

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?

All in all, O'Hara's study is an intriguing discussion of multiple voices perceivable in the epic tradition. It draws attention to various ways in which the internal audience, as well as the external one, are sometimes deceived by the poet. Similarly, it seeks to liberate Roman epic poets from their canonical position as interpreters of their age, and allows them a right to hesitate, err, and have a change of heart. Rather than seeking to convince the reader, O'Hara's study encourages us to consider Roman epic from various viewpoints, and to continue discussion of its goals and ideals.

*Elina Pyy*

*Colloquial and Literary Latin.* Edited by ELEANOR DICKEY – ANNA CHAHOUD. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2010. ISBN 978-0-521-51395-1. XVIII, 515 pp. GBP 65, USD 110.

What is colloquial Latin? This book, dedicated to the renowned Latinist J. N. Adams, discusses one of the most intricate questions of Latin linguistics and literary studies: how and to what extent did Roman authors exploit spoken language in constructing their literary works. The term 'colloquial' remains one of the concepts that seem to escape clear-cut definitions but that are vital to any student of Roman literature or of linguistic variation and change.

The book consists of 25 articles or chapters arranged in five parts, the first part outlining the theoretical framework. Here the primary task is, inevitably, to try to determine the notoriously ambiguous terms 'colloquial' and 'literary' as precisely as possible.

In chapter 1, Eleanor Dickey points out that the two concepts refer to registers and are dependent on the linguistic genre of the text, the distinction between them being connected to that between spoken and written language. According to Dickey, the latter holds true to some point but the dichotomy 'colloquial'/'literary' cannot be equated with the dichotomy speech/writing. The fact that Classical studies deal exclusively with written sources predestines the parameters of the examination, as all written texts, be they speeches or lines of a play, have a literary touch after all, whatever conversational features they may display. As Dickey notes, another serious problem is that the terms are used inconsistently among scholars. It is well known that 'colloquial', referring either to the conversational language of low-status people or to that of high-status people, may occur in both these senses even in a single study.

In chapter 2, James Clackson surveys how the term 'colloquial' has been used in the history of linguistics. He concludes that it has too wide a field of application to serve as a classificatory term. Therefore, most linguists tend to replace it with more specific terms that do not confuse diaphasic and diastratic variation. The concept of register appears a useful tool when assessing linguistic varieties determined by the context of their use. After all this, one would have expected some definition of 'colloquial', but the author, apparently being cautious, refrains from offering any.

The authors of chapter 3, Rolando Ferri and Philomen Probert, succeed well in their un-rewarding task of analysing the inconsistent terminology used by Roman authors with formal and less formal varieties of Latin. Ferri and Probert try to reconstruct the attitudes to diverse varieties by examining the classifications and examples given, first, by the rhetorical theorists