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The Clouds *in Basel:*
Beatus Rhenanus as a translator of Aristophanes

Abstract

This paper examines Beatus Rhenanus' Latin translation of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, preserved in the manuscript *Selestad. 336* at the *Bibliothèque Humaniste* of Sélestat. Produced in Basel around 1512, Rhenanus' version represents one of the earliest and most sophisticated attempts to render Aristophanes' *Clouds* into Latin. The study situates this translation within the broader humanist revival of Greek comedy from Guarino of Verona to Erasmus' circle, exploring how Rhenanus combined the philological rigor of Basel humanism with creative strategies of cultural mediation. Through detailed textual analysis, the paper shows how Rhenanus approached Aristophanes' complex language, linguistic inventiveness, cultural references, and humour. His translation mirrors Greek syntax and vocabulary with remarkable accuracy, yet often expands, clarifies, or reinterprets the text for a Latin public. Glosses and interpretive paraphrases reveal him not only as a translator but also as a commentator who sought to make the comic and cultural nuances of Aristophanes intelligible to early modern readers. The article argues that Rhenanus' *Clouds* exemplifies the Renaissance transformation of translation into a scholarly and creative act, a bridge between classical Athens and humanist Europe.

Il saggio analizza la traduzione latina delle *Nuvole* di Aristofane realizzata da Beato Renano e conservata nel manoscritto *Selestad. 336* della *Bibliothèque Humaniste* di Sélestat. Composta a Basilea intorno al 1512, la versione di Renano rappresenta uno dei primi e più raffinati tentativi di rendere le *Nuvole* di Aristofane in latino. Lo studio colloca questa traduzione nel più ampio contesto dell'Umanesimo europeo, dal ritorno dei testi greci in Italia con Guarino Veronese fino all'ambiente di Erasmo, mostrando come Renano unisca rigore filologico e creatività interpretativa. Attraverso l'analisi linguistica e stilistica del testo, il contributo mette in luce le strategie di Renano nel tradurre il linguaggio comico, le invenzioni lessicali, e i riferimenti culturali di Aristofane. Pur mantenendo una fedeltà quasi letterale al greco, il traduttore interviene con chiarimenti, glosse ed espansioni, per adattare al pubblico latino la comicità e i riferimenti culturali dell'originale. La traduzione di Renano si configura così come un atto di mediazione culturale e di creazione intellettuale: un esempio emblematico di come, nel Rinascimento, la traduzione diventi un ponte vivo tra la Grecia classica e l'Europa umanistica.

1. *Introduction*

Humanist translators stood at the intersection of languages and centuries. To interpret ancient texts and render Greek literature into Latin was not simply an exercise in philology, but a cultural mission: to restore the dialogue between Greece and Rome, and to reconnect the Latin West with its forgotten Hellenic heritage. Because Latin remained the universal language of learning, translations became the medium through which the

Greek world was rediscovered[1]. The Latin versions produced by Byzantine and Western scholars thus deserve close attention, for they illuminate how ancient knowledge was reimagined and transmitted in early modern Europe.

Recent research has revealed the remarkable scale of humanist translation activity. Yet many Latin versions of Greek texts remain unedited and largely unstudied, often preserved only in manuscripts or early prints that have never been systematically analysed. Within this vast field, one major gap concerns the reception of Aristophanes, whose comedies, lost to the medieval West after the fall of Rome, were reintroduced by humanists in the early Quattrocento[2].

Greek drama, once recovered, spread rapidly across Italy. Latin translations were the principal means through which Aristophanes entered élite Western culture, shaping how Renaissance readers encountered Greek comedy[3]. A long and varied tradition of Latin versions arose, first in Italy and then throughout Europe. His plays, especially *Plutus*, *Clouds*, and *Frogs* – the so-called Byzantine triad – became core texts for teaching Greek and refining Latin style. Indeed, *Plutus* was the first Aristophanic comedy to appear in Latin translation[4].

This study builds on a systematic survey of printed and digital library catalogues across Europe, supplemented by major repertories such as Kristeller's *Iter Italicum* and the *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum*, as well as by direct examination of selected manuscripts. Although not exhaustive, the investigation has identified nearly all surviving Renaissance Latin translations of Aristophanes, including several unpublished witnesses examined first-hand.

What follows is a comprehensive list of humanist translators and their Latin versions of Aristophanes[5]:

> 1406-1408, Constantinople: interlinear translation of *Plutus*, *Clouds*, and *Frogs* by Guarino da Verona. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, *Pal. gr.* 116, cc. 25*r*-140*r*.

> 1415-1416, Crete: remake of *Plutus* (403-618) by Rinuccio Aretino. Balliol College Library, Oxford, ms. 131, cc. 31*r*-37*r*.

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[1] On early modern translations of classical authors see BOTLEY (2004); CORTESI (2007).

[2] On the rediscovery in the 15th century of Aristophanes' text see WILSON (2007, 1-14); BOTLEY (2010, 88-91).

[3] For an overview of the humanistic Latin translations of Aristophanes see GIANNOPOULOU (2007, 309-42).

[4] SOMMERSTEIN (2010, 7-12); MUTTINI (2023a).

[5] The Greek manuscripts of the comedies containing interlinear Latin glosses will be the subject of specific studies. See, for instance, my works dedicated to the exegetical glosses on the *Plutus* that can be traced back to the university courses held by Antonio Urceo Codro in Bologna and Constantine Lascaris in Messina during the second half of the fifteenth century: MUTTINI (2020, 168-95); MUTTINI (2021, 199-228).

1439-1440, Florence: prosimetrum translation of *Plutus* (1-269) by Leonardo Bruni. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, *Par. lat.* 6714, cc. 69*r*-71*v*; Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele III, Naples, *Neap.* V. F. 15, cc. 59*r*-62*v*; Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome, ms. *Antonelli* 545, cc. 32*r*-36*r*; Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, Turin, *Taur. Varia* 14, cc. 137*r*-144*r*.

ca. 1440, Padua: prose version of *Plutus* by Pietro da Montagnana. Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, *Marc. lat.* XIV, 10, cc. 41*r*-65*v*.

1458, Otranto: interlinear translation of *Plutus* and *Clouds* (1-205 of *Clouds*) by Alexander of Otranto. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, *Vind. philosoph. et philol. gr.* 204, cc. 1*r*-110*v*.

Late 15th century, Tuscany: interlinear translation of *Plutus* by Ludovicus de Puppio. Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid, *Matrit.* 4697, cc. 166*r*-225*v*.

Late 15th century, Pavia (?): prose translation of *Plutus* (1-269) by an anonymous translator. British Library, London, *Arund.* 338, cc. 123*r*-126*v*.

1501-1502, Nuremberg: prose translation of *Plutus* (270-end) by Willibald Pirckheimer. British Library, London, *Arund.* 338, cc. 126*v*-142*v*.

1504, Venice: prose translation of *Clouds* (1340-end) by Johannes Cuno. Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, ms. *Lat. oct.* 374, cc. 43*r*-44*v*.

1511, Basel: prose translation of *Plutus* and *Clouds* (1-554 of *Clouds*) by Bruno Amerbach. Universitätsbibliothek, Basel, *Basil.* F. VI. 50, cc. 1*r*-56*v*.

1512, Basel: prose translation of *Plutus* and *Clouds* (1-502 of *Clouds*) by Beatus Rhenanus. Bibliothèque Humaniste, Sélestat, *Selestad.* 336, cc. 11*r*-51*r*.

1517, Milan: metrical translation of *Clouds* by Andrea Alciato, along with his Latin comedy *Philargyrus*. Biblioteca Trivulziana, Milan, *Triv.* 738, cc. 1*r*-41*v* (*Clouds*) and 56*r*-93*r* (*Philargyrus*).

1517, Italy (Padua or Bologna): metrical translation of *Plutus* by Thomas Venatorius. Stadtbibliothek, Nuremberg, ms. PP. 146, cc. 2*r*-21*v*.

1520-1521, Ingolstadt: prose translation of *Plutus* by Johannes Reuchlin. Universitätsbibliothek, Salzburg, M I 452, cc. 1*r*-25*v*.

1522, Ingolstadt: prose translation of *Plutus* (1-511) by an anonymous translator. Universitätsbibliothek, Leipzig, Rep. I 44d, cc. 2*r*-12*v*.

Mid-16th century: bilingual Greek-Latin version of *Plutus* by Adrianus Chilius (Antwerp, 1533). Biblioteca Universitaria, Bologna, *Bonon. gr.* 1766, cc. 61*r*-108*r*.

1541-1542, Ferrara: prose translation of *Clouds* by Alessandro Sardi. Biblioteca Estense Universitaria, Modena, *Estens.* α. W. 6. 3, cc. 139*r*-167*r*.

Mid-16th century, Germany: prose translation of *Plutus* by an anonymous

translator. Bibliothèque Humaniste, Sélestat, *Selestad.* 329, cc. 1*r*-20*r*.

1553, Paris: prose translation of *Plutus* by Adrien Turnèbe. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, *Par. lat.* 13042, cc. 74*r*-92*v*.

Post 1560, Florence: bilingual Greek-Latin version of *Plutus* (1-485) by Lorenzo Giacomini. Biblioteca Riccardiana, Florence, *Ricc.* 61, cc. 69*v*-95*r*.

1575-1577, Padua-Hungary: prose translation of *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Lysistrata* by Nicasius Ellebodius. Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, *Ambr.* D 478 inf., cc. 2*r*-39*v*; D 247 inf., cc. 104*r*-152*r*; I 159 inf., cc. 205*r*-245*r*.

Late 16th century, Florence: bilingual Greek-Latin translation of *Plutus* (1-1113) by Marcello Adriani the Younger. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City, *Barb. gr.* 110, cc. 1*v*-32*r*.

1591-1600, Tuscany: prose translation of *Clouds* (1-1298) by an anonymous translator. Biblioteca Riccardiana, Florence, *Ricc.* 57, cc. 36*r*-59*r*.

Late 16th century, Tuscany: interlinear translation of *Frogs* by an anonymous interpreter. Biblioteca Riccardiana, Florence, *Ricc.* 48, cc. 2*r*-81*r*.

The story begins in 1408, when Guarino da Verona returned from Constantinople with the *Aristophanes Palatinus*, a Byzantine manuscript containing *Plutus*, *Clouds*, and *Frogs*. His dense Latin glosses on the text mark the earliest evidence of humanist engagement with Aristophanes[6].

Around the same time, Manuel Chrysoloras, teaching Greek in Florence, trained the first generation of Western humanists in the art of translation[7]. Among the earliest Aristophanic experiments in Latin is Rinuccio da Castiglione Aretino's *Fabula Penia* (1415-1416), a comedy inspired by the *Plutus* and the outcome of his Greek studies in Crete under Giovanni Simeonachis, the *protopapas* of Candia[8].

Also noteworthy is the *ad sententiam* Latin version of the first 269 verses of the *Plutus*, prepared around 1439 in Florence by Leonardo Bruni, secretary of the Florentine Republic and a lucid theorist of translation in the humanist age[9]. Writing

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[6] Guarino acquired the *Aristophanes Palatinus* in 1406, probably in preparation for Manuel Chrysoloras' lectures. The marginal and interlinear glosses, in his own hand, represent a fair copy of the notes he had taken during his years of study with Chrysoloras (1403-1408): ROLLO (2019, 269-86).

[7] Following a principle already expressed by Jerome (*Epistulae* 57, 5: *non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere e sensu* – «not to render word for word, but to express the sense from the sense»), Chrysoloras urged humanists to translate not *verbum de verbo*, as was common in medieval practice, but *ad sententiam*. He also advised avoiding that freer type of translation which Remigio Sabbadini later defined as *traduzione oratoria libera*, to be distinguished from the *traduzione oratoria fedele*, that is, Chrysoloras' own *ad sententiam* method: SABBADINI (1922, 17-27).

[8] RADIF (2011).

[9] In his treatise *De interpretatione recta* (1424-1426), Leonardo Bruni elaborates the concept of 'faithful oratorical translation' developed by his teacher Manuel Chrysoloras, which would remain a long-standing reference point for humanist translators: GRIFFITHS et al. (1987, 208-10).

when Greek was still little known in Italy, Bruni declared that he wished *volens Latinis nostris ostendere quale genus erat illarum comoediarum* («wishing to show our fellow Latins what kind of comedies these were»)[10].

A few years later, in Padua, Pietro da Montagnana, a priest and teacher of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, produced the earliest complete Latin translation of an Aristophanic comedy: a literal prose version of the *Plutus* prepared under John Argyropoulos as a linguistic exercise[11].

By mid-century, translations served mainly pedagogical ends. In 1458, Alexander of Otranto, a Dominican friar, prepared an interlinear Latin version of *Plutus* and the first 205 lines of *Clouds* for school use – the earliest surviving translation of the *Clouds* in fifteenth-century Italy[12]. Around the same period, Ludovico di Poppi prepared an interlinear *Plutus* for teaching pagan poetry in Tuscany[13].

During the sixteenth century Aristophanes flourished both in Italy and beyond. Willibald Pirckheimer's Latin *Plutus* (1501-1513), produced in Nuremberg as part of his self-taught study of Greek, marks the northern revival[14]. The surviving manuscript, partly in his own hand, offers a rare glimpse into his work: an anonymous scribe copied the first 269 verses, while Pirckheimer himself translated the remainder (from verse 270 to the end)[15].

In the early sixteenth century, one of Europe's most vibrant intellectual hubs was the Aldine Academy of Venice, founded by Aldus Manutius in 1500[16]. Scholars from across the continent flocked to this *Neacademia* to discuss classical texts, select manuscripts for new editions, and refine methods of teaching Greek. Aristophanes, valued as a model of linguistic purity, was central to this programme, alongside grammars and lexica, as an ideal author for training future humanists.

The Dominican humanist Johannes Cuno, a pupil of Markos Musuros and later a promoter of Aldus' editorial methods in Basel, encountered Aristophanes at the Academy under the guidance of John Argyropoulos, who in September 1504 publicly read and commented on the *Clouds*. Cuno himself produced a Greek-Latin translation exercise of the play, an early witness to the pedagogical use of Aristophanes in Venice[17]. Cuno carried this interest to Basel, where he taught Greek between 1510 and 1513 and

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[10] CECCHINI (1965).
[11] MUTTINI (2023a, 93-100).
[12] CHIRICO (1991); MUTTINI (2024, 394-421).
[13] MUTTINI (2023b, 19-36).
[14] MUTTINI (2023a, 126-34).
[15] Both this anonymous translation and Leonardo Bruni's version stop at line 269, during the scene describing the blind god Plutus. Nevertheless, they are independent of one another.
[16] DAVIES – HARRIS (2019).
[17] MUTTINI (2023a, 134-41).

counted Bruno Amerbach and Beatus Rhenanus among his pupils. A literal prose translation of the *Clouds* by Amerbach, probably produced under Cuno's supervision around 1511, shows how medieval-style *ad verbum* renderings survived among humanists as practical tools for learning Greek. Rhenanus, too, turned to Aristophanes during his training, producing in 1512 a complete Latin version of the *Plutus* and a partial version of the *Clouds*[18].

Elsewhere in the German-speaking world, Thomas Venatorius devoted much of his early career to Aristophanes[19]. His better-known Greek-Latin verse translation of the *Plutus* was published in Nuremberg in 1531 by Johannes Petreius, expressly for use in humanist schools. Less familiar is an earlier autograph translation, dated 27th January 1517, completed during his formative years in Italy; written in iambic and anapaestic metres, it combines precision with genuine literary grace.

The jurist and poet Andrea Alciato illustrates another facet of Renaissance engagement with Aristophanes. In 1517 he produced a Latin verse translation of the *Clouds*, followed in 1523 by *Philargyrus*, a Latin comedy inspired by Aristophanes[20]. These little-studied works shed light on the creative reception of Aristophanes in Italy, where humanists did not merely translate but also reimagined the comic tradition.

Johannes Reuchlin prepared a word-for-word Latin prose translation of Aristophanes' *Plutus* for his teaching in Ingolstadt[21]; both his autograph (Salzburg) and a student copy (Leipzig, 1522) survive.

The Ferrarese humanist Alessandro Sardi, renowned for his erudition in history, philosophy, and antiquarian studies, produced an unpublished complete Latin prose translation of Aristophanes' *Clouds* in 1541-1542[22]. A student of Marco Antonio Antimaco, himself trained by John Mosco, Sardi composed the work during his years of Greek study in Ferrara.

The French humanist Adrien Turnèbe produced a prose paraphrase of Aristophanes' *Plutus* on 8 January 1553, during his first years of teaching at the Collège du Roi[23]. He filled the wide margins with dense autograph notes, offering a vivid picture of his sustained study of the Attic comedy.

Among the last Renaissance translators of Aristophanes was Nicasius Ellebodius, who studied in Padua under Michael Sophianos[24]. In the final years of his life he produced unpublished Latin versions of the *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Lysistrata*, which

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[18] MUTTINI (2023a, 136-41).
[19] MUTTINI (2023a, 142-49).
[20] BASTIN-HAMMOU (2023, 37-52).
[21] CANADA (2001, 416-19).
[22] BAROTTI (1793, 199-203).
[23] LEWIS (1998, 125).
[24] SCHREIBER (1975, 313-32).

he dedicated to his patron Gian Vincenzo Pinelli, with whom he resided in Padua.

In the later sixteenth century the Florentine humanist Lorenzo Giacomini Tebalducci Malespini, a pupil of Piero Vettori, translated the *Plutus* into Latin, probably as a classroom exercise[25]. A few decades later Marcello Adriani the Younger, professor of Latin and Greek at the Florentine Studio, prepared a bilingual Greek-Latin version of the comedy, reflecting the late Renaissance revival of classical translation[26].

This varied tradition of Aristophanic translations – from school exercises to literary reworkings – shows how deeply Renaissance humanists engaged with Attic comedy. Far from being a marginal scholarly curiosity, Aristophanes became a key author for teaching Greek, refining Latin style, and experimenting with comic language. It is within this intellectual landscape that Beatus Rhenanus' translation of the *Clouds* must be understood: an emblem of how Aristophanes was reborn in the philological schools of early sixteenth-century Basel.

2. *Translating Aristophanes in Basel: Beatus Rhenanus and the* Clouds

Among the many humanists who approached Aristophanes, Beatus Rhenanus (1485-1547) occupies a distinctive place. His Latin translation of the *Clouds* (1-502), preserved in the manuscript *Selestad.* 336 (= K 930) at the *Bibliothèque Humaniste* of Sélestat, has long escaped notice but deserves recognition as one of the most sophisticated examples of early humanist translation.

Selestad. 336 is a paper codex compiled in Basel in the early sixteenth century. It contains several classical texts in Latin translation[27]: *Musaei De Ero et Leandro* (cc. 1*v*-10*v*), *Aristophanis Plutus* (cc. 11*r*-41*r*), *Aristophanis Nubes* (cc. 41*v*-51*r*), *Lucillii Epigrammata* (cc. 58*r*-67*v*). The hand is that of Beatus Rhenanus himself[28].

Born in Sélestat as Beatus Bild, he adopted the humanist name Rhenanus. After early schooling in his hometown, he studied in Paris (1503-1507) under Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples and worked as corrector for leading printers such as Jehan Petit and Henri Estienne. In 1511 he moved to Basel, where he studied Greek under Johannes Cuno, a former pupil of Musurus and Aldus Manutius, and entered the lively humanist circle around Erasmus and the Froben press.

Renowned for his philological skill, Rhenanus soon became a pivotal figure in the transmission of Greek and Latin classics north of the Alps. His editorial work for

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[25] MUTTINI (2023a, 113-23).
[26] MUTTINI (2023a, 78-83).
[27] ADAM (1962, 122); SICHERL (1979, 62, 64-69).
[28] For a biography of Beatus Rhenanus see MEYER (1998); HEIM – HIRSTEIN (2001); WALTER (2011); MUHLACK (2013, 657-710).

Froben – on Pliny the Younger, Svetonius, Seneca, Tertullian, and Velleius Paterculus (whose first printed edition he produced in 1520) – secured his reputation as a careful and methodical scholar. His vast personal library, later bequeathed to the *Bibliothèque Humaniste*, mirrors his encyclopaedic interests.

Against this background, his translation of the *Clouds* emerges as a product of the Basel classroom, shaped by Cuno's teaching and the ideals of literal accuracy cultivated in Aldine circles. Indeed, Cuno himself seems to have used Aristophanes as a didactic text[29]. In a letter written in 1516, three years after Cuno's death, Bruno Amerbach referred to *translationes Luciani et Aristophanis, ubi verbum verbo respondet, quas habui a communi praeceptore nostro Conone* («word-for-word translations of Lucian and Aristophanes, which I received from our mutual teacher Cuno»)[30].

Rhenanus' version, composed around 1512 (as noted in the *subscriptio* at c. 41*r*), thus stands among the earliest complete Latin translations of the *Clouds*, preceded only by those of Alexander of Otranto (1458) and Bruno Amerbach (1511)[31].

The Greek model he used was the *Cantabr.* R. 1. 42, copied in Crete in the second half of the fifteenth century by Michele Lygizos[32]. The manuscript, containing the Byzantine triad, had belonged to Cuno and, after his death (1513), passed to Rhenanus, whose ownership notes appear at cc. 1*r*, 3*r*.

Through a close reading of this Latin *Clouds*, the following analysis explores how Rhenanus approached Aristophanes as both translator and scholar. The *Clouds* offered him a text that was at once dramatic, poetic, comic, a Greek literary classic, and a rich socio-historical document – a challenge and an opportunity to recreate the voice of Greek comedy in Latin[33].

2.1 *Strategies of Latinization: A Translator or a Commentator?*

Every translator must face the same question: how far can one language carry the life of another? Beatus Rhenanus, confronted with the Greek of Aristophanes, opts not for

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[29] SAFFREY (1971, 19-62).

[30] MEYER (1936, 281-84). On Basel in the Renaissance see BIETENHOLZ (1971).

[31] On the rediscovery of Aristophanes' *Clouds* in Renaissance Europe see NASSICHUK (2013, 427-46); HADLEY (2015).

[32] On the Cretan scribe Lygizos (*nota subscriptionis* at c. 192*v*), who worked in the circle of Michele Apostolis, see *RGK* I, nr. 282, II, nr. 386, III, nr. 465. On the manuscript *Cantabr.* R. 1. 42 see MUTTINI (2019, 335 n. 114). A full collation reveals that the Greek text of Aristophanes' *Clouds* has been influenced by the Thoman-Triclinian recension. On the manuscript tradition of this play see DOVER (1968, 99-125).

[33] I created a digital edition of this translation as part of the *Translatoscope* project at Université Grenoble Alpes (scientific supervisor: Malika Bastin-Hammou). To consult it, see the following address: https://renard.elan-numerique.fr/traductions.html.

ornament but for fidelity. In his *Nubes*, when set beside Aristophanes' text as transmitted in the *Cantabrigiensis* manuscript, he almost never departs from the original. His Latin moves with quiet precision, phrase answering phrase, line for line: literal to the edge of mirroring, yet still alive enough to breathe.

The opening five lines already make this method visible:

Strepsiades
Iou, iou!
O Iuppiter rex, res noctium
quam infinitum! Numquam dies fiet?
Atqui dudum gallum audivi ego.
Sed domestici stertunt, sed non antea!

Oh! Oh! O King Jupiter, how endless is the matter of the nights! Will it never become day? And yet just now I heard the rooster. But the servants are snoring. But not before!

The corresponding Greek reads:

ἰοὺ ἰού·
ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ τὸ χρῆμα τῶν νυκτῶν ὅσον·
ἀπέραντον. οὐδέποθ᾽ ἡμέρα γενήσεται;
καὶ μὴν πάλαι γ᾽ ἀλεκτρυόνος ἤκουσ᾽ ἐγώ·
οἱ δ᾽ οἰκέται ῥέγκουσιν· ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἂν πρὸ τοῦ.

Rhenanus keeps the very breath of Aristophanes' opening lines. The noun phrase τὸ χρῆμα τῶν νυκτῶν becomes *res noctium*, and the Greek intensifier ὅσον is mirrored by *quam infinitum*, confirming his attention to syntactic and semantic structure. The same method continues in the following lines: οὐδέποτ᾽ ἡμέρα γενήσεται; becomes *Numquam dies fiet?*, maintaining verbal structure and word order; ἀλεκτρυόνος ἤκουσ᾽ ἐγώ is rendered as *dudum gallum audivi ego*, again mirroring the Greek in both lexical choice (ἀλεκτρυών: *gallus*) and emphasis (the subject *ego* placed at the end, as in Greek). Even the rhythm of the Latin echoes the Greek phrase by phrase. Finally, οἱ δ᾽ οἰκέται ῥέγκουσιν becomes *domestici stertunt*, slightly more concise but semantically exact, and ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἂν πρὸ τοῦ is translated literally as *sed non antea*, preserving not only the meaning but the adversative construction and temporal nuance.

This is fidelity as method, but not servitude. Like many humanists, Rhenanus walks the line between literal translation and learned commentary[34]. His accuracy is never mechanical; it is interpretive[35]. He translates not only words but meaning, guided

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[34] SABBADINI (1896, 135).
[35] For the use of paraphrase as a pedagogical tool during the Renaissance see BLACK (2010, 513-36).

by a pedagogical instinct: to make Aristophanes speak intelligibly in Latin.

At times, that instinct leads him beyond equivalence into invention. When he encounters κοππατίαν (v. 23, 'a horse branded with the koppa', a symbol of aristocratic prestige in classical Athens), he coins the phrase *equum cappatum*[36]:

> *Intellexi! Quoniam _ _ _ _ equum cappatum.*
>
> I understood! Because [...] a koppa-branded horse.

The expression never existed in classical Latin; it is Rhenanus' own creation. By turning *koppa* into *cappa* and forming the adjective *cappatus*, he reshapes the Greek for readers who would never have known this Athenian prestige symbol. In doing so, he comments while he translates: a humanist explaining Greek culture from within the text itself.
A similar instinct guides his version of σαμφόρας (v. 122), a Greek term that refers to a horse branded with the letter *san*[37]. Instead of transliterating or approximating the term, he translates it as *equus signatus .σ.* ('a sigma-branded horse'):

> *Non igitur, per Cererem, ex meis comedes,*
> *neque ipse, neque coniungens, neque equus signatus .σ.,*
> *sed expellam ad κόκακας ex domo.*
>
> So, by Ceres, you shall not eat from my stores, not you, nor your companion, nor your branded horse with a sigma, but I will throw you out of the house to the crows!

The adjective *signatus* ('marked' or 'sealed') is plain and Roman. Through it, the exotic Greek custom of horse-branding becomes immediately legible within Latin codes of ownership and dignity.

In such passages, Rhenanus acts as a cultural mediator: he brings the Greek world into Latin speech through small acts of explanation[38]. Often he amplifies the original by adding adjectives or doubling nouns, what we might call a strategy of semantic expansion.

When Strepsiades imagines his son parading through the city in aristocratic splendour (v. 70), the Greek ξυστίδα ('robe of rich and soft material') becomes *vestem pulchram* ('a fine garment'):

> *Hunc filium accipiens blandiebatur:*
> *«Quando tu, magnus existens, currum ducis in urbem,*

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[36] OLSON (2021, 67).
[37] BRAUN (1970, 256-67).
[38] For the concept of 'cultural translation', see BURKE (2007).

> *velut Megacleis, vestem pulchram habens».*

> He fondly welcomed this son, saying: When you, grown great, drive your chariot
> into the city, like the sons of Megacles, wearing a fine garment.

One adjective, *pulchram*, transforms the robe into a visible emblem of status and elegance.

The same interpretive impulse shapes his translation of μεριμνοφροντισταί (v. 101, 'careful thinkers'), a comic compound coined by Aristophanes to caricature Socratic thinkers:

> *Non novi per certe nomen:*
> *solliciti excogitatores, elegantes bonique.*

> I certainly do not recognise the name: anxious thinkers, refined and virtuous men.

Rhenanus' *solliciti excogitatores* ('anxious inventors') captures not only the structure of the Greek compound but also its ironic psychology: the anxiety (μέριμνα) of minds that think too much.

Elsewhere, he expands with a scholar's instinct for clarity:

> *Orare fies pulvillus, cymbalum, flos farinae.*
> *Sed habe quietem!*

> You will become, I tell you, a little pillow, a cymbal, the flower of flour. But now keep quiet!

The Greek παιπάλη (v. 260, 'the finest flour') becomes *flos farinae* ('the flower of flour'), a metaphor from classical Latin that makes the image instantly elegant and intelligible. What was one Greek word becomes two Latin ones, but with that doubling comes a new expressive force.

At other moments, Rhenanus expands compact Greek expressions into explanatory Latin phrases:

> *Caeram liquefaciens, deinde pulicem accipiens*
> *intinxit in caeram ipsius pedes,*
> *et deinde in frigore aggenitae fuerunt Persicae.*

> Melting some wax, then taking a flea, he dipped its feet into the wax, and then, as it cooled, little Persian shoes were formed.

The Greek term Περσικαί refers to a type of luxurious Persian shoes worn by Athenian women as a status symbol. By adding the marginal gloss *id est calcendi* (i.e.,

'footwear'), Rhenanus clarifies the meaning for a Latin reader unfamiliar with Athenian fashion, thus combining translation with lexicographical explanation, a practice typical of humanist pedagogy[39].

Through these glosses and periphrases, Rhenanus reveals his dual vocation: translator and commentator at once. His Latin is faithful, but never blind; precise, yet always ready to guide. What he offers is not just Aristophanes in Latin, but Aristophanes made readable for the Renaissance public.

2.2 *The Challenges of Translating Aristophanic Comedy*

Investigating the translation process in the humanistic Latin versions of Aristophanes is especially relevant, since comedy poses genre-specific issues such as obscenity, political attacks, irreverence, humour, and topicality. His plays abound with references to people, objects, and institutions familiar to the playwright and his original audience but unknown to early modern readers[40].

The following pages examine how Rhenanus addressed these challenges, making Aristophanes comprehensible and effective for a Latin readership. The discussion is organised around two key aspects of the Aristophanic text: strategies for conveying linguistic creativity, comic humour, and obscenity; and the transposition of culture-specific references and topical allusions from the classical Athenian world to the Latin West. Two further sections address errors in Rhenanus' translation and features of his humanist Latin. This thematic approach shows how Rhenanus balanced fidelity with adaptation, acting both as translator and commentator on Aristophanic comedy.

2.2.1 *Translating Aristophanes' Linguistic Creativity, Comic Humour, and Obscenity*

Aristophanes' language is famously inventive, rich in hapax legomena, playful compounds, and metaphors. Translating this creativity poses a double challenge: grasping the unusual terms and deciding whether to reproduce their comic effect. Rhenanus often captures the humour by coining Latin equivalents that mimic Aristophanes' tone, structure, or wordplay.

One revealing case occurs at verse 55, where the verb σπαθᾷς ('you weave') is used metaphorically to mean 'squander', and almost certainly carries an obscene undertone ('indulge in sexual pleasure')[41]. Rhenanus translates it literally as *texis* ('you weave') but signals the double meaning with a marginal note: *amphibologia*. This

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[39] ENENKEL – NELLEN (2013).
[40] SOMMERSTEIN (1973, 140-54); ROBSON (2008, 168-82).
[41] HENDERSON (1991[2], 73, 172); SONNINO (2014, 113-40).

technical term from rhetorical theory, denoting ambiguity or punning, shows his sensitivity to Aristophanic wordplay even when the Latin text itself remains neutral:

> *Non tamen dicam quod ociosa erat, sed texebat;*
> *ego autem ipsi vestem ostendens hunc*
> *praetextum dicebam: «O uxor, valde texis!».*

> I will not say she was idle, but she was weaving; and I, showing her this cloth, said: 'Oh wife, you really weave!

By keeping the literal image but annotating its second sense, Rhenanus makes the joke visible to the attentive reader, not through laughter, but through learned precision.

Elsewhere, he responds to Aristophanes' verbal inventiveness with creative Latin coinages of his own. At verse 166, the grotesque compound διεντέρευμα ('intestinal investigation'), a blend of διερευνάω ('to examine closely') and ἔντερον ('gut'), becomes *enteratio* – an elegant hybrid that preserves the comic absurdity of the Greek[42]. Though unattested, it is perfectly intelligible and parodies the pseudo-scientific tone of Aristophanic humour:

> *Tuba anus est forte culicum!*
> *O ter beati propter istam enterationem!*

> The trumpet is perhaps the anus of a gnat! Oh, thrice blessed because of that intestinal investigation!

At verse 10, the bizarre hapax ἐγκεκορδυλημένος ('swaddled' or 'wrapped in bandages') becomes *infasciatus*[43]. The Latin loses the odd, knotted sound of the Greek but keeps its visual concreteness – a young man entangled in multiple layers of bedding:

> *Sed neque bonus ille iuvenis*
> *excitatur de nocte, sed pedit*
> *in quinque lodicibus infasciatus.*

> But that good-for-nothing young man does not wake up at night; he just farts, swaddled in five blankets.

At verse 74, Aristophanes invents ἵππερον, a playful compound from ἵππος ('horse') and ἴκτερος ('jaundice'), describing the son's 'horse-madness'[44]. Rhenanus renders this with the neat calque *equinus morbus* ('equine illness'), capturing both the humour and the tone of the original:

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[42] WILLI (2003, 137).
[43] NASSICHUK (2013, 430-33).
[44] OLSON (2021, 74).

> *Sed non persuasi meis quicquam verbis,*
> *sed equinus morbus meis se superinfudit pecuniis.*

> But I persuaded him of nothing with my words; instead, horse-madness poured itself over my money.

Similarly, at verse 94, he produces a satisfying translation of φροντιστήριον, Aristophanes' famous neologism for Socrates' 'Thinkery'. Rhenanus paraphrases it as *cogitatorium vel schola* ('thinking place or school')[45]. The term is devoid of its corrosive potential and polemical intent, adopting a more neutral meaning based on its etymology as a 'place for meditation':

> *Animarum sapientium hoc est cogitatorium vel schola.*

> This is the thinking-place or school of wise souls.

At times, however, Rhenanus moves in the opposite direction, heightening rather than softening Aristophanes' grotesque humour. At verse 296, the comic epithet for comedians τρυγοδαίμονες – literally 'grape-spirit beings', a Dionysian jab at comic actors – is translated as *fecibus peruncti* («smeared with wine dregs»):

> *Noli cavillari, neque feceris quae fecibus peruncti,*
> *sed benedic: valde nam deorum movetur cetus cantans.*

> Do not scoff, nor do what those smeared with wine dregs do, but speak well; for truly the choir of the gods is greatly moved as it sings.

This line shows how Rhenanus replaces a playful, mythologically flavoured compound with a concrete and visceral Latin phrase. The resulting image, immediately intelligible to a Latin readership, turns the metaphor into an earthy and physical picture, favouring vividness over strict equivalence.

Despite the freedom of his inventions, Rhenanus shows no trace of prudery. His translation of obscene or scatological passages remains faithful to the Greek, and his vocabulary draws naturally on the Latin comic and satirical tradition.

At verse 9, the Greek πέρδεται ('breaks wind') is rendered bluntly as *pedit* ('farts'). The verb, familiar from Horace (*Sat.* I 8, 46) and Martial (10, 14), carries exactly the right earthy tone, aligning Rhenanus with classical models of humorous realism.

Likewise, at verse 173, where a disciple of Socrates is struck by a comic mishap, κατέχεσεν ('shit on') becomes *cacavit* ('defecated'), a word used by Catullus (*c.* 20; 23,

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[45] OLSON (2021, 78).

20; 36, 1):

> *Querente ipso lunae vias*
> *et circulationes, deinde sursus hiantis*
> *a tabulato nocte catus cacavit.*

> While he was inquiring into the paths and revolutions of the moon, then, from
> above, with mouth agape, a cat defecated from the platform at night.

Across such examples, Rhenanus emerges as a translator with both discipline and
daring. He is not afraid of Aristophanes' obscenity, nor does he shy from invention. His
Latin speaks in the register of Horace and Catullus, urbane, physical, and amused,
carrying the laughter of Athens into the learned world of the Renaissance.

2.2.2 *Translating Cultural References and Topical Allusions*

A key challenge in translating Aristophanes is handling *realia* and culturally embedded
references. These include religious cults, proper names, items of daily life, and socio-
political institutions, familiar to ancient Athenians but distant from sixteenth-century
Latin readers. In the *Clouds*, Rhenanus addresses them through approximation,
generalisation, and selective clarification.

    One telling example is *Genetillidis* (v. 52, Γενετυλλίδος), a local cult title of
Aphrodite as a goddess of procreation. The passage, spoken by Strepsiades, contrasts
his rustic simplicity with his wife's sophisticated vices:

> *Hanc postquam duxi, concumbebam ego*
> *redolens fori, mensulae carycarum, lanarum abundantiam,*
> *hec rursus unguenti, crori, basiationum,*
> *impensarum, destructionis, Koliadis et Genetillidis.*

> After I married her, I used to go to bed smelling of the marketplace, of a table of
> figs, of piles of wool; and she, on the other hand, of perfume, of daintiness, of
> kisses, of expenses, of ruin, of Koliadis and Genetillidis.

Rhenanus glosses *Genetillidis* simply as *Veneris*, turning a local Athenian epithet into
the universal Roman goddess. The substitution flattens the cultic specificity but
preserves intelligibility – a typical humanist compromise between precision and
familiarity[46].

    A similar move appears at verse 17, where εἰκάδας ('the twenties', referring to the
final ten days of the Athenian month) becomes *vigesimum diem* ('the twentieth day'):

> *Ego autem perii videns ducentem lunam vigesimum diem.*

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[46] OLSON (2021, 71).

> *Usurae enim currunt.*

> But I am ruined, seeing the moon bringing in the twentieth day. For the interest is running.

The rendering simplifies a complex calendrical expression into something a Latin reader could instantly grasp, though at the cost of the Greek's temporal nuance.

At verse 72, the rustic διφθέραν ('cloak') is translated as *pellem caprinam* ('goat-skin garment'):

> *Ego autem dicebam:*
> *«Quandoque capras ex phelle,*
> *velut pater tuus, pellem caprinam indutus».*

> And I used to say: 'When will you, like your father, drive goats from Phelle, wearing a goat-skin cloak?'.

Here Rhenanus captures the material sense but loses the earthy, class-marked tone of διφθέρα, a word that in Greek signals the peasant world to which Strepsiades belongs. The Latin neutralises that social colouring.

Proper names pose an even subtler difficulty[47]. Rhenanus usually adopts the strategy of transference, transliterating rather than translating. Thus, the names of Strepsiades' creditors – Πασίας and Ἀμυνίας – appear as *Pasiae* and *Aminiae* in the Latin version (vv. 30f.):

> *Sed «quod debitum accedit» me post Pasian?*
> *Tres mnas de bigula et duabus rotis Aminiae.*

> But what about the debt that's added on after Pasias? Three minae for a wagon and two wheels from Amynias.

Material culture (*realia*) offered further pitfalls[48]. Sometimes Rhenanus simply transliterates – a method that Leonardo Bruni had explicitly discouraged. For instance, μνᾶς (v. 31, the Attic 'mina') is rendered as *mnas*: accurate in form, yet puzzling for any reader without numismatic knowledge.

Elsewhere, he turns to functional or generic Latin equivalents, preferring clarity over ethnographic detail. At verse 10, σισύραις ('a shaggy woollen cloak worn by herdsmen') becomes *lodicibus* ('blankets'):

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[47] Alexander of Otranto declines to translate personal names in his Latin version of *Clouds*: proper nouns are often glossed with the expressions *ille vir/illa mulier* ('that man' / 'that woman') and *nomen proprium* ('proper name').
[48] OSIMO (2011, 111): «parole che denotano cose materiali culturospecifiche».

> *Sed neque bonus ille iuvenis*
> *excitatur de nocte, sed pedit*
> *in quinque lodicibus infasciatus.*

> But that good-for-nothing young man does not wake up at night; he just farts, swaddled in five blankets.

The choice of *lodicibus* domesticates the image, replacing rustic texture with household familiarity: the smell of the Roman bed replacing the feel of the Athenian farmyard.

At verse 19, the Greek γραμματεῖον ('wax tablet') is translated as *rationarium* ('account book')[49]:

> *Accende, puer, lychnum*
> *et effer rationarium, ut cognoscam accipiens*
> *quot debeo et computem usuras!*

> Light the lamp, boy, and bring out the account book, so that I may see how much I owe and calculate the interest!

The Latin term approximates the function of the Greek original but shifts the object from a physical tablet to a more general notion of a financial record.

At verse 37, δήμαρχος ('demarch', the elected head of an Attic deme) is rendered generically as *magistratus*[50]:

> *Mordet me magistratus in lectis.*

> The magistrate torments me even in bed.

Once again, the translation smooths the democratic texture of the original into a familiar Latin term, making Aristophanes' political landscape look comfortably Roman.

Domestic implements undergo the same levelling. At verse 96, πνιγεύς ('baking-cover', a domed lid used for bread) becomes *fornax* ('oven'), with an interlinear gloss *caminus* ('hearth'):

> *Hic habitant viri qui celum*
> *dicentes persuadent quod est fornax,*
> *et est circa nos sic, nos autem carbones.*

> Here live men who, saying so, persuade us that the sky is an oven, and that it is like that all around us, while we are but coals.

While *caminus* is a somewhat closer match than *fornax*, both Latin terms generalize the

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[49] OLSON (2021, 66).
[50] OLSON (2021, 69).

function, omitting the distinctive shape and culinary specificity of the original Greek item[51].

Even food items lose their local savour. At verse 188, βολβούς (the 'muscari comosum', or wild hyacinth bulb) becomes simply *bulbos* ('bulbs')[52]:

> *Bulbos forte quaerunt.*

> Perhaps they are looking for bulbs.

The etymology is correct, but the cultural flavour vanishes: the rustic delicacy of the Athenian countryside becomes a neutral Latin vegetable.

These examples show that Rhenanus favours domestication over reproducing Aristophanes' foreignness[53]. He privileges clarity over precision, often at the expense of local colour, cultural allusion, or historical fidelity. Yet this is no failure of erudition: it reflects a broader humanist conviction that the translator's task is not to preserve strangeness but to mediate it, to make ancient Athens legible within the linguistic and cultural horizons of the Latin West.

2.2.3 *Errors and Misinterpretations*

Even the most skilled translators stumble, and Rhenanus was no exception. His slips are revealing: they expose not negligence, but the limits of a humanist's tools – his lexicons, his manuscripts, and his capacity to guess at meanings across the gulf of cultures. Most arise from words so rare or context-bound that no clear Latin equivalent was available. Yet, precisely for this reason, these misreadings illuminate his working methods and interpretive instincts.

At verse 35, the Greek adverb ἐτεόν ('really') becomes *amabo* ('please [I beg you]'), a colloquial formula borrowed from Plautus and Terence.

> *Amabo, o pater,*
> *quid molestaris et veneris per totam noctem?*

> Please, father, why are you troubling yourself and staying awake all night?

Here, an assertion of truth softens into a phrase of politeness. The mistranslation turns Phidippides' exasperation into courtesy, subtly altering tone and characterisation.

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[51] OLSON (2021, 78).
[52] OLSON (2021, 91). The Latin *bulbus* appears in ancient authors, including Erasmus (*Adagia*, no. 2344: *bulbos quaerit*), often with humorous or rustic connotations, though not necessarily equivalent to the Greek culinary reference.
[53] VENUTI (1995).

A more inventive misunderstanding occurs at verse 170, where ἀσκαλαβώτου ('reptile' or 'lizard') becomes a paraphrase worthy of a fabulist: *ab animali*, *quod sine scalis ascendit* ('from the animal that climbs without ladders'). The image, spoken by one of Socrates' disciples, reads like a small act of comic imagination, as if Rhenanus, uncertain of the term, chose to capture the creature's behaviour rather than name it:

> *Prius autem in magna sententia privatus est*
> *ab animali, quod sine scalis ascendit.*

> But earlier he lost a great idea because of an animal that climbs without ladders.

His error reveals a translator thinking visually, not lexically.

At verse 173, the Greek γαλεώτης (probably a weasel or gecko) becomes *catus* ('cat'):

> *Querente ipso lunae vias*
> *et circulationes, deinde sursus hiantis*
> *a tabulato nocte catus cacavit.*

> «While he was inquiring into the paths and revolutions of the moon, then, from above, with mouth agape, a cat defecated from the platform at night».

Though zoologically inaccurate, the substitution is psychologically astute: Rhenanus domesticates the alien creature into a familiar domestic creature, simplifying the exotic nuance of the original.

At verse 45, στεμφύλοις ('olive-cakes', the pressed residue of oil production) become *uvis* ('grapes')[54]:

> *Michi enim erat agrestis vita suavissima,*
> *squallens, sine munditie, temere iacens,*
> *scatens apibus et ovibus et uvis.*

> For me, the rustic life was most delightful – filthy, without cleanliness, lying carelessly, teeming with bees, sheep, and grapes.

The harsh, oily realism of Attic countryside becomes a Latin bucolic idyll, more Virgilian than Aristophanic[55].

At verse 28, Rhenanus similarly domesticates πολεμιστήρια ('war chariots') as

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[54] OLSON (2021, 70).

[55] This mistranslation may stem from a lexicographical confusion with σταφυλή ('bunch of grapes'). Such a mistake would highlight Rhenanus' dependence on limited or inconsistent Greek-Latin resources circulating in Basel at the time.

certaminum lora ('reins of contests'):

> *Quot cursus impulerunt certaminum lora?*
>
> How many races have driven the reins of contests?

The martial force of the original dissolves into the elegant abstraction of sport.

Finally, at verse 41, προμνήστρια ('matchmaker') is rendered as *pronuba* ('bridesmaid'):

> *Utinam debebat pronuba perire male,*
> *que me ducere excitavit tuam matrem!*
>
> If only the bridesmaid should perish miserably, the one who urged me to marry your mother!

The Roman term fits neatly in Latin idiom but not in Athenian society: *pronuba* evokes ritual assistance, not the transactional brokerage implied by προμνήστρια. Once again, Rhenanus replaces foreign specificity with domestic familiarity.

Taken together, these misreadings form a revealing pattern. When the Greek world grows too distant, Rhenanus bridges the gap by approximation, guesswork, or analogy, translating ideas into what his Latin imagination could grasp. His errors are rarely mechanical; they are acts of interpretation. And even when wrong, his Latin remains fluent, idiomatic, and alive – far removed from the stiffness of an *ad verbum* version. Through these small imperfections, we glimpse the humanist at work: resourceful and sometimes delightfully fallible in his effort to make Aristophanes speak a living Latin.

2.2.4 *The Latin of Beatus Rhenanus*

Rhenanus' Latin in *Clouds* reveals a complex attitude toward humanist linguistic ideals. Bruni, in *De recta interpretatione*, demanded strict imitation of classical vocabulary, rejection of Greek borrowings, and avoidance of clumsy neologisms[56]. Rhenanus departs from these rules: his lexicon mixes classical taste with pragmatic flexibility.

Some terms come from medieval or late Latin rather than the *auctores*[57]: v. 92 θύριον ('small doorway')] *ostiolum* ('little door'); v. 92 τῲκίδιον ('tiny house')]

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[56] BERTOLIO (2020, 7-62). While there is no direct evidence that Beatus Rhenanus read Bruni's *De interpretatione recta*, the treatise was widely circulated among northern Italian humanists and served as a foundational treatise on translation theory during Rhenanus' formative years. His Greek training under Johannes Cuno and his collaboration with the Amerbach circle in Basel suggest that he was likely familiar, whether directly or indirectly, with Bruni's principles of *ad sententiam* translation.

[57] The tendency to translate the participle of the verb «be» by the Latin *existens* evoques the medieval translations.

domunculam ('little house'); v. 103 ἀνυποδήτους ('without sandals')] *nudipedes* ('barefooted'); v. 387 ζωμοῦ ('thin soup')] *prodio* ('thin broth'). Other words occur in neo-Latin, such as the adjectives *tenuisculo* ('somewhat thin') for λεπτοῦ (v. 161, 'delicate' or 'thin') and *gravisonus* ('heavy-sounding' or 'deep-toned') for βαρύβρομος (v. 313, 'loud-roaring' or 'deep-thundering'). Such taste for late Latin was common among neo-Latin writers, who often preferred scholarly Latin over classical precedent[58]. Latinization is another characteristic feature of Rhenanus' style. He regularly adapts Greek words to Latin morphology, as in *phasianos* ('pheasants') at v. 109 for φασιανούς ('plumed birds') and *obolum* ('a small coin') at v. 118 for ὀβολὸν ('obol'). At times, however, he goes further and inserts untranslated Greek directly into the Latin text, such as Φεῦ (v. 41, 'alas'), ἢ ἢ (v. 105, 'either ... or'), and *ad* κόρακας (v. 123, 'to the crows!', i.e., 'go to hell!').

Rhenanus creatively handles Aristophanes' inventive compounds, sometimes coining neologisms, such as *tonitrufulgures* ('thunder-lightnings') at v. 265 for βροντησικέραυνοι ('thunderstrikers'); *gravistrepo* ('I roar heavily') at v. 277 for βαρυαχέος ('heavy-roaring'); and *frondicomas* ('leaf-haired') at v. 280 for δενδροκόμους ('tree-haired'). Elsewhere he breaks compounds into Latin periphrases: for example, ἀεροβατῶ (v. 225, 'walk the hair') becomes *aera conscendo* ('I climb the air'), and βεκκεσέληνε (v. 398, 'babbling prelunar idiot') – an invented compound each of whose two elements implies that Strepsiades is portrayed as having a primitive mentality – is paraphrased as *lumine senior* ('elder by light')[59].

Finally, Rhenanus consistently adapts religious invocations to Latin idiom, following Cicero's practice by using the preposition *per* (e.g., *per Ceres*, *per Iovem*). The names of Greek deities are fully Romanised: *Ceres* for Demeter, *Iuppiter* for Zeus, *Neptunus* for Poseidon, and *Hercules* for Heracles.

Overall, Rhenanus' Latin is neither rigidly Ciceronian nor fully medieval: it balances humanist purity with the need to render Aristophanes vivid and intelligible for sixteenth-century readers[60].

His language, poised between imitation and innovation, thus leads naturally into a broader reflection on the purpose of translation itself – how a Renaissance scholar could

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[58] TATEO (2006).

[59] Cf. Erasmus, *Adagia*, no. 2351: *Becceselenus*, a proverbial expression for someone senseless or deranged, possessed, or completely senile. Erasmus encountered the term *Bekkeselenos* in the 1499 edition of the *Suda*.

[60] To produce his Latin translation Beatus Rhenanus may have drawn not only on the Greek scholia in his manuscript of Aristophanes (Trinity College, Cambridge, R. I. 42), but also on the *Lexicon Graeco-Latinum* by Johannes Crastonus, published in Venice in 1497 by Aldus Manutius. A copy of this work was indeed part of his library, as evidenced by the copy currently preserved under the shelfmark *Selestad.* K 846, richly annotated by Cuno and bearing the ownership note (*Est Beati Rhenani Selestadiensis MDXIII Basileae*).

revive, rather than merely reproduce, the voice of Greek comedy.

2.3 *Conclusion*

Beatus Rhenanus' *Clouds* embodies the central paradox of the humanist translator: the pursuit of fidelity across the boundaries of culture, time, and language. His version remains remarkably faithful, often *verbum verbo*, yet never mechanical. He paraphrases, annotates, and occasionally expands, guided by the conviction, formulated by Leonardo Bruni, that translation is not servile imitation but the right transfer of meaning from one idiom to another[61].

What distinguishes Rhenanus is not passive accuracy but active interpretation. He clarifies obscurities, explains *realia*, and recreates Aristophanes' humour and obscenity with learned ease, drawing on Horace, Catullus, and Martial to fashion a Latin idiom capable of laughter. His glosses and expansions turn translation into commentary; his lexical invention turns scholarship into creativity.

Stylistically, his Latin blends classical and neo-Latin elements in a supple prose, accessible yet erudite. Occasional misreadings do not diminish his achievement. The *Clouds* of Rhenanus is not a mechanical exercise but a humanist reanimation of Greek comedy, a text reborn through the idiom of Renaissance scholarship.

In bridging Athens and Basel, Rhenanus transforms Aristophanes from an ancient curiosity into a living interlocutor of the sixteenth century. His translation stands as one of the most intelligent encounters between Greek comedy and the Latin humanist world: a work that reveals translation itself as the highest form of cultural mediation.

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[61] As Leonardo Bruni expressed it in his treatise *De recta interpretatione*: *Rapitur enim interpres vi ipsa in genus dicendi illius, de quo transfert* («For the translator is inevitably carried away by the very force into the style of expression of the author from whom he translates»). According to Bruni, a worthy translator must enter into a condition of empathy with their source and be seized by the power of their subject's style.

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