

his work in a thoughtful and balanced manner, expressing their support for the traditional dates (c. 430–424 BCE), but also explaining why later dates have been proposed and where to find those discussions (89, with footnotes 25–26).

The section on Herodotus' historiography, titled 'Form and Thought in Herodotus' in homage to Henry Immerwahr's influential 1966 volume of that name, is particularly helpful. Herodotus' historical method is notoriously difficult because so much of it is implicit, rather than overtly stated, but the authors discuss it with clarity and completeness. For example, the authors explain the relationship of Book 1 to the rest of the work, showing that, while the overall structure of the *Histories* 'provides a chronologically organized account of Persian imperial aggression', Book 1 introduces the work's 'chronological format, its formal properties, and many of its major themes' (14). The authors briefly discuss several of these themes, including 'the fundamental uncertainty of human life', the 'inscrutable will of the gods' and the fact that a hardy, simple, warrior culture can often conquer a complex and more sophisticated one (15).

In the commentary (which, at over 300 pages, makes up the largest portion of the book), the authors provide clear and straightforward explanations to challenging topics without oversimplifying them. Their discussion of Herodotus' puzzling 'Persian version' of the cause of the Persian Wars is a case in point. Herodotus represents the Persian chroniclers as using traditional Greek myths to explain the Persian War as the result of a series of reciprocal abductions. On this view, the Persian War was simply a (just) retaliation for the Trojan War (1.1–5). Dewald and Munson point out that while Herodotus presents the Persians as sophisticatedly using the Greeks' own legends 'to construct an elaborate pro-Persian apologia', he also introduces several important themes that will be programmatic for the *Histories* as a whole, including 'retribution as a motive or pretext for action', and the 'fundamental Herodotean principle' that 'no-one's story ... will prove to be a disinterested, impartial account' (182).

Throughout the volume, the authors keep their narrative relatively straightforward while sketching out important scholarly debates in the footnotes, with ample citations for those who wish to pursue the issues further. This approach makes for a satisfying reading experience and is appropriate for a series intended for intermediate and advanced students as well as for scholars (as noted on the back cover).

I noticed only one typographical error: in the Abbreviations section (xi), A. M. Bowie's commentary in this series is incorrectly identified as being on Herodotus' *Histories* Book 7 (rather than Book 8). It is listed correctly in the Bibliography.

As Dewald and Munson note in their preface, this commentary has been many years in the making. The extraordinary care and thoroughness with which they have researched and written it ensures that this will be the standard commentary of Herodotus' Book 1 for many years to come.

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DUBOIS (P.) **Democratic Swarms: Ancient Comedy and the Politics of the People.** Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2022. Pp. xv + 261. £36/\$45. 9780226815749.
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This book marks a new era in the scholarship on Aristophanic comedy. It boldly touches upon the relationship between humanistic scholarship and activism and the place that antiquity occupies in the conceptualizations of this relationship. In a political context

in which antiquity is often used to enforce the most pernicious ideologies, how can we look to ancient comedy, a profoundly political genre steeped in misogyny, transphobia and racism, to articulate forms of emancipatory thinking? At a time when, in many states in the US, critical theory is in danger of being silenced, Classics is self-servingly presented by some institutions as a code for the safe and apolitical. This is the reason why, as Page duBois suggests in the introduction of her brilliant book, a renewed discussion of the relationship between Classics and critical theory is urgently needed.

Comedy is a very complex discursive machine, in which the funny is always implicated with the unfunny, pleasure with pain, release with discomfort. The very dynamic of the joke presupposes an opposition between those who are in the know and those who are not, those who get it and those who do not. There is an in-built structure of exclusion that should inform our presuppositions. While the debate on Aristophanes has long centred the dichotomies of irony and seriousness, escapism and political engagement, the question now seems to be this: given that this is a deeply political corpus, how can we make a case for continuing to read it when we find it disturbing and often not funny at all?

An important starting point, for duBois, is a re-evaluation of the anarchic energy located in the swarming, buoyant energy of unruly chorality. In his theorization of the political aesthetics of Blackness, of refusal as a sensory break, an agential cut, Fred Moten coins the word 'choreophonographics', a term that nicely dovetails with duBois' spot-on focus on Deleuzian becoming, on Aristophanic drama's exuberant mobility. I could not agree more (and I hope that many other classicists will, too) on the necessity, in her words, of 'break[ing] Greek comedy out of the scholarly insularity of its study' and 'challeng[ing] the complacencies of Western liberalism based on ancient models' (x, 186). To do so, duBois calls for a shift of attention from personhood (that is, from the never fully abandoned notion of Aristophanic authoriality) to impersonality, the singular plurality of the Chorus.

duBois makes a powerful case for shifting critical emphasis from mockery to laughter as an insurrectionary vibration. In Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York (1967), translated from the French 1952 edition), laughter is an act of emancipatory intemperance, of bodily dissolution as escape from the control of the colonial oppressor. The phenomenology of laughter, the choreographics or choreophonographics of laughter, encompasses laughter's vibrations and its indecent gaping at the purely representational. It constitutes the political not as the carnivalesque, or liberal inclusion-as-containment, but as an infinite, unforeseeable force of de-actualization. There is a kind of choreographic swarming even in the languaging of comic language, a rendition of the affective contradictions of laughter.

I am particularly taken by duBois' compelling observation that 'we can see, in such contemporary movements as the Yellow Umbrellas, the Sunrise Movement, Occupy, and Black Lives Matter, resistance to defined leadership, to named figures who stand for the group as a whole, and by contrast, the cultivation of habits of collective decision-making and equality that could look back to ... the wild anarchy of [ancient] choruses' (xiii). This wild anarchy is what also brings her to see comic politics beyond the limited perspective of citizenship, and to see in a genre that codifies the most horrifying conspiratorial stereotypes about non-citizens the possibility for the undocumented, a politics that realizes itself, or rather never realizes itself, in the questioning of citizenship itself.

In the comic Chorus duBois daringly and powerfully suggests that we look for aestheticized, embodied expressions of radical impossibility, which we take to be the affirmative negativity for emancipatory change. For duBois, and for this reviewer too, Aristophanic metapolitics stems precisely from the comic enabling of an imaginative encounter with the continuously enfolded inscription of the impossible within the possible. duBois deftly shows that Aristophanic choreophonographics immerse us in a *super-real* process of

continuous *poiēsis* of the word and the world, broken to be rebuilt anew, all over again. As Judith Butler observes, ‘The global attacks on gender studies [and] critical race theory ... are linked with the situation of endangered scholars who are forced’, like the protagonists of Aristophanes’ *Birds*, ‘to leave their universities and ... their countries ... because of the content of their scholarship’ (‘Endangered Scholarship, Academic Freedom, and the Life of Critique’, *Critical Times* 5.2 (2022), 399–423, at 399). Butler’s suggestion for responding to these attacks is to ‘reformulate and publicize the critical nature of our work as central not only to the university but to democracy more broadly’ (400). Aristophanic comedy, duBois shows us in her magnificent book, can participate in this inquiry. And that is an important reason why it matters, and should matter.

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FARAONE (C.A.) and TORALLAS TOVAR (S.) (eds) **The Greco-Egyptian Magical Formularies: Libraries, Books, and Individual Recipes** (New Texts from Ancient Cultures). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022. Pp. xxviii + 534, illus., facs. £89/\$95. 9780472133277. doi:[10.1017/S0075426923000988](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0075426923000988)

This collection of essays accompanies other research outputs from the project ‘The Transmission of Magical Knowledge’, funded by the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society at the University of Chicago. The close, physical analysis of the papyri has led to a number of interesting and important discoveries, clearly set out in *Greek and Egyptian Magical Formularies, Vol. I: Text and Translation* (Berkeley 2022, referred to hereafter as *GEMF*) from the same editors. The volume under review is meant to be considered a part of the larger project and is described as ‘an unintended, but very welcome, outcome of our multiyear project to re-edit and translate into English the Greek and bilingual Greek-Egyptian magical handbooks’ (xxii).

The emphasis on the physicality or materiality of the magical papyri is a particularly useful companion to the republished texts. This is the predominant focus of Part One (‘Libraries, Codices, and Rolls’), where otherwise inaccessible knowledge about the scribes behind the papyri is drawn out. By looking at questions such as who these individuals might have been, and what their engagement with this magical material could have been, we gain a far better understanding of why these papyri were produced and how they were engaged with.

In Chapter 1, ‘Anatomy of the Magical Archive’ by Korshi Dosoo and Sofia Torallas Tovar, a shift in focus from ‘magical archives’ to ‘archives with magical content’ is convincingly argued for. This would be a move towards seeing magical texts as one type of material that individuals might collect and use, whose relationships with non-magical material may be important for its contextual understanding. This analysis is developed in Chapter 2, ‘Roll vs. Codex: The Format of the Magical Handbook’ by the same authors, where they study the formularies within the wider context of book production in Egypt, which is particularly interesting as it reminds readers that these documents were not produced in isolation.

Re-evaluation of the knowledge that can be gained from the Theban Magical Library is very useful and the evolution of Greek texts alongside those in Coptic and Demotic is important for providing an understanding of the evolution of the magical texts tradition as a whole. In their own words: ‘Much of the research on magical manuscripts over the last 200 years has, understandably, focused on their rich and complex textual content, and yet,