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Pseudartabas: lost or found in translation? The famous verse 100 of Aristophanes' *Acharnians* in translation into English

Much ink has been spilled over the famous verse 100 of the comedy *Acharnians* by Aristophanes (for example Chodźkiewicz [1876], Dover [1963], West [1968], Chiasson [1984], Aveline [2000]) which represents Pseudartabas, the sham Persian envoy's, first utterance (out of the two) before the Athenian assembly. The various scholarly commentators on the topic have covered a wide range of issues, such as how we should interpret the verse's meaning or what was the poet's possible motive behind including it in the play. Does it carry real meaning (be it distorted Persian court formulas¹, fragments of distorted Persian personal names² or distorted Greek words³)? Are such interpretations beyond our capabilities?⁴. Does the verse carry no meaning, being simply a linguistic play of a sort intended to amuse the audience who must have found it sounding gibberish-like?⁵.

¹ See Starkie W.J.M. (*The Acharnians of Aristophanes with introduction, English prose translation, critical notes and commentary by W. J. M. Starkie, M. A.*, London, MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1909, p. 245), for example, who, in a sense, supports this interpretation. But see also Starkie's inquiry into the Persian character of the verse's language (*ibid.*, p. 33, footnote to v. 100).

² West M. L. (*Two passages of Aristophanes*, 'Classical Review', 1968, No. 18, p. 5–8) is one advocate of this opinion.

³ For example, Aveline J. (*Aristophanes' Acharnians 95–97 and 100: Persians in the Athenian Assembly*, 'Hermes' 2000, No. 128, p. 500–501) supports this claim.

⁴ Chiasson C.C. (*Pseudartabas and His Eunuchs: Acharnians 91–122*, 'Classical Philology', 1984, No. 79 (2), p. 131–136) draws such a conclusion. Also see Miller M.C. (*Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century BC. A Study in Cultural Receptivity*, Toronto, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 130–133) for an insightful discussion on whether 5th-century Greeks spoke Persian or Persians spoke Greek, or if there was perhaps a third party in the mutual communication between Hellas and the Persian empire, acting as interpreters.

⁵ Cf. Olson S.D. (*Aristophanes: Acharnians*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 104–5). I come back to this issue later in the text of the article.

As an attempt to see the issue from a somewhat more practical perspective, the aim of this article is to propose an analysis of how the Aristophanic line has been rendered into English by various translators. It presents the way in which almost all published translations of the *Acharnians* into English (thirty-two⁶) render the famous verse and comments on it with the hope of gaining some insight into how the translators might have understood the one line of Aristophanes' comedy, without making any attempt at formally placing the particular translations within the theory of translation studies. As a byproduct of the above endeavor, the author hopes to share with the reader the sheer pleasure of seeing how much translation potential, variety, and play there can be in a short line of ancient poetry.

A. Aristophanes – the *Acharnians* – Pseudartabas

Aristophanes, a classical Old Attic Comedy representative and the only author of the genre whose (11 out of some 44) comedies have come down to us, produced the *Acharnians* at the Lenaian festival in Athens at the beginning of 425 bce. Those were the times of the war that Athens was waging against Sparta (the so-called Peloponnesian war) and the comedy's main theme is war indeed. The main hero, Dikaiopolis, unable to persuade his fellow citizens to give up fighting and seek peaceful means of dealing with the foreign affairs problems, decides to make his private peace with the Spartans and enjoy prosperity unseen for many years in the *polis*. Prior to that, the protagonist witnesses the hearings of various envoys appearing before the assembly. One such envoy is Pseudartabas, the alleged messenger of the great king of Persia. Pseudartabas not only looks peculiar (as we gather from Dikaiopolis' comments) and has a much-revealing name (suggesting falsehood), but he also speaks in a most comic way. His utterances are anything but easy to comprehend and, therefore, must constitute a serious challenge for any translator of the comedy.

B. Technicalities

Pseudartabas speaks in verses 100 and 104, the former being the concern of my article. What the verse says in the original is $\text{ιαρταμανεξα\rho\xiαναπισσονασατρα}$. This rendition of the verse comes from Olson (2004, p. 11), whose edition of the comedy's text is perhaps one of the best modern editions of Aristophanes' *Acharnians*, also for its comprehensive and most detailed commentary on various aspects of the comedy, such as its lexicon, metrics, structure, and so forth. Other contemporary editors split the particular hypothetical lexemes of verse 100, for example, $\text{ιαρτα ναμε \rhoαρξαναπισσονα σατρα}$ (where πισσονα is spelled with one *sigma* and the consonants in the sec-

⁶ It is perhaps not possible to exactly state the number of the English translations (see the bibliographical sources helpful in postulating any such number given in Section B). I would tentatively put it at around 40, some of which have purposefully not been included in the analysis offered here. The issue is readdressed in Section B.

ond 'word' are given in an unexpected order (*name* rather than the expected *mane*); Henderson 1998, p. 68), *ιαρταμαν ἔξαρχαν ἀπιςσωνα σατρα* (Wilson 2007, p. 11; Wilson uses a different symbol for the letter *sigma*), *ιαρταμαν ἔξαρχας ἀπιςσωνα σατρα* (where *ἔξαρχας* terminates with a *sigma* and *ἀπιςσωνα* has no gemination of the consonant; Sommerstein 2015, p. 48). Out of (some of) the classic editors, Dindorf (1828, p. 14) renders the line as *ιαρταμὰν ἔξαρχ' ἀναπιςσόναι σάτρα* (where, perhaps, we see elision in *ἔξαρχ'* and *ἀναπιςσόναι* ends in an *iota*), similarly to Merry (1893, p. 18 [Part I]), but unlike Hall and Geldart (1906 [edition with no pagination]), who spell the verse out as *ιαρταμὰν ἔξάρχαν ἀπιςσόναι σάτρα*. Starkie (1909, p. 32) reads along Dindorf's lines: *ιαρταμὰν ἔξαρχ' ἀναπιςσόναι σάτρα*, similarly to Meineke (1910, p. 7) and Rogers (1930, p. 14). A somewhat different spelling is to be found in Coulon and van Daele (1934, p. 16), where the verse has the form of *Ι αρταναμε Ξαρχας απιαονα σατρα* (Coulon marks no accents or breathings and offers a rarer spelling in *απιαονα*)⁷.

No doubt, some of the above editorial conjectures stem from the fact that we have scanty information about the original form of verse 100 (let alone its meaning): it is not preserved in the Aristophanic papyri and the extant manuscripts offer various spellings of some parts of the verse, for example, *ιαρταμαν ἔξαρχαν ἀπιςσωνα σάτρα* / ...*ἀπιςσον σάτρα* / ...*ἀπιςσομαι σάτρα* / ...*ἔξαρχας πιςσόναστρα* (Olson 2004, p. 11). Of course, certain editors of the comedy's text include comments on the line's spelling/meaning, thus taking a stand in this seemingly never-ending discussion. For instance, Merry (to take the earliest one listed above who offers a lengthy comment) (1893, p. 10 (Part II)) writes:

The syllables *άρτα*, *χαρχ*, and *σάτρα* give an Oriental sound to the sentence. ...quotes a version of the line, treated as Persian, which makes it mean, 'The king said to me, I will send thee gold'; treating *σάτρα* as *σάρτα*, and comparing it with *zar*, 'gold.' ... notes that the words as given in most MSS, may be exactly reproduced in old Sanskrit, as ... = *mittit me Xerxes, o scelerate, nequaquam*.

Since the purpose of the current text is not to try to contribute to the understanding of the verse 100 meaning or to try to pinpoint the most likely spelling of the line, nor is it to list all the attempts that have been made to achieve it, let me close this short outline with Olson's attitude to the problem. His rendition follows one manuscript, *acL*, but, as we can see above, he refrains from dividing the string of letters into individual words. He may have done so, as we might want to offer an educated guess, not to fully embrace any interpretation theory as to what the verse supposedly means: he finds the answer to the above question far less important than the fact that the line was nonsensical for Aristophanes' audience (2004, p. 105), which seems to be corroborated in the text of the play: after Pseudartabas has spoken at 100, Dikaiopolis has no idea of what has been said, unlike after the Persian's utterance at 104.

⁷ One may wonder whether van Daele (the translator) agreed his version with Coulon (the editor) since the (French) rendition of the line reads 'I artaman exarxan apiaona satra,' where the two noticeably diverge at points.

The following body of the article presents the English translations of the *Acharnians* verse 100, divided into several categories. The names of the categories do not reflect any formal nomenclature to be found in the translation studies literature (as mentioned earlier, the current text does not aspire to formally comment on the method a particular translator adopted). Instead, the names of the categories constitute somewhat commonsensical labels, i.e. Category 1: translations closely following the original, Category 2: translations following the original to a (much) lesser extent, Category 3: translations radically departing from the original, Category 4: translations based on a particular interpretation of the original, and Category 5: original verse omission.

Every effort has been made to make the list of translations as exhaustive as possible⁸. Out of the whole-text translations into English, most have been consulted⁹, whereas some decisively free versions and adaptations/interpretations have not been taken into consideration¹⁰. It should be noted, however, that the adaptation by Church (1893) is included in the following analysis due to the rendition of verse 100 to be found there which is similar to others proposed by various translators, but not identical to any one of them. Taking into consideration the place of publication and/or the translator's background, out of all the translations analyzed here, 22 renditions are British and 10 are American¹¹.

The following lists of translations are oriented chronologically, where the date of the first publication of a given translation is the reference point. Many of the translations have had numerous editions, whereas others have had just a few. In certain cases, the text of the translation included in the list is not that of the first publication.

⁸ The main bibliographical sources for the ensuing lists of translations are Giannopoulou V. *Aristophanes in translation before 1920* [In:] E. Hall, A. Wrigley (ed.), *Aristophanes in performance 421 BC–AD 2007. Peace, Birds and Frogs*, London, Legenda, 2007, p. 315–340 and Walton J.M. *Found in translation. Greek drama in English*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 253–257.

⁹ The one I know of and which is not included in the analysis is Nash T. (transl.), *Acharnians of Aristophanes. Literally translated by a First-Class Man of Balliol College for Interleaving with the Clarendon Press Edition*, Oxford, A. J. Shrimpton and Son, 1883.

¹⁰ An example of such an adaptation would be the one made by Collins W.L. (*Aristophanes*, [online], Edinburgh and London, William Blackwood and Sons, 1872) which really is Frere's translation (first edition in 1839) given in fragments intertwined with description of the comedy's plot. (The *Acharnians* is part of Chapter III of Collins' work). I have not included Landes' translation either (Landes S.H., *The Acharnians*, Studio City, Los Angeles (CA), Players Press, Inc, 1998; the translation may have been published as early as 1953, although I have not been able to conclusively confirm that). Upon a careful comparison of the NN3 translation and Landes' one, it would not seem ungrounded to claim that the latter appears to be a plagiarism. The differences between the two are few and far between (one that would be interesting here is the spelling of part of verse 100: *Jaraman* instead of *Jartaman*; most likely, however, it is a misprint). Finally, the ensuing analysis does not include the Perseus Digital Library translation (*Perseus Digital Library*, [online]) which appears to be based on NN3/Landes (with slight changes to the spelling of proper names and the wording of footnotes).

¹¹ The translators/translations are, chronologically: British: Mitchell, Warter, Walsh, Wheelwright, Frere, Hickie, Rudd, Billson, Tyrrell, NN2, Church, Covington, NN3 (and NN4), Starkie, Rogers, Norwood, Way, Dickinson, McLeish, Sommerstein (two); American: NN1, Harvey, Parker, Henderson (two), Flavin, Olson, Theodoridis, Roche, Ewans.

If this is the case, the year of the original edition is given in square brackets, before the publication which has been consulted for the purpose of the present article (enclosed in parentheses). If any given translation is accompanied by a note/footnote, it has been commented on, quoted, paraphrased, or explained otherwise. Likewise, the stage directions for the verse have been provided, not only when they contribute to the understanding of the line, but in all the cases. It should also be underscored that the original spelling of the translations has always been preserved, with all the italics, uppercase letters, and so on.

C. Translations

Not unpredictably, the majority of the translators of verse 100 into English (20 out of 32) rendered the original text along similar lines, perhaps (closely) following the original wording found in the edition of the comedy's text they were using and merely transferring it into a different script (Latin):

Category 1 (translations closely following the original¹²):

Mitchell (1820)	Iartaman exarx' anapissonai Satra ¹³ .
Warter (1830)	Jartaman exarx' anapissonai satra.
Wheelwright (1837)	Iartaman exark' anapissontai satra ¹⁴ .
Frere [1839] (1886)	Iartaman exarksan apissonai satra ¹⁵ .

¹² As discussed earlier, we do not know exactly what form Aristophanes' line 100 had. The term 'the original,' as used in the descriptions of the translation categories here, means the extant versions of the verse to be found in the manuscripts and the later editions of the comedy's text: all such versions are, in effect, very similar.

¹³ In a footnote (Mitchell T. (transl.), *The Comedies of Aristophanes*, vol. I, London, John Murray, 1820, p. 27), Mitchell writes: 'M. Poinset, the French translator of Aristophanes, says that this is Celto-Scythian, and [writes] ...C'est-à-dire, *une charte est émanée du secrétariat (des bureaux) du satrape de la province d'Issus...*' Mitchell meant the French translator Louis Poinset de Sivry; the above quote (talking about a chart coming from the satrap of the province of Issus) appears in his 1790 publication (*Théâtre D'Aristophane, avec les fragmens de Ménandre et de Philémon*, vol. IV, Paris, 1790, p. 19).

¹⁴ Footnote n (Wheelwright C.A. (transl.), *The Comedies of Aristophanes, translated into familiar blank verse, with notes, preliminary observations on each play, etc.*, vol. I, Oxford, D. A. Talboys, 1837, p. 110) explains the verse: 'The uncouth words comprising this verse have been variously interpreted – M. Anquetil... declares the sense of them to be "Money shall be brought to us on the part of the king." Hotibius, however, with far greater probability, renders the line into Greek thus: *ἐγὼ ἄρτι μὴν ἐξηρξ' ἀναπυροῦν αὐ σαθρά*: the metaphor being taken from a vessel, about to have her rotten timbers calked or covered again with pitch ...' For 'rotten timbers' and their 'repair' see Category 4 below.

¹⁵ Stage directions precede Frere's translation of the verse (Frere J.H., Franklin T., Wodhull M. (transl.), *Plays of Aristophanes, Sophocles and Euripides*, London–New York, George Routledge and Sons Limited, 1886, p. 18): 'SHAMARTABAS here utters some words, which Orientalists have supposed to be the common formula prefixed to the edicts of the Persian Monarch.' Of course, Shamartabas is Frere's rendition of the name Pseudartabas.

Hickie [1848] (1889)	Iartaman exarx' anapissonai satra ¹⁶ .
Rudd (1867)	I artoman exarx ampissonai satray.
Tyrrell (1883)	<i>iardaman exarxas apissonasatra</i> .
NN1 (1886) ¹⁷	Iartaman exarksan apissonai satra.
Church (1893)	Artaman exarksam anapissonai satra ¹⁸ .
NN3 [1898] (1943) ¹⁹	Jartaman exarx 'anapissonai satra ²⁰ .
Starkie (1909)	Iartaman-exarx-anapissonai-satra ²¹ .
Norwood (1911)	Iartaman exarxas apisona satra.
Harvey (1925)	Iartaman Exarx anapisson a satra ²² .

¹⁶ Hickie W.J. footnotes the verse (*The Comedies of Aristophanes. A new and literal translation*, vol. I, London, George Bell & Sons, 1889, p. 6, footnote 2): 'The ambassador is introduced using the *Talkee-Talkee* dialect, i.e. a sort of gibberish made up of Greek and Persian. ...A Greek scholar has suggested that this line, as uttered in the bad Greek of the Persian ambassador, originally stood in this form: *ιδ' Ἀρτάβαν μ' ὄς Ἐέρξ ἄνατ πίστ' ἐμὶ σάτραπ*, "Behold me, Artabas! who am the faithful satrap of king Xerxes."...'

¹⁷ *The Acharnians of Aristophanes: Performed by Undergraduates of the University of Pennsylvania, in the Academy of Music, in Philadelphia, May 14th and 15th, 1886*, Philadelphia (PA), University of Pennsylvania, 1886.

¹⁸ The footnote (Church A.J. (transl.), *Stories from the Greek comedians. Aristophanes, Philemon, Diphilus, Menander, Apollodorus*. [online], London, Seeley and Co. Limited, 1893, p. 7 footnote 1) explains the line: 'Supposed to resemble the words with which a Persian edict commenced.'

¹⁹ The original translation seems to have been published in *Aristophanes: The Acharnians, The Knights and The Clouds. Literally and completely translated from the Greek*, London: 1898. It was privately printed for the Athenian Society, vol. 7 of The Athenian Society's Publications, in 250 copies and it appears to have been re-issued later (perhaps a few times). The translation analyzed in the present article is *Aristophanes. The Eleven Comedies. Literally and Completely Translated from the Greek Tongue into English with Translator's Foreword, an Introduction to each Comedy and Elucidatory Notes*, New York, Liveright Publishing Corp, 1943. The Publisher's Note says: 'This beautiful translation was originally published by The Athenian Society, London, 1912, for subscribers only. The name of the translator was not stated or he should have been given just acknowledgment here for his excellent scholarship. The present text is based on that edition.' In all likelihood, this is the same translation as the one from the year 1898.

²⁰ The verse is footnoted (*ibid.*, p. 92, footnote 3): 'Jargon, no doubt meaningless in all languages.'

²¹ In a footnote, Starkie (*op. cit.*, p. 33) ponders in length the nature of the language of verse 100. He wonders if this is real or distorted Persian, resorting to comparisons of Aristophanes with Shakespeare and Moliere. Starkie also has an Excursus on line 100 (p. 245) analyzing the supposed meaning of the verse and mentioning the detailed analysis put forward by the Polish writer and translator Władysław Chodźkiewicz (Chodźkiewicz W., *Un Vers d'Aristophane*, [online], Paris, 1876). The stage directions preceding Shamartabas' (Pseudartabas') line (p. 33) read: '(Haltingly, as if repeating a lesson).'

²² The stage directions preceding Quackartabas' (Pseudartabas') words (Harvey A. (transl.), *The Acharnians. Aristophanes*, Girard (KS), Haldeman-Julius Company, 1925, p. 9) go: '(A Greek parody of a Persian name)'. And an explanation follows his speech: '(This is thought to be ancient Persian for: I was sent by that rascal of a Xerxes).'

Sommerstein 1 [1973] (1985)	Yartaman esharsha sapitchona satro.
Sommerstein 2 [1980] (2015)	Iartaman exarxas apisona satra ²³ .
Henderson 1 [1997] (2003) ²⁴	Iartaman exarxas apisona satra ²⁵ .
Henderson 2 (1998)	Iarta name xarxana pisona satra ²⁶ .
Olson (2001)	<i>Iartamanexarxanapissonasatra</i> .
Roche (2005)	<i>Parta namè xarxana satra</i> .
NN4 ²⁷	I artamane Xarxas apiaona satra.

If we disregard certain minor discrepancies (for example ‘Artaman’/‘Yartaman’/‘Iartaman’/‘I artaman’/‘artaman’/‘araman’/‘aramane,’ and so on, ‘apissonai’/‘anapissonai’/‘anapissontai,’ and so forth, ‘satra’/‘Satra,’ and the like), we have to agree that the above renditions are not overly dissimilar from one another. One could wonder, however, why there appear certain spelling variations in some translations at all, variations that do not seem justified taking into account that just a handful of different forms of verse 100 has been handed down to us. In the case of the NN4 translation, quite different from the others, we could argue that the translation is based on Coulon’s edition of the text of the comedy, but how do we pinpoint the source of inspiration for Warter (‘Iartaman’), Rudd (‘I artoman... satray’), Sommerstein 1 (‘esharsha sapitchona satro’), or Roche (‘Parta’)? The particular translator’s *licentia poetica* must have played a role here, it seems, combined perhaps with the verse’s interpretation that the translator was aware of and found particularly convincing. Certainly, such an interpretation is, by and large, little known to us, however, a few translators/editors attempted to bring possible readings of the line’s meaning closer to the reader in the form of footnoted commentary. They seem to have thought the verse might be a sort of Persian: ancient (Harvey), formulaic (Frere, Church), or mock/comic/

²³ Sommerstein A.H. (*The comedies of Aristophanes. Acharnians*, Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2015, p. 162) writes: ‘**Iartaman... satra**: this is “not Persian, it is gibberish made from Persian noises”, as it is put by M.L. West... who offers an ingenious analysis. We can at any rate detect traces of the names Artaxerxes and Xerxes and the title “satrap”’.

²⁴ I have been unable to determine if the first translation by Henderson appeared before 1997 (and when), but it seems likely. In any event, Henderson’s two translations are different, the 1998 one being more philologically oriented (the Loeb series).

²⁵ A footnote clarifies the verse (Henderson J. (transl.), *Aristophanes: Acharnians*, 3rd ed., Newburyport (MA), Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company, 2003, p. 29): ‘Mock-Persian of doubtful meaning’.

²⁶ Henderson adds (*Aristophanes: Acharnians, Knights*, Cambridge (MA)-London, Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 69, footnote 19): ‘Comic Persian, suggesting King (Arta)xerxes and Pissuthnes, satrap of Sardis’.

²⁷ The translation comes from *The Acharnians by Aristophanes*, [online], and appears to be generally based on NN3. The differences between the two are negligible. I include the translation here due to a different rendition of verse 100 found in it.

distorted (Starkie, Henderson 1, Henderson 2); gibberish made from Persian noises (Sommerstein 2), gibberish Greek-Persian (Hickie); Celto-Scythian (Mitchell); meaningless jargon (NN3). Most noticed a rather obvious reference to the Persian ruler that may be read out of the line, but some steered towards a somewhat more detailed interpretation of its meaning: connected with pecuniary issues (Wheelwright), a Persian delegation (Mitchell), or a general introduction of the Persian envoy (Hickie, Harvey). Finally, there is also Wheelwright's comment of a different nature, which is taken up in the Category 4 discussion. It is worth underlying that whatever a particular Category 1 translator might have believed line 100 of the *Acharnians* meant, they did not express it in the translation itself.

On a side note, one should perhaps notice Olson's translation and juxtapose it with his rendition of the original text of the comedy from 2004: in neither version is the verse's text broken down into individual words.

Certain translators adopted a different approach to the original text and followed its letter to a much lesser extent. The three translations falling into this category are presented below:

Category 2 (translations following the original to a [much] lesser extent):

Way (1927)	Artamas – Xerxee satrap – trustee – fit!
Parker (1961)	ARTASHMEDLAP XARXES TWOGGLE SATRAP!
Theodoridis (2004)	Artaman exarzan! Colo megalo, holo satra! ²⁸

The Category 2 translators make greater use of their poetic license than those in Category 1, diverging from the original to the degree that much less of the alleged Persian-Greek is visible in the translation. It does not seem implausible that they might have wanted to include in their rendition of the line the oddity the Athenian audience must have noticed about Pseudartabas' utterance and put it into the language of the contemporary audience/readership. What is interesting to notice here is the fact that in two of the above translations we may discern the (homo)sexual implications present in the original line 104 (οὐ λῆψι χρυσό, χαυνόπρωκτ' Ἴαοναῦ; spelling after Olson 2004, p. 11), the other utterance by Pseudartabas: 'twoggle' in Parker's (his translation of verse 104 reads: 'WOAN GETTUM NO GOLDUM, GAPASSITY IONISH!'; where 'gapassity' could perhaps be understood as 'gap-assed') and 'holo' in Theodoridis' version (if we interpret the word as 'hole', in accordance with what the stage directions seem to convey and having in mind his rendition of verse 104: 'Greeks him muchy

²⁸ Stage directions (Theodoridis G. (transl.), *Aristophanes' "Acharnians"*, [online], 2004) precede Pseudartabas' piece: 'Pseudoartabas: *Makes rude gestures, swinging and pointing first at his bum, then at his phallus.*'

bummy hole not get him muchy goldy')²⁹. Way does not seem to take this avenue: line 104 reads: 'No piecee gold, crack fool Ionian!' (Or does he?).

Then, there are translators who seem to have stretched their poetic license to its limits. Examples of such unrestrained imagination would be the renditions shown below:

Category 3 (translations radically departing from the original):

Dickinson (1957)	Edditeddihenwypawlipansy.
McLeish [1964] (1983)	Holiness-moses-oh-my-goodness-yes! ³⁰ .
Flavin (1998)	Ootay Ow-Blay Oke-Smay Up-Ay Eir-Thay Arse-Ay.

Of the above three translations, two are especially interesting. Dickinson's rendition of line 100 echoes ('pansy') the (homo)sexual overtones present in line 104 and might partly reflect his translation of the very line ('No getting gold. NOT. Greeks all bumsuckers'), where 'bumsuckers' could have obsequiousness (sycophancy) connotations or it might allude to (homo)sexual practices. Flavin adopted a somewhat similar strategy, yet vindicated the playfulness of the translation to a higher level still. In his rendition we can detect lexicon pertaining to the 'bottom part of the body', but it is concealed in an argot – Pig Latin. If we decipher the line, we receive the hidden message: 'to blow smoke up their arse.'

In a number of translations one could attempt to trace a particular line of interpretation a given translator seems to have been yielding to, an interpretation diverging from a somewhat more obvious reading of the line if one wants to see a semantic analogy between the very line and verse 104 (which, of course, may be risky). Such examples are given below:

Category 4 (translations based on a particular interpretation of the original):

Walsh [1837] (1848)	Him Justeynow began to pitchoney Unzound.
Billson (1882)	Beginney shippi-bungo pitchin' hollow!
Covington (1894)	I beg inmakre ddyship.
Rogers [1910] (1930)	Ijisti boutti furbiss upde rotti.

²⁹ Cf. Henderson's (*The Maculate Muse. Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*, New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 59, 211) discussion of the abusive *χαυνόπρωκτος/χαυνόπρωκτοι*. It is worth remembering that Old Comedy, as far as we can say, teems with all kinds of sexual wordplay and homosexual overtones are perhaps the most prevailing form of it to be found there.

³⁰ Stage directions precede Pseudartabas' piece (McLeish K. (transl.), *Four Greek Plays. Sophocles: Oedipus the King, Antigone. Aristophanes: the Acharnians, Peace*, Harlow, Longman, 1983, p. 106): 'with an elaborate gesture.'

reach. It would appear that a translation for the general public would be less constrained than one meant for specialists (scholars, philologists, hobbyists, and so on). Indeed, this seems to be visible in the translations of, for example, Sommerstein 1 or Roche, which are directed to a general audience rather than a narrower group of readers with a broader understanding of the issues connected with Old Comedy/Aristophanes or merely having a substantially deeper interest in the issues than an average reader would. The latter type of translation would include the renditions of Starkie, Sommerstein 2 (the Aris & Phillips Classical Texts series), or Henderson 2 (the Loeb series). Yet another kind of recipient ought to be mentioned here which is not a readership but rather an audience. A number of translations of the *Acharnians* were primarily meant to be staged or, at least, to be stageable. Such renditions could naturally be less literal as to the original wording, metrical matters, or source-culture connotations. This type of translation would be exemplified by the renditions of Parker and Theodoridis.

Finally, it seems safe to assume that any translator of such a difficult text as an Aristophanic comedy would have consulted previous renditions of the comedy in search of inspiration, better comprehension of the text, or as a means to avoid possible misinterpretations. Certainly, such cases are hard to pinpoint, unless there is a strong textual correlation between a substantial part of a given translation and a particular earlier one. An example of such a case is visible perhaps in NN1: is verse 100 in NN1 based on Frere?

D. Conclusion

As can be seen from the above renditions, the translators of verse 100 do not always see eye to eye as far as the meaning of the line is concerned or what form it ought to have in translation. This certainly should not be surprising: we have to assume that each translator had done substantial research into the possible meanings of the verse and, predicating their judgment on the prevailing/most attractive interpretation at the time and negotiating it with the verse's edition they meant to adopt for their translation, they produced a particular, subjective, rendition. Of course, as hinted at above, one could wonder why there are so many variants of the verse's interpretation. Most of the translators (20 out of 32 [62,5%], Category 1), spelling the line somewhat differently, stay nevertheless within a comparable realm of possible forms, where particular elements of Pseudartabas' utterance are easily discernible (Sommerstein 1 and Roche have a somewhat altered version, which does not pose real identification problems, however). A few others (3 out of 32 – 9,38%), Category 2), as it seems, in translating the Aristophanic line, seized an opportunity to free their imagination to a much greater extent. Others (3 out of 32 – 9,38%) seem to have gone even further along those lines, as we can see in Category 3. In certain cases (4 out of 32 – 12,5% – Category 4) we may want to perceive a particular coherent idea the translator had in mind

when rendering the line. Finally, some translators (2 out of 32 – 6,25% – Category 5) decided not to include verse 100 in their translation – one would wonder if the line's ambiguity (or its sheer meaninglessness) was the reason for their decision.

Any text of such antiquity as the *Acharnians* poses a serious challenge for the translator, if not – at least at certain points – an insurmountable obstacle. Aristophanic verses are the elite here: to render into another language what the poet had in mind when composing particular sections of his comedies is not just hopelessly difficult but oftentimes plainly hopeless. Pseudartabas' lines are the epitome of that hopelessness, verse 100 being perhaps the translational impossibility embodied. It seems that a translator of the verse, instead of hoping to preserve its meaning in translation, has to resort to hoping not to lose too much since they have no means of ascertaining what exactly Aristophanes meant to say. If they are lucky, they may guess quite correctly, however most often they will be shooting in the dark, approximating the original meaning. Chances are therefore that they will lose Pseudartabas in translation and only find (part of) him if lucky.

Analyzing the above thirty-two renditions of verse 100, we may, nevertheless, have a feeling that quite a number of translators were up to the task and, dealing with the almost impossible, did manage to keep some of Pseudartabas in translation, at least to the degree that we have to accept as sufficient now, over twenty-five centuries after the comedy was first staged. And even if this were not true, one aspect seems indisputable: certain translators have enabled us to experience the sheer pleasure of dealing with some ingenious renditions of line 100 of the *Acharnians*.

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**Pseudartabas: lost or found in translation?
The famous verse 100 of Aristophanes' *Acharnians*
in translation into English**

Abstract: Verse 100 of the comedy *Acharnians* by Aristophanes, the first entry of the character named Pseudartabas, has traditionally been a problem verse for both the editors of the comedy's text and its translators. This article aims to propose an analysis of how the Aristophanic line has been rendered into English by various translators. It presents the way in which almost all published translations of the *Acharnians* into English (thirty-two) render the famous verse and comments on it with the hope of gaining some insight into how the translators understood the one line of Aristophanes' comedy. As a by-product of the above endeavor, the author hopes to share with the reader the sheer pleasure of seeing how much translation potential, variety, and play there can be in a short line of ancient poetry.

Keywords: Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, verse 100, Pseudartabas, English translations

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34864/heteroglossia.issn.2084-1302.nr16.art6>

