

# Translation of a translation: comic branding, politics and the ‘graphic novel face’ of Aristophanes

**Dimitris Asimakoulas**

*University of Surrey*

Humorous comic books often offer a coherent comic tone that may become recognisable by readers and which might lead to commercial success. Such is the case of a distinctly Greek invention, the comic book adaptations of Aristophanic plays, which have sold over one million copies to date. The adaptations – arguably, instances of intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 2000) – were done in the mid-1980s by the Akokalides-Apostolides artistic duo. The books travelled well into the 2010s and translations were commissioned (stretching from the late 1980s till now): English, French and German, all done in Greece; Turkish, done by an independent publisher in Turkey. As such, the books constitute publication oddities, given the usual editorial barriers afflicting translation (Dalkey Archive Press 2011), and they represent a highly unusual South-to-South cultural flow.

This paper plots the socio-historical context of the Aristophanic comics series, which can be seen as recent additions to a so-called *rewriting chain*, or interrelated textual transformations harking back to classical comedy. The paper then discusses the views of key players, using Lefevere’s concept of rewriting as theoretical framework (Gentzler 2017; Lefevere 2017). Archival work and interviews showcase the precarious yet enabling roles of rewriters (artists, translators, publishers) who sought to break new ground commercially or artistically. Aristophanic rewriters have specifically attempted to appeal to new audiences with a penchant for multimodal storytelling, foreign language learners and culturally/politically curious audiences. Underlying the above is a notion of resilience both in text thematics and the behaviour of rewriters; rewriting go-betweeners firmly believed in the comic branding potential of Aristophanic thematics, a belief that often justified sacrifices in time/economic capital, lengthy negotiations with state/private institutions and the risk of representing a minoritarian(-language) work with topical political nuances.

## **References:**

Dalkey Archive Press (2011) *Research into Barriers to Translation and Best Practices. A Study for the Global Translation Initiative*. [last accessed 18 Jun 2019] <[http://www.dalkeyarchive.com/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Global\\_Translation\\_Initiative\\_Study.pdf](http://www.dalkeyarchive.com/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Global_Translation_Initiative_Study.pdf)>

Gentzler, Edwin (2017) *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies*. London and New York: Routledge.

Jakobson, Roman (2000) “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation.” In Lawrence Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 113-118.

Lefevere, André (2017) *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. Reissued *Routledge Translation Classics* Edition. London and New York: Routledge.