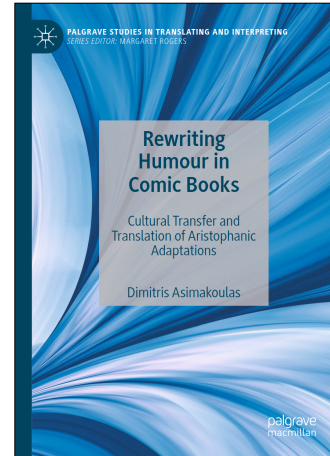


Dimitris Asimakoulas, **Rewriting Humour in Comic Books: Cultural Transfer and Translation of Aristophanic Adaptations**, Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, 189 pp., \$56.47 (hardcover).

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In the past couple of decades, many classics have been rewritten into comic books so as to appeal to new audiences. For the comic book, humor undoubtedly serves as a staple feature. Therefore, a growing body of research is focusing on the role humor plays in the comic rewriting of classics, which leaves humor a topic in need of more attention in the field of comic arts. As part of these efforts, **Rewriting Humour in Comic Books: Cultural Transfer and Translation of Aristophanic Adaptations**, as a book of the series *Palgrave Studies in Translation and Interpreting*, whose purpose is to examine the crucial role translation and interpreting play at all levels of communication in today's world, explores the rewriting of humor elements contained in Aristophanic comic books and makes a timely addition to the field. This book analyzes comic book adaptations of Aristophanes' plays to shed light on how and why humor travels across cultures and time, and could be considered as a must read for scholars in the fields such as translation studies, comic studies, humor studies, and Greek studies.



The book consists of six chapters. Chapter 1, the introductory chapter, begins with a discussion on the role humor plays in comic books, and suggests that comic artists may use humor for branding purposes. It then clarifies the object of study in this book as comic book adaptations of classical comedy, and explains the reason why comic book adaptations of Aristophanes' plays are prime examples of comic branding. In addition, this chapter outlines the research rationale and method of the whole book, and further offers a brief introduction of the main topics in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 makes a diachronic research on the rewriting of Aristophanic plays made by philologists, educators, translators, directors, and children's literature adapters, and clarifies that the comic book is the latest format of such rewritings. In this chapter, the author gives a general survey of rewriting theory by Lefevere, discussing the five constraints (language, the universe of discourse, poetics, professionals, and patronage) affecting the rewriting of literary works, and offers a brief introduction of rewriting perspectives in classics such as audience response, genre analysis, the link between texts and other cultural practices, and sociolinguistics, explaining specifically the humor poetics perspective by Manteli. He then analyzes the rewriting chain of Aristophanic plays in modern Greek and discusses five paradigms of Aristophanic reception. The author further reviews four waves of Aristophanic rewritings for children and explores the posttranslation multimodal features of those rewritings. The last section of this chapter focuses on the main professionals of Aristophanic comic book rewritings, including creators, publishers, and translators.

Chapter 3 focuses on the transition of Aristophanic plays to comic book texts as well as the multimodal reimagining of Aristophanic work in comic arts. In this chapter, the author explores the basic matrix of a typical classical comedy, which includes prologue/prologos, parados, contest/agon, parabasis, episodeia, and exodos, and analyzes the multimodal reimagining of Aristophanes' comedy in the corresponding comic book from the perspective of the previously mentioned matrix. In addition, he lists rewriting strategies such as integration, concretization in image, reculturalization, addition, condensation, and omission, which are typical of the multimodal adaptation of comic books, and clarifies the application of those strategies to the matrix of play texts by Aristophanes. Furthermore, the author examines Aristophanes' five play texts, which are *Acharnians*, *Peace*, *Women at the Thesmophoria*, *Frogs*, and *Assembly of Women*, and their respective comic book adaptations to show how each comic reimagines the plot, characters, and cultural-ideological information inscribed in the source texts.

Chapter 4 proceeds from a humor studies approach to comedy. It introduces two models of studying humor in Aristophanes' works. The first one is Robson's two-tier model: maxim amuse and fame amuse; and the second one refers to Vandaele's poetics-informed model, which "entails the management of incongruity and superiority relations between discourse participants in literary communication: author, narrators, readers/spectators, characters" (Vandaele, 2010, p. 732). According to Vandaele's humor theory, metanarrative humor, comic suspense, comic surprise, and comic characterization are the main types of humor. This chapter then explains Robson's approach, which is based on Arrardo's general theory of verbal humor, to rewriting humor in the translation of comic books, and further elaborates the effects of graphic style as well as suspenseful surprises and characters in the translations of Aristophanic series. The following sections explore comic suspense and comic surprise by citing case studies of translating the overt political, antiwar thematics in *Peace* and *Acharnians* and translating the intertextual, literary orientation in *Frogs*.

Chapter 5 builds on the discussion in chapter 4 and extends the traditional narratological approach to characterization. This chapter focuses on the character of comic books. Characters in comics can be flat or round on two levels: textual and conceptual (Mikkonen, 2017, p. 188). The textual level concerns the extent and variety of attention a character receives in a story, and the conceptual level concerns the psychological depth readers may recognize in a character. The author proposes that characters in Aristophanic comics can be seen as one-dimensional flat characters and that the audience can also detect the round, multidimensional features of those characters. Such character complexity can manifest itself in characterization of comic heroes through their prototypical features of resourcefulness, excess, and individualism. The following sections examine eight significant characters from the Aristophanic comic book series to assess the resourcefulness-excess-individualism effect of comic heroism on constructing the sense of humor from the perspective of the multimodal narrative that combines image, language, and their relationality or spatiality.

Chapter 6, the concluding chapter, first diachronically reviews the rewriting chain of Aristophanic plays from exploratory translations and stagings to imitations in theatre and journalism, Modern Greek versions for the page or the stage, and finally adaptations for children, then returns to the questions posed in chapter 1 and further explores the participants who rewrote Aristophanic works into the comic book format as well as why and how humor travels in translation. In addition, the author presents his view on the topic, requiring further research at the end of this chapter: reception. According to the author, the

reception of humor in comic books should be empirically tested in future studies. Beyond that, reception in the broader sense of systemic interactions and cultural openness is also a noteworthy topic that deserves further study.

Overall, this book provides a research model for the study of rewriting humor in comic books by examining the cultural transfer and translation of Aristophanic adaptations. One of the highlights of the book is that it provides a lot of illustrations of Aristophanic comics and their corresponding English versions to clarify the humor elements rendered during the rewriting so that readers may have a clear understanding of the humor effect conveyed in the comic books. In addition, the author makes semistructured interviews with participants of the comic rewriting of Aristophanic works including creators, translators, and publishers. Those interviews shed light on the backgrounds and aspirations of those involved and are also of great importance to the research. Besides that, the structure of this book is clear and intuitive in logic. Each chapter except the introductory and concluding parts has its own abstract, conclusion, and references, which could give readers a more holistic understanding of the content of each chapter.

On the other hand, the book also has its shortcomings. The subtitle of the book is *Cultural Transfer and Translation of Aristophanic Adaptations*, so the issue on the cultural transfer during the adaptation of Aristophanic works should be a main topic in this book. However, the discussion of such a topic is relatively limited in this book. As a matter of fact, it would inevitably involve cultural issues in both the comic adaptation of Aristophanic works and the humor rewriting of comic books. Moreover, the cultural issues can be detected during the process of the rewriting and translation of Aristophanic plays, and also should be considered while applying relevant strategies to the rewriting of humor elements in comic books. Therefore, the cultural issues related to the rewriting of Aristophanes' plays, the transition to comic book text, and the conveyance of humor elements need to be further discussed so that the reader can have a holistic understanding of the motif of this book.

To sum up, this book sheds light on the rewriting of humor elements in comic books on both the theoretical and empirical sides and involves interdisciplinary research in fields including humor studies, classic studies, translation studies, and Greek studies. Therefore, the book is of great academic value and deserves to be used as a reference book for scholars of modern languages, translation studies, comics studies, cultural studies, comparative literature, and communication.

References

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