

bigger questions. And one can almost feel the lake washing below, the smell of a mahogany table, the glimpse of the mountains in the background. Long may the *Entretiens* continue.

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POLITICIZED CRITICS

Y. L. TOO: *The Idea of Ancient Literary Criticism*. Pp. ix + 326. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. Cased, £45. ISBN: 0-19-815076-8.

This is a problematic book. Its central thesis, that the texts of so-called ancient literary criticism constantly engage in processes of political discrimination and cultural self-definition, offers a fresh angle on the subject, though the novelty is more conspicuous in general assertion than in fine detail. The value of Too's work is impaired, however, not only by shortcomings of argument but also by the worst collection of scholarly errors I have ever encountered from a professional Hellenist.

T. rightly questions views of ancient criticism as essentially 'aestheticist' and apolitical. She believes all criticism, *qua* judgement and regulation of discourse, to have implications for socio-political values, and she maintains that ancient criticism repeatedly foregrounds such concerns through strategies of ideological inclusion and exclusion, always in the interests of cultural élites. She regards such strategies as partly motivated by a fear of 'multiple voices', which she traces back (Chapter I), somewhat portentously, to the motif of the Hesiodic Typhon (*Theog.* 829–35), and which she also finds in Aristophanes (of whom her solemn treatment shows no awareness of the distinctively comic). Unsurprisingly, Plato's *Republic* (Chapter II), with its proposed 'censorship' for the benefit of the community, is paradigmatic for T.'s approach (which here, though, has affinities with the work of, for example, Ferrari, nowhere cited). She discusses the *Republic's* link between poetry and civic identity, its anxiety over psychic fragmentation, and its attempt to embody a discourse of justice in its own philosophical 'poetry'. In Chapter III, more contentiously, T. argues that an 'éliteist ideology' of pleasure (that of the educated male citizen) underlies Aristotle's *Poetics*: she builds her case essentially on *Politics* 8, whose implications for the theatre are, however, more complex (cf. 1342a16–28) than she acknowledges; but she fails to grapple with (or even fully cite) the *Poetics'* own complex series of references to, and implications for, tragic audiences. Chapter IV, which rests substantially on familiar claims about the critical scholarship of Ptolemaic Alexandria (not the only part of the book where T. is over-reliant on paraphrase of others' views), stresses the Alexandrians' 'appropriation' and reshaping of Greek cultural identity for their own situation, 'dislocated' (an overworked favourite of T.'s) in North Africa. Chapter V, on Roman ideas of freedom of speech (where T. rejects a simple equation of Republic/freedom and Empire/oppression, and illustrates different ways in which writers—including Horace, Ovid, and Tacitus—position themselves *vis-à-vis* discourses of power and *libertas*), Chapter VI, on 'Longinus' (whose notion of the sublime involves mental 'transport' from the present into an idealized literary past, thus creating a kind of political community in the mind of appropriately tuned readers), and Chapter VII (on Augustine's adaptation of the pagan 'critical imperative', partly against pagan literature itself, in the interests of the Christian 'city') give wide and varied scope to T.'s conception of criticism. In her final chapter and conclusion, T. posits significant continuities between ancient criticism and modern arguments over, for example,

obscenity, pornography, and multiculturalism in higher education: T. herself favours ‘multiple voices’ in the curriculum, especially those of the previously disadvantaged, though she also accepts the validity of carefully contextualized arguments for ‘censorship’.

Parts of this book are stimulating and provocative, but there is much that is insufficiently rigorous and awkwardly written. While T.’s widening of the ambit of ‘literary criticism’, to include, for example, debates over freedom of speech, poses a worthwhile challenge to customary perspectives, the challenge would be more cogent if she had properly confronted various conceptions of ‘the literary’: the issue is skirted round for most of the book; the belated remarks on pp. 282–3 hardly scratch the surface. (Some scrutiny of the idea of ‘the political’, whose force is largely and conveniently taken for granted, would also have been welcome.) More disturbingly, readers must be warned that T.’s linguistic and interpretative scholarship is extensively flawed. Here are some of the worst cases (but more could be catalogued, not to mention some eighty errors in quotation and transliteration of Greek). T. makes a vocative masculine adjective agree with a feminine accusative noun at *Hom. Hymn. Merc.* 533 (p. 29), whose context she utterly confuses (it has nothing to do with ‘Delian bee maidens’; cf. p. 129); she translates ὄρχεις (‘testicles’) as ‘dances’ (and πρωκτός as ‘genitals’) at Aristophanes, *Wasps* 1035 (p. 42); she thinks the divine demiurge in *Republic* 10 is an ‘imitator’, astonishingly misapplying to him the description of the ‘sophist’ poet at 596cd (pp. 61–2); she thinks ἀνδριάντα is neuter plural (and turns ἀπεργάζεσθαι into the non-existent ἀπεργάζεω, p. 72); she mistranslates Aristotle, *Pol.* 1336bl6–17, where *tôthasmos* does not mean mockery of gods (p. 85); she claims (p. 92) that at *Pol.* 1288b37ff. Aristotle ‘portrays Sparta as an ideal chorus’ (*sic*) and ‘a model practical constitution’, whereas Aristotle refers to (without endorsing) *others’* praise of Sparta, and his term *chorégia* (whose usage in Athenian theatre T. seems not to grasp) is no active choral metaphor; she strangely thinks Aristotle criticizes Sophoclean, not just Euripidean, choruses at *Poet.* 1456a27 (p. 92); she totally misconstrues Aristophanes, *Knights* 517, making it say that comedy ‘pleases only a few people’ and taking it to imply ‘a contrast between élite and mass tastes’, when the line refers to poets not audiences (p. 97); she grotesquely scrambles Aristotle, *EN* 1175b3–10, foisting on the philosopher the bizarre idea that one cannot enjoy music and ‘the accompanying words’ at the same time, when his example is of being distracted from a discussion by the *overheard* sound of music (p. 101); she garbles Aristotle, *Poet.* 1461b27–9, completely missing the point that tragedy has (supposedly) inferior spectators to epic but nonetheless provides a superior pleasure (p. 107); she makes Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1385b21–3 say ‘it is impossible to feel pity for someone who enjoys every good thing’, rather than impossible *for* such a person to feel pity (p. 111; a negative missing in l. 16 *ibid.*); she totally obscures Luciano Canfora’s view that the Alexandrian Library was not destroyed by fire in the Roman period (p. 116); she calls Callimachus, without qualification, ‘librarian’ at Alexandria (pp. 132–3); she thinks the interpretative principle of ‘Homer from Homer’ has something to do with the poet’s biography (p. 133); she supposes that Strabo, in his disagreement with Eratosthenes, thought poetry was for ‘entertainment’ (p. 143, part of a very muddled passage, especially regarding allegory); she unwarrantedly claims that Hellenistic scholars ‘refused’ to catalogue a putative play by Alexis (p. 145); she three times calls Plutarch simply ‘Roman’ (pp. 145–7); she translates the words νῶϊ θεοῦ (*Od.* 4.160) as ‘mind of a god’ (p. 148); she translates συμμαχεῖ (‘is an ally of’) at *De sublim.* 17 as ‘fights against’, thus *reversing* the argument about sublimity and emotion (pp. 203–4: contrast the correct translation on p. 216!); she translates τὰ ὅλα διέβαλεν (‘he spoilt the whole

thing') as 'was unable to leave out any detail', and transfers to Cicero a (misunderstood) phrase referring to Plato's style (pp. 204–5).

Such errors, most of which distort T.'s arguments, are shockingly unprofessional: it is patent that the author's knowledge of Greek is extremely defective (there are worrying mistakes in Latin too). No reader should take anything in this book on trust. One wonders how a work with such gravely imperfect scholarship was not fully vetted at OUP.

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A NEW ETRUSCAN TEXT

L. AGOSTINIANI, F. NICOSIA: *Tabula Cortonensis*. (Studia Archaeologica, 105.) Pp. 175, incl. 35 pls. Rome: 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider, 2000. Cased, L. 250,000. ISBN: 88-8265-090-1.

This book will already be known to some readers of *CR* from L. Bonfante's lucid review in *The Times Higher*, 19 May 2000. It is the *editio princeps* of a long Etruscan inscription that came to light at Cortona (prov. Arezzo) in 1992 and is now in the care of the Florence Archaeological Superintendency (pp. 11, 122; inv. 234.918). Together with excellent photographs and facsimiles, the book comprises discussion of the text (A.) and of the item on which it appears (N.).

Containing over 200 words (including many proper names), the *Tabula Cortonensis* overtakes the stone Perugia Cippus (130 words) as the third longest extant Etruscan text, after the linen wrappings (once a *liber linteus*) of the Zagreb Mummy (1200) and the terracotta Capua 'Tile' (300). The actual *Tabula* (discussed in Chapter I, pp. 11–30) is a bronze plaque 2–3 mm thick and 28.5 cm wide by 45.8 long, on which thirty-two regular horizontal lines of about thirty letters each were engraved on face A, and eight more on the upper part of face B; a riveted handle allowed suspension (for public inspection?). The plaque is exceptionally well preserved, although it was deliberately broken in antiquity into eight small rectangles. One of the latter is missing, but it is clear that it contained exclusively names: the actual 'narrative' text is complete and virtually intact, which cannot be said of either the Mummy or the Tile. Internal evidence suggests that the text was written around 200 B.C. at Cortona, a major city of Northern Etruria. Nothing is known of the archaeological context. The seven surviving fragments were handed in to the Carabinieri by a carpenter, who indicated for their 'chance' discovery a place that subsequent investigation by the Florence Superintendency (then headed by N.) showed to be false. The loss to science invariably represented by lack of documentation makes the exegesis of this remarkable text particularly difficult: and now we have to contend with the fundamental difference between the overall interpretation offered here by A. and that simultaneously—and no less authoritatively—proposed by C. De Simone, *ASNP*⁴ 3 (1998 [1999]), 1–122.

De Simone (who, unlike A., provides a tentative, and naturally provisional, translation), suggests that the 'sconvolgente novità' of this text resides in its status as the first long official Etruscan document that refers to the funerary rituals performed annually by the members of a family confraternity in honour of their ancestors—the well-known ceremony of *parentatio*, here concerning the aristocratic Cusu of Cortona. In sharp contrast, the uncompromisingly technical Chapter III of the work under review ('L'interpretazione', pp. 53–114; following Chapter II, 'Il testo', pp. 31–52) tells us (see especially pp. 104–8) that the *Tabula* contains the permanent transcription of a