long time, inconsistency within these poems was considered a problem that needed to be explained away on the grounds of bad transmission or an unfinished state of the works. The greatest merit of O'Hara's study is his unprejudiced approach towards the subject: he challenges the reader to consider the striking contradictions and incongruities in the Latin epic not as mistakes but as possibly deliberate and, at any rate, functional elements that can considerably add to one's understanding of the poems.

The author considers it important to discuss epic tradition utilising a broad time frame. Instead of focusing on a single author, he examines inconsistency in five Roman hexameter works: *Catullus 64*, Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. Due to the relatively short length of the book, none of these poems receives a very thorough handling; obviously this is not the aim of the author. Rather, he picks different examples from these very different works, introducing themes and questions that are common to epic inconsistencies. What should be thought about Roman poets' tendency to coincidentally utilise various, often contradictory versions of a myth? How are divine inspiration and human will conflicted in the epic worldview? Is it even possible to try to make sense of the poets' political attitudes on the grounds of their inconsistent ideas about chaos, order, and the use of power?