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The sociolinguistics of gender, social status and masculinity in Aristophanes

Abstract: This article explores variation in the language of male characters in the plays of the Athenian playwright Aristophanes, using *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Frogs* as in-depth case studies. Studies of modern languages have shown that men's linguistic practices can be just as marked for gender as women's, and the data from these plays bears this out. Using past work on 'female speech' as a starting point, this article explores the incidence of gendered markers in male characters' speech, and shows that some of these features characterise not just gender but the intersection of different aspects of identity including gender, social class and sexuality. These features include particular oaths, obscenities, certain uses of the particle *ge*, hedging and politeness strategies. The article shows that a lack of male-associated speech markers is enough to characterise a male Greek speaker as 'unmanly', without the addition of female-associated speech markers.

1 Introduction

Despite ongoing interest in both masculinity (Gleason 1995; Foxhall and Salmon 1998a, Foxhall and Salmon 1998b; Bassi 1998; Rosen and Sluiter 2003; Sutherland 2005; Goldhill 2004) and the language of women in the ancient world (Gilleland 1980; Adams 1984; Adams 2005; Bain 1984; Maltby 1985; Sommerstein 1995; McClure 1999; Mossman 2001; Schauwecker 2002; Willi 2003; Duhoux 2004; Fögen 2010; Clackson 2011; Kruschwitz 2012), the language of ancient men and its relationship to the performance of masculinity has been neglected. To tackle this problem, this article turns to the plays of the fifth-century Athenian dramatist Aristophanes as one of our best sources for the linguistic performance of masculinity in the ancient world.

As an initial exploration of the sociolinguistics of masculinity and its relationships with gender, sexuality and class, this article investigates the language

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of male characters in two plays of Aristophanes: *Thesmophoriazusae* (c. 411 BC) and *Frogs* (405 BC).[1] These plays, which will be used as in-depth case studies, have been chosen to provide data for this study because both feature 'unmanly' men alongside more typically masculine characters of a range of social classes, facilitating comparisons between different portrayals of male speech.[2] Both plays feature Euripides, allowing us to explore whether Aristophanes gave the character (based on the famous dramatist) a similar linguistic characterisation across two different plays. *Thesmophoriazusae* is also famously a play in which a male character, Euripides' Inlaw, tries to disguise himself as a woman, both in dress and in linguistic habits. The contrasts between the linguistic characterisations of different male characters in the two plays and the linguistic behaviour of a male character trying to conform to typical female language use in the *Thesmophoriazusae* will allow us to make some preliminary comments on how Aristophanes portrays male characters performing their gender and other aspects of their identity through their use of language. The characters, situations and plots in the two plays are completely different from each other, and so the patterns of linguistic usage may not be directly comparable between the two plays; however, any pattern that we do find in both plays may be evidence of a wider phenomenon worthy of further study.

2 Using Aristophanes as a linguistic source

Aristophanes was an Athenian playwright who wrote a large number of comedies for public performance in the late fifth and early fourth century BC. Eleven of his plays have survived to the present day. It has been recognised for some time that the plays of Aristophanes can give us some evidence for social variation within Greek, including gender-based variation (Willi 2003; Duhoux 2004; Clackson 2011: 505–506).[3] It has also been argued that the language of these

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1 I am using the editions Sommerstein (1994) and Sommerstein (1996).

2 I use the term 'unmanly', as in Rademaker (2003), rather than 'effeminate', as I would not want to assume that men can only fail to be sufficiently masculine by being feminine. See also Gaudio (1994).

3 For a more sceptical view, see Bain (1984); Silk (1990); Dickey (1995: 261–262); Colvin (1999: 286); see also Plutarch *Mor.* 853c-d. Silk's (1990) argument against this use of Aristophanes as a sociolinguistic source – that Aristophanic dialogue is inherently unrealistic because the stylistic level of a character's speech always changes during the play – is not as great a problem as it first appears. Firstly, a speaker's or writer's style will always vary depending on content and context, and this has to be taken into account in any sociolinguistic study. Secondly, some of the extreme and non-naturalistic stylistic variation in Aristophanes – such as mock-tragic or

plays may reflect contemporary spoken language, though the evidence needs to be treated carefully.

A fragment of one of Aristophanes' lost plays (fragment 706) has often been quoted to show that he recognised social variation in language, including variation according to gender, social status and geographic location. The fragment reads: "… [him] whose language is the average style of the polis, neither urbane and slightly womanish nor vulgar and somewhat boorish" (trans. Willi 2003).[4] What is not often stressed, however, is that this fragment appears to deal with variation within *men's* speech, and not variation between two genders. It implies that women and men speak differently, but only indirectly, by stating that some men speak in a 'womanish' way – their language is somehow insufficiently masculine, or excessively feminine. What Aristophanes might mean by this, and how this insight might be evidenced in his work, is worth exploring.

Past work on the sociolinguistics of Aristophanes has been invaluable in identifying possible markers of gendered speech in Greek. However, because of the wide range of gender identities and performances depicted in Greek drama, the use of 'male speech' as the standard and 'female speech' as a deviation from the standard has left scholars needing to explain away the fact that some of Aristophanes' characters do not conform to the typical speech patterns of their own gender.[5] For example, it has already been noted that some female characters adopt aspects of 'male' speech styles when in positions of power (Willi 2003: 170; Taaffe 1993: 64) and that female characters violate gender norms around obscenity in certain circumstances (Willi 2003: 188), suggesting that there is an important intersection between the linguistic performances of gender and social status which needs further investigation. Scholars have also needed to explain away the avoidance of obscenity in the language of 'unmanly' male characters such as Agathon in *Thesmophoriazusae* (Henderson 1991: 87; McClure 1999: 226; Willi 2003: 165; Fletcher 2012: 205 n. 8).

There are also a number of occasions in Aristophanes' plays when men impersonate women, or vice versa, and it is clear from the text that they make

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mock-legal language – is so pronounced that it is easy to spot and account for in our analysis. Silk's argument does, however, remind us that we should take particular care with making generalisations in one character's speech across whole plays, and that characters with shorter speaking parts may show the clearest and most consistent linguistic characterisation.

4 διάλεκτον ἔχοντα μέσην πόλεως οὔτ' ἀστείαν ὑποθηλυτέραν οὔτ' ἀνελεύθερον ὑπαγροικοτέραν.

5 Scholars have used both 'gender' and 'sex' as category labels in their discussions of ancient language variation. I use 'gender' here to refer to a social category which is performed by the individual.

use of linguistic as well as visual disguises (Taaffe 1993: 87–90; Sommerstein 1995: 63; Mossman 2001: 374; Stehle 2002: 387).[6] But these disguises are not always straightforward: in *Thesmophoriazusae*, the typically masculine Inlaw uses feminine-sounding language even before he has been dressed up as a woman (see 3.4, below). The humour and playfulness around linguistic gender norms in Aristophanes means that even those linguistic features that are normally labelled as 'gender-exclusive' are available to be used by anyone under appropriate circumstances, however rare or comic those circumstances might be (Gilleland 1980: 182; Sommerstein 1995: 65–68; Willi 2003: 189–190; Fögen 2010: 322–323).[7] This kind of variation is difficult to explain while using 'female speech' as a monolithic category.

Research into the sociolinguistics of gender in ancient languages therefore needs to take a new approach. The current focus on 'women's language' and 'female speech' misleadingly implies that men's speech and writing represents a default or standard variety from which women deviate (Motschenbacher 2010: 1–2). Studies of both ancient and modern languages have already shown that there are markers associated with men's language use as much as there are markers associated with women's language use, particularly in stereotypical portrayals such as comedy.

We also need to take note of developments in modern gender linguistics, including the growth of queer linguistics, which have shown that the gender binary is not the only possible starting point for linguistic research (Bucholtz and Hall 2004; Speer 2005: 12–14; Holmes 2007; Motschenbacher 2010: 7–14; Coates and Pichler 2011: 1–2, 370–373).[8] Scholarship has started to explore variation within speakers of the same gender, rather than always designating data as 'male' or 'female'. We must also recognise that there is considerable overlap between how people of different genders speak, and that there is wide variation within the speech of people of the same gender, including within the speech of one individual (Motschenbacher 2010: 20–25). With this in mind, I

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6 The women of the *Ekklesiazusae* also have to practice making their speech sound more masculine by avoiding self-referential grammatically feminine forms and certain phrases such as 'by Aphrodite' (*Ekklesiazusae* lines 155–195). In *Thesmophoriazusae*, the Inlaw tries to use feminine-sounding language when disguised as a woman (*Thesmophoriazusae* lines 279–650), though it is debated whether or not he is successful.

7 Recent work on the performance practices of ancient comedy (Stehle 2002; Compton-Engle 2003) has stressed that *all* of the female characters were visibly played by men – so that female speech in comedy can *only* be males imitating female speech. We cannot, strictly speaking, label any usage in comedy 'gender-exclusive'.

8 See also Gleason (1995) for the argument that Greek medical thought did not conceive of gender as binary – instead, each individual was a mixture of both genders.

have avoided the term 'female/male speech', which might imply two clear and homogeneous categories.

This article also makes use of the idea of 'doing gender' – that is, the idea of gender as an ongoing continuous performance rather than a state that is achieved – and sees language as a key component in performing a gendered identity (West and Zimmerman 1987; Butler 1988; Butler 1990: 24–25; Butler 1997: 7–8; Gleason 1995: 70; Cameron 1997: 47–48; de Klerk [see Klerk] 1997; Sutherland 2005: 52; Holmes 2001; Holmes 2007: 51–52; Leap 2008: 283; Baker 2008: 72–89). However, it is rare for only one linguistic feature to be used to express gender, or for an individual linguistic feature to express only gender. A single feature may index the intersection of a number of different identities, such as gender, social status, geographic origin and age, and the expression of an individual's identity is achieved through a combination of interlocking features (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 475; Cameron and Kulick 2003: 56–57; Colvin 2004: 95; Leap 2008: 283–284; Kiełkiewicz-Janowiak 2012: 318–319). This intersectionality is the reason why gender and social status must often be considered together, and the features marking these identities cannot always be neatly separated.

We should not always expect to find exact parallels between modern and ancient gender linguistics. The linguistic features which we might identify as gendered markers will of course be different, and the degree of gendered linguistic variation is likely to be different across societies, with some societies showing more restrictive gender roles and/or more fixed norms of linguistic practice for each gender. But nevertheless we should expect to find linguistic gender variation in ancient societies in much the same way as in modern societies, following the uniformitarian principle of linguistic variation (Conde-Silvestre and Hernández-Campoy 2012: 2). It has also been argued that ancient Athens and (some) modern societies are typologically similar patriarchal societies in which both women and men are judged by their performance of their gender, including their linguistic performance (Willi 2003: 164–165). It is possible, as we will see, that some of the gendered linguistic markers which we can identify in Greek may show similarities with modern gendered variation, at least insofar as we can posit cross-culturally useful categories such as politeness or obscenity. Nevertheless, we should be careful not to transfer modern European categories of gendered language onto historical societies unless the evidence gives us good reason to do so (Kiełkiewicz-Janowiak 2012: 324).

In our efforts to get as much as possible out of the available data we should not, of course, expect Aristophanic Greek to be able to tell us everything about how gendered language was used by speakers of fifth-century Attic Greek. We are dealing here with stereotypical and exaggerated depictions of speakers by

one educated male native speaker, and not data from a range of speakers. This does not mean, though, that these features had no reality outside comedy. Many of the features discussed may have existed in contemporary speech, and could have shown sociolinguistic variation which was picked up on by authors and audiences.[9] Recent work on the highly stereotypical language of modern advertising suggests that written texts can also reinforce what correct 'masculinity' and 'femininity' sound like, and that reading or hearing such stereotypes can create real-life linguistic behaviour (Motschenbacher 2010: 52–58; Shibamoto 1987: 40–48). It is possible that comedy, which was seen by a large proportion of the citizen population, could have created a similar positive feedback loop of stereotypes. Nevertheless, there are many features which might have been important to speech variation between different men which are impossible to recover, including aspects not coded in writing such as pitch and intonation (Gaudio 1994).

3 Linguistic markers of gender

The most complete list of gendered linguistic features, which I will be using here as a starting point, is found in Willi's chapter on female speech (2003: 157–197). These gendered markers have generally been identified from ancient comments on male and female language and/or from statistical analysis of the speech of male and female characters in Aristophanes. Some but not all of these features have parallels in modern languages.

Most of these features have been identified as either 'male-preferential' or 'female-preferential'. A very small number of highly gender-preferential features, such as self-referential grammatically masculine/feminine forms and certain oaths, have been identified in previous work as 'gender-exclusive', although in certain circumstances including quoting and impersonation they may be used by a character of another gender. The goal here is to identify how Aristophanes uses both 'male-preferential' and 'female-preferential' features in his portrayal of male characters, and how his use of these features may vary with gender presentation or with factors such as social class which may have been associated with certain gender presentations in his audience's minds. The features discussed here can be loosely grouped into the following categories, each of which requires a brief explanation.

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9 On the 'high performance' style of pre-planned, public performances and this style's exaggerated use of existing sociolinguistic variables, see Coupland (2007: 146–171).

3.1 Metalinguistic commentary

As noted above, gendered speech was a phenomenon that was commented on by a number of ancient authors (Gilleland 1980; Fögen 2010). Fragment 706 is a particularly famous instance, but Aristophanes' surviving plays also comment on male and female linguistic usage. In particular, the term *laleῖn* 'to chatter' (also *laliá* 'chat' and *lálos* 'chatty') is often used by characters in the plays to refer to women's speech, and is often associated with negative attitudes to how women speak, or to the fact that they speak at all.[10] Occasionally, the term *laleῖn* is used neutrally (to mean 'to talk'), or can even be used positively. The neutral use of this verb could also be viewed as an innovation, since the verb *légein* 'to talk' was later replaced by *laleῖn* (Willi 2003: 191); see also Section 3.7.

3.2 Grammatically masculine and feminine forms

One of the most obvious ways in which speech is gendered in Greek is the use of masculine and feminine forms – for example, in pronouns, nouns, adjectives and participles referring to the speaker, the interlocutor or a third party. In these plays, characters are sometimes misgendered by other speakers, while characters who are temporarily impersonating a member of another gender may also refer to themselves with different forms than normal.

3.3 Oaths

The term 'oath' refers here to expressions with *má*, *nḗ*, and *prós* plus the name of a deity, meaning something like 'by [god]; in the name of [god]'.[11] The use of different oaths by men and women is one of the most obvious gender divides in spoken Greek. Some oaths are strongly gender-preferential, to the extent that unusual usages may attract comments from other characters. Characters of both genders swear by Zeus, and this is the most common oath among both genders. Women also commonly swear by 'the two goddesses' (Demeter and Kore), Aphrodite, Artemis and Hecate; men generally swear by various male gods or by Demeter. Men may swear using 'female' oaths and vice versa for various reasons of plot, such as deliberately impersonating a member of another gender,

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10 Dover (1993: 22) suggests that the translation 'chatter' or 'babble' can often be too strong, and that its meaning is closer to 'talk (too much)' or 'talk (out of turn)'.
11 'Oaths' in this context do not include direct addresses to gods in the form 'O [god]'.

so that none of these oaths are truly gender-exclusive. Sommerstein also notes that Aristophanic women swear more often than men in general, and suggests that this makes their language sound more emotional (1995: 65–68).

3.4 Obscenity

Henderson's *Maculate Muse* gives the best list of Greek primary obscenities, that is, "words that refer directly, without any intermediary associations or distancing, to the sexual organs, excrement, and the acts which involve them, and which are always improper" (1991: 35). These terms are: *péos* 'cock', *kústhos* 'cunt', *psōlḗ* 'hard-on', *stúesthai* 'have a hard-on', *skōr* 'shit (noun)', *khézō* 'shit (verb)', *prōktós* 'arse', *pérdesthai* 'fart (verb)' (noun *pordḗ*), *bineîn* 'fuck', *déphesthai* 'wank', *kineîn* 'fuck', *lēkãn* 'suck cock', *laikázein* 'suck cock', *splekoũn* 'fuck'.[12] We should also include words like *katapúgōn* and *eurúprōktos* 'wide-arse' i. e. a man who enjoys being penetrated.[13] In contrast, there are a number of commonly used euphemistic or childish words, especially for body parts, which are less obscene: e. g. *pugḗ* 'bum', *pósthē* (or diminutive *pósthion*) 'willy', *delphákion* or *khoiríon* 'pussy' (both lit. 'little pig').[14] Some characters also make use of various metaphors for potentially obscene topics, some of which are probably off-the-cuff rather than established euphemisms (Adams 1982: 3).

Women in modern societies are often thought to use fewer obscenities than men, though this is probably impressionistic or even prescriptive (Lakoff 1975: 50–51; Coates 1993: 126), and recent research raises serious questions about this generalization (de Klerk [see Klerk] 1997; Baker 2008: 48). It is possible, as some studies have suggested (Hughes 1992: 294), that both men and women use more obscenities in single-sex groups, and thus that women's full range of usage has historically been systematically hidden from male writers. It is, however, a persistent cross-cultural stereotype that women, whose language may be policed

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[12] In general, I have followed the translations used by Sommerstein. These translations are intended to reflect approximately the correct level of obscenity, using British English equivalents, though an exact reflection of the connotations of each word would be impossible. See Clackson (2015: Ch. 5) for the apparent strength of various ancient obscenities.

[13] On the connection between unmasculine speech and unmasculine sexual desire implied by these terms, see Worman (2008: 17). Davidson (2007: 113) differs from other commentators in not seeing these insults as sexual; Austin and Olson (2004: 121) suggest that these insults can be sexual in origin without referring to the sexual behaviour of the target (cf. 'cocksucker' or 'wanker' as an all-purpose insult).

[14] Silk (1990: 152) overestimates the obscenity of *khoiríon*, and mistakenly thinks it is out-of-character for an old woman to use this word.

more than men's, use euphemism rather than obscenity (Coates 1993: 126; de Wit-Tak [see Wit-Tak] 1968: 363). Previous research suggests that this stereotype also applies in ancient societies, and it is understandable that ancient authors therefore characterize different characters' speech by the use or non-use of obscenity (Willi 2003: 188).[15] The use of obscenity may also relate to social status or age as much as gender.

Occasionally in Aristophanes, an obscenity is greeted with surprise, shock or hostility from another character. This indicates the word has been used in a socially unacceptable way and may help us to interpret social attitudes to certain words, though there is no reason to think that the audience would have found obscenity shocking in itself (Robson 2006: 84).

3.5 Politeness

Politeness includes linguistic strategies which relate to both the negative and positive face needs of the addressee (Brown and Levinson 1987). Negative face needs include the desire not to feel offended or insulted, and the desire to act without being obstructed by others. 'Hedging' is used here as a broad term for strategies which limit the force of a speech act, including words and phrases like 'maybe', 'you know' and tag questions seeking agreement. These kinds of strategies address the negative face needs of the interlocutor.

Hedging was originally identified as part of female linguistic practice by Lakoff (1975). More recent research, however, has shown that the use of hedging strategies by both men and women is complicated. Firstly, hedging does not always indicate hesitancy or lack of assertiveness, as Lakoff initially suggested: the same features can be used for expressing confidence, preventing talk from becoming too face-threatening or drawing in other speakers as joint creators of the conversation (Coates 1993: 117). There is now considerable doubt over how far gendered hedging strategies are female-preferential (Freed and Greenwood 1996).

Although we would not expect the specific politeness markers to be the same in Greek as in modern languages, it would not be unexpected for some social groups in any patriarchal or hierarchical society to use similar linguistic strategies. Some hedging and negative politeness strategies have already been identified elsewhere as linguistic features which may be a stereotypical way of representing some kinds of female or low-status speech. Features considered here include: double *án* within one clause, *hópōs* + subjunctive + *án*, tag

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15 *Pace* Dover (1987: 243): 'It does not happen that some characters in an Aristophanic play use obscene language while others abstain from it.'

questions, and (more broadly) unnecessarily indirect or litotic expressions (Willi 2003: 177, 181–186).[16]

There are also politeness strategies which aim to protect the positive face needs of the interlocutor, such as the desire to be liked and approved of. There is a general belief that women's language usage includes more positive politeness strategies (Kramer 1977: 159; Holmes 2001: 159), though in part this might have to do with the behaviour of female subjects in interview contexts (Hughes 1992: 294; Holmes 2001: 162). Women have been found to use more compliments than men, particularly in all-female groups; men rarely compliment each other as a way of bonding.[17] While men do sometimes compliment women, particularly women who are close to them, they can also use compliments in a face-threatening way – for example, by making overtly sexual comments that can be perceived as harassment (Coates 1993: 128–129; Holmes 1995).

The features of Aristophanic language which have already been identified as positive politeness strategies used disproportionately by women and/or lower-class speakers include *boúlei* + subjunctive as a periphrasis for the deliberative subjunctive, the ethic dative, the fossilised imperative *amélei* 'don't worry', and (more broadly) compliments catering to positive face needs (Willi 2003: 179–193).

3.6 Use of particles

Greek particles can have many different pragmatic uses, from hedging and politeness to acting as intensifiers. The particle *ge* is an interesting case, as it can be used both as a hedge, by limiting a statement ('I at least'), and as an intensifier (Willi 2003: 183; Denniston 1996: 114–115).[18] But even as an

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16 The particle *án* (which is obligatory in Attic in main clauses with a counterfactual indicative verb or a potential optative verb) can sometimes be repeated in long clauses. Willi (2003: 181–182) identifies this as a hedge, particularly in shorter clauses where the repetition cannot be motivated by needing to 'remind' the listener of this information.

17 The compliments between the women in the first scene of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* are cross-culturally interesting from this point of view, since this seems to show a group of women speaking and bonding unobserved by men, including complimenting strategies. However, as Fletcher (2012: 226) notes, Calonice's comment about Lampito's marvellous breasts "is hardly the type of greeting one woman might make to another", and she argues that this is to be understood as a lewd comment from a (male) actor about another actor's costume. See also Willi (2003: 190); Robson (2006: 49).

18 *Ge* is sometimes referred to as a 'scope particle', which delineates the applicability of the utterance to at least the item governed by *ge* (Wakker 1996: 250). It is not always easy or even possible to give an accurate account of the semantic and pragmatic purpose of a particle in a given context, and judgements tend to be somewhat impressionistic (Kroon 1995: 41–57,

intensifier, it often seems to be used by characters that lack power in the scene, or feel out of control, to try to bolster their position. The use of *ge* by the female innkeepers in *Frogs* (559–567) has long been considered to be a 'female' feature (Sommerstein 1996: 206; Willi 2003: 183). Sommerstein comments that this usage is not typical of all women, and might be used to stereotype elderly women or women of low social status, or even female innkeepers specifically (Sommerstein 1995: 81; Sommerstein 1996: 206) – see Section 5.2.

Other particles that have been identified as being used in a gender-preferential way include *pou*, used to convey the speaker's uncertainty, and perhaps also *goŭn*, though these are much less common than *ge* (Willi 2003: 183–184).[19]

3.7 Innovation and preservation

Gender interacts with innovation and language change in a complicated way. In general, past studies have found that women use the more prestigious or more standard form where two variants are in competition over a long period (such as *walking* vs. *walkin'* in English), but also that they use more innovations than men, as long as those innovations are not stigmatized (Labov 1972: 301–304; Trudgill 1972; Kiesling 1998: 69; Coates 1993: 183; Eckert 2011: 59). Women may also have a wider discrepancy between their conversational and most formal speech styles, sometimes using more stigmatized forms in their casual speech than men but showing more self-awareness in their use of language than men and achieving greater success at excising the stigmatized forms when speaking formally (Labov 2006: 197; Kruschwitz 2012: 208). In this way, women can be associated with both prestige and non-prestige forms depending on factors such as context and social class.

Men, particularly but not exclusively men of lower social status, may preserve older forms which are stigmatized or associated with local speech; these forms can come to index solidarity with a local identity and are a way for speakers to gain covert prestige (Willi 2003: 163–165). This sketch of the gender difference in language change is an overgeneralization of a complex set of relationships with social class and other identities (Hughes 1992: 292; Coupland 2007: 132), and elides for example the role of women of preserving the traditional language of the community in bilingual societies, but this

discussing Latin particles). A more systematic consideration of the semantics and pragmatics of *ge* is beyond the reach of this article.

19 The particle *goŭn* is used frequently in the first scene of *Lysistrata*, but Willi states that it is not female-preferential elsewhere; however it may be associated with the language of slaves.

generalization helps to explain some of the comments on male and female linguistic practice found in ancient sources.

One example of the association of women and prestige forms is found in Plato (*Cratylus* 418b-d). Socrates describes women using different pronunciation from men:

> You know that our ancestors used the *iota* [/ĭ/] and the *delta* [/d/] in a very correct way, especially the women, who best preserve the ancient pronunciation. But nowadays, people change *iota* into *epsilon* [/ĕ/] or *eta* [/ē/], and *delta* into *zeta* [/zd/], because they sound more impressive ... Thus, the most ancient speakers used to pronounce *hēméra* ['day'] as *himéra*, a bit later they made it *hĕméra*, and today they say *hēméra* ... Similarly, you know that our ancestors said *duogón* for *zdugón* ['yoke'].[20]

As it happens, we know from inscriptional evidence that the iotacising pronunciation with /i:/ is the later development, and replaced earlier /e:/ – so what Socrates claims is an older and 'correct' form is in fact an innovation, but presumably a prestigious innovation given Socrates' mistake.[21] The complex relationship between gender and innovation might not always be apparent to speakers, but from this metalinguistic comment there seems to have been a conscious association of women with prestige variants.[22] This association of women with prestigious new forms may be the reason for the association between the urbane, educated language of intellectuals and the language of women, including in fragment 706, quoted above (Willi 2003: 165).

Forms that have been identified as recent innovations associated with female speakers in Aristophanes include: possessive enclitic genitive *mou/sou* 'of me/you' in place of the possessive adjectives *emós/sós* 'my/your' (Willi 2003: 179–180), *hupárkhō* 'exist' as a synonym for *eimí* 'be' (Willi 2003: 192), the phrase *heîs gé tis* for 'someone' (Willi 2003: 191), the use of an iterative indicative + *án* to express the repetition of a past action (Willi 2003: 182) and

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20 οἶσθα ὅτι οἱ παλαιοὶ οἱ ἡμέτεροι τῷ ἰῶτα καὶ τῷ δέλτα εὖ μάλα ἐχρῶντο, καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα αἱ γυναῖκες, αἵπερ μάλιστα τὴν ἀρχαίαν φωνὴν σῴζουσι. νῦν δὲ ἀντὶ μὲν τοῦ ἰῶτα ἢ εἶ ἢ ἦτα μεταστρέφουσιν, ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ δέλτα ζῆτα, ὡς δὴ μεγαλοπρεπέστερα ὄντα ... οἷον οἱ μὲν ἀρχαιότατοι 'ἱμέραν' τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκάλουν, οἱ δὲ 'ἐμέραν', οἱ δὲ νῦν 'ἡμέραν' ... καὶ τό γε 'ζυγὸν' οἶσθα ὅτι 'δυογὸν' οἱ παλαιοὶ ἐκάλουν (Willi 2003: 162). Sommerstein (1995: 83) suggests that the changes mentioned in this passage may have entered Attic Greek from the low-prestige Boeotian dialect, but Willi (2003:162) demonstrates that they are much more likely to be high-prestige innovations within Attic.
21 The case of /d/ and /zd/ is slightly more complicated – probably this refers to the new pronunciation /dz/ for older Attic /zd/ (Willi 2003: 162).
22 See also Cicero's *De Oratore* (3.12.45).

paratactic conditional clauses (Willi 2003: 178). Other examples discussed by Willi are not numerous enough in the case study plays to be used here.

4 Case study: *Thesmophoriazusae*

Thesmophoriazusae ('women of the Thesmophoria festival') shows us a range of different male characters, who often comment on each other's gender presentation and speech. The two central characters are Euripides, an intellectual playwright, and his Inlaw, a masculine everyman character. The plot of the play centres on Euripides' efforts to win round the women of Athens, who think he misrepresents them in his plays, by sending someone to the female-only Thesmophoria festival to speak on his behalf. Alongside the Inlaw and Euripides appear Agathon and Cleisthenes, both of whom are repeatedly the subject of jokes about their sexuality and femininity.[23] Euripides, Agathon and Cleisthenes are all real people who were alive when the play was first produced in 411 BC. Other male characters include the Prytanis (an Athenian official) and two slaves (Agathon's slave and a Scythian archer), while a number of women appear at the Thesmophoria festival.[24] Towards the end of the play, both Euripides and the Inlaw start quoting Euripides' plays at length, to varying degrees of accuracy – since these lines are tragic and mock-tragic, they yield few features that are relevant to this discussion.

4.1 Metalinguistic commentary

A number of comments are made in the play regarding the speech and voices of the characters. These comments are particularly concentrated in the first scene between Euripides, the Inlaw and Agathon. As he enters, Agathon is singing, alternating between playing the part of a priestess and a female tragic chorus. In the song, Agathon refers to himself in character using feminine forms (lines 101,

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[23] It is assumed in this play, as elsewhere in Aristophanes, that a man who wears feminine clothes and is beardless would also take a submissive role in same-sex sexual activity. It is thought that the real-life Agathon continued his youthful pederastic relationship with Pausanias (which would have been a normal feature of Greek aristocratic life) into adulthood in a way that may have been considered inappropriate. Dover (1978: 73, 139–144); Skinner (2005: 121–126); Austin and Olson (2004: 61–63).

[24] I will not deal in detail with the representation of the Scythian archer as an L2 speaker of Greek. Willi (2003: 198–225); Austin and Olson (2004: 308–309).

116), but as the song closes he also describes the *árseni* 'masculine' tones of the kithara. The stage direction then makes clear that Agathon ends his song with an ululation (*ololúzei* – a stage direction included in the original script), often seen as a typically female speech act (McClure 1999: 32–38; Willi 2003: 168). The Inlaw then praises Agathon's song, particularly its femininity (131). This opening song immediately puts the focus of the play on indeterminate gender, but also emphasises that voice and language are the clues to gender.

The actor playing Agathon is wearing a costume which makes him difficult for the Inlaw to gender. The Inlaw first asks 'who are you (feminine)' (134), despite addressing Agathon in the same line as a 'young man'.[25]

(1)   καί σ' ὦ νεανίσχ' ἥτις εἶ ἐρέσθαι βούλομαι.
       kaí s'   ȭ   neanískh'   hḗtis
       and you(SG) O young.man-VOC.SG.M whoever-NOM.SG.F
       eĩ...   erésthai   boúlomai
       be-2SG.PRS ask-INF.AORIST want-1SG.PRS
       'And now, young sir, I want to ask you what manner of woman you are.'
       (*Thesmophoriazusae* 134–135. Text and translation by Sommerstein 1994: 32–33.)

As he looks at Agathon, and at the scene around him, the Inlaw sees a strange combination of gendered props and instruments (136–143), and decides that he will have to guess Agathon's gender by his singing (144–145). He also uses the word *laleĩ* (138) to describe the 'chatter' that takes place between Agathon's mismatched instruments.

More specific references to speech are made as the scene goes on. Euripides states specifically that Agathon not only is unshaven and pale-skinned, but is also *gunaikóphonos* 'woman-voiced' (192). In contrast, Euripides refers to the Inlaw's speech negatively as *baǚzōn* 'barking (like a dog)' when telling him to shut up (173). After dressing the Inlaw up as a woman, Euripides advises him that if he talks (*lalẽis*) at the Thesmophoria, he must use a woman's voice to be convincing (267–268). This use of *laleĩn* means neutrally 'talk like a woman' and not necessarily 'chatter irrelevantly', since Euripides is sending the Inlaw to the

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25 The play seems to deliberately refer to the contrast between the gender of the character and the gender of the actor, for example at 1077, where the Inlaw addresses Echo as 'my good man' (*ȭgathe*), apparently addressing the actor playing Echo. Sommerstein (1994: 227); Stehle (2002: 380–381); Austin and Olson (2004: 98).

Thesmophoria with an important talking-related task.[26] Taken as a whole, the emphasis on speaking like a woman in this scene, and the confusing visual and linguistic clues to Agathon's gender, puts the focus on the linguistic and visual performance of gender as a central concern of this comedy.

4.2 Oaths and the particle *ge*

The most common oath used in the play is 'by Zeus', which is used by both male and female characters. 'By the two goddesses' is used by women, and a quickly corrected prayer 'O two glorious goddesses' (594, example 2a) is used by the Inlaw in disguise when he incorrectly starts to use the male-preferential prayer 'O glorious gods' (example 2b).

(2) a. ὦ   πολυτιμήτω   θεώ
        ỗ   polutimḗt-ō   the-ố
        O glorious-DU.F god-DU.F
     b. ὦ   πολυτίμητοι   θεοί
        ỗ   polutimēt-oi   the-oí
        O glorious-PL.M god-PL.M

The Inlaw uses a range of oaths, including, when dressed as a man, Heracles (26), Poseidon (86), Demeter (225 – this is an oath commonly used by men, despite referring to a goddess), Apollo (269, 748),[27] and 'the gods' (72, 172; also used by Euripides at 228) and when disguised as a woman, Artemis (517, 569; also used by Mica at 742). The only oath used by another character that is never used by the Inlaw is 'by Hecate', used once by the woman Critylla (858).

     The Inlaw also uses 'by Aphrodite' on being shown the saffron gown he will have to wear (254) – at this point he has been shaved but not yet dressed, and he is not deliberately impersonating a woman. This use of a 'female' oath at a point when the Inlaw is not actively trying to sound like a woman and has not been told to alter his language yet is difficult to account for, and is one of the strongest arguments against considering this oath to be 'gender-exclusive' (Austin and Olson 2004: 136; Fletcher 2012: 205 n. 8). Sommerstein's statistics (1995: 64–65) seem to get round this problem by designating the Inlaw as

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26 Though the use of this usually negative term could also be taken to foreshadow the fact that the Inlaw is not going to do very well. Austin and Olson (2004: 140).

27 At 269, he is already dressed as a woman but is not yet impersonating one.

'female' at this point, but this is not correct. In any case we would then have to explain his use of 'by Apollo' a few lines later. It seems more likely that the Inlaw, who uses both 'by Aphrodite' and the childish word *pósthion* 'willy' in this scene, which he only uses elsewhere when in disguise, could be mocking Agathon's feminine demeanour.

The Inlaw uses more oaths than any other character, with oaths in around 6 % of his lines (Table 1).[28] Of the other characters, only Critylla gets close to this proportion, and Euripides uses oaths only around a third as often. Agathon and Cleisthenes, who have relatively short speaking parts, use no oaths at all. So, although women use more oaths in general than men, that statistic obscures considerable individual variation.

Table 1: Frequency of oaths by character in *Thesmophoriazusae*.[29]

Character	No. of lines	No. of oaths	%
Inlaw (m)	427	25	6
Critylla (f)	108	6	6
Mica (f)	107	4	4
Euripides (m)	199	4	2
Chorus (f)	289	1	0
Agathon (m)	75	0	0
Cleisthenes (m)	42	0	0
Archer (m)	70	0	0

The Inlaw also has a particular habit when using oaths – out of the 26 oaths he utters, 17 (around 70 %) are accompanied by the particle *ge* in the same sentence.[30] No other male character in the play ever combines oaths and *ge* (Table 2). Only one other character in *Thesmophoriazusae* ever does this – Critylla (6 oaths, 3 of which are combined with *ge*).[31] There are other parallels between the speech of

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28 Here, as elsewhere, these percentages use an estimate of the number of lines for each character, where any partial line (even a single word) spoken by a character is counted as one 'line'. They are also rounded to the nearest whole percent. The percentages are therefore approximate, and meant only as indicative of relative usage.

29 Not included in the table: the Garland Seller, the Prytanis, Echo and the Servant of Agathon. None of these characters use any oaths.

30 Oaths with *ge* spoken by the Inlaw: 20, 27, 34, 86, 206, 207, 225, 240, 248, 254, 269, 518, 552, 555, 567, 624. The Inlaw is disguised as a woman from 279–650; from line 650, he is still dressed as a woman but is no longer trying to impersonate one.

31 Oaths with *ge* spoken by Critylla: 640, 898, 934.

Table 2: Frequency of the particle *ge* and oath + *ge* by character in *Thesmophoriazusae*.

Character	No. of lines	No. of *ge*	%	No. of oaths + *ge*	%
Inlaw (m)	427	34	8	17	4
Critylla (f)	108	9	8	3	3
Servant (m)	22	1	5	0	0
Mica (f)	107	4	4	0	0
Euripides (m)	199	8	4	0	0
Agathon (m)	75	2	3	0	0
Archer (m)	70	2	3	0	0
Echo (f)	30	1	3	0	0
Chorus (f)	289	7	2	0	0
Cleisthenes (m)	42	1	2	0	0
Garland Seller (f)	16	0	0	0	0
Prytanis (m)	9	0	0	0	0

the Inlaw and Critylla. If we look at all instances of *ge*, then we see that the Inlaw uses by far the most – the particle appears in around 8 % of his lines. Critylla uses *ge* roughly as often as the Inlaw, but no other character gets anywhere near this frequency. Euripides uses *ge* only half as often as the Inlaw and Critylla, and Cleisthenes only a quarter as often.

    The use of oaths and the use of *ge* both seem to be ways of emphasising or verbally underlining a statement. Although both the Inlaw and Critylla use oath + *ge* in a number of situations, it seems to occur most when they are not feeling in control. For example, the Inlaw uses this construction when Euripides is leading him to see Agathon without telling him where they are going (1–35), when he is being shaved, depilated and dressed up by Agathon (215–278), and when he starts to get carried away in describing the crimes of women and starts an argument (466–574). The Inlaw also uses oath + *ge* several times in his outraged reaction to Agathon's sexual habits (194–210). Two of Critylla's three uses come when she is getting increasingly frustrated with Euripides and the Inlaw pretending to be tragic characters (898, 934). This habit seems, then, to be a strategy that certain characters, both male and female, use to emphasise their speech when they are at risk of being ignored or feel out of control.

    Do the Inlaw and Critylla have anything else in common? We are not told a great deal about Critylla, but Sommerstein (1994: 295) infers from the fact that she leads the opening prayers of the women's assembly that she is a priestess. She is old enough to be called 'old woman' as an insult by the Inlaw (1024–1025) and Euripides (896 – though perhaps he says this as a joke, since he addresses his Inlaw as *xénē* 'lady' in the same line). Old women are not necessarily subject to the same speech norms as younger women, and may be desexualised

and de-gendered to some extent. If Critylla is a priestess, then oath + *ge* could not be a marker of low social status per se; she also takes a leading role in proceedings, and is educated enough to successfully adapt legal language to the women's purpose (331–351; 372–379). It is possible that oath + *ge* characterises masculine speakers and older women, in contrast to young women or urban intellectual men. Critylla's use of oath + *ge* is unlikely to be motivated by factors such as accommodation to the speech of the Inlaw: although they do interact, the majority of her uses of oath + *ge* appear in the scene from line 846 onwards where the Inlaw and Euripides are speaking to her only in tragic and mock-tragic lines, and are not using oaths or *ge*.

4.3 Obscenity and euphemism

The use of obscenity also varies across the characters in *Thesmophoriazusae*. The vast majority of the obscenity is sexual and anatomical rather than scatological. The majority of the obscene terms are used by the Inlaw (50, 57, 62, 142, 200, 206, 242, 248, 493, 570) and the Scythian Archer (1119, 1120, 1123, 1124, 1215). Other male characters use obscenities infrequently. Euripides uses *bineĩn* 'fuck' only once (35), and Cleisthenes uses *péos* 'cock' twice (643, 648).[32] Agathon uses no obscenities at all, and even avoids nursery terms as much as he can, referring to sex in the most euphemistic way possible (205). No women use any primary obscenities.

Henderson (1991: 87) states that the Inlaw "holds a virtual monopoly on obscenity and general outspokenness," and the reason for this is "to provide an earthy, masculine contrast to the effeminate posturings of Agathon and Cleisthenes". This goes a long way towards explaining the contrast between Agathon and the Inlaw, but leaves Cleisthenes' use of obscenity unaccounted for. If Agathon and Cleisthenes are both "effeminate transvestites", as Henderson puts it (1991: 88, 90), then why does their speech differ in this obvious respect? Given that Cleisthenes only has about a quarter of the number of lines that Euripides does, it becomes even more significant that he uses an obscene word twice while Euripides only does so once.

We need to take account of the reasons the obscenities are used, and not just their frequency. Euripides only uses obscene language in the presence of his Inlaw, and not in front of women or men who might be sensitive to bad

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32 De Wit-Tak's (see Wit-Tak) analysis (1968: 363) of obscenity in this play, which does not specify exactly which words are considered 'obscene', produces different raw numbers, but the same general impression of the variation between different characters.

language. When Euripides uses *bineĩn*, it is as the punch line of a joke about Agathon, who is not present. In fact, he is very respectful of Agathon's aversion to swearing, and is as euphemistic as possible when depilating the Inlaw, referring to 'down below' (216) and 'the tip of your tail (i. e. penis)' (239). Euripides' use of *bineĩn* has sometimes been described as incongruous (Dover 1987: 244; Silk 1990: 152), but there is no reason why Euripides could not be characterized as someone who uses obscenity occasionally, and only when it is not impolite to do so. Cleisthenes only uses *péos* when at the peak of his frustration with the Inlaw, who is desperately trying to maintain his disguise – Cleisthenes is angry and is being deliberately rude.

The Inlaw, on the other hand, uses obscenity in general conversation, and is not concerned about using obscene language in front of Agathon. It is possible that some of the time he uses obscenity in a socially unacceptable way – for example, Agathon's servant is rather shocked by his use of *péos* (62). As with oaths, he often emphasises his obscenities with *ge* (200, 206).[33] The Inlaw does seem to realise that obscenities are used less commonly by women: his use of obscenity drops drastically when he is in disguise, though he does forget himself and use *lēkṓmetha* 'we get fucked' (493) and *kheseĩn* 'shit' (570). He also seems to realise that euphemistic language is appropriate for women (euphemisms and nursery language used by the Inlaw as himself: 133, 153, 158, 237, 254, 912; used by the Inlaw disguised as a woman: 289, 291, 488, 492, 515, 540). In fact his use of nursery language and euphemism outstrips that of the women themselves, who use almost none (though they do use the diminutive of 'breast', *titthíon*). This appears to be because the Inlaw is more prone to introducing taboo subjects than the women – his imitation of female linguistic practice goes as far as using euphemisms for these topics, but not as far as avoiding these topics in the first place. The Archer also uses a considerable number of these weaker words too (1114, 1185, 1187, 1188, 1194) including *pugḗ* 'bum' and *póstion* 'willy' (for *pósthion* – the Archer's L2 Greek is characterised by a lack of aspirated consonants).

It seems, therefore, that common use of obscenities and euphemisms is not a feature of 'male speech', but of lower-class masculine linguistic practice specifically. The female characters do not use obscenity, while Euripides and Cleisthenes only swear in limited circumstances. Agathon's total aversion to obscene or nursery language suggests a complete rejection of the masculine covert prestige associated with swearing.[34]

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33 He also uses a euphemism with *ge* (540). Euripides uses an obscenity with *ge* once (35).

34 It is possible that Agathon (inadvertently?) makes a slightly rude pun at 205 (Sommerstein 1994: 171).

4.4 The Inlaw as a woman

There are many other features which may be female-preferential that the Inlaw uses when disguised as a woman. These include the use of female forms to refer to himself (e. g. at 285, 288), the use of the ethic dative (289, 291), *boúlei* + subjunctive (553), tag questions (490, 496, 556), indirect expressions (555, 859), paratactic conditions (405, 407–408), *hamōsgépōs* 'in some way or other' (429) and *heĩs gé tis* 'someone' (430). A few other female-preferential features are used at points when the Inlaw is wearing women's clothing, but is not actively impersonating a woman: *hupárkhō* for 'to be' (851, 1013), *goũn* (263) and *kaíper* (938).

The fact that so many female-preferential features seem to occur in the Inlaw's speech when he is impersonating a woman, and not elsewhere, suggests that these are part of his conscious attempt to put on a woman's voice. As we have already seen, the performance is not flawless, and arguably the Inlaw uses too much obscenity and other sexual language to be convincing. The Inlaw's speech as a woman is full of both stereotypically female and stereotypically male markers, resulting in a particularly ridiculous speech style.

4.5 The urban intellectuals

We have already discussed the use, or lack of use, of oaths and obscenities by Agathon, Cleisthenes and Euripides, but their speech is also differentiated from the more masculine and lower-status characters in other ways. Agathon's language is not only characterized by a lack of oaths, obscenities and euphemisms, but also by the use of a small number of features associated with female linguistic usage. These include *hupárkhō* for 'to be' (155), otherwise used only by the Inlaw impersonating a woman, and double *án* (196), otherwise used only by the female Chorus.

There is one instance of a male character paying a non-sexual compliment to another man: Euripides compliments Agathon at line 192. In the same scene, Agathon comments on the appearance and clothes of someone called Phrynichus, though this is not a compliment as Phrynichus is not present (165). We might also note that Cleisthenes seems to use *laleĩn* neutrally to mean 'to talk' (578), and Euripides uses it to mean simply 'to talk like a woman' rather than more negatively as 'chatter' (267).[35]

Agathon, therefore, uses very few masculine speech markers and a reasonable number of the less obtrusive female markers. The use of female markers is

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35 There are some instances where the Archer may be using *laleĩn* without negative connotations, but this is unclear (1083, 1087). Elsewhere he uses it negatively (1097, 1108, 1109).

even more marked if we include his singing in the voice of a priestess and a female chorus on his first entrance – although he is playing a part here, so we might choose to exclude this section. The same cannot be said for Cleisthenes. Even given the relatively small size of his part and his characterisation as an effeminate intellectual, it is striking that he does not use any female-preferential markers, and swears at the Inlaw twice. His speech is not characterised as masculine and low-status in the way that the Inlaw's is, but neither does he speak 'like a woman'.

4.6 Conclusions on *Thesmophoriazusae*

Past scholarship on *Thesmophoriazusae* has sometimes been guilty of over-generalizing the extent to which certain characters speak alike. While Henderson contrasts the speech of the Inlaw with that of Agathon and Cleisthenes, Stehle (2002: 396) has claimed that "gender indeterminacy marks the speech of both" Agathon and the Inlaw when dressed as a woman. In fact, all of these characters use gendered speech markers differently from each other.

The Inlaw's speech appears to be marked as low-status (with obscenities and childish euphemisms, a habit he shares with the Scythian Archer) and uncultivated (perhaps the reason for the oath + *ge* habit shared with Critylla). Even when he is dressed up as a woman he retains some of these and adds female-preferential features. His speech while he is a 'woman' may be an amusing combination of clashing gendered features.

Agathon and Cleisthenes, who are both described as feminine in appearance, do not speak particularly alike. Agathon avoids male-preferential features and low-status features such as obscenity and euphemisms, and shows a small number of female-preferential features. Cleisthenes, on the other hand, uses obscenity and does not show any female-preferential markers. Euripides' speech is most similar to Cleisthenes', and is not strongly marked for either gender, though he appears to use obscenity only where appropriate. Therefore it seems that a gender-neutral speaking style with few masculine speech markers may be enough to indicate that a male speaker is urban, intellectual or 'effeminate'. Men do not necessarily need to be 'womanish' to be 'unmanly'.

5 Case study: *Frogs*

In *Frogs*, first performed in 405 BC, the god Dionysus decides to travel to the underworld with his slave Xanthias to rescue Euripides (died 406) and bring him

back to Athens. After a series of adventures, Dionysus judges a contest between Aeschylus and Euripides to establish which poet deserves to return to the world above. As in *Thesmophoriazusae*, different types of masculinity are strongly contrasted in *Frogs*. We have slave characters, Xanthias and the Slave of Pluto,[36] the archetypally masculine Heracles, and also a contrast between the 'effeminate' intellectual Euripides and the older traditionalist Aeschylus. There are also a number of minor female characters, of whom the two female inn-keepers have attracted the most attention in gender linguistics scholarship because of their frequent use of the particle *ge*.

Dionysus is complicated in his gender presentation, and is often a sexually ambiguous figure in Greek art and culture (Lada-Richards 1999: 25). It is noted in the play itself that there is a mixture of gendered elements in Dionysus' outfit (lines 46–47). In his effort to dress like Heracles, he combines a club and lion skin with the more typical Dionysian costume of a yellow tunic and boots, which were usually women's clothing (Habash 2002: 2). At a number of points, Dionysus' sexuality and sexual preferences are also mentioned, with other characters sometimes implying that he has a preference for men (56–58) and sometimes for women (291, 740). Unlike the characters we have discussed previously, Dionysus is also a god, and so may show different speech habits to human male characters. However, he is still essentially a comic buffoon and commentators have seen him as similar in some ways to the Inlaw of *Thesmophoriazusae* (Dover 1993: 39). It has also been argued that Dionysus' personality changes around the midpoint of the play, with 740 being the last mention of his comic buffoon role, so that he becomes a serious and credible judge of the dramatists in the second half (Sommerstein 1996: 12). Henderson (1991: 91) has also argued for the language of the play being split into two halves, with almost all the obscenity in the first half.

5.1 Metalinguistic commentary

The verb *laleĩn* 'chatter' is used both negatively and neutrally in the play. Heracles (91), Dionysus (917), Aeschylus (1069) and the Chorus (1492) all use it negatively, though they all use it to refer to the long-winded chatter of

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36 It is not clear from the text whether Aeacus (Pluto's doorkeeper) and the Slave of Pluto are two separate characters (Dover 1993: 50–51). Here they have been treated separately.

intellectual young men, rather than to the speech of women. It is used neutrally to mean 'talk' by Xanthias (751, 752) and Euripides (954). Euripides even uses a derivative of this verb positively – at 839 he accuses Aeschylus of being *aperílalēton* 'unskilled in sophisticated waffling'. This is indicative of Euripides' apparently positive views towards this kind of speech.

5.2 Oaths and the particle *ge*

In general, the characters in *Frogs* use oaths typical for their gender. The main exception is the use of 'by Apollo' (508), by the female maid.[37]

In raw numbers, Dionysus uses the most oaths of the characters in the play (26 instances), followed by Xanthias (14 instances) (Table 3). Taking number of lines into account, though, Xanthias uses proportionally more oaths, with oaths in approximately 7 % of his lines compared to 5 % of Dionysus' lines. Euripides (3 %) and Aeschylus (2 %) use a similar amount of oaths to each other. This lower frequency is perhaps due to their higher social status or the fact that their speech often quotes or parodies tragic verse which does not contain this kind of language.

Among the minor characters, there is huge variation. Heracles uses only one oath, while Aeacus, the Maid and Pluto all use an unremarkable amount (in 5–6 % of their lines). The unnamed female Innkeeper also uses none, but her partner Plathane, who has only eight lines, uses three oaths (i. e. oaths in 38 % of her lines). This is partly because of the context, which is a vehement argument – but since the other female Innkeeper uses no oaths at all, this also may be a characterization of Plathane's speech as particularly over-emotional. The Slave of Pluto has the second highest frequency of oaths, using an oath in more than 10 % of his lines. The incidence of oaths seems, therefore, to be linked in part to low social status – but not all characters of low social status use oaths as frequently as Plathane and the Slave.[38]

There is not such a stark difference between use and non-use of oath + *ge* as in *Thesmophoriazusae* (Table 4). Dionysus uses this habit the most (3, 7, 70, 128, 152, 164, 182, 276, 1047, 1067, 1074, 1158, 1433), but it is also used by

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37 This is not completely exceptional, as a woman also swears by Apollo in *Lysistrata* (917).
38 The status of the Innkeeper and Plathane is not made completely clear, but they may be thought of as foreign citizens ('metics') resident in Hades (Dover 1993: 263; Sommerstein 1996: 205).

Table 3: Frequency of oaths by character in *Frogs*.[39]

Character	No. of lines	No. of oaths	% of lines containing an oath (to the nearest %)
Plathane (f)	8	3	38 %
Slave of Pluto (m)	62	7	11 %
Xanthias (m)	197	14	7 %
Aeacus (m)	52	3	6 %
Maid (f)	17	1	6 %
Dionysus (m)	503	26	5 %
Pluto (m)	20	1	5 %
Charon (m)	23	1	4 %
Euripides (m)	200	6	3 %
Aeschylus (m)	253	6	2 %
Heracles (m)	75	1	1 %
Chorus of Initiates (m&f)	325	1	0 %
Innkeeper (f)	23	0	0 %

Table 4: Frequency of the particle *ge* and oath + *ge* by character in *Frogs*.

Character	No. of lines	No. of *ge*	%	No. of oath + *ge*	%
Plathane (f)	8	3	38	1	11
Innkeeper (f)	23	5	21	0	0
Dionysus (m)	503	53	11	13	3
Heracles (m)	75	7	9	1	1
Euripides (m)	200	15	8	3	2
Chorus of Frogs (n/a)	41	3	7	0	0
Xanthias (m)	197	12	6	3	2
Aeschylus (m)	253	14	6	2	1
Slave of Pluto (m)	62	3	5	1	2
Charon (m)	23	1	4	1	4
Aeacus (m)	52	6	2	0	0
Corpse (m)	5	0	0	0	0
Maid (f)	17	0	0	0	0
Pluto (m)	20	0	0	0	0

Xanthias (28, 41, 183), Euripides (863, 1222, 1237) and Aeschylus (1184, 1198).[40] For Euripides and Aeschylus this represents half of their total use of oaths. Oath + *ge* is also used by Heracles for his only oath. There is not, therefore, a

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39 Not included in the table: the Chorus of Frogs and the Corpse, who do not use any oaths.
40 It is also used once each by Plathane (559), the Slave (781), and Charon (189).

particularly clear correlation between masculinity or social status and the use of this habit in the play. The only female character to use oath + *ge* is Plathane, which may add to her characterisation as lower-class or over-emotional.

The use of *ge* itself shows a clearer pattern. The frequent use of *ge* by the two female innkeepers (559–567) has already been noted (Willi 2003: 183). It has not been mentioned, though, that Plathane uses *ge* in almost twice as many of her lines as the other Innkeeper (38 % vs. 21 %), perhaps making her sound more over-emotional than her colleague.[41] The other speaking female character, the Maid, never uses *ge*. This particle is not, therefore, necessarily a female characteristic as has sometimes been stated in the past. Instead, it may characterise the innkeepers as particularly lower-class speakers or suggest that they are speaking in the context of an argument. The variation we see here may relate as well to the fact that women can have a larger discrepancy between their casual and formal speech than men: the innkeepers' argument is perhaps an example of very casual female language use.

Among the male characters, Dionysus uses *ge* the most (around 11 % of his lines), with Heracles (9 %) and Euripides (8 %) the next highest; Xanthias and Aeschylus are both around 6 %, and all other characters are lower. This might suggest, at first sight, that Dionysus, Heracles and Euripides are characterised as lower-class or masculine speakers. However, we also need to distinguish between intensifier *ge* and hedging *ge*. Hedging use of *ge* seems to occur mainly in the speech of Dionysus and Euripides. For example, several times, Dionysus gives a potentially impolite order to one of the playwrights, and when they react, he mitigates the force of his original command with 'If you take my advice, at least (*ge*)' (1134, 1229). The particle may serve a similar function at 1368 ('Come here! – or, at least').

(3)   Δι: Αἰσχύλε, παραινῶ σοι σιωπᾶν. [...]
       Αἰ: ἐγὼ σιωπῶ τῷδ';
       Δι: ἐὰν πείθῃ *γ*' ἐμοί.
       Di: *Aiskhúle   parainõ   soi*
           Aeschylus-VOC advise-1SG.PRS you(SG)-DAT
           siōpãn
           keep.quiet-INF.PRS
       Ai: *egṍ siōpõ   tõid*'?
           I   keep.quiet-1SG.PRS this-DAT.SG.M

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41 The division of lines between Plathane and the other innkeeper is not completely clear, but the scene works best if the speakers alternate, rather than giving as many lines as possible to Plathane (Dover 1993: 263). I have used Sommerstein's text.

> Di: eàn peíthēi   g'   emoí.
>   if   persuade-2SG.PRS.PASS   at.least   I-DAT.SG.M
> 'Dionysus: Aeschylus, I recommend you to keep quiet. [...]
> Aeschylus: *Me* keep quiet for *him*?
> Dionysus: If you take my advice.'
> (*Frogs* 1132–1134. Text and translation by Sommerstein 1996: 124–125.)

Euripides uses *ge* in a sentence which also contains a double *án* (1449), which suggests that the *ge* might be a hedge rather than emphatic in this case as well. The more frequent use of *ge* by Dionysus and Euripides might, at least in some instances, make them sound less sure of themselves. This does not necessarily apply to Heracles, who mainly seems to use *ge* as an intensifier.

5.3 Obscenity and euphemism

The level of obscenity in this play has been previously discussed by Henderson (1991: 91), who argues that (a) almost all the obscenity is scatological, (b) it appears only in the first part of the story, and (c) this play has by far the lowest level of obscenity of any Aristophanes play. The third statement certainly appears to be true, and this is perhaps because the storyline involves little reference to obscene topics. This makes the use of obscenity as a speech marker potentially problematic: the fewer instances of obscenity there are, the less obvious are the contrasts between characters.

The balance of obscenities is not perhaps so strongly towards the scatological as Henderson suggests, nor is obscenity completely absent from the second part of the play. The scatological terms are *khézō* 'shit (verb)' and *skõr* 'shit (noun)' (8, 146, 479), *pérdomai* 'fart' (10, 1074, 1096), and *prōktós* 'arsehole' (237). The sexual obscenities are various words for 'fuck' (148, 426, 429, 740), *kústhos* 'cunt' (430), and 'arsehole' with explicit sexual reference (423). There is therefore a low overall level of obscenity, with scatological obscenities somewhat outnumbering sexual ones. Dionysus uses the most obscenities (a total of 5), followed by the Chorus (4), two of which are the punning obscene names 'Sebinos' and 'Hippokinos' (Sommerstein 1996: 195–196). The other instances of direct obscenities are spoken by Xanthias (10, 740) and Heracles (146, 148).

A wider range of characters uses euphemisms or less strongly obscene words: Dionysus, Xanthias, Heracles, the Chorus, the Slave and Aeschylus. Aeschylus uses the more proper term *pugḗ* 'bum' (1070), and the euphemism *meignuménas* 'mix with' for 'have sex with' (1081) – and this is as rude as Aeschylus gets in his frustration with Euripides, though he may be making a

pun on songs/genitals (both *mélē*) at 1328 (Sommerstein 1996: 276). It is possible that Aeschylus' famous 'oil-flask' joke about Euripides' formulaic writing style has some sexual reference too, but this is not clear; it is probably best to see the flask as an object chosen at random, with some possible suggestiveness.

Even with the generally low level of obscenity, it is notable that obscenity is used primarily by Dionysus, Xanthias and Heracles, and that Euripides completely shies away from using either direct obscenities or euphemisms. From this perspective, he sounds even less masculine than he did in *Thesmophoriazusae*. In this play, he is characterised mainly as an unmanly intellectual, while he is by no means the least manly character in *Thesmophoriazusae*.

5.4 Politeness

The particle *goŭn* is notably linked to the low-status characters Xanthias (159, 289, 293, 320) and the Slave (804), though it is also used once by the Chorus (736). It is also a particle which is characteristic of Dionysus, but only in the second part of the play, while deferentially addressing the playwrights Aeschylus and Euripides (930, 980, 1028, 1037). The word *amélei* is used once, by Xanthias to Dionysus. We might also note the form of address Dionysus uses to Aeschylus ('O highly honoured Aeschylus', 851), which is more usually employed to address gods – the reversal of that norm here is probably meant to sound comically deferential. The construction *boúlei* + subjunctive is used by Heracles (127, addressing Dionysus somewhat patronisingly) and the Chorus (416–417).

The hedging double *án* is used by Xanthias (34, 581), Dionysus (96–97, when addressing Heracles), and the Innkeeper (572–573). It is also perhaps used by Euripides (1450), but this is restored (Sommerstein 1996: 150). The construction *hópōs* + subjunctive + *án* is used by Dionysus (872); it is also used twice by Aeschylus (1351, 1363) but only when impersonating Euripides' poetry. Indirect and litotic expressions are used by Xanthias (598, 614), Euripides (930), and also the Chorus (695, 708, 899).

These female-preferential markers of politeness and hedges are used primarily by low-status characters including slaves, or characters like Dionysus who are temporarily in a subservient position in the scene. These are not so much markers of female language use but markers of a lack of power: they can appear to mark female linguistic usage because of the frequent intersection of femaleness with lower social status. However, politeness and hedging can also be used for sarcasm, if that is a fair interpretation of Heracles' use of *boúlei* + subjunctive to Dionysus, or parody of another character's speech, such as the imitation of Euripides performed by Aeschylus.

5.5 Innovation

There is a relatively high proportion of possessive mou/sou compared to emós/sós (15 uses versus 17) in this play (Willi 2003: 180). The usages of *mou/sou* are relatively evenly spread among the characters, being used by Aeacus, Dionysus, Innkeeper, Slave, Euripides and Aeschylus. Euripides uses the innovative iterative + *án* for a repeated past action (from 911 onwards).

5.6 Conclusions on *Frogs*

Sexuality and gender is less of a preoccupation in *Frogs* than *Thesmophoriazusae*, but speech features indexing 'masculinity' can still be seen to some extent. Obscenity is used primarily by lower-status, more masculine or more buffoonish characters. It is notably not used by the two competing dramatists, and Euripides completely avoids both obscenity and euphemism. This could be seen as consistent with his portrayal in *Thesmophoriazusae*, where he uses euphemism and obscenity only where necessary or appropriate, or it could be seen as a linguistic characterisation which emphasises his lack of masculinity more than the portrayal in the first play. Euripides' lack of manliness, and his positive view towards the speech of women and intellectuals, might also be seen in his positive use of *laleĩn* and in his use of innovative iterative + *án*.

However, factors such as social status or the intersection of masculinity and status seem to be more important factors in this play than masculinity alone, and even these elements are not marked in a completely straightforward way. The frequent use of oaths points to low social status, though it is not found in the speech of all low-status characters. Overly frequent use of *ge* seems to be associated with the female innkeepers, and may be intended to make Plathane sound over-emotional or particularly low-status. While some of the male characters also have relatively high frequencies of *ge*, they do not all use it in the same way: some of the usages by Dionysus and Euripides seem to be hedging rather than emphatic, relating to their roles as intellectuals. We have also seen that certain hedging and politeness features seem to be associated mainly with lower-status characters or those being deliberately deferential, particularly Dionysus when speaking to the dramatists, rather than with women. As in *Thesmophoriazusae*, the gender linguistic data in this play show considerable overlap between male and female characters, and variation within each gender.

6 Conclusions

Even by taking two plays as case studies, we can see that quantifying female language use is only a first step in understanding ancient gender linguistics. As well as dividing characters into 'male' and 'female', we also have to take a more nuanced approach to the different kinds of men and women that are portrayed. Some gendered speech markers act intersectionally as markers of other factors, such as age, social class, status relative to other characters, sexuality or education level. The combinations of markers used for a particular character in a particular scene and the frequency of these markers come together to produce a detailed linguistic characterisation.

As we have seen, some of the 'male' speech markers, such as the frequent use of oaths + *ge* (used only by the Inlaw and Critylla in *Thesmophoriazusae* and most frequently by Plathane in *Frogs*) and obscenities (as used by most frequently by the Inlaw and the Scythian Archer in *Thesmophoriazusae* and with far less frequency in *Frogs*), may mark low social status in addition to or instead of masculinity. In some circumstances, these features may serve to mark out the comic buffoon character, who may not be of particularly low status (e. g. Dionysus). These features might therefore be said to index a kind of everyman masculinity and are often associated with the lead male character. A lack of obvious 'male' speech markers in a male character, such as the avoidance of obscenity, may also contribute to his unmanliness, even if they use few or zero female-preferential features – this may be one aspect of how characters like Agathon, Cleisthenes and Euripides are characterised as less masculine than the characters around them. To perform masculinity, it appears that men need to actively use 'male' speech markers, not just avoid female ones.

Some of the features that have been identified as 'female' speech markers – such as the use of euphemisms in place of obscenities – may also mark high social status, a high level of education, or socially unusual sexual behaviour when used by male characters. Conversely, some 'female' speech markers may mark the speech of low-status men including slaves. This is especially true of markers associated with politeness, hedging and deference, such as double *án*, *boúlei* + subjunctive, *amélei*, and the particle *goûn*, and features that show excessive emotion, such as overly frequent use of *ge* (used most notably by Plathane and the Innkeeper, but also used frequently by the Inlaw and Critylla in *Thesmophoriazusae* and Dionysus in *Frogs*) and oaths (used most frequently in *Thesmophoriazusae* by the Inlaw and Critylla and in *Frogs* by Plathane, the Slave, Xanthias, Aeacus and the Maid).

This article has also shown that we need to be critical of the difference between female language use and male characters imitating female language

use. The Inlaw's linguistic imitation of a woman is not perfect. In addition to his occasional slip-ups, his performance appears to consist of adding female-preferential features to his speech and not taking the other necessary step of removing the male-preferential features. Even where he manages mostly to remove a male speech habit – such as replacing obscenities with euphemisms – his commitment to talking about taboo subjects means that his use of euphemism far outstrips that of the women around him. Whereas some past work has counted the Inlaw's dialogue as 'female speech' when he is dressed as woman, this article has shown that it should be considered separately as an incompetent imitation of female linguistic practice.

We have also seen that some features may index different character traits depending on the meaning of the word in context. With *ge*, for example, we must be careful to distinguish where it might be a hedge rather than an emphasis. However, we should also avoid the assumption that it is hedging *ge* rather than emphatic *ge* that would be typically feminine – in fact, it seems to be the emphatic *ge* that is typical of lower-status female characters such as *Frogs'* Innkeepers and *Thesmophoriazusae's* Critylla as well as characters like the Inlaw and Heracles.

The relationship between male and female linguistic practice is complicated. We cannot say simply that male = dominant language and female = subservient language, for example. Nor can we safely identify any particular features as just 'male' or 'female': as we can see by the list of the most frequent users of oaths above, many features show as much variation within one gender as between genders. There are also a number of features which may index gender in some circumstances but not others, or may index an intersection of gender with one or more other social categories. Although we can seek to understand aspects of Aristophanes' use of language variation, it is extremely unlikely that we can reconstruct every implication of every linguistic feature. While the case studies in this article have helped to improve our understanding of Greek gender linguistics, further work on Aristophanes' other plays will reveal yet more nuance in these patterns. *Clouds*, *Knights* and *Lysistrata* are plays in which gender, sexuality, class and education are key themes, and may be the most fruitful starting points for wider study.

suggestions for further improvements.This research was conducted at the University of Cambridge.

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