between Burckhardt and Nietzsche, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff and Max Weber, as well as a page concordance between different Burckhardt editions. In conclusion, this is a very well written book which definitely deepens our understanding of Burckhardt and his view of the *polis* and democracy.

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OUR DEBT TO BAKHTIN

R. Bracht Branham (ed.): *Bakhtin and the Classics*. Pp. xxvii + 299. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002. Paper, $27.95. ISBN: 0-8101-1906-4 (0-8101-1905-6 hbk).

The Bakhtin phenomenon is fascinating. How is it that a writer from the Stalinist Soviet Union, whose work became widely known even in Russia only after it was translated into French fifty or more years after its initial publication, should be so trendy for classicists? Especially when Bakhtin is given to grand theory and grand pronouncements on Literature, the World, Laughter—the sort of theorizing that makes many professional classicists in the twentieth century, dedicated as they are to the protocols of the footnote, want to duck beneath the parapet. It is not a stirring story of personal heroic resistance to the oppressive State: as the leading Bakhtinian scholar Ken Hirschkop nicely puts it, 'For a long time, we knew very little about Bakhtin's life. Thanks to the efforts of postglasnost Bakhtin scholarship, we now know even less'. Nor is it the express content of his classical criticism. Although he writes on 'epic and the novel', and is one of few writers of his period to take e.g. the ancient Greek Romance seriously, most of his remarks on ancient literature are passed over with rather awkward silence, or alluded to in the most general way as 'stimulating'. Nor is it evident that his interest in the grotesque body of Rabelaisian fantasy would attract the devotees of Apollonian perfection, nor that his love of what he calls the dialogic novel of the nineteenth-century Soviet Union would provide fertile ground for classicists, particularly when cultural and generic specificity are privileged focuses of ancient literary study. Yet what makes Bakhtin 'one of the leading thinkers of the twentieth century' (as Clark and Holquist put it with the biographer's usual lack of disinterestedness) is the productivity of his ideas. His notions of 'the carnival', 'the dialogic', 'the chronotope', the destabilizing force of laughter, the revolutionary gesture of the popular grotesque, have not only been swiftly absorbed into mainstream criticism, but have also been used not just as templates to be dropped over other cultures or literatures (though there are plenty of rather slavish and uninspiring 'Bakhtinian readings'), but as starting points which lead in different and often thrilling directions. This is seen not just in obvious and brilliant reworkings of his material (like Stallybrass and White's *The Politics and Poetics of Trangression* or Terry Castle's *Masquerade and Civilization*—to mention two major books that do not reach Branham's bibliography), but also in such volumes as Emily Gowers's excellent *The Loaded Table* or Amy Richlin's *The Garden of Priapus*, which could not have been imagined without the influence, direct and indirect, of Bakhtin.

This productivity of Bakhtin is the strength and weakness of Branham's bold, explorative, and varied volume. Readers who turn to it to find what Bakhtin thought of the classics will be disappointed: there is no comprehensive guide. Nor will initiands find an account of what Bakhtin said and why it is useful for classicists. (There are

https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/52.2.362 Published online by Cambridge University Press

many full guides to Bakhtin elsewhere.) Rather, a well-chosen roll of particularly creative classicists (Anthony Edwards, Jack Peradotto, Gregory Nagy, William Batstone, Garth Tissol, Francis Dunn, Andrea Nightingale, and Branham himself) each take Bakhtin as a starting point for a more reflective reading of their own chosen author or genre—with Greek writing (Aristophanes, Homer, Plato, Antiphon, the novel) dominating Latin (only Catullus and Ovid) to a marked degree. In some cases, the starting point and the texts considered are closely and productively intertwined: so Anthony Edwards looks first at how Bakhtin discusses the political impact of outrageous laughter and the grotesqueries of carnival, and moves, via a consideration of why Bakhtin writes so little on Aristophanes, to exploring not just how Bakhtin's models are inadequate for Aristophanes and his political culture, but also how Aristophanes in turn can raise questions for Bakhtin in a way which should be fed back into theories of the politics of the comic and the grotesque. The full force of the 'and' in 'Bakhtin and the Classics' is here vividly felt. Edwards is helped by the fact that this is already one of the most worked areas of scholarship on Bakhtin and the ancient world—following on from Jean-Claude Carrière's ground-breaking *Le Carnaval et le politique* of 1979, Peter Möllendorff's lengthy *Grundlagen einer Ästhetik der Alten Komödie*, my own *The Poet's Voice*, and Jeff Henderson's contribution to *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?* have each treated precisely this issue. Nonetheless, this is a useful and stimulating chapter.

At the other extreme, Francis Dunn offers a piece entitled 'Rethinking Time: from Bakhtin to Antiphon', which the editor describes as providing 'a complex dialogic context in which to rethink Bakhtin's own theorizing', but which might better be termed 'a brief history of time'. It consists of some inevitably rather thin—though not unintelligent—comments on a range of thinkers on time from Augustine to Spinoza to Kant to Antiphon. That last name is the surprise and the pay-off, though I remained unconvinced that a coherent theory of time to be set against e.g. Augustine's *Confessions* could be extracted from the fragments of Antiphon. Here, Bakhtin is the initial stimulus for reflection—but is scarcely set in significant dialogue with any of the figures discussed, and certainly not with Antiphon.

The classicists are framed by two of the most distinguished of Slavic scholars. A first chapter on carnival is provided by Caryl Emerson, who has done more than anyone to make the postglasnost Bakhtin available to those of us without Russian. Her piece is characteristically lucid, magisterial, and instructive (though inevitably something of an afterthought to her fine recent study, *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*). A final chapter is offered by Gary Morson on the tension between the formalism of art and the arbitrariness of life, which seemed rather undeveloped. Neither piece has much to do with the classics, though Emerson is always a compulsory read for anyone interested in Bakhtin.

Overall, this is a volume which testifies strikingly to the productivity of Bakhtin across classics: it is a contribution to an ongoing dialogue, a dialogue where readers will find it better to join in than to remain silently on the sidelines. Dialogues sometimes bring misunderstanding, confusion, and even hurt: but, as Bakhtin constantly reminds us, they are still the best form of discourse we have.

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https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/52.2.362 Published online by Cambridge University Press