Literary careers – Classical models and their receptions

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The subject of literary careers has attracted considerable interest recently among both classicists and students of English and other vernacular literatures.[1] 'Career criticism' has emerged as a distinct branch of literary scholarship and criticism. It is to be distinguished from the older fashion for a life-and-works approach to the biographical criticism of an author, and also from the more recent interest in the ancient tradition of authors' lives. Instead of starting from what might be known, or claimed, about the historical life and times of an author, career criticism takes as its starting point the totality of an author's textual output and asks how that oeuvre as a whole shapes itself, both in its intratextual relationships (what kinds of beginnings, middles, and ends are traced in the pattern of an oeuvre), and in the claims it makes to reflect or mould extratextual conditions of production (whether located in the personal history of the author, or in the relationship of the author to political and cultural structures of power and authority). The previous sentence ascribes an agency to the oeuvre in 'shaping', 'reflecting' or 'moulding', an agency that can only be realized through a reader's perception of these processes. 'Careers', however, are things that authors, not texts or readers, pursue, and career criticism is unabashed in making the author its focus, always with the recognition that the author is mediated through texts, which in turn are always received by readers.[2] This is what Patrick Cheney, one of

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[1] Essential bibliography: Helgerson 1983; Lipking 1981. More recently Patrick Cheney has worked intensively in the field, with books on Marlowe, Spenser and Shakespeare. The collection of essays in Cheney and de Armas 2002 focuses mostly on post-antique authors; this volume is divided fairly equally between antique and post-antique authors, and centres on the reception of the ancient models.

[2] The status of the author in this kind of criticism may usefully be compared to the qualified 'intention-bearing authorial voice' constructed for the purposes of his study of allusion and intertextuality by Stephen Hinds in Hinds 1998: 47–51. Career criticism is consciously post-'death of the author'.

the leading practitioners of career criticism, means by 'emphasizing the category of the *literary* (rather than, say, the biographical …)'.[3]

The presence of the reader in all of this, and the possibility that we may read into a writer's oeuvre patterns of which he or she may only have been dimly aware, should at least prompt the general question of 'who decides whether a poet has a career'. One answer might indeed be the reader, tempted to see patterns in a disparate body of texts. If we are prepared to allow the author some say in the matter, is it a decision taken at or near the beginning of a career, in the shape of a syllabus for future action (Virgil has often seemed to be this kind of careerist)? Or is it a matter of the retrospective realization of a pattern in what during the passage of the years may often have seemed a haphazard and accidental process (Ovid is very good at rearranging, at least, the pieces in the puzzle with the aid of hindsight). Another answer to the question of who decides whether a poet has a career, might be other, earlier poets. This is an answer that will usually imply a decision early in a career. By this we mean to refer to the intensely intertextual (or perhaps interauthorial) quality of literary careers.[4] As this volume abundantly shows, writers are acutely aware of the career patterns of great writers of the past, and motivated by that awareness to emulation, or in some cases conscious avoidance, of the paths of their predecessors. This is a particular, and particularly large-scale, example of the rivalry, *aemulatio*, that characterizes many intertextual relationships.

An author's sense of his or her literary career is traced through statements or hints, explicit or implicit, in an oeuvre that point to a developmental relationship between the individual works in the oeuvre. There are some examples in ancient Greece where reference is made by an author in one work to another, for example in Aristophanes' explicit reference in the *parabases* of some of his comedies to a previous play of his own. The *parabasis* is formally privileged as the place in an Attic old comedy where the playwright uses the chorus to speak *in propria persona*; but Aristophanes exploits the occasion (as does Terence in the prologues to some of his Roman comedies) in order to engage in literary polemic or literary criticism, praising his own earlier work and the good taste of the audience, not to present us with the outlines of a literary career. The modern critic may trace a development within the surviving plays of Aristophanes, say from the conventions of Old Comedy in the direction of the different conventions of Middle Comedy (and formal development of this kind

[3] Cheney 2002a: 6.   [4] Noted by Cheney 2002a: 11–12.

has also been discerned in the *corpora* of the Attic tragedians), but this is not evidence that the author has self-consciously given shape to his career over the literary production of a lifetime. Furthermore the development is a matter of change within a genre (comedy, tragedy), rather than progression from one genre to another, which is a common (if not essential) marker of a literary career.

At the end of his elegiac poem in four books on 'Causes', the *Aitia*, the Hellenistic poet Callimachus states that he is moving on to 'the pedestrian pasture of the Muses', which is normally taken to refer to the *Iambi*, a work in a more pedestrian, prosy metre than the elegiac couplet.[5] Here we have self-conscious moving-on, from one genre to another, but it is unclear that it is part of a larger plan, of a career teleologically designed (the 'pastures new' of a Milton), rather than simply a change of course for the sake of variety. We simply have no way of knowing whether a part of the highly self-conscious poetics of Callimachus consisted in the representation of his multiform output as shaped by what might be called a strategic career-plan.

Joseph Farrell has argued powerfully that it is in Rome that is first to be found a strong experience on the part of an ancient author of his output over time as conforming to the pattern of a career.[6] According to Farrell, the decisive impetus was given by the position of the poet at Rome, typically dependent on an upper-class patron, and who came to fashion his own literary career on the political career of his patron, the aristocratic *cursus honorum*, the hierarchically ordered sequence of magistracies through which the successful Roman ascended to the consulship. *Cursus*, literally 'running', may refer to the running of horses in a chariot-race, the public career viewed as a competitive race to the top (the same image is found in *curriculum uitae*, lit. 'racecourse of life').[7] The pinnacle of the Roman military career was to ride in a chariot as *triumphator*: the motif of the literary triumph has a long history that perhaps goes back to Ennius (239–169 BC), whose culminating literary achievement was the writing of the national Roman epic of its time, the *Annals*, the first edition of which climaxed with the literal triumph of Ennius' patron. Farrell gives a leading role to Ennius in stimulating the development of the Roman

[5] For the issues see Fantuzzi and Hunter 2004: 33.

[6] Farrell 2002.

[7] Cic. *Rab. Perd.* 30 *exiguum nobis uitae curriculum natura circumscripsit, immensum gloriae*; *Sest.* 47 *uitae breuis cursus, gloriae sempiternus.* On the racing connotations of 'career' see Cheney 2002a: 8.

model of the literary career.[8] To the institutional factors identified by Farrell as promoting the emergence of the Roman literary career might be added a marked tendency on the part of Roman poets to engage in auto-biographical utterances, often with reference to their social status and to their relationship to their powerful patrons. Ennius cast out the imper-sonal objectivity of the epic narrator in opening the *Annals* with a scene of poetic initation in a dream, and gave a notice of his age, possibly in the last book of either the first or second edition of the *Annals* (*sed. inc. fr.* lxx Skutsch ed. 1985), and possibly in a passage in which he also referred to himself as an ageing racehorse (coming to the end of its career?). While Ennius does not seem to have used this autobiographical mode to talk about a career pattern stretching over his larger (and very varied) oeuvre, he offered what one might call a 'licence to autobiography' to later poets who might wish to reflect openly on their careers. Later in the first cen-tury BC the satirist Lucilius writes largely in autobiographical mode, and in this he is very influential on Horace. Lucilius does not appear to have shaped his output according to any coherent model of progression, but, Farrell suggests, this may have been deliberate: as a member himself of the aristocratic patron class his choice to write poetry represents a deliber-ate rejection of the *cursus honorum* – an anti-career.

The Roman literary career finds its fullest and most influential mani-festation in the three major works of Virgil: the *Eclogues*, *Georgics* and *Aeneid*.[9] The perceived upwards progression through these three hexam-eter works was formalized in the medieval *rota Vergiliana*.[10] There is a seemingly inevitable, and almost prescribed, development from the small-scale and self-reflexive green cabinet of the *Eclogues*, through the didactic intervention in the world of the farmer in the *Georgics*, to the sublime epic flight of the *Aeneid*, engaging with the widest themes of Roman history and imperial power. The generic variation that in Callimachus had not apparently been guided through time by a planned curriculum, is here informed by a drive to achieve progressively more ambitious goals in the genres of bucolic, didactic and epic. The poet comments on these ambi-tions at key points, most prominently in the proem to the third *Georgic*, the midpoint of the middle of the three poems, in which future poetic

[8] Farrell 2002: 37–8; see also Hardie 2007b.

[9] Very little, if any, of the *Appendix Vergiliana*, a body of works attributed to the young Virgil, is considered these days to be authentic; the situation was different from antiquity through to the early modern period, so yielding a more complex picture of the development of Virgil's career. On the reception of the *Appendix Vergiliana* in the Renaissance see Burrow 2008.

[10] See Putnam below, Ch. 1.

success is presented as a figurative triumph, the chariot of poetry har-nessed to the horses that draw the imperial *triumphator*. In another crucial modification of the Alexandrian model, Virgil disobeys the Callimachean injunction to avoid the large-scale and epic,[11] so allowing himself a career that audaciously challenges comparison not just with that of a Republican consul or general, but of the *princeps* Augustus himself.

The Virgilian career has a formal perfection such that it almost seems that it could be explained purely in terms of the unfolding of a law of generic development. At the same time the smooth progress through lit-erary genres is also a progressive rapprochement with the political and military realities of Rome. The question of the exact degree of pressure or constraint applied to Virgil by Augustus and his ministers will never be resolved. But, however much some readers will continue to find in the poems signs of a deep reluctance to accept the aims and ideology of the principate, the career itself, understood as a progression through genres that is at the same time a progression to an increasing engagement with the extra-literary world, shows remarkably few signs of strain. Indeed, Michael Putnam, in his revisionist account of the *rota Vergiliana* in this volume, directs attention to the continuity in change, unity in diversity – itself a sign of the smoothly oiled machine.

Partly because of its seeming inevitability, and partly because its prod-ucts immediately established themselves as the central classics of Latin literature, the Virgilian career has been an enduring temptation, chal-lenge or reproach to later poets. The Latin love elegists persist in the Callimachean refusal to venture beyond slighter genres, now not as a matter of aesthetic choice but because of the harsh necessity of a life of love that restricts their literary career to the narrow circle of love poetry, just as in his life the love elegist consciously rejects the career expected of the upper-class Roman male, the public *cursus honorum*. Once the Virgilian model for a literary career is available, the elegiac anti-career can also represent itself as a (forced) alternative to the Virgilian career. Stephen Heyworth shows how Propertius, despite the variety of his four books of elegies, repeatedly fails to break away from a life spent writ-ing poetry about Cynthia to follow other paths; even in Book 4, a book which contains much allusion to the *Aeneid*, Cynthia, given her marching orders at the end of Book 3, and now further distanced through death,

[11] Whether Callimachus himself referred to epic or other kinds of large-scale poetry in his literary polemics is disputed; what matters is that in the Latin *recusatio* ('refusal' to write in a more ambi-tious genre) the standard opposition is between slighter genres and epic (or sometimes tragedy).

returns to life, irrepressible. In 3.9 Propertius justifies his own refusal to change course from elegy with an appeal to his patron Maecenas' refusal to pursue a senatorial *cursus honorum*. In Propertius' last elegy, 4.11, the emperor's stepdaughter Cornelia boasts of a feminine kind of *cursus honorum*; but since in Rome only men can have public careers, this is a contradiction in terms, and the imperial *matrona* is dragged back into the elegist's own world of lamentation and separation.

Ovid, last of the love elegists, flags a relationship to the Virgilian model with the very first word of his oeuvre, *arma*, the first word of his elegiac *Amores* and also the first word of the *Aeneid*.[12] In this context it introduces a version of the conventional elegiac *recusatio*, a refusal to venture into epic because of the erotic enslavement to which the poet is condemned in his real life. By the third book of the *Amores* Ovid has shuffled off the inevitability of the elegist's lot, and looks forward to a career move to the higher genre of tragedy. From the *Medea* (now lost) he advanced higher still, to the epic *Metamorphoses*, outbidding the *Aeneid* both in length and in chronological scope. Within elegy itself Ovid progresses from the slight matter of love to the subject of Roman religion and history in the *Fasti*. After a career that has cheerfully freed itself from the personal and private constraints that dictate the literary output of his predecessors in Latin love elegy, as well as registering a fair degree of indifference to any claims that Augustus might have on a writer, Ovid has what might be called an 'after-career', the consequence of the harshest of external constraints, exile from Rome to the outer darkness of the Black Sea as a result of the emperor's displeasure. This has the effect of undoing the satisfying closure of the Virgilian career: not only is the *Metamorphoses* not the crowning glory of Ovid's career, what follows is a reversal of the upwards trajectory as the grief of exile forces the poet to return to the tearful elegies of his youth. Ovidian exile, or the danger of the artist losing status or position by offending through his art, is a recurrent model for literary careers: Barchiesi examines three examples, the first an Ovidian retrojection of his own woes on to the first Latin love elegist, Cornelius Gallus, the second an ingenious reworking of the Ovidian elision of the boundary between art and life in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, and the third Boccaccio's successful use in the *Decameron* of Ovidian apologetics to negotiate the rocks on which Ovid himself had foundered.

Yet even in the Ovidian pattern of an upwards career trajectory broken by exile there are traces of a Virgilian model. Exile, as Michael Putnam shows in this volume, is indeed one of the elements of unity in the diversity of the *rota Vergiliana*. At the end of his career Ovid relives the experience of Meliboeus, the shepherd-farmer who in Virgil's first *Eclogue* has to leave the pastoral world for exile at the ends of the earth. At the very end of the *Aeneid* Turnus 'flees' into the perpetual exile of death, dispatched by the distant ancestor of Augustus. This is also the point at which to note another way in which Ovid's 'after-career' mirrors the Virgilian career, but with reference not to the Virgilian oeuvre but to the biographical tradition that on his deathbed Virgil asked to be allowed to burn the manuscript of the *Aeneid* (*vita Donati* 39); in the first book of the *Tristia* Ovid claims that on being sent into exile he put the manuscript of the *Metamorphoses* on the fire (1.7.15–22; somewhat disingenuously Ovid now realizes that there were other copies in circulation). But this gesture marks all of the exilic poetry as, figuratively, poetry from the other side: Ovidian exile is thereby equated with Virgilian death. The gesture of bookburning, real or threatened, will be used recurrently by later writers who do not want to leave their unpublished works as the coping-stone of a literary career, as Nita Krevans records. The epilogue to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* itself, on the other hand, alludes to the notion of a more successful afterlife than exile in the Pythagorean belief of metempsychosis: Ovid's 'soul', his great poem, will survive the death of his body, given the breath of life by the living bodies of his future readers.[13] By this conceit Ovid also acknowledges that his poem is the latest product in the history not of an individual writer, but of a tradition that goes back to Ennius, who in the prologue to his epic *Annals* claimed, in a speech put in the mouth of the phantom of Homer, to be the reincarnation of the true soul of Homer. If bookburning violently breaks off a career, the Ennian claim to be the reincarnation of an earlier poet extends a career to a time before the bodily birth of a writer: Stuart Gillespie traces episodes in the afterlife of the Ennian conceit.

The Ovidian career is an alternative, but also a reaction, to the Virgilian model. A third way is represented by Horace, who neither follows nor reacts against his friend Virgil, their two paths diverging, although not beyond close hailing distance, after each producing as a major early work a book of ten poems in hexameters, the *Eclogues* and the first book of

Satires.[14] Horace's career thereafter is characterized by a diversity at the generic level that may, as Stephen Harrison suggests in this volume, mark a reversion to the *poikilia* (generic variety) of Callimachus' output. Horace is the most autobiographical of the Latin poets, allowing us to see (a carefully manicured version of) the external and internal pressures to which his writing responded at various junctures in his life. Great patrons, Maecenas and Caesar, are both empowering and constraining. The *Carmen saeculare*, written for performance at the Secular Games of 17 BC, was an important commission in itself, and may have been a significant factor in prompting Horace to return to a lyric career seemingly brought to a final conclusion, with a fourth book of odes. Equally important, so Horace tells us, as a determinant of literary choice is an inner desire for freedom that makes him kick against the demands of patrons, politics and the literary marketplace, a drive for independence that finds most sustained expression in *Epistles* 1. This more varied kind of career might be seen as anticipating the increasing fragmentation in post-Classical centuries of the shapeliness of Virgilian and Ovidian models, whether through the changing conditions of literary production and consumption, or, at a later date, through a set towards the expression of the writer's inner self.

Post-Augustan epic poets are keenly aware of the Virgilian challenge. Statius charts the poetic career of the dead Lucan (*Silvae* 2.7), a young man in a hurry and who is reported to have boasted that he had written his great epic at an age when Virgil had only got as far as the *Culex* (one of the poems in the *Appendix Vergiliana*, attributed to the young Virgil). Dead before his twenty-sixth birthday, Lucan had no time to waste: Statius outlines an ascent from epic juvenilia on merely Greek, Iliadic, themes, to the Jovian thundering of his epic on the Roman civil war, a poem inspiring awe even in the *Aeneid* itself.

In his first satire Juvenal uses the autobiographical conventions of Roman satire that go back through Horace to Lucilius and Ennius to present a colourful picture of the reasons that impelled him to take up a literary career in the first instance. That career is confined to one genre, and the variations in tone between the five books of *Satires* have often been seen as formalist, rhetorical variations of a satirical mask or *persona*. Catherine Keane reads, rather, in the Juvenalian sequence a consistent story of self-fashioning over time, as the satirist calibrates his several satirical postures as an on-going negotiation of the excessively angry, and

[14] For the conscious engagement of *Satires* 1 with the *Eclogues* see Zetzel 1980.

in some ways epic, indignation with which he burst on to the literary stage.

Writers in prose as well as verse may have literary careers. Roy Gibson and Catherine Steel develop Joseph Farrell's insight into the connection between the political *cursus honorum* and the literary career with reference to Cicero and Pliny the Younger, both of whom did make it to the top of the *cursus honorum*. The prolific writings of Cicero are subordinated to the needs of his political career, and as a result display a 'generic profligacy', because in this case there is no literary career that shapes itself independently of the public career. On the other hand Pliny the Younger's insouciant indifference, in his *Letters*, to a progression of the Virgilian kind in his own literary output, pointedly parades the fact that one who has reached the top of the political ladder has no need to aspire upwards in a literary *cursus* (in contrast to the career in literary prose of his equestrian uncle, Pliny the Elder); this snobbishness is all the more necessary in the conditions of the principate, when to reach the consulate in fact brings no real power on the political stage.

The Classical models for the literary career, and the Virgilian career above all, exercise a fascination over medieval and early modern writers, but their applicability comes under increasing strain as conditions of literary production and consumption change, and as the ancient generic system expands and metamorphoses. In the middle ages the Virgilian model serves Dante well enough, as he crowns his writing career with an 'epic' even more universal and totalizing than the *Aeneid*. The epic *Africa*, however, does not similarly mark the culmination of Petrarch's career: begun in the middle of his life, the ambitions that Petrarch held out for it as the great work that would both sum up his dealings with antiquity revived and satisfy his own desire for lasting fame, were not realized. Andrew Laird takes a fresh look at some of the complexities of Dante's and Petrarch's imitation of Virgil and of their relationship to the Virgilian career pattern.

From the earliest days of career criticism, ideas of progression, development and purpose have clustered around the notion of the literary career, accompanied by an acknowledgement of the existence of dissident and countering career practices: Lipking, for example, cites in passing Propertius, Ezra Pound, Yvor Winters and Robert Graves as poets whose 'contempt' for the career model 'implies a reverse ambition' manifested as 'a self-consuming devotion to craft'. Similarly, his brief reference to Emily Dickinson raises the question of whether and to what extent the classically sanctioned (and implicitly male) career models are open to or

embraced by women once they enter the world of public writing.[15] Of the English literary careers discussed in this volume, none is straightforwardly Classical in the way of a Spenser or a Marlowe, whose career models have been successfully described by Cheney and others as Virgilian in the first case and Ovidian in the second.[16] The existence, let alone format, of Shakespeare's career is still a matter of debate; Milton's later career, with his revision (in 1673) of the 1645 *Poems* and his ambiguous final work, *Samson Agonistes*, undermines the Virgilian confidence of his early self-proclamations; the range of Dryden's career – encompassing criticism as well as composition – ushers in a new element to the career matrix; and assessments of the careers of both Marvell and Wordsworth are rendered problematic by a lack of self-commentary in the case of the former, and competing versions of the poetic self in the case of the latter. Within the context of English letters, there is also a notable lack of an English poetic career model to rival those of Virgil, Horace and Ovid. In particular, the failure of Chaucer's life-narrative 'to translate itself into a model for an Elizabethan poetic "career"', as Kevin Pask puts it,[17] both enhances the longevity of the Classical career models and ensures diversity in the scope and structure of their English successors.

Patrick Cheney's pertinent question framed in this volume, 'Did Shakespeare have a literary career?', hovers over any discussion of the literary career in the early modern period, and draws attention to the profound changes in the mechanics of literary production that were consequent upon printing, the opening of the public theatres, and the increasing professional self-reliance of the writing life (although, as discussed below, literary patronage continued to figure in much of the period covered by this book).[18] Unlike Spenser and Marlowe, Shakespeare's career has so far eluded characterization, mainly because the shape of his

[15] Lipking 1981: xii–xiii. Outlining the 'anti-careerist vocation' of Dickinson, Lipking highlights 'her unwillingness to publish, her preference for intensity and brevity, her hesitation to try new forms or to "develop", her sublime independence' (p.xiii); he develops this 'anti-careerist' line of thought further in Lipking 1988. For the applicability of the term 'career' to early modern women writers see Woods and Hannay 2002 and for the emergence of the nineteenth-century woman of letters see Peterson 2009. The relationship between English women writers and Classical modes and models of authorship is treated in Hurst 2006; see in particular ch.3, 'Unscrupulously Epic', on Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

[16] Cheney 1993. Two other roles, those of secretary and bard, also figure in assessments of Spenser's poetic identity. Rambuss 1993 examines the literary impact of Spenser's other career as secretary and bureaucrat, and its intersection with his poetic career; whilst Highley 1997: 21–39 addresses Spenser's 'fugitive' interest in the proscribed poetic persona of the Gaelic bard.

[17] Pask 1996: 30.

[18] For the professionalization of the male and female writing lives see B. S. Hammond 1997 and Turner 1992 respectively.

career, whether viewed in its entirety or in its parts (beginning, middle and end), does not conform to Classical prototypes. It lacks both generic progression and a clear destination; critical dissatisfaction over the years with the 'late' plays might well be due in part to a feeling that they do not provide a fitting *telos* for this particular literary life.[19] Another important factor is that the early 'missing years' in Shakespeare's biography mean that it is impossible to pinpoint the reasons for, and mechanisms of, his entries to stage and print.[20] Thus there is no identifiable trajectory to Shakespeare's career, whether of the upwards or reverse kind. Lacking information as to the circumstances of Shakespeare's initiation to the literary life, or other self-articulations – both traditionally important aspects of the 'managed vita' (see Lyne below, Ch. 13) – scholars have tended to construe Shakespeare's career in non-classical terms that place his literary endeavours firmly in the context of his financial and business engagements with London's professional theatre – concentrating, in other words, on 'Shakespeare's job'.[21] Recent studies have shed much light on the precise mechanics of this 'job', revealing a world of extended financial and artistic collaboration (between playwrights, actors and owners), and textual revision. In short, the world of the London playhouses was one in which 'authorship could be a continual process, not a determinate action'.[22] Inevitably, however, such an interest in the theatre as Shakespeare's 'job' has created over time a false distinction between his theatrical and poetic careers, a distinction that Cheney has sought to break down in another context by asserting a different kind of Ovidian identity for Shakespeare as 'poet-playwright' (the pertinent aspect of Ovid's *vita* in this case being the surviving two lines of his tragedy *Medea*).[23] In his chapter for this volume, Cheney turns his attention to the 'classical underpinnings' of Shakespeare's career, one that he terms 'counter-laureate'. Through a reading of the Choruses to *Henry V*, Cheney engages head-on with Shakespeare's perceived failure (or playful refusal) to present himself in his works, finding instead a detailed engagement with the six elements Cheney identifies as constituting the 'career

[19] On the critical significance of the terms 'late', 'last' and 'final' see Richards and Knowles 1999: 1–6 and McMullan 2007.

[20] The classic articulation on this subject is Honigmann 1998.

[21] P. Thomson 1992: xv; see also Bentley 1971.

[22] Ioppolo 2006: 1; see also Vickers 2002.

[23] Cheney 2004. Lukas Erne has also sought to resolve the problems of Shakespeare's career through a composite formulation, 'literary dramatist', arguing that, contrary to much hitherto received wisdom, Shakespeare did indeed take an interest in the publication of his plays (Erne 2003).

template'. In Cheney's analysis, Shakespeare is no longer an absent presence in his own works, but a writer with a finely tuned sense not only of his own composite career(s), but also those of his Classical forebears and 'laureate' contemporaries.

In its avoidance of the laureate model, Shakespeare's literary career employs strategies of self-effacement and authorial displacement that are reminiscent of Ovid. For Shakespeare, and later Milton, the uncertainties, recapitulations and reversals of the literary career as manifested in Ovid are just as important as the stylized assurance of the received Virgilian *rota*. Indeed, Ovid's revision of the Virgilian career is a frequent point of reference for English writers, and most English relationships with the Virgilian model combine imitation with revision, a fact that is not always openly acknowledged at the time. As Kilgour argues in her essay, ostensibly Virgilian careers can be read as illusory self-representations that variously suppress early uncertainties, minimize the significance of deviation from the Virgilian norm, and play down public acts of self-correction or revision. Milton's literary career was certainly announced in uncompromisingly Virgilian terms, with the inclusion of an epigraph from Virgil's *Eclogues* on the title page, *Baccare frontem / Cingite, ne vati noceat mala lingua futuro* ('wreathe my brow with foxglove, lest the evil tongue harm the bard that is to be'), which claims both Classical and Christian poetic eminence through the 'vates futurus' tag, but as Colin Burrow has pointed out, the cracks in this Virgilian confidence were already apparent in *Lycidas* and *Epitaphium Damonis*, which 'hint at early deaths and poetic unfulfilment'.[24] The fact that Milton was thirty-eight when this collection of largely youthful poems was published is particularly significant in this context, drawing attention to the temporal gap between the actual and the public initiations of the poetic career. In the overlapping manuscript and print cultures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the literary career arguably has two beginnings.[25]

Kilgour's chapter examines the closing stages of Milton's career, the time when, according to Lipking, the ageing poet asks himself 'whether he has accomplished everything of which he is capable'.[26] She identifies a specifically Ovidian circularity and return to origins in *Samson Agonistes*, the tragedy on an Old Testament hero that in the 1671 volume comes after *Paradise Regained*, the epic on a New Testament hero. Viewed in career

terms, it is remarkable that Milton chooses to project himself through a hero, Samson, who literally brings the edifice tumbling down around his ears, and biographical parallels are seemingly irresistible. Accordingly, Helgerson writes that '*Samson Agonistes* reflects the experience of the older man whose work in the cause of liberty had failed to achieve its expected end and who seemed denied a second chance. The crisis of his defeat, his blindness and his captivity forces Samson, as the crisis of 1660 must have forced Milton, to review the signs of his vocation.'[27] From a different perspective, however, the violence and destruction of *Samson* can be viewed as regenerative, although there are signs that the critical wheel is turning full circle and once more articulating a visceral horror at the poem's action (see survey in Kilgour below, Ch. 9, n. 22).

Lipking hints in his epilogue to this volume that the self-authored 'grand design' of the literary career is, indeed, something of a chimaera in post-Renaissance English literature, with contingent circumstances such as financial exigency, occasion and commission increasingly coming to dominate the writing lives of many authors and determining the shape of their *vita*; the modern literary career is just as likely to be unplanned or fortuitous, as it is to be modelled or managed. In some cases, such as that of Marvell, there is a notable absence of any grand design: Marvell remained largely unpublished in print throughout his life, and, as Smith writes, he 'seemingly … missed all the boats that guaranteed esteem' (p.237). In stark contrast to Milton, Marvell did not seek or articulate a public place for himself within the traditions of Classical and English poetry. His sense of a career is revealed rather through the correspondences and coincidences that connect him to the writings of his contemporaries and forebears, as illustrated by the way in which the personal trauma of his father's death by drowning resonates with Milton's watery elegy, *Lycidas*. Smith characterizes Marvell as a secretive and elusive writer, whose poetic autobiography needs to be reconstructed from the 'patina of allusion' (p.236) that characterizes his poetry.

Partly as a consequence of its fortuitous character and partly because of the diminishing power of Classical models, the post-Renaissance literary career typically ranges over a far greater generic territory than that of the ancients and their sixteenth-century imitators. Adherence to the hierarchy of genres is correspondingly weakened, most notably by the inexorable rise in the status of prose writing, primarily fiction and criticism. Accordingly, a new vocabulary of career criticism comes into play,

one that emphasizes range and quantity rather than generic development. Steven Zwicker, for example, opens his assessment of Dryden's poetic career by noting its 'breadth and authority' and characterizing it as 'various and fecund', 'opportune and adventitious', before baulking slightly at his own taxonomic task: 'even the idea of a literary career gives a false stability to the haphazardness of Dryden's literary production'.[28] Raphael Lyne's essay on Dryden addresses this fecundity by proposing a new model he terms the 'complete' career, in which 'many different sorts of writing are attempted in an implicit or explicit project to command as much canonical territory as possible' (p.241). 'Variety and totality' (p.246) are the characteristics of the complete career, characteristics that would seem to be at odds with the generic priorities and focused management of the Classical models, yet which co-habit with them in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literary careers. The variety and totality of the complete career make possible surprising juxtapositions such as that manifested in Dryden's *Fables*, when his translation of *Iliad* Book 1 is followed by *The Cock and the Fox*, translated from Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*. Rather than being incongruous, this acts as a showcase for Dryden's command of incident and detail – his 'trivial virtuosity' (p.254) – and declares the power of his own 'unifying presence' that can bring great authors of the past into such proximity and thematic conversation.

Of all the aspects of the Classical literary career that fed through into the Renaissance and later, patronage is perhaps the most enduring. Despite the increasing cultural and financial influence of the middle class, political and ecclesiastical patronage was still pervasive throughout the eighteenth century, and intersected with literary patronage in what David Griffin has termed 'the interwoven braid of dependency'.[29] All of the English writers addressed here were mapped into varying kinds of patronage relationships as well as engaging directly with the day-to-day business of the literary marketplace. Shakespeare dedicated *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594) to the Earl of Southampton, and probably wrote his earliest plays for Lord Strange's Men, who became the Earl of Derby's Men. Marvell was employed in the early 1650s as tutor to the daughter of Thomas, Lord Fairfax, a situation that gave rise to arguably the greatest of English country-house poems, *Upon Appleton House*. Dryden enjoyed the favour of royals, politicians and peers, for whom he

wrote dedications of such effusive praise that he called down centuries of criticism for flattery upon his head. Even Wordsworth and Coleridge benefited from the traditions of patronage by accepting the hospitality of leading figures of their day.

The chapters on Goethe and Wordsworth test the continuing applicability of the Classical career model to writers of the later eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, a period which saw enormous changes both in the external conditions of authorship and in writers' perception of their own relation to earlier tradition. Joseph Farrell focuses on a discrete segment of Goethe's vast and polymorphous career, his Italian journey of 1786 to 1788, and on the classicizing *Römische Elegien* written out of the experience of those years. Reference to the literary careers of the ancient Roman elegists allows us to reflect on the ways in which the *Römische Elegien* both mark a brief, self-contained, elegiac career, separated from the public career in Weimar that Goethe had abandoned for the time being, comparable to the Propertian rejection of the public Roman career, and, if we think rather of Ovid, form only a stage in a more extended career, that will progress, once more, beyond the private and the erotic to works of greater ambition. In the case of Wordsworth, Nicola Trott has shown elsewhere how the shape and character of the poetic career as it is generally and personally inflected receive intense scrutiny through the 'self-explorations' of *Tintern Abbey* and *The Prelude*. The hitherto dominant metaphors of the path or journey that were traditionally employed by poets at the start of their careers are side-stepped by Wordsworth, to be replaced by the river and the church as 'organic, counter-classical modes of organization'. A further element to Wordsworth's poetic career that contrasts with the received classical models is the fact that his great work, *The Recluse*, was never completed.[30] In her chapter for this volume, Trott continues her analysis of Wordsworth's literary career through a reading of the 1807 *Poems, in Two Volumes* – in particular their Virgilian epitaphs – as a disjunctive moment in Wordsworth's career that in one sense enforced a 'career break' as the poet sought to revise his work in a less 'peculiar' direction, and in another advanced whilst concealing Wordsworth's 'hidden career' working on *The Prelude* (p.285). As Trott points out, it is this 'hidden' career that has subsequently commanded greatest critical attention, in a marked break with the traditionally valorized motif of the unified and public *cursus honorum*. All of the post-Classical literary

careers addressed here – from Shakespeare's 'counter-laureate'-ship to Wordsworth's 'hidden' career and Goethe's elegiac 'sabbatical' – bear eloquent testimony not only to the continuance in post-antique literature of ancient career models, but also to that Ovidian principle of career re-scription and re-vision that is as much a part of the ancient conception of the literary career as is the *rota Vergiliana*.

CLASSICAL LITERARY CAREERS AND THEIR RECEPTION

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