

A detailed marble relief of a laughing face, likely a Greek comedy mask. The face has a wide-open mouth and deep-set eyes. It is adorned with a headband featuring a grapevine with clusters of grapes and leaves. The background is a textured, aged stone.

OXFORD

Talking about
Laughter

and other studies in Greek Comedy

ALAN H. SOMMERSTEIN

TALKING ABOUT LAUGHTER

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ALAN H. SOMMERSTEIN

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*To the memory
of
Surya Shaffi
† 8.ii. 2008*

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Preface

This book comprises a selection of my articles on Greek comedy from 1980 to the present—though, for a reason which will be explained presently, all but one of them actually originated in or after 1990. The majority have been published previously, but in two cases—Chapters 6 and 14—I have, with the consent of the conference organizers, included papers originally destined for publication in conference volumes which have not in the end (or at any rate have not yet) seen the light of day. I hope soon to bring out a further volume mainly consisting of articles on tragedy.

I have chosen to present here those papers which might otherwise be difficult for many readers to access. I have therefore left out of consideration those which first appeared in books published in English-speaking countries, or in periodicals widely available in the libraries of universities with Classics departments, or in e-journals accessible without subscription. (Chapters 11 and 12 are exceptions only on the surface: the former appears here with the scholarly apparatus which would have been inappropriate in the book in which it was originally published, and the collection containing the latter was actually an issue of a little-known, and now defunct, periodical, the *European Studies Journal*.)

These principles of selection largely account for the chronological asymmetry mentioned above, owing to a change in my publication habits which reflects—in a somewhat exaggerated form—a development that has affected the entire discipline. Until 1990 I hardly ever gave papers at academic conferences, and my articles were invariably submitted to journals. Then the conference on ‘Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis’, held at Nottingham in July 1990 (when I presented the paper which appears here as Chapter 13), led to the planning of a series of others (two of which gave rise to the papers which appear here as Chapters 5 and 8), and since then most of the articles I have written (more than two-thirds, up to the time of this writing) have been committed in advance to publication in conference proceedings or other edited volumes. I do not wish to

express any opinion on whether this development has been for the better or the worse.

With the exception of Chapter 11 (on which see above) and of Chapter 4 (which appears here in its original English, having been previously published in a French translation), these articles are published here essentially as they originally appeared; each is followed by an addenda section drawing attention to significant subsequent developments in the relevant scholarship, or to points where my own thinking has changed since the article was first published. Reference to the addenda is made by an asterisk inserted in the text. This also applies, with some modifications, to Chapters 6 and 14, which have been left essentially in the revised form in which they were *submitted* for publication; their text has been updated as regards style and referencing but not on matters of substance.

In the ten chapters not mentioned in the previous paragraph, the original page numbers have been inserted in the text (and, where necessary, in the notes), in square brackets and in boldface, at the point where each new page of the original began. I have also made the following further changes; except for those in the first three categories, these are indicated in the text by angle brackets.

(a) The style of references, abbreviations, etc., has been made uniform throughout; I have not, however, attempted to regularize my practice in such matters as the representation of Greek names. Where the original makes reference to a paper of mine now included in this volume, I have replaced this by an internal cross-reference.

(b) Where the original publication had endnotes, these have been replaced by footnotes, but the pagination of the original endnotes is still recorded.

(c) At the end of each chapter an additional footnote has been inserted recording its original publication (or conference delivery) and acknowledging the permission given for it to be published here.

(d) In a few places I have corrected a misprint, omission, or blatant factual error, which ought to have been dealt with at proof stage; in one case I have corrected a reference to a statement in a conference paper which, unknown to me at the time, had been omitted from the version submitted for publication.

(e) Where I originally referred to an edition of a text, or a collection of fragments or inscriptions, which has since been superseded by a more recent edition, I have inserted an up-to-date reference while not suppressing the old one. Changes of this type have occasionally necessitated the insertion of a few words of explanation elsewhere (e.g. in n. 19 to Chapter 2).

(f) I have occasionally inserted an explanation, unnecessary in the original context, of a phrase like ‘the Colloquium from which this volume derives’.

(g) In the discussion section of Chapter 10 I have made minor modifications to the text as originally published (derived from sound recordings of the speakers’ impromptu words) in the interest of grammaticality and intelligibility.

It remains to express my gratitude to Hilary O’Shea, of Oxford University Press, for the enthusiastic support she gave to my unsolicited proposal for the publication of this volume; to the British Academy, the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, and above all the University of Nottingham, for making it financially possible for me to attend many of the conferences at which I presented papers that are here reproduced; and to those whose invitations—to speak, or to write, or both—engendered so many of the chapters that follow: Umberto Bultrighini, Susan Carlson, Francesco De Martino, Marie-Laurence Desclos, Andy Fear, Juan Antonio López Férez, James McGlew, Giuseppe Mastromarco, Marco Presutti, Jim Roy, Pascal Thiery, and Bernhard Zimmermann.

I have dedicated this book to the memory of my former research student, Surya Shaffi, who pursued her studies undauntedly in the face of physical disabilities (including a life-threatening illness) that few if any others would have braved let alone surmounted, devoted her life to enabling and encouraging others to do likewise, and died tragically young in the midst of her endeavours. May that memory be a blessing and an inspiration.

ALAN H. SOMMERSTEIN

Nottingham

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Abbreviations

THIS list includes only abbreviations not listed in the Liddell–Scott–Jones *Lexicon* (Oxford, 1940), in its *Revised Supplement* (Oxford, 1996), or in the third edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford, 1996). In some cases abbreviations of ancient author names or text titles may be less drastic than those used in these works, or may differ from them owing to transliteration conventions (e.g. by using *k* rather than *c*). Where the number of a fragment, hypothesis, etc., is followed by the name of a scholar, the reference is to that scholar's edition of the author or text in question; where there might be ambiguity about the meaning of such a reference, the editor's name is listed below.

APF	<i>Archiv für Papyrusforschung</i>
Aul.	<i>Aulularia</i> (Plautus)
CFC	<i>Cuadernos de Filología Clásica</i>
CGFP	C. Austin, <i>Comicorum Graecorum fragmenta in papyris reperta</i> (Berlin, 1973)
Gentili–Prato	B. Gentili and C. Prato, <i>Poetarum elegiacorum testimonia et fragmenta</i> (2 vols.) (Leipzig, 1979–85)
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HT	<i>Heauton Timorumenos</i> (Terence)
K–T	Körte and Thierfelder (1953)
Hypoth.	Hypothesis (headnote to, or synopsis of, a literary text)
LICS	<i>Leeds International Classical Studies</i> (electronic) (http://www.leeds.ac.uk/classics/lics)
PMLA	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
RhM	<i>Rheinisches Museum für Philologie</i>
Snell	B. Snell, <i>Supplementum</i> , in reissue of <i>TGF</i> (Hildesheim, 1964)
SPAW	<i>Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin</i>

<i>Truc.</i>	<i>Truculentus</i> (Plautus)
<i>UCPCP</i>	<i>University of California Publications in Classical Philology</i>
West	(for iambus and elegy) M. L. West, <i>Iambi et elegi Graeci</i> (Oxford, 1971–2)
	(for epic) M. L. West, <i>Greek Epic Fragments</i> (Cambridge, Mass., 2003)
Σ	scholium

Introduction

Although, as has been explained in the Preface, the essays included in this volume are a fairly arbitrary sample of what I have written in article form on Old Comedy¹ over the past few decades, it is also a fairly representative sample, incorporating work on all the major themes that have concerned me repeatedly over this period, with the exception of the history and criticism of the Aristophanic text.² In what follows, I attempt to define these themes and offer some reflections on them.

There could have been more than one reasonably logical arrangement of the chapters that follow, and so I have decided to arrange them in the book in one sequence, but discuss them in this Introduction in another. In the book, Chapters 1–4 deal with aspects of language, proceeding broadly from the general towards the particular; Chapters 5–7 examine areas of the subject-matter of Old Comedy, or of Aristophanic comedy, generally; Chapters 8–13 are

¹ I have as yet written nothing dealing exclusively with later comedy, though it figures importantly in Chapter 2 of this volume and in one other article (Sommerstein 1998*a*). Henceforth in this Introduction, to avoid constant repetition of my name, my own publications will be referred to by date (and suffix letter, if necessary) alone.

² For this, in addition to the volumes of *The Comedies of Aristophanes*, see (1977*c*, 1978, 1980*b*, 1986*b*, 1993*a*, 1993*b*, forthcoming). Other publications of mine not classifiable under any of the ‘major themes’ include a few short studies of particular passages (1974, 1983*b*, 1987) and also (1984*b*), a not very felicitous attempt to trace back into Old Comedy the ancestry of the five-act structure of New Comedy, (2004*a*) on comedy’s portrayal of aspects of the life and art of Euripides, (2006*a*), an autobiographical piece which may or may not be of some value to future historians of classical scholarship, and (2007*b*), a study in the ‘reception’ of Aristophanes, with significant points of contact with Chs. 10 and 11 of this volume.

studies of particular surviving Aristophanic plays or groups of plays; and Chapter 14 deals mainly with a lost play that was probably Aristophanes' last, and with another comedy that may have been roughly contemporary with it.³ In this Introduction, the approach I take focuses on the 'major themes' mentioned in the previous paragraph, and discusses the individual chapters (some of them more than once) in a sequence determined by the themes they reflect. Readers are welcome, when they turn to the body of the book, to take the chapters in either order, or indeed in any other.

The fundamental theme of *the nature and functions of comedy* is, at least implicitly, the topic of Chapters 4 and 5.

There can be no doubt that the prime objective of Athenian comedy was at all times to entertain and amuse its public, principally by stimulating them to laugh.⁴ Chapter 4 seeks, by means of an analysis of the use of vocabulary items referring to laughter, to determine how Aristophanes himself, whether consciously or instinctively, understood and categorized this end-product of his art, and identifies three basic types of laughter, each with its own typical vocabulary: the laughter of derision; laughter deliberately induced by a person whose interest it serves; and the spontaneous laughter of shared pleasure, which one might almost call the *sum-mum bonum* in Aristophanes' comic world.

There has, however, been a persistent tendency to suppose that an art-form whose primary aim is to arouse laughter cannot also be aiming—in the words which Aristophanes gives to his Euripides in *Frogs* 1008–9, when the latter is asked to name the qualities for which a poet⁵ ought to be admired—to 'make men better members of their communities'. There may have been some excuse for supposing this to be true in 1938, when Gomme published his famous article 'Aristophanes and politics'; there is none today, when scores of

³ Despite the title of the chapter, this comedy is not, of course, the *Odysseas* of the long-dead Cratinus; to learn what play *is* being referred to, and why Cratinus' play is relevant, please read the chapter!

⁴ Even the comedies of Menander, a far less hilarious dramatist than Aristophanes, in the invocation of the goddess of Victory with which they end, regularly refer to her as 'the *laughter-loving* maiden' (*Dysk.* 968, *Mis.* 465, *Sik.* 422; cf. *Men. fr.* 903.20 KA, *Poseidippus fr.* 6 KA).

⁵ A *poet*, be it noted; not specifically a tragic poet.

stand-up comics deal in undisguised political polemic, and when few social commentators exercise so great, and arguably so beneficial, an influence on public thinking in the English-speaking world as the scriptwriters of *The Simpsons*. In Chapter 5 I explore the comic dramatists' own views about the nature of their art and its criteria of quality—or at least what they *desired to be perceived* as their views on these matters—through their own words about their own and each other's work, and come to the conclusion that while most of them seem to have been almost entirely concerned with the aesthetic qualities and entertainment value of their work, Aristophanes—and so far as our admittedly skewed evidence goes, Aristophanes alone—regularly claimed to be a benefactor of his community, devoted to its well-being and to the cause of right and justice. We may well wish to query the validity of this claim, but it remains highly significant that the claim was made, over and over again.⁶ What is no less significant is that the claim was frequently recognized in other public discourse: comic dramatists could be honoured for their services to the community in their professional capacity,⁷ their words could be cited in the courts as character evidence,⁸ and politicians could speak and act on the assumption that both their own reputation and interests, and those of Athens itself, could be promoted or damaged by things said on the comic stage.⁹ Moreover, the evidence for this begins well before Aristophanes; the first known instance of political interference with comedy dates from 440/39,¹⁰ when Aristophanes was perhaps 9 or 10 years old, and is doubtless to be associated with the fierce attacks made on Pericles and his associates in some of the plays of Cratinus.¹¹ Thus from the 440s at least, to adopt an apt expression of

⁶ It appears in all Aristophanes' first five surviving plays, and also in *Frogs*.

⁷ See Ch. 13.

⁸ See (2004c) 155–6, citing Lysias fr. 53 Thalheim (= 195 Carey), Aeschines 1.157, and Pl. *Apol.* 18a–19d.

⁹ See (2004c) *passim*.

¹⁰ Σ Ar. *Ach.* 67.

¹¹ Most of the known references to Pericles and Aspasia in the fragments of Cratinus (e.g. fr. 73, 118, 258, 259) are likely to be later, but this may merely be because most of his plays of the 440s did not survive into Hellenistic times. Two plays of Cratinus from as late as the mid-420s, *Cheimazomenoi* and *Satyrs*, appear to have been completely lost, and we know of their existence only from the mention of them in the *didaskaliai* attached to the Hypotheses of Aristophanes' *Acharnians* and *Knights*.

Giuseppe Mastromarco's,¹² Athenian comedy was *impegnato*, engaged with and committed to the concerns of the Athenian *polis* community.

Often, though not always, this commitment to the *polis* was manifested in the relatively narrow sphere which goes by the name of *politics* today, and the political aspects of Aristophanic comedy are the main theme of Chapters 7, 10, 11, and 13.¹³ Chapter 7 explores how Aristophanes exploited and transformed the traditional figure, well attested both in Sicilian and in earlier Attic comedy, of the fearsome monster/ogre/demon who is defeated (usually) by a hero from myth or even by a god: the monster becomes a political figure, Lamachus or (especially) Cleon, and his vanquisher is an ordinary mortal—sometimes the 'comic hero', Dicaeopolis or the Sausage-Seller or Trygaeus, sometimes the comic poet himself. This theme, or formula, dies with Cleon (or rather a few months after him), but is revived in a surprising form in *Frogs*, when the contest between the monster-like Aeschylus and the sophistic(ated) Euripides, a contest whose final round is explicitly political, ends with the victory of the monster.¹⁴

Had Aristophanes in 405, when *Frogs* was produced, wished to cast a living politician in the monster role, it would certainly have been Cleophon, and Chapter 13 examines the possible connection between the subsequent fortunes of Cleophon and the remarkable decision taken by the Athenian Assembly, at some point after the original production of the play, to order it to be performed again and at the same time to confer public honours on its author. It is argued that this decision was made in the autumn or winter of 405, and the play restaged at the Lenaea early in 404, and that the decree had 'the precise object of influencing public opinion against

¹² Mastromarco (1998), esp. 29–30 (on Cratinus), 32–3, 41–2.

¹³ And of several other papers not included in this volume, notably (1977*b*, 1986*a*, 1996*c*, 2004*b*, 2004*c*, 2005).

¹⁴ A point that might have been made in Ch. 7 is that the motif of a false preparation for the monster's appearance, found in *Wasps* (197, 409) and in *Peace* (313–23) in connection with Cleon, reappears in *Frogs*—and in connection with Cleon—when the two women innkeepers, taking the disguised Dionysus for Heracles who had robbed them on his last visit to the underworld, decide (569–78) to fetch their 'patrons' Cleon and Hyperbolus, now of course underworld residents, to have the criminal prosecuted and punished; neither ever comes.

[C]leophon' who, quite close to the time of the second performance, was in effect judicially murdered; and the question is considered whether Aristophanes was a knowing confederate of the anti-democratic conspirators who, on this view, were behind the decree. The conclusion reached is that he was an innocent party (in more senses than one, some may think).

But if Aristophanes was not guilty of actively plotting to subvert the democracy,¹⁵ it is far from clear that he positively believed in it as the best form of government for Athens. He never, indeed, openly criticizes the constitution itself, or allows any of his characters to do so; but then, so far as we know, nobody ever did, in any text composed for public performance or delivery in democratic Athens, unless either (i) the criticism was clearly flagged as coming from an unsympathetic character and promptly refuted by a sympathetic one¹⁶ or (ii) there seemed to be a good prospect that democracy would be overthrown at an early date.¹⁷ As I argue in Chapter 10, however, he regularly does disparage crucial features of democracy—public pay for civic functions, the prosecution of rich defendants by volunteer accusers, the throwing open of political leadership to populist 'demagogues', and readiness to wage war against Sparta—all policies that were also criticized by the 'Old Oligarch' and reversed by the oligarchs of 411 and 404. This does not prove that he was an anti-democrat in the sense of desiring the disfranchisement of the poorer Athenian citizens, but it does indicate, at the very least, that he would have preferred the kind of democracy that was prepared to defer to the well-born, well-educated, and well-heeled and leave them

¹⁵ That he served as a councillor c.390 (*IG* ii². 1740.24 = *Ath. Agora* xv. 12.26) shows that he had been able, at his *dokimasia*, to satisfy the previous year's councillors that there was nothing in his past life to disqualify him from holding public office in a democratic state—or alternatively that no one had been hostile enough to him, or confident enough of success, to challenge his fitness to serve, in the way that councillors-designate like Philon (*Lysias* 31) and Mantitheus (*Lysias* 16) had been challenged on the basis, in part, of things they had done or not done in the troubles of 405–403.

¹⁶ As in the case of the speech by the Theban herald in Euripides' *Suppliants* (409–25): he is carefully labelled, before and after it, as an advocate of tyranny (399, 404, 429), he is defending the right of the Thebans to deny burial to their enemies (471–2, 495), and Theseus is given, in rebuttal, a speech more than twice as long (426–62).

¹⁷ As in the Assembly debates in the period preceding the seizure of power by the Four Hundred in 411 (*Thuc.* 8.53, 8.65–6).

in *de facto*, even if not *de jure*, control of the state.¹⁸ Chapter 10 also examines the fantasy polities created in *Birds*, *Lysistrata*, and *Ecclesiazusae*, each of which is an absolute monarchy, but in none of which is monarchical power exercised by a male Athenian over male Athenians.

Lysistrata, in the play named after her, uses *her* (temporary) monarchical power to force the Athenians and Spartans, with their respective allies, to make peace with each other; and this dénouement, together with the heroine's memorable choice of a method for achieving it, has caused her and her creator to be adopted as the patron saints, one might say, of a succession of 'peace' campaigns in recent generations.¹⁹ In Chapter 11 I argue that this is a complete misinterpretation of Aristophanes' play, in which Lysistrata is not at all opposed to war or violence as such, but only to war against Sparta, and that even with Sparta she is willing to make peace only on terms which in the real world, at the time of production, would have been utterly unobtainable—and which indeed proved to be so when the Four Hundred did seek peace a few months later. That conclusion is quite compatible with the view that Aristophanes did at the time believe (i) that it was highly desirable to end the war as speedily as possible, and (ii) that Sparta would be ready to accept peaceful coexistence with a powerful Athens controlling a maritime empire; after all, that was what the Four Hundred, or most of them, apparently believed when they came to power. Naive optimism is hardly an unknown phenomenon among amateur politicians, or even professional ones.²⁰

If Aristophanes' dramas indeed often reflected specific political stances, they are likely on these occasions to have polarized his

¹⁸ A similar conclusion emerges from my study in (1996c) of the choices made by Aristophanes and his rivals of which individuals to satirize and, at least equally important, which individuals not to.

¹⁹ An early example of this, which its author subsequently found something of an embarrassment, is discussed in (2007b).

²⁰ I again find myself speaking of political naivety in connection with *Frogs* at the end of Ch. 13, and with *Knights* at the end of the discussion section in Ch. 10; see also (1999) 253 ('readers acquainted with twentieth-century politics may be surprised to learn that if a proposal for political action is "thoroughly sentimental" ... [or] disregards "the reality of military campaigns and the complexities of political negotiations" ... that is evidence that its public is not expected to take it seriously').

audiences rather sharply along the lines of their own political preferences. I have argued elsewhere²¹ that the average theatre audience was probably a good deal more affluent, and a good deal more right-wing politically,²² than the average meeting of the *ekklesia*; the case for this view is made considerably stronger if we accept arguments recently advanced which give the fifth-century Theatre of Dionysus a capacity much lower than the figure conventionally accepted, perhaps 7,000 or even less.²³ But class, wealth, and politics were not the only, or even the most prominent, lines of *division within the population* of Attica, and several others are explored in various parts of this volume.²⁴

Chapter 6 deals mainly with the division between the old and the young. Throughout the history of Greek comedy (and of Roman comedy too) this is virtually always thought of as a simple two-way polar opposition, on one side young men, unmarried or recently

²¹ See (1998c) and—partly overlapping with it—(1997), esp. 65–71. The case I there made was amicably criticized by Henderson (1998–2007) i. 19–22, but he had already accepted (p. 11) that the admission charge, ‘roughly equivalent to the cost of attending a major concert today... may well have deterred the poorer classes from attending’ unless strongly motivated; and Revermann (2006) 168, while also disagreeing with my position, himself notes that ‘[the] very introduction [of the theoric subsidy] is best taken to be motivated by the perceived need to annihilate an economic entry barrier which debarred the poor from attending.’

²² I define a “right-winger” as one who favours the active use of the power and institutions of the state to maintain or extend privilege and inequality among those under its jurisdiction, and a “left-winger” as one who favours the active use of the power of the state to reduce or eliminate such privilege and inequality. Strictly, therefore, all Athenian politicians were right-wing, since they all supported legal discrimination against slaves, women, and aliens. But I will follow their own practice and confine the universe of discourse [for this purpose] to adult male citizens, which is only what we always do when we speak of classical Athens as a democracy’ (1997: 68–9 n. 36).

²³ The best presentation—at least in English—of the case for this smaller-capacity theatre is by Csapo and Goette (2007) 97–100, 116–21. It should be borne in mind that, the smaller the seating capacity we assume for the theatre, the larger becomes the proportion of it that will be taken up by office-holders (magistrates, councillors, priests, etc.), by the families and friends of those involved in the productions, and (at the City Dionysia) by official delegations from perhaps two hundred allied states.

²⁴ See also (1984a), discussing mainly wealth and age, and (1998a), discussing gender, specifically the treatment of rape in Old and New Comedy respectively (I have returned to this subject in (2006b), where I argue that comedy’s attitude to rape, barbaric as it was, can by no means be regarded as straightforwardly typifying ‘the Athenian view’ of this crime).

married, on or just within the threshold of adult life, and on the other side the generation of their fathers. To a considerable extent, this way of thinking seems to have been characteristic of the whole culture; indeed there hardly existed a Greek expression for ‘middle-aged’.²⁵ But whereas in New Comedy it tends to be the young men who drive the action forward, and the play almost invariably ends with the marriage or betrothal of one or more of them, in Aristophanic comedy the older males are normally the central figures and, in the end, the triumphant ones. Almost every one of Aristophanes’ surviving plays contains at least one elderly male as a major character, and in almost every one of them an elderly male (often, by then, rejuvenated) dominates the play’s conclusion.²⁶ In two plays, *Clouds* and *Wasps*,²⁷ the action is largely centred on a conflict between an old man and his son; in each case the father has an old-fashioned, frugal lifestyle while the son moves expensively in high society. Chapter 9 focuses on *Wasps*. It criticizes what had become, in recent decades, an extremely popular model for interpreting much Greek imaginative literature (especially but not exclusively texts concerned with young adult males), the model of ‘initiation’ or ‘*ephebeia*’, arguing that there did not exist in fifth-century Athens any ritual, or combination of rituals, on which such a model could be based,²⁸ and *a fortiori* that the process which gives the action of *Wasps* its shape—the re-socialization of the old man Philocleon from his passion for judging

²⁵ The nearest we get is in Men. *Dysk.* 495–6 where the cook Sikon, discussing how to ingratiate oneself with strangers, says that when he knocks on a door and it is answered by a woman τῶν διὰ μέσων, he calls her ‘priestess’.

²⁶ In *Knights* this elderly male is Demos—who, in addition to becoming the ‘monarch of Greece’ (1330, 1333), is given multiple sexual rewards in the shape of two girls and a boy (1384–93); in *Frogs* it is Aeschylus (Dionysus, who has been the central figure of the whole play, neither speaks nor is spoken to in the final scene); in *Ecclesiazusae* it is Blepyrus, who during most of the play has cut a sorry figure in comparison to his wife, but who eclipses her in the *exodos* (where he too gets multiple sexual rewards). The exception to both generalizations is *Lysistrata*, where the only individual elderly male character, the *proboulos*, appears only in a single scene and is humiliated by the women.

²⁷ We know that there was a somewhat similar situation in Aristophanes’ earliest play, *Banqueters* (*Daitalēs*), except that the old man there had *two* sons, one traditionally and one sophistically educated; see *Clouds* 529 and Ar. fr. 205, 206, 225, 233.

²⁸ I discussed the implications of this for certain fifth-century *tragedies* in a 1996 conference paper, ‘Adolescence, *ephebeia*, and Athenian drama’, which I hope to publish in a future volume.

and condemning to a passion for drinking and revelling—cannot be regarded as any kind of variation or transformation of this non-existent model. Rather, I suggest that the key educative agent, in this and many other comedies, is the god Dionysus, ever ready to grant collective, pain-free pleasure to those who are willing to welcome him into their lives.²⁹ Philocleon proves, in the end, ready to do so, and he entirely dominates the ending of the play; his son Bdelycleon, despite having been the principal human agent of his father's re-socialization, despite having actually been responsible for taking a reluctant and protesting Philocleon to his first high-class symposium, is himself neither the drinking nor the laughing kind, and in the final scene he has been completely forgotten.

Chapter 6 explores Aristophanes' treatment of two dichotomies generally thought fundamental to the world-view of most classical Greeks, that between free people and slaves and that between citizen and alien. It argues that 'far from validating or confirming [these] status distinctions... Aristophanic comedy rather consistently negates and subverts them': free people are at least as likely as slaves to be beaten up with impunity, slave characters often establish a strong rapport with the audience, they regularly share the rewards of their masters' success, and deserving foreigners (provided they do not pretend to be citizens) normally end up doing better than undeserving Athenians. Perhaps, in assessing the importance of these and other status distinctions in the society of fifth- and fourth-century Athens, we should remember to compare that society not (or not only) to the western societies of our own day (let alone to our ideal model of what these societies *ought* to be like) but to other societies of *its* day, within and beyond the Greek world. When Plato makes Socrates and Adeimantus agree that in democratic Athens women and slaves (and, they add, animals) enjoyed an extraordinary and absurd degree of liberty and insubordination,³⁰ the modern reader wonders how he could possibly have been so utterly detached from reality; that is certainly not the reaction Plato expected to elicit from the contemporaries for whom he was writing.

²⁹ Cf. Eur. *Ba.* 64–169, 378–433, 677–713—in contrast with most of the rest of *Bacchae*, which shows what Dionysus can do to those who are *not* willing to welcome him into their lives.

³⁰ Pl. *Rep.* 562b–d.

Women and animals certainly do demonstrate a high degree of insubordination in some of Aristophanes' comedies: animals in *Birds*,³¹ women in *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae*, and *Ecclesiazusae*, in marked contrast to the other eight plays in which women play very marginal roles and seem to exist only for the convenience and pleasure of men. Chapter 12 examines two of the devices by which women in *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae* are made to assert and make evident this insubordination, by appropriating two practices that were normally treated as the exclusive preserve of males: the voluntary display of the naked body and the free use of obscene language.³²

The use of language by, to, and about women (and men, in comparison with them) is the topic of Chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 2 deals with a specific issue, considering whether it is possible to generalize the finding by David Schaps (1977) that in the Athenian courts women were not normally mentioned by their own personal names unless they were dead, or disreputable, or connected with the speaker's opponent. It concludes that this finding can indeed be generalized, not only to comedy but, so far as our evidence goes, to all public Athenian discourse: to be precise, a free man does not mention a respectable woman by her own name in public³³—that is, in the presence of other free men who are not members of the woman's family. As Pericles was reported to have said,³⁴ among women 'the greatest honour belongs to her of whom there is the least report among men, whether for praise or blame'. *Lysistrata* is a notable exception to this principle; different (though not incompatible) explanations for her special status are offered in Chapter 2 and in Chapter 12.

³¹ As also in the *Fishes* of Aristophanes' younger contemporary Archippus (cf. Archippus frs. 23, 27, 28), and probably in the *Beasts* of a dramatist of the generation before him, Crates (cf. Crates fr. 19).

³² It is striking that both these practices feature in the behaviour of one notoriously insubordinate *tragic* woman, the Clytaemestra of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*: when facing the sword of her son she displays her breast to him (Aesch. *Cho.* 895–7), and when justifying the killing of her husband she speaks of his sexual infidelities and of her own in language that comes nearer to outright obscenity than anything else found in tragedy (Aesch. *Ag.* 1435–47; see (2002*b*) 154–7).

³³ Instead, just as in the courts, he will identify her, if necessary, by calling her the wife of X, the daughter of Y, etc.

³⁴ Thuc. 2.45.2 (addressed to war widows on the occasion of their husbands' state funeral!).

Chapter 1³⁵ is a much broader survey of gender-related³⁶ differences in linguistic usage in Athenian comedy. These differences are significant but not enormous; it is fairly easy for a woman to learn to talk like a man (or vice versa) sufficiently well to avoid detection. Some of them, though by no means all, can be seen as ‘clearly reflect[ing] the subordinate status of women in society’; but except in the case of obscene language, there is little positive evidence that the use by a woman of linguistic forms that were normally exclusive or almost exclusive to men would be regarded as unwomanly or insolent. If certain kinds of speech were considered improper for women, the reason was more likely to lie in their content than in their expression. An aspect of the subject that was not systematically discussed, or indeed seriously noticed, in this paper was the greater tendency of women than men to use euphemistic expressions; I analysed this a few years later in the study that appears here as Chapter 3 (see below).

I began my career in the discipline of general/theoretical linguistics, and the analysis of linguistic phenomena has continued to be one of my interests.³⁷ Chapter 3 deals with a linguistic phenomenon which is hardly the first that comes to mind when one thinks of Aristophanes, but of which his plays do in fact contain a great deal (nearly two hundred separate instances): euphemism. It finds that euphemisms are heavily concentrated in Aristophanes’ later plays (they are more than three times as frequent after 413 BC than before) and in the mouths of women (who use them, proportionately, two and a half times as often as men do), and examines particular scenes and passages in which they are especially prominent.

Chapter 4 is a study of the language of laughter³⁸ in Aristophanes, which shows that the poet’s vocabulary clearly distinguishes three

³⁵ This chapter, though first published only in 1995, originated from a lecture given at the University of Essex in 1980—that is, at about the same time as the publication of the paper appearing here as Ch. 2.

³⁶ Or, as the paper itself would say (see its first footnote), sex-related; I have let this particular linguistic practice stand as it was in the original publication, but today, only thirteen years later, it hardly seems to be current English any longer.

³⁷ Exemplified—in addition to the studies included in this volume—by (1980*a*, 2004*b*, 2004*d*, 2007*a*).

³⁸ And of smiling, which Greek treated lexically as a species of laughter.

varieties of laughter: laughing derisively at a person (often an enemy) who has been discomfited; laughing by the contrivance of a person who, unlike most people, benefits by being laughed at; and the spontaneous laughter of shared pleasure. All three are crucial to Old Comedy: the first is indulged at the expense of its satirical victims, the second is the objective of its composers, the third could almost be said to be the *summum bonum* of its heroes, often associated with one or more of the seven comic happinesses of ‘song, dance, food, drink, sex, sleep, and good company’.³⁹

Two studies deal with the *composition and production history* of particular plays. One surviving Aristophanic play, *Clouds*, existed in antiquity in two forms,⁴⁰ one of which (the one we possess) included references to events later than the production of the play and other anomalous features; ancient scholars concluded that the poet had revised his script, the original play having been a failure, but had not in the end produced the revised version. Another, *Frogs*, was reportedly ordered to be restaged at some time later than its first production, and while our text of it contains no obvious anachronisms, it does contain some curious apparent doublets and one crucial passage (1410–67, just before the long-awaited conclusion of the Aeschylus–Euripides contest) where it has been frequently suggested, ever since antiquity, that there have been interpolations or displacements in the text. Chapter 8 attempts to infer from the available evidence as much information as possible about the content and structure of the original *Clouds* and about the process of revision, concluding that Aristophanes’ main concern in revising the play was to make the guilt of Strepsiades more apparent and his punishment less disturbing. Chapter 13, already discussed above in connection with the political content of *Frogs*, also argues that lines 1437–53 constitute a further doublet and that coherence can be restored, without positing any losses from or spurious additions to the text, simply by separating out the earlier and later versions of this passage; this was not a new proposal (it had been made more than once in the nineteenth century), but it had been neglected since 1956 in favour of

³⁹ Dover (1968) liii.

⁴⁰ So probably did one lost Aristophanic play, *Aiolosikon*, discussed in Ch. 14, but its two versions probably differed only in that one of them included the texts of choral songs and the other did not.

more elaborate alternatives.⁴¹ In this case, I suggest, Aristophanes' motive in revising his script was to maintain suspense over the result of the contest,⁴² which risked being dissipated if Euripides' final response was an obviously absurd one.

Finally, Chapter 14 seeks to unravel how the late ancient writer Platonius came to make certain muddled, and in some respects provably inaccurate, statements about the history of comedy (and of Athens), what factual inferences can safely be drawn directly from the passages in question (answer: none), and what we can learn by investigating the processes by which Platonius may have been led to write them (answer: quite a lot).

I will conclude this Introduction by quoting again two statements I have made in the past that attempt to articulate what may be called the Aristophanic spirit. The first appears three times already in the following pages, near the ends of Chapters 9, 4, and 6 (to list these papers in the order in which they were originally written):

The Dionysiac spirit, as it is presented in comedy, is the spirit of seeking enjoyment for oneself and others, as inclusively as possible . . . Its enemies are those who seek enjoyment for themselves at others' expense, or those who reject enjoyment for themselves and try to deprive others of it as well.

The other appeared first in the introduction I wrote for the revised (more accurately, rewritten) Penguin translation of *Acharnians*, *Clouds*, and *Lysistrata* (2002c: xxxix), and I repeated it in an autobiographical survey of my engagement with Aristophanes (2006a: 138). It was offered as a distillation of the sensitive account by Michael Silk⁴³ of 'the comic vision of Aristophanes', and it therefore claims no originality save of expression.

⁴¹ Since that date no less than nine different rearrangements of the text have been proposed (all are referenced either in the body of the chapter or in the Addenda), not counting two attempts at defending the transmitted text in its entirety.

⁴² Or rather over how it was to be reached. Most spectators will have realized from the start that Aeschylus was bound to win: the first speaker in an Aristophanic *agon* is always the loser, and Euripides had been the first speaker in every round of this contest. But if Euripides puts forward an idea that seems to merit serious attention (such as that of 1442–50) they will be wondering what Aeschylus will be able to say to cap it; whereas after something as silly as 1437–41 Aeschylus, as I put it in the article, 'only has to get the ball back over the net to win the championship'.

⁴³ Silk (2000) 403–9.

Nothing is beyond imagination; no one is contemptible (except those who choose to make themselves so); everything that can be seen and felt and experienced is of interest, and capable of generating happiness through laughter; and we are what our past has made us, though our nature also impels us to reach out for an ideal future.

With which thought, I leave you to read on.

The language of Athenian women

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper* I will be examining the extent and nature of sex-based¹ differentiation in spoken Attic Greek between the late fifth and early third centuries BC, using as my main evidence the words put into the mouths of male and female characters by the composers of Athenian comedy, principally Aristophanes and Menander.² I will be considering not only forms and usages which are employed *exclusively* in speech by or to members of one alone of the two sexes, but also those which could in principle be used by (or to) members of either sex but which were in fact associated *disproportionately* with one.³

So far as Menander is concerned this field was admirably investigated a few years ago by David Bain [62] (1984), and I shall frequently

¹ Throughout the present paper I use the word 'sex' rather than the currently fashionable substitute 'gender', because 'gender' has a highly specific and quite different meaning in a linguistic context.

² Unless otherwise stated, statements and statistics about Aristophanes refer to the eleven plays that survive complete, and statements and statistics about Menander refer to the eighteen complete and fragmentary plays printed in Sandbach (1990) 1–300, together with the addenda *ibid.* 341–54.

³ This of course begs the question of what constitutes a disproportion—or more precisely, perhaps, what constitutes due proportion. In this paper I shall in general assume that the due or expected extent to which a given usage is employed in speaking by or to females in a given corpus of material is the proportion which speech by or to females (as the case may be) in that corpus bears to the total size of the corpus, and significant departures from that expectation will be regarded as disproportions. The question of the extent to which speech by or to females is itself disproportionately rare, though sociologically a very important one indeed, will here be regarded as not a linguistic question.

be referring to his findings; the present inquiry, however, makes use of Aristophanes as well, thus very greatly extending the information base. Bain had a total corpus of only 346 lines spoken by women; each of three Aristophanic plays (*Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazousai*, *Ekklesiazousai*) easily exceeds that figure on its own.⁴ Bain was reluctant to use Aristophanic comedy as primary evidence because 'individual characterization in Old Comedy is discontinuous' (Bain 1984: 27); but while one can fully agree with him that 'the wisest course is...not to regard isolated and unsupported utterances by [Aristophanes'] female characters as evidence for women's speech' (*ibid.*), this is very far from showing that evidence of consistent and distinctive patterns for women's speech in Aristophanes is of no value. Nor should we restrict ourselves to using Aristophanes 'to confirm findings obtained from Menander' (*ibid.*). Aristophanes, after all, was writing about a century earlier, and we know that there were significant changes in Attic Greek during that interval; moreover, we know independently that Aristophanes and Menander use different ranges of linguistic registers (for example Aristophanes makes far greater and freer use of sexual and excretory language that was normally regarded as taboo). Where Aristophanes and Menander agree, there, certainly, we have strong evidence for (male perceptions of) women's linguistic usage between (say) 430 and 290 BC. Where they disagree, provided we have an adequate sample of relevant evidence from each, and provided that there is no special reason in the particular case for discounting the Aristophanic evidence (e.g. because the usage only occurs in a [63] paratragic context), the most plausible explanation will be that usage has changed. In some cases we may be able to support this hypothesis by evidence external to comedy. I am sure, however, that Bain is right in regarding comedy as our primary source of evidence in this field, certainly if

⁴ Using Bain's criterion ('all those lines which contain something, even a monosyllable, uttered by a female speaker', Bain (1984) 30; in the case of Aristophanes we must also include male speakers posing as women, like the old man in *Thesmophoriazousai*, and exclude female speakers posing as men, like Praxagora in *Ekklesiazousai* 173–240), *Lysistrata* (ed. Sommerstein 1990) has 768 'women's lines' (58.1% of its total length); *Thesmophoriazousai* (ed. Coulon 1923–30) has at least 708 (57.5%); *Ekklesiazousai* (ed. Vetta 1989) has 636 (53.8%). The other eight surviving Aristophanic comedies have between them a total of about 560 such lines (4.8%), of which the majority (377) are spoken by divinities.

we are considering the speech of fifth- and fourth-century *Athenian* women.⁵

It must first be said that while first-person sex differentiation⁶ certainly exists in the language of Athenian comedy, it is not as strong as one might expect given the very wide difference between men's and women's lifestyles in Athenian society. Two plays of Aristophanes provide us with test situations. In one (*Thesmophoriazousai*, produced in 411 BC) a man disguises himself as a woman to attend, and speak at, a women's meeting; in another (*Ekklesiazousai*, produced in or about 391) a party of women disguise themselves as men to attend the citizen assembly, and they hold a dress-rehearsal on stage where several in succession speak, posing as men, while the others shout words of approval. In both cases the impostors succeed in speaking like the opposite sex. It is true that the man disguised as a woman is in the end unmasked, but it is not his use of language that betrays him.⁷ As for the women who pose as men, they do, to be sure, need a certain amount of speech-training; they must remember not to use feminine [64] adjectives of themselves,⁸ not to address their hearers as 'ladies',⁹ and (though this is not strictly a linguistic point) not to talk too much about drink;¹⁰ but the only part of this training that is really relevant to the present inquiry is that they have to learn to use

⁵ On difficulties inherent in the use of other kinds of literature, see Bain (1984) 27–8; add that tragic drama, though written in fifth-century Athens and much concerned with contemporary social issues, is almost invariably set in a period many centuries earlier, and its female characters normally belong to a class which did not exist in fifth-century Athens, that of the wives and daughters of monarchs.

⁶ Henceforward, differentiation governed by the sex of the speaker will be termed *first-person* differentiation; differentiation governed by the sex of the addressee, *second-person*; differentiation governed both by the sex of the speaker and by that of the addressee, *first-plus-second person*.

⁷ The steps that lead to his discovery are: (1) a rumour has been going round the Agora, and is conveyed to the women, that a man has succeeded in infiltrating their meeting (*Thesm.* 584–91); (2) he is the only person present whom the other women do not know (614); (3) the supposed woman cannot name 'her' husband or 'her' tent-mate at the Thesmophoria (619–25); (4) he forgets that a woman could not urinate into the type of vessel called a *ἀμῖς* (633–4; cf. J. J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy*² (Oxford, 1991) 191).

⁸ *Ekk.* 297–8 (contrast 204 and 213 where they use masculine adjectives in praising the speaker).

⁹ *Ekk.* 165.

¹⁰ *Ekk.* 132–46, 153–5.

men's rather than women's oaths.¹¹ I will return to this directly. The impression given is that any woman can learn without too much difficulty to speak like a man, and any man to speak like a woman. The differences are definite but minor.

2. OATHS*

To judge both by comedy and by other texts such as the dialogues of Plato and even the speeches of the orators, classical Athenians were in the habit of making extensive use of oaths by various deities to strengthen their assertions;¹² and the great majority of these oaths were [65] used exclusively by men or exclusively by women.¹³ Over time, too, there seems to have been a tendency for this sexual segregation of oaths to become more complete.

¹¹ Avoiding 'by Aphrodite' (*Ekkl.* 189–91) and 'by the Two Goddesses' (155–9)—which latter the speaker, on being pulled up, corrects to 'by Apollo'.

¹² Bain (1984) 42 remarks that in Menander 'men have many more (real) oaths than women'. It is not clear whether this refers to oath-types (i.e. *variety* of modes of swearing) or to oath-tokens (i.e. *frequency* of swearing). As regards oath-types the statement is true, with the caveat that some allowance must be made for the fact that men, with much more to say in the surviving texts, have more *opportunity* to use a wide variety of oaths. In Menander there are fifteen oath-types used by men and six used by women. In Aristophanes the contrast is less clear-cut: if we exclude those oaths appropriate only to foreigners (e.g. 'by Iolaus' for a Theban, 'by Kastor' for a Spartan), to philosophers (e.g. 'by Air'), or to birds ('by the kestrels'), there are fourteen oath-types used by men (five of which, however, occur only once each) and nine used by women. In terms of oath-tokens, however, it proves that women in these plays actually swear *more* than men. In Aristophanes, female speakers utter one oath in about every 23 lines, males one in every 35. In Menander (using Bain's approximate figures for 'total lines' and 'women's lines' (Bain (1984) 31), adjusting to take account of new discoveries (see n. 2), and ignoring altogether, as Bain does, prologues spoken by divinities, who in Menander never swear) women utter fourteen oaths in 372 lines (about one in every 27) while men utter 126 oaths in approximately 3,856 lines (or about one in every 31). And both these calculations actually understate the difference in relative frequency, because they count any line in which both a man and a woman speak as a 'women's line' (see n. 4 above) and therefore overstate the total number of lines spoken by women and understate the total spoken by men.

¹³ The same is true of invocations of the gods not in the form of oaths, such as ὦ πολυμήντοι θεοί (used only by men throughout comedy) and ὦ θεοί (used only by women in Menander, but by both sexes in earlier comedy); see Bain (1984) 41–2.

Generally speaking, men swear by male and women by female deities, but there are exceptions in both directions. Women are found in comedy swearing by two male deities, Zeus and Apollo. There is a marked decline over our period in the frequency of their doing so. In Aristophanes, women use the oath by Zeus more frequently than all others put together, and not much less often than men in proportion to the total number of their oaths.¹⁴ In Menander, on the other hand, out of fourteen oaths uttered by women¹⁵ only two or at most three are by Zeus,¹⁶ whereas among men Zeus still has nearly half of the total number of oaths uttered.¹⁷ The oath by Apollo is already almost [66] exclusively male in Aristophanes; men use it about thirty times, women once for certain, once probably, and once possibly,¹⁸ and in *Ekkl.* 158–60 a woman

¹⁴ In the eleven comedies of Aristophanes, out of a total of 117 oaths uttered by females 63 (53.8%) are by Zeus (next in frequency are ‘the two goddesses’ 16, Aphrodite 13, Artemis 8, Hekate/Phosphoros 7); out of a total of 447 oaths uttered by males 295 (66.0%) are by Zeus (next come Apollo 30, Poseidon 23, Demeter 23, ‘the gods’ 23, Dionysos 14, Hermes 7).

¹⁵ All but one of which, incidentally, are uttered by <women> not of Athenian citizen status (slaves, ex-slaves, hetairai, etc.); the exception is *Epitr.* 819.

¹⁶ *Georgos* 34, *Perik.* 757. The oath by a male deity whose name is lost, uttered by Pamphile at *Epitr.* 819, may also be by Zeus (though Hymenaios has also been suggested, see Turner on *POxy* 3532.8). Otherwise the pattern is very similar to that in Aristophanes: there are six oaths by the ‘two goddesses’ (*Georgos* 24, 109; *Dysk.* 878; *Epitr.* 543; *Mis.* 176; *Sik.* 33), two by Aphrodite (*Epitr.* 480, *Perik.* 991), one by Artemis (*Dysk.* 874), one by Demeter (*Epitr.* 955, discussed below), and one by ‘the gods’ (*Dis Exapaton* 95, where Sostratos is imagining what the Samian girl will be saying to herself; this is the only oath of this particular type ascribed to a woman either in Menander or in Aristophanes, as against 41 uttered by men, and it *may* be that Sostratos is envisaged as mistakenly putting in her mouth the sort of oath that he himself would use).

¹⁷ Of a total of 126 oaths uttered by men 58 (46.0%) are by Zeus; next come ‘the gods’ with 18, Apollo 14, Helios 9, Dionysos 6, Athena and Asklepios 4. Neither Helios nor Asklepios figures among the 447 oaths uttered by Aristophanic males; Hermes has disappeared from the Menandrian repertoire.

¹⁸ Certain: *Lys.* 917. Probable: *Frogs* 508; many scholars, including the three most recent editors (W. B. Stanford (London, 1963); D. Del Corno (Milan, 1985); and K. J. Dover (Oxford, 1993)), have held that the speaker is a man:* but the speaker is a servant of Persephone (ἦ... θεός 504), not of Pluto whom (s)he never mentions, and addresses the supposed Herakles in a tone of gushing personal affection and personal determination to get him into the palace (ὦ φίλταθ’ 503, οὐ γάρ σ’ ἀφήσω 513, εἴσιθι four times in as many short speeches) which is hard to account for except on the assumption that *she* hopes to become Herakles’ latest conquest (on his matchless record in this respect cf. *Soph. Trach.* 459–460) even if she does find it necessary

practising to pose as a man, pulled up short by Praxagora for using a feminine oath, hastily corrects it to 'by Apollo'. In Menander the restriction of this oath to men has become total.

While the tendency was thus for oaths by gods to become more and more exclusively male, oaths by goddesses were by no means exclusively female. Some, indeed, were reserved for men. Only men swore by the warrior goddess Athena (once in Ar., four times in Men.) and, in our evidence, only men swore by Gē (once in Ar., once in Men.). In the case of Demeter the situation was more complex, and may have changed with time. In Aristophanes, the oath by Demeter alone was exclusively male (23 times) while the oath by Demeter and Kore together (τῷ θεῷ) was exclusively female (16 times). In Menander the latter oath remains confined to women, but Demeter appears alone in three men's oaths (*Dysk.* 570, 666, *Perik.* 505, all in the form νῆ τῇν Δήμητρα) and one woman's oath (*Epitr.* 955, νῆ τῇν φίλῃν Δήμητρα). The oath by Aphrodite was nearly always female (13 times in Ar., twice in Men.) but is used once by a man in [67] Aristophanes (*Thesm.* 254), significantly at the moment when he puts on a woman's garment. Other oaths by goddesses (Artemis; Hekate/Phosphoros; the minor deities Pandrosos and Aglauros) are used by women only; once in Aristophanes (*Clouds* 773) a male character applauding an elegant sophism swears by the goddesses of elegance, the Charites, but this oath does not occur at all elsewhere and may be an *ad hoc* coinage to suit the context.

In some cases a particular oath has an obvious appropriateness to one sex or the other, as in the case of Poseidon (horses, ships) or Artemis (maidenhood, childbirth). In others, the rationale (if any) of the oath's usage is less clear: why should Apollo, rather than (say) Dionysos, be the one male deity other than Zeus who could figure in women's oaths? Why should Aristophanic (though not Menandrian)

to tempt him with a few dancing-girls as well (possibly because she is a good deal less attractive than they); the fourfold εἴσιθι (answered by Xanthias/Herakles with εἰσέρχομαι, 520) may, especially if reinforced by appropriate gesture, be designed to be taken as a *double entendre*. Possible: *Ekkl.* 631; this has often been ascribed to Praxagora (so still R. G. Ussher (Oxford, 1973)), but M. Vetta (Milan, 1989) sees that it must belong to one of her male hearers: 'l'osservazione che si tratta di una trovata "veramente democratica" non può venire da Prassagora, che ne è stata l'artefice, ma è una forma di assenso'.

males so often swear by Demeter, almost alone among goddesses?¹⁹ Some of these questions will probably remain unanswerable.

Not all the women who speak (and swear) in Athenian comedy are Athenian women. In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* both male and female Spartan characters have speaking parts, and their swearing patterns are all but identical. The Spartan woman, Lampito, swears four times by 'the two gods' (Kastor and Polydeukes) and once by Kastor alone; the male Spartans who appear later in the play swear six times by 'the [68] two gods', once by Kastor, and twice by Zeus. We cannot take this as evidence for actual Spartan practice (Aristophanes is unlikely ever to have met a Spartan woman); possibly Spartan men and women are made to swear alike because Spartan women were supposed to be unfeminine in certain aspects of their behaviour (e.g. gymnastic training, cf. *Lys.* 80–2), but quite likely Aristophanes, in a scene in which everyone on stage was female, was merely more concerned to mark out Lampito as a Spartan than to mark her out as a woman, and therefore made her swear in the manner supposed to be typical of Spartan men.

3. ADJECTIVES

Bain (1984) 33–9 investigates the usage of a variety of specific words by women in Menander: one interjection (*aĩ*), two nouns, mainly

¹⁹ Demeter's seeming loss of popularity in Menander may be partly due to metrical reasons: her affirmative oath *νὴ τῶν Διμήτρα*, with its four consecutive long syllables, cannot fit into any iambic or trochaic line (though the negative form *μὰ τῶν Διμήτρα* can); Aristophanes on the other hand had been able to use the affirmative form in his many scenes in anapaestic rhythm. The entire absence from Menander of oaths by Hera might have a similar explanation, were they not absent from Aristophanes as well. Such oaths do occur in Plato and in Xenophon's Socratic works; they are not confined to Socrates or even to people who knew him (Lysimachos in Pl. *Laches* 181a is meeting Socrates for the first time; cf. Xen. *Symp.* 4.45 (Kallias), 8.12 (Hermogenes), 9.1 (Lykon)). Dodds (1959) 105 notes that in Plato they 'always accompan[y] an expression of admiration', and this appears to be true in Xenophon also (*Mem.* 3.11.5, 4.2.9, 4.4.8; *Oik.* 10.1, 11.19; *Symp.* 4.54; and the passages cited above). That all who use this oath are male is of little significance, since except for Diotima—who uses no oaths at all—women hardly speak in our Socratic material. It remains a mystery why Hera's name should be absent from the oaths of comedy, which is not deficient in expressions of admiration and wonderment.*