
Kenneth Quinn’s *Texts and Contexts* is a discussion of those Roman writers whom he considers worthy of attention on modern criteria of what constitutes worthwhile literature. It is thus a wider-ranging book than anything he has written before; it is also consciously aimed more at the general reader and the student of literature in translation than at the professional scholar, though the latter will read the book with interest and profit. Unlike the standard literary handbooks, it avoids factual accounts of names, dates, works, and contents, and concentrates instead on ‘more interesting and less straightforward matters’ where the general reader is ‘less well served by the books available . . . ’ (p.37), which means in practice critical assessment of individual passages and careful consideration of literary and social context. The book also abandons the chronological approach of the traditional handbook in favour of a fourfold thematic division of Roman literature, which is the basis of its four main chapters: these are ‘The Poet as Storyteller’ (ch 2 : epic and drama), ‘The poet as Teacher’ (ch 3 : didactic), ‘The Poet as Himself’ (ch 4 : lyric, elegy, pastoral, satire), and ‘The Uses of Prose’ (ch 5 : didactic, historical, epistolary, and imaginative).

One strength of the book is Quinn’s willingness to confront general literary questions which are too easily ignored by professional writers on Roman literature, such as ancient and modern definitions of literature (pp. 1-4), attitudes to the usefulness of literature (pp. 21-4), the relation between literary work and social context (pp. 40-6), and the relative developments and separate etiquettes of prose and verse (pp. 205-8). Another is his ability to sum up an individual author with a pithy critical judgement; not all of his verdicts command immediate assent, but they do demand a serious consideration (and one can imagine setting general questions to students for years to come on the basis of quotations from Quinn). In a review of this length it is scarcely practicable to examine Quinn’s assessments of the twenty or so writers whom he chooses to discuss; it may be more useful to examine the effectiveness of his approach (called on p.37 ‘a radical reversal of emphasis’) and its implications for the study and teaching of Roman literature.

The principle of selectivity has obvious advantages: minor or fragmentary authors need be mentioned (if at all) only when they form part of the literary context of major writers, and this can be done in passing without
holding up the flow of the narrative. In effect Quinn has two criteria for inclusion, quality and genre: ‘What is important for our purpose is that those works which are not literature [sc. in the modern sense] should not be taken to be literature, and that those which are bad literature should be frankly acknowledged to be bad’ (p.6). In terms of quality Quinn rightly includes besides the acknowledged front-rankers those second-rankers who have had an important influence on European literature (such as Plautus, Terence, and Seneca); on grounds of genre he excludes most didactic prose and, more strikingly, the speeches of Cicero (‘however much that might have surprised Cicero’ : p. 4). A few minor writers are perhaps fortunate to creep in, notably Tibullus and Pliny; on the other hand Caesar, Statius, Silius, and Suetonius are all omitted. The result is a very readable and uncluttered book, one of the few accounts of Roman literature which one can imagine the general reader reading through from beginning to end.

Crucial to Quinn’s approach is the arrangement of the material. As he points out (p.37), it is one of the disadvantages of the chronological approach to Roman literature that one has to wade through a lot of second-rate or fragmentary stuff before one comes to anything really worth discussing; another is that it makes comparison of related but chronologically separated works difficult. With Quinn’s scheme the Aeneid is one of the first works to be discussed; and the Aeneid, Metamorphoses, and Lucan’s Bellum Civile follow each other directly (ch 2), as do the De Rerum Natura, Georgics, and Ars Amatoria (ch 3). And this is not merely a matter of taking a traditional genre (such as epic or didactic) and following it through. It does give a new perspective on the Eclogues or Horace’s Satires to see them as different developments of personal poetry (ch 4); and the discussion of all forms of (literary) prose in one chapter (ch 5) does illuminate the development of prose and its changing relation to verse. But not all Quinn’s groupings are as successful: it is hard to see what is gained by coming to drama at the end of a discussion of epic under the general heading of narrative poetry (ch 2), or even by treating comedy and tragedy together when they were composed in such different circumstances. There are obviously many ways of grouping works of Roman literature for study, all of which would have their own advantages and disadvantages (one could, for example, abandon Quinn’s verse/prose division and take verse epic and prose epic together, or verse didactic epistle and prose didactic epistle). Yet the chronological approach is perhaps not in the end to be despised: it does have its own built-in coherence, especially if one is to emphasise the importance of social context and of changing attitudes to literature.

The basic method of the book, as the title implies, is to take for each work one or more passages of some length for analysis (and comparison with related passages), which is essentially the method successfully used in
Quinn’s earlier *Latin Explorations*. This method here runs into two difficulties, first that it is dealing with translations rather than with Latin texts, which limits the effectiveness of close stylistic analysis, and secondly that there is simply not space *both* to analyse passages at length *and* to compare other related writers *and* to give a balanced impression of the work as a whole. The Latin text is given for some passages, but only occasionally and on no discernible principle; for the translations, on which the reader has mostly to rely, Quinn has a marked preference for the older literary versions (such as Holland’s Livy or Golding’s *Metamorphoses*) which for all their merits may give a false impression to today’s students. As for space the nine-page treatment of the *Aeneid* (pp. 59-68) is a fair example, which contains the following: the hunting-scene from *Aen.* 4. 129-50 with careful stylistic analysis (one page), the Atlas passage (*Aen.* 4. 246-51) contrasted with two passages from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (two pages), Medea in love from *Met.* 7 set beside Dido in love from *Aen.* 4. 1-27 (two pages), and the closing scene of *Aeneid* (12. 919-52) with full discussion of Virgil’s intentions (four pages). All perceptive and stimulating, but inevitably only a partial account of the *Aeneid*.

The book has no footnotes and a limited bibliography (restricted to recommended translations and a few basic critical works); these are welcome features if they imply that a well-stocked card-index is not the prime requisite for an intelligent approach to Roman literature. It is difficult to see how it could be used as a textbook, as the publishers suggest. It is rather a book to read and be stimulated by; and as such it is warmly recommended to teachers of Roman literature and their students.

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From nearly 600 articles and reviews (‘opere minori’) written over the past five decades by Massimo Pallottino, and listed in the impressive thirty-page *Bibliography* at the outset of the three-volumed publication (vol. I, pp.xvii-xlvi), some 75 works have been judiciously selected and re-published in their entirety by a number of his former students—now distinguished scholars in their own right: Giovanni Colonna, Mauro Cristofani, Francesco Roncalli, and others—to honor their master, one of the most eminent of Italian archaeologists and scholars today. The articles, sundry papers, and reviews