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**DIFFERENCES IN THE SPEECH OF MEN AND WOMEN.**  
LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTION AND PERFORMANCE OF GENDER: THE  
GERMAN SUBTITLING OF GENDER-SPECIFIC ENGLISH IN THE  
DOCUMENTARY *VENUS BOYZ*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Gender linguistics studies the way men and women speak or are spoken about. Because of its derivation from general linguistic gender conventions, the speech of the homosexual community has often been the subject of (socio-)linguistic study. Transvestites, and in particular drag kings and queens, can be considered part of that community. When constructing and performing their gender and sexual identity, they draw on the conventions of the linguistic behavior of men and women in their society. The speech of four protagonists from the documentary *Venus Boyz* is analyzed in terms of the gender identity created and performed through language on the basis of conventional male and female language features established in previous research. Such features are then tested for their validity and relevance in gender construction and performance. The analysis is conducted on oral English source-language texts and also covers their translation into German subtitles in order to explore the translatability of gendered language in this language pair under the formal constraints of the genre.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Gender linguistics is concerned with various aspects of the representation of gender in language. They can be divided into two categories: How the genders speak (or write), and how they are spoken (or written) about. Karin M. Eichhoff-Cyrus, editor of a volume on gender linguistics published by DUDEN, expresses the importance of the subject as follows: “[...] Sprache spiegelt nicht nur Realität, sie schafft auch Realität” (Eichhoff-Cyrus, 2004: 7): Language not only reflects reality, it also creates reality. This dissertation will deal with how the genders express themselves in spoken language.

How the genders are spoken (or written) about usually involves a feminist agenda and applies to women’s representation in language, which has become an important political issue. To be politically correct, the once sex-indefinite pronoun “he” is being substituted with “he or she” (Bondine, 1990), and gender-specific nouns for professions are created or reinforced (for example, actor/actress). The representation of the genders in fiction also falls into the category of how the genders are represented in language. Considering how the genders express themselves, Dale Spender addresses the issue of men being the ones “who have made the world which women must inhabit” (Spender, 1990: 93). This created world refers to the world of words, the world as it was named with language, and thus the instrument determining “the limits of our world, which constructs our reality” (Spender, 1980: 94). Such restrictive language forces women into a system of personal expression that is not necessarily true to their nature, something that has been addressed not only by linguists, but, for example, as early as the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the writer Virginia Woolf in *Women and Fiction* (Woolf, 1990: 47-53) or in *The Angel in the House* (Woolf, 2004: 185-190). In these articles, Woolf addresses the struggle women writers experience because they are limited by the conventions of writing that have been created by minds of men. In the first instance, this is “the very form of the sentence [that] does not fit her. It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman’s use” (Woolf, 1990: 50); but Woolf also felt restricted in her writing by what she called “ghosts” or “phantoms” (Woolf, 1942: 189), which were what she felt to be controlling instance in her own head that would judge her own writing by male standards (Woolf, 1942: 187-189). She felt that to write freely and according to their female nature, women would have to learn to break out of the role society expected of them. To a similar degree, gender issues are confronted with the problem of existing gender stereotypes and

clichés in society. Hence, a society's ideology of gender may stand as the common denominator connecting the various issues.

However, this dissertation will not address any specific agenda, political or otherwise. Neither the representation of the genders in language nor the expression of the genders in fictional or any other written form are its focal point. The only exception will be the example of an e-mail interaction, analyzed because that particular piece of text is not constrained by the formality or norms of writing but is comparable to spoken discourse.

Instead, this undergraduate dissertation is concerned with one aspect of gender linguistics: The verbal behavior of men and women, a field of study of inherited and learned language patterns in human minds. Noam Chomsky assumes that all people have a basic sense of language, or rather of grammar, in them: *Generative grammar* (Chomsky: 1966). Is it possible that we also have a pattern of language usage engraved in us, depending on whether we are male or female?

This dissertation considers in particular the oral expression of the genders. How do the genders talk and how do people create and perform gender with language? When men and women talk, their utterances differ in terms of semantics, syntax, and implicatures. It is possible that the differences in speech behavior are perceived to be much stronger than they actually are. Therefore, alongside natural gender differences in speech, stereotypes also serve to create and perform gender.

After considering gender-based differences in speech in general, this undergraduate dissertation investigates how transvestites (drag kings and queens in particular) make use of those perceived differences to recreate the opposite gender through their speech. Does the use of their language contribute to their credibility as exponents of the other gender? What actual features of language are used because they are specific to one gender or the other, or because they seem to be stereotypically male or female? The data for the analysis of gendered speech in this dissertation is taken from the documentary *Venus Boyz* (2001). In *Venus Boyz*, directed by the Swiss filmmaker Gabriel Baur, “[w]omen become men-some for a night, others for their whole lives” (Baur: [www.venusboyz.net](http://www.venusboyz.net)). The selected sequences for analysis do not feature exclusively individuals seeking to perform the opposite gender but also individuals representing a shade of gender other than male or female. This selection was made to investigate how the norms of gender (= man and woman) and also such shades of gender are created and performed.

This dissertation also addresses the question of whether gendered language is universal or not. The subjects of study are native English speakers, and most research on gendered linguistic behavior has been formulated for speakers of the English language. For translational purposes, however, it is important to know if gendered speech differs in different languages, and if so, how it operates in other languages. The DVD of the documentary *Venus Boyz* contains the option for German subtitles. After the linguistic strategies used by the transvestites have been looked at in the original language, the translation of these strategies in the form of the German subtitles is analyzed as well. In this case, not only the transfer of the language, but also transfer of the media from oral text to a condensed version of written text is analyzed for its effect on the outcome of the translation of gendered language.

The following chapter will discuss the background to gender linguistics, in particular the research that has been done on the different speech behavior of men and women. After some features of gendered language are established, a brief case study testing the accuracy of these features is conducted. To narrow the focus to the socio-linguistic group of drag kings and queens, the terms “drag” will be explained, and also the term “camp,” which is associated with the language used by that group. The third chapter will introduce the subjects of research of this dissertation (the protagonists in the documentary *Venus Boyz* whose language will be analyzed) and describe the method of analysis. The fourth chapter contains the analysis, in terms of gendered language, of the speech of the people introduced in the previous chapter. The English original version as well as the German subtitles are analyzed to determine if and to what extent they make use of the gender features indicated in chapter 2, and what notion of gender is created by the use of such language.

## 2 BACKGROUND

The Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s started to sensitivize people in the Western world to the disadvantageous position women held in society, professionally, politically, culturally and socially. Linguistics was no exception and only with the rise of feminist studies did the field of gender linguistics emerge as a serious discipline. When women started to define themselves as a political group, they became one whose linguistic behavior was the focus of analytical interest, and linguists started to pay more attention to the differences in the way the genders use language (Trömmel-Plötz, 1997: 236). Feminists saw the origin of female powerlessness in the way we speak. They believed that language presented them in a way creating inferiority, and women's use of language itself represented them as inferior to men.

When the subject of study is one the linguist is personally affected by or has her own agenda for, the danger of personal interests confusing an objective view cannot be excluded. A feminist linguist may be biased when interpreting gendered language and may conceive of it either as more or less gendered than it actually is. Robin Lakoff, for example, did not base her findings on empirical research, but on introspection: introspection in a world with what she perceived to be an existing power imbalance between men and women (Lakoff, 2004).

Gender linguistics has reached a broad audience through popular titles such as *Men are from Mars. Women are from Venus. A practical guide for improving communication and getting what you want in your relationships* (1992) by John Gray, or Jennifer Coate's *Woman Talk* (1996) and *Men Talk* (2003). These topics focus mainly on the failure of communication between men and women due to their different styles of communication. The more scientific research on how the genders talk and differ in their discourse analyzes the forms of speech, topics, intonation or grammatical features which make the language of men and women distinct. Examples of this would be Robin Lakoff (2004), Senta Trömmel-Plötz (1997), or Anthony Mulac (1999).



## 2.1 (Fe)male Speech Features

One of the earliest linguists to examine gendered ways of speaking was the Dane Otto Jespersen, in his article *The Woman* (1990). His analysis dates from 1925 and is therefore to be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, it serves as a useful starting point in this exploration of the study of gendered language and its ideologies, and to a certain degree anticipates Cameron's deficit framework (Cameron, 1990: 14; see 2.2 below).

According to Jespersen, women's speech is clearly deficient to men's (Jespersen, 1990: 234-240). Reasons for this value judgment could be that there was no adequate record of the speech of both genders produced in comparable situations or that his analysis is the result of pre-conceived stereotypes. What is clear, however, is that Jespersen's article is extremely judgmental and it has been cited by many feminists to cover "a whole tradition of patronizing and sexist commentary by male linguists before feminism" (Cameron, 1990: 216).

50 years later, Robin Lakoff established a set of gender features that seems to be a confirmation of an existing power imbalance reflected in linguistic expression (Lakoff, 2004). Although counting as one of the first – if not *the* first – contribution to feminist linguistics, some of Jespersen's sexist assumptions are carried over into her work. Lakoff's data does not originate in empirical research, but is based on observations and introspection and thus does not necessarily reflect the reality of the (fe)male speech community. Especially her lexical gender markers lack accuracy and stand as mere stereotypes, possibly rooted in women's socialized role from the past. She claims, for example, that women use weaker and almost sweet-sounding swear words such as "oh dear" or "goodness," whereas men use stronger expressions such as "shit!" or "damn!" (Braun, 2004: 13). Any person overhearing conversations of men or women in a variety of social classes, situations and English dialects would find this very hard to accept. It seems that such assumption can only be valid for certain social contexts. Along the same lines, women are said to use adjectives evoking frivolity and triviality. Despite the fact that such features fail to reflect the true nature of women's speech, they are nonetheless a representation of actual stereotypes based on existing ideologies of women's speech in society's collaborative mind.

Newer data based on empirical research by Anthony Mulac (1999) and others rendered more concrete insights into gendered language. Although all features identified and

presented here are used by both men and women, there are clear differences in the frequency of usage between the genders (Braun, 2004: 16). Firstly, women tend to use more intensifying adverbs such as “very” or “really” (Braun, 2004: 15). Women’s sentence structures involve the more frequent use of tag questions, questions in general, and hedges (Braun, 2004: 15). Together with a female style of conversation that is more polite and contains indirect orders rather than imperatives (Braun, 2004: 15), this could be categorized as an absence of dominant behavior. Men, on the other hand, use more directives (Braun, 2004: 15). They also behave more competitively in conversations, for example interrupting and talking more often than their female conversational partners (Braun, 2004: 15). By contrast, women display a more cooperative style of conversational interactions including minimal reaction to mark interest with such devices as “yes” or “mhm” (Braun, 2004: 15). In terms of sentence structure, women adhere more closely to the norms of the standard language. Men, on the other hand, are seen to talk more colloquially and make greater use of dialect. Women talk in sentences of average length, often introducing their sentences with an adverbial clause, and their sentences contain subordinate clauses. Men’s ways of speaking are less grammatical and more elliptic. When it comes to the actual subject matter of the utterances men and women make, women relate what they say to emotions and they speak more personally. Men’s speech is less emotional and more factual, using a greater amount of locatives and terms relating to quantity. They are also more judgmental in their utterances and relate more consistently to themselves, something that Friederike Braun, in her article *Reden Frauen anders?* calls *ich-Bezüge* (Braun in Duden, 2004:15), and that will from now on be referred to as I-focus in this dissertation.

The two anthropologists Maltz and Borker have studied the interactions between children when playing together (Maltz and Borker, 1982: 196-216). They have found that girls learn to create and maintain relationships of closeness and equality, to criticize others in acceptable ways, and to interpret the speech of other girls accurately (Maltz and Borker, 1982: 205), while boys learn to assert their position of dominance, to attract and maintain an audience, and to assert themselves (Maltz and Borker, 1982: 207). Other female speech features found by Maltz and Borker, such as females speaking more personally and using more inclusive pronouns such as “you” and “we,” have been corroborated in the work of Deborah Tannen (1990a).

## 2.2 Three Ways of Interpreting the Differences

Linguists agree that the way we speak is gendered, and that women and men do talk differently from each other (see, for instance, Frederike Braun, 1997; Anja Gottburgsen, 1997; Ulrike Grässel, 1997; Robin Lakoff, 2004). The speech of men is usually considered the norm, and women's speech to be deviant from the norm. An example of this can be seen in the frequently encountered stereotypical opinion that women talk a lot, but never that men talk little.

Linguists' opinions differ as to the extent to which these distinctions exist. Also the interpretations as to why the differences exist are based on widely different theories. Three generally accepted approaches, also referred to as frameworks, have been established for analyzing female speech; these can be explained broadly by concepts of deficit, dominance, and difference (Cameron, 1990: 14-15).

- The “**deficit framework** suggests that women's ways of speaking are, whether by nature or nurture, deficient in comparison to men's” (Cameron, 1990: 14). Robin Lakoff supports this view of gendered female language. Sometimes, women who feel that their way of speaking is deficient and that they lack something (e.g. credibility or power) due to their language usage go to classes offering such subjects as assertiveness training, which basically teach them to “talk like man.” In the documentary *Venus Boyz*, Diane Torr teaches aspiring drag kings how to talk, move and behave like males in order to gain respect, power and credibility. Like the assertiveness training for women, her course confirms the notion of the deficit framework: Women lack something that men have.
- The “**dominance framework** suggests that women's ways of speaking are less the result of their gender *per se* than of their subordinate position relative to men: the key variable is power” (Cameron, 1990: 14). In this case, female speech is an interlocutory device signaling subordination.
- Finally, the “**difference framework** suggests that women's ways of speaking reflect the social and linguistic norms of the specifically female subcultures in which most of us spend our formative years” (Cameron, 1990: 14). It was the

anthropologists Maltz and Borker who originally created this framework (Maltz and Borker, 1982: 196-216). They compared sex differences to culture differences, and in those two “cultures,” boys and girls “learn to do different things with words in a conversation” (Maltz and Borker, 1982: 200). Proponents of this framework (e.g. Maltz and Borker, 1982 or Deborah Tannen, 1990) often base their research on data from interaction between and among same sex groups only. When criticized for ignoring the factor of dominance or power imbalance between the sexes, they claim that this factor may exist on the locutionary level, but it is not intended by the speaker. Knowing that their research does not consider the interaction of mixed sex groups, it is not surprising that they do not find an intended dominant linguistic behavior of males over females (Uchida, 1990: 285-287).

Sometimes it is not completely clear which of the frameworks a theory belongs to because they may interplay and cannot be seen as totally isolated from each other (Uchida, 1990: 289). When Shelly Mars, a protagonist from the documentary *Venus Boyz*, says: “So what we do when we are in a gender is perform an already socially constructed script,” (*Venus Boyz*, 2001) this can justifiably be regarded as an opinion confirming the difference framework. However, the actual performance of that socially constructed script may indicate dominance of males over females and thus confirm the dominance framework. The differences in speech between men and women discovered by Lakoff, such as the “female register” marking politeness and non-assertiveness, both being an expression of a weaker role or position compared to the male, could likewise be interpreted according to the deficit framework or the dominance framework.

The frequent use of questions, tag questions and hedges in women’s speech is often interpreted as insecurity, weakness or confirmation-seeking. In her article *Conversational Insecurity*, Pamela Fishman advocates another interpretation of those same linguistic features (Fishman, 1990: 255-256). In the case of the questions and tag questions, she argues that an interrogative helps to sustain a back and forth in a conversation, thus contributing to a cooperative conversational style (Fishman, 1990: 255). She also maintains that asking a question is a request or demand for the other to talk, and thus does not necessarily have to be rooted in a power imbalance but stands for a “female way” of

expressing demands (Fishman, 1990: 255). Fishman (256) also considers hedging to derive from women's cooperative style of conversation.

'You know' displays conversational trouble, but is often an attempt to solve the trouble as well. 'You know' is an attention-getting device, a way to check with one's interactional partner to see if they are listening [...].

Thus, according to her, questions, tag questions and hedges present a compensation for men's failure to cooperate in conversations.

Deborah Tannen presents a contradictory interpretation of the indirectness of female speech (Tannen, 1990: 268f). She claims that being indirect does not necessarily reside in perceived powerlessness or a lower position in hierarchy, but may be just the contrary. In her judgment, indirectness is ambiguous and polysemous, because "indirectness [...] is not in itself a strategy of subordination. Rather, it can be used either by the powerful or the powerless" (Tannen, 1990: 268).

Ali Ulchida strongly criticizes the one-sided view of many proponents of the difference framework. However, she does not want to advocate using another approach instead. She points out that the approaches of difference and dominance are to some extent contiguous, and to gain a realistic insight into the reasons for differing speech behavior of men and women, she suggests establishing a new, holistic framework to see how we "are doing gender through use of language" (Ulchida, 1990: 289).

Ulchida also finds fault with the difference framework for ignoring the existence of other identity markers such as race, class, age, or sexual orientation (Ulchida, 1990: 184). All these markers may influence the linguistic behavior of people. In fact, this criticism can be applied to all frameworks, since whenever an utterance is made it is not only made by an individual of this or that gender, but by an individual consisting of many different identity markers that all influence the way we speak.

As we have seen, the linguistic behavior of women in relation to that of men can be looked at from different angles. Depending on the viewpoint, the social role of the genders varies somewhat. Interpreting female speech with the deficit framework theory, we can see that women are deficient in relation to men. This is, of course, the position taken by Jespersen (1990), unconscious or otherwise (see 2.1 above). Women represent the inferior gender which lacks something the other gender has or can do. The theory of the dominance framework also implies that women are inferior to men, but the difference between the two frameworks is that the dominance variant shows them not to be inferior due to

something they lack but portrays their inferiority as rooted in passive or active subordination. The theory of the difference framework is the least judgmental. It simply accounts for the fact that the genders do have different roles and a different status in society, and that this variation in upbringing or training is the explanation for the differences in their speech behavior.

In addition to the theory of those three frameworks, other interpretations of varying speech norms have been presented that relativize the inferiority and suppression of women (Fishman, 1990; Tannen, 1990). Yet, whatever the roots and reasons for women talking this way and men talking that way, their speech does vary. The following section will test the aforementioned speech markers presented in 2.1. The interpretation of these will be based on one, or a combination, of the three frameworks.

### **2.3 Revealing Gender: A Brief Case Study**

In this section, a series of e-mails will be analyzed. The writer of the e-mails is Rhonda\*, a female pretending to be a male she calls Rob\*. The language in the e-mails will be examined under the aspect of the use of the gender indicators identified in section 2.1. If they should be able to reveal the writer's true gender, the features identified as markers of that gender are valid. Although written text, the e-mail interaction is considered suitable for the analysis of gender features of spoken text because, in this context, it presents a very informal and spontaneous text similar enough to spontaneous oral discourse to be comparable to spoken words.

The language of the e-mails is German (originally Swiss-German translated into German), whereas the features established in 2.1 were mostly identified and formulated for the English language. In applying them to the following text, we shall also be testing their validity for the German language because the same features will be used in 4.2 as tools for analyzing the German translation of gendered language.

Appendix A contains the full series of e-mails. In the following, certain passages revealing the writer's gender have been selected for use in the analysis.

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\* Names have been changed to preserve anonymity

### **Passages from e-mail written by Rhonda alias Rob:**

“Hey schreib mir doch bitte zurück... bitte...”

The repetition of “bitte” is both a marker of politeness as well as a reference to the writer’s emotions. It overtly shows the writer’s wish to receive an answer.

“endlich!!! Das hat ja jetzt aber seeeeeeeehr lange gedauert”

Here, the punctuation is a substitution for what would be stressed intonation in spoken text. Three exclamation marks after “endlich” make it obvious that the writer is relieved and happy to have received an answer to her mail. So again, there is an overt revelation of emotions. The extra “e”s in the word “sehr” would also represent a stressing of the word if articulated aloud, and therefore likewise reveal an emotional response in the writer of the text.

“ui nein, du hast einen freund?”

“ui” is in itself an exclamation of astonishment, most likely of an unhappy or unpleasant nature. In any case, it indicates the writer’s emotional state.

“aber ich gönne dir dein glück natürlich.”

In this sentence, the writer seems more concerned about the addressee’s feelings than her own. It displays sympathy, benevolence, and generosity. Although the addressee never directly mentioned her happiness, the writer automatically equates her having a boyfriend with that emotion. This shows that the writer tries to be sensitive to the addressee’s feelings.

The rest of the e-mails contain more spots of excessive punctuation and exclamation marks that can be interpreted as unhidden emotionality. This emotionality was the main marker to betray the writer’s gender as different from that claimed, although an absence of sentences or phrases with I-focus also suggests that the writer is not male.

On the basis of this short analysis, the speech markers and conversational patterns discussed in 2.1 do seem to be effective in identifying the performance and in reinforcing its perception of gender. Although the features which revealed the gender of the writer in this e-mail conversation are almost exclusively reduced to over-emotionality, they will be

used as the foundation for analyzing genders in the documentary *Venus Boyz* in chapter 4 of this dissertation. The reason for this is that the e-mail conversation is restricted to one person and one topic, so the span of linguistic action is likely to be smaller than that of many people expounding on multiple subjects. The features used serve as representative samples for the whole model, and this model, with all its constituents, will be used for subsequent analysis in this work.

## **2.4.Reversed Roles**

The gender features we have looked at in 2.1 serve to mark a woman as female and a man as male. In 2.3, someone trying to pass herself off as a male has been unmasked as being of the female gender due to the presence and absence of such features. This now brings us to the subject of research of this dissertation: the speech of the individuals portrayed in the documentary *Venus Boyz*. The protagonists are drag kings and drag queens. Similar to the writer in 2.3, they seek to believably represent the other gender. Unlike the writer in 2.3, they do not wish to do so to deceive others but as part of a visible stage performance. They are performing as drag kings or queens to entertain their audience. Before their speech is analyzed, a note on what drag actually is will be included here to clarify what it is that they want to perform as well as what effect they wish to achieve with their performance. Chapter 2.4.2 will be devoted to camp, a constituent of drag, because “[d]rag and camp are the most representative and widely used symbols of homosexuality in the English speaking world” (Newton, 1979: 10), and the triangle homosexuality–drag–camp presents an inseparable interplay. When the theory of the three frameworks was presented in 2.2, other aspects of identity were not considered in identity construction. Homosexuality, however, is an important constituent of identity in reference to drag or camp since it automatically calls social gender roles into question and thus presents an important factor in gender construction and performance.



### 2.4.1 Drag

There are differing definitions of what drag is. Most associate drag with homosexual transvestites. Whereas between 72 and 97 percent of male transvestites in the general population are heterosexual, drag queens are almost exclusively homosexual (Bullough & Bullough, 1993). Drag queens are gay men dressing up and performing femininity; drag kings are lesbians in men's clothes. The majority of the drag scene may well be homosexual, but there are heterosexual drag kings and queens. If the key determinant of drag is not sexuality, it must be something else. It is hard to make clear distinctions between, or formulate definitions for, transvestites and drag, because it is hard to categorize individuals who are by nature of their gender identity not easily placed into categories. The term transvestism generally applies to individuals having a desire to dress up as the opposite sex. This desire usually occurs at an early stage in life, gradually grows stronger, and is usually of erotic nature (Docter, 1988: 9-38). Drag, then, is a sort of subgroup of transvestism. It also includes a desire to dress up as the opposite sex, and although it may be exciting to the individual drag performer, there is another desired effect to it: Drag kings and queens perform an alter ego of the opposite gender to an audience with the purpose of entertaining. Unlike "normal" transvestism, drag does not mean that one wants to pass as a member of the opposite sex, because drag queens or kings do not try to hide their true sex, producing instead an adequate and realistic "*image* of a particular type of woman" (Barrett, 1999: 316) or man. Rusty Barrett (1999: 314) describes the overall goal of drag queens as the believable production of an image of hyperfemininity. The effect of their performance may best be described in the words of a few individuals who are themselves part of the drag king scene.

Maureen Fishman, an actress in her thirties, says about Mo B. Dick, one of her drag king characters:

He's a really cheesy kind of guy, he's opinionated, macho, always thinks he's right, and is quite riled about any injustices: but he's also sexy and "ruff and tuff"; it's actually taken me a long time to come into my own as him. But once I am on stage, his total schmuck attitudes come all too naturally to me, it's scary. [...] He's a typical Brooklyn guy who mouths off, "I ain't no homo" and "suck my dick" and "fuck you." The crowd love that, they love to hear me say that stuff, it's so funny to me because I see this as total parody and I get off on emulating maleness in such an extreme and crass way (Del Lagrace Volcano, 1999: 114).

The character traits of this male stage persona can be seen as a reflection of Fishman's view of masculinity. She uses the negative aspects of male behavior to entertain her audience with this parody.

Like Maureen Fishman, Diane Torr is another persona appearing in the documentary. She teaches drag king workshops and is highly regarded by other women in the drag king scene. Many say that she was the one making it possible for them to even be a drag king and helping them create a male alter ego of their own. The characters Diane Torr plays in her drag performances she calls a composite of a variety of “ghostly” men she has seen and met in her life (*Venus Boyz*, 2001). These performances are an accumulation of their negativity, stereotyped into one man who embodies all features of the masculine sex. Her performance is a parody, as she says, but it is also true to life.

Gabriel Baur, the director of the documentary, comes to the conclusion that drag is ambiguous (*Venus Boyz*, 2001: Bonus Features). It is, in her view, a matter of constructing as well as deconstructing masculinity. She says that drag is the joy of playing a man while criticizing machismo. Everyday male behavior becomes absurd when seen like this on stage.

Transvestites do make use of stereotypical gender roles to produce the desired effect through their performances. In reference to the conventions of linguistic gender, Anna Livia (1990: 363) points out that speakers adopt the conventions of the gender to create a gender identity. Accordingly, transvestites adopt the conventions of the opposite gender to create an identity opposite to that of their biological sex. Regardless of whether these stereotypes represent the reality or only society’s perception of gender roles, they do create gender in the minds of the people witnessing a performance.

Barrett cites a viewpoint on the element of parody in drag queen performances other than that of entertainment:

[...] [S]cholars argue that drag is not “about” women but rather about the inversion or subversion of traditional gender roles. These scholars often praise drag queens for demonstrating that gender displays do not necessarily correlate with anatomical sex and typically see drag as a highly subversive act that deconstructs traditional assumptions concerning gender identity (Barrett, 1999: 315).

Since drag queens and kings, by definition, do not conform to society’s gender roles through their sexuality or through their gender identity, it makes sense that the element of parody in their performances is a means of fighting against those roles.

If the definition of drag is cast more widely, it could also include individuals who do not necessarily purposely perform the gender opposite to their biological sex on stage, but who simply show the manners and behavior of their opposite sex because of their personal gender identity. Examples for these would be so-called butch femmes or dykes. Asked

what “butch” was, gender theorist Judith Halberstam, appearing in *Venus Boyz*, answered: “Butch is masculinity as an identity in women” (*Venus Boyz*, 2001). “Femme” is usually used to signify the contrary of butch. Widening the definition in the other direction, that is by defining it rather through male parody than through the imitation of male physique and appearance, we may say that even biological men can be drag kings. It seems that, like the range of gender identity felt by the individuals in the drag scene, the range of drag has as many shades as it has members.

Reasons for performing drag vary. For some it may be simple joy of acting. For others it may present a possibility to express a part of their identity they feel that they cannot express in their everyday gender role. In Esther Newton’s *Mother Camp*, another reason for performing emerges: Whatever the reason for choosing to be a professional drag queen, it is also a means to make money (Newton, 1979: 1-19).

Newton’s research only covers drag queens, not drag kings. It dates from the 1960s, a time when drag kings had not been in identifiable existence. They are a newer manifestation which is still in the process of formation. Because of their unparalleled origin and development, drag queens and drag kings may also not be identical in definition. In a footnote of her *Mother Camp*, Newton accounts for a loosening of the definition of drag by saying that “any clothing that signifies a social role, for instance a fireman’s suit or farmer’s overalls. The concept of drag is embodied in a complex homosexual attitude towards social roles” (Newton, 1979: 3). According to her, to succeed as a professional drag queen, one has to “possess skills that are widely distributed and prized in the gay world: verbal facility and wit, a sense of ‘camp’ (homosexual humor and taste), and the ability to do both ‘glamorous’ and comic drag” (Newton, 1979: 3). If drag queens are mainly homosexuals, and homosexuals have a particular humor and taste that is subsumed under the name of camp, then drag kings and queens also use camp. Camp stands for various modes of expression, and language is one of them. This will be examined more closely in the next section.

### **2.4.2 Camp**

As we have seen, camp is a form of expression of the homosexual scene. It expresses their humor and taste, but it also plays on the gender roles in society, while at the same time presenting a critique of those roles by the homosexuals who are, by definition, themselves

critiqued by society's norms for performing those roles (Newton, 1979: 100). Camp is another form of parody, or as Shelly Mars from *Venus Boyz* puts it: "Drag is camp is parody" (*Venus Boyz*, 2001). Unlike drag, camp is not necessarily a parody of men or of women as such, but rather a parody of the status masculinity and femininity have in society. It is parody of the existing gender roles and of the relationship between men and women. Camp is the language of those people who do not conform to the expected gender roles. It is the language of homosexuals and it is a language that creates humor because the speaker surprises listeners by adopting a mode of speech that is unexpected for his or her biological sex. It also creates humor because it ridicules the stereotypical way this or that sex speaks. Since drag is mostly performed by homosexuals and its performers do not seek to hide their true gender behind their performances, camp must be considered a component of drag.

One of the most famous and most cited works on camp is Susan Sonntag's *Notes On Camp* (1964), written at the beginning of research in the field. According to her early description of this form of speech (and behavior), "all camp objects, and persons, contain a large element of artifice. Nothing in nature can be campy [...]." (Sonntag, 1964). In the documentary *Venus Boyz*, Diane Torr goes even further by referring to it as something kitschy and foolish.

As has been shown, it is already hard to categorize people doing drag as such. It is even harder to define the group of people speaking camp. Some argue that everybody who is homosexual is automatically assigned to camp (Barrett, 1997: 182-189). Others say that there needs to be a conscious choice made by the individual to "join" camp (Barrett, 1997: 182-189). In other words, to belong to the homosexual speech community, one does not just have to be homosexual, but one has to "do homosexuality." This categorization may not be of much importance for the analysis and translation of the gendered language in the documentary later in this dissertation. Nonetheless, it is something that needs to be considered when gendered language is translated in other contexts.

Locating the beginnings of camp in time could help to explain its existence. In order to see who brought camp to life and why, hence who its speakers and its functions are, the next section will be on the history of the phenomenon of camp.

### 2.4.2.1 History of Camp

In the seventeenth century, the so-called “mollie houses” were the first form of an openly gay scene (King, 1994: 27). The people frequenting those places, the mollies, “were an underground society of men who met in taverns to have sex with other men and to parody in improvised performances the increasingly normative concept of companionate heterosexual marriage prevalent among the Puritan bourgeoisie” (King, 1994: 27). Clearly, this – for the purposes at hand – *speech* community, differed in its form from the existing norm. Whereas in the world outside the mollie houses, social identity markers such as gender, age, and rank played an important role in defining social interactions and hierarchy between people, that was erased in the mollie community. Hence, such communities were able to establish new means of interaction, including a new form of communication. This might be one thing that led to camp. The absence of hierarchy in this new social order threatened the existing status quo and thus created antipathy among those holding power. The aristocracy criticized the effeminate behavior of the mollies. King (1994: 23) describes the mollies as the new aristocracy, indeed, as an aristocracy of taste – a parallel to today’s homosexual community, which also is stereotyped as being very conscious of style and fashion, possessing a sort of snobbery when it comes to their tastes.

According to King, the mollie houses were what led to camp. That would bear out Susan Sonntag’s assertion that camp had its origin in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Europe (King, 1994: 23). In the same way as the language of women described above, camp is a marked form of speech. This is not to say that camp has not been investigated thoroughly enough to prove its markedness, or variation from the norm, however, it may be that part of its difference is based on the investigator’s perception. The mollies’ (sexual) behavior does not conform to society’s standard behavioral rules, so they are perceived as different before they even open their mouths. In King’s article, it can be seen that the homosexuality was the main reason for scrutiny (1994: 30-32). However, the question remains whether the ruling class was truly bothered by the mollie’s homosexuality, or if they just used this as an excuse for scrutinizing them in public because it felt the need to defend its status. The historian Jack Babuscio (1993: 20-21) suggests that camp was the gay response to the penchant of the society at the time for a labeling which polarized individual types. Hence, camp was an answer to society’s branding of those branded, with the intention of criticizing the branders.

Although the history of camp shows that its community consisted of people connected by certain common attributes in their nature, it was also partly a conscious choice of that community to “use” camp. Camp was an intentionally triggered reaction by a group of people joined through their nature. Like their performance of camp, everybody’s identity is the result of a certain performance. In this dissertation, the performance of gender is of central interest.

## **2.5 Performing Gender**

Since the listener might respond to camp as language incongruent with sex and gender, we have seen that language can – together with paraverbal features such as props (wigs, make-up, fake mustache, etc.), mimicry, intonation, or other – evoke gender. It therefore follows that a speaker can steer the way he or she is perceived. As Anna Livia (1990: 363) states:

Speakers are not passive with regard to language and the possibilities its system of distinctions and similarities sets up. [...] They may use the conventions of linguistic gender to create different gender identities.

Thus, gender is not necessarily a biological given, but can be a conscious choice. A speaker may choose what degree, or what form, of gender is to be perceived by the listener. This performance includes much more than only language itself, including mimicry, gesture and posture; and very often, this “choice” of what personal gender identity one wants to transmit, and others to receive, is subconscious. In the cases of drag performances, it is a conscious performance of identity. Even though the way of speaking (and other behavior) is not a given by destiny or genetics, but an active performance (Braun, 2004: 17-20), boys and girls are trained and socialized into this or that side of the two poles of gender. According to Ulchida, gender is not something we are but something we become after we have been assigned to this or that based on our biological sex (Ulchida, 1990: 290).

To construct one of the binary genders, then, a person will use the conventions of linguistic gender. Yet, there are clearly other possibilities of gender construction, other forms of outcome, than simply man or woman.

In the very concepts of the *signifiant*, different languages possess the potential to construct something other than the poles of gender. The Lakota, for example, know more than only two accepted concepts of gender. Next to men and women, the concept of man-woman and woman-man exists as well (Trechter, 2004). In India, the hijras are an established gender in, or at least on the margins of, the community (Trechter, 2004). In Thailand, glamorous and attractive men who have turned themselves into women are a modern tourist attraction under the name of ladyboy cabarets. Their origins lie in an archaic Thai tradition: In Thai culture, they are called kathoey and form a sort of third sex (Totman, 2003). In these cases, the existence of a *signifiant* has created a place for those individuals who do not fit into the binary concept. In one instant, there are four spaces to occupy, in the others, there are three. If the number of spaces in this “grey zone” varies, so must the degrees of gender variability. This is the fundamental rule of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. In most Western societies, there are only two established genders. The concepts transsexual and transgender are not recognized as genders in their own right, though there is evidence that this may be changing: In American passports, for instance, individuals can now have “O” for “other,” or “I” for “intersexed” entered under sex (Venus Boyz, 2001). Yet, this shift is hardly one taking place in society as a whole, remaining merely a means of personal freedom on a formal level. A male who feels like he is caught in the wrong body and who expresses his otherness through camp is still perceived as a man, or in terms of male-ness (he is “not a real man”). English cannot cope adequately with transgenders, since the choice is either to reinforce polarity using masculine or feminine pronouns, or else to completely depersonalize transgenders by using the neuter “it”.

## **2.6 Universal (Western) Gender?**

In 2.5 we have seen that cultures different from those of industrialized Western countries leave room for the existence of other gender concepts. These concepts are rooted in the culture, tradition and beliefs of the society in question. In most Western countries, however, including the United States and the German-speaking countries of Europe (which will be relevant for the analysis of the language in this dissertation), the concepts of gender are defined by biological sex. So the basics for comparative gender research are given and comparison is possible with regards to the speech of the two defined genders.

Possibly because gender cultures are very similar in those parts of the world, the way the genders speak in those cultures is very similar as well. The societies in the English- and the German-speaking world have very similar ideologies of gender roles, and thus the stereotypical male or female behavior, including speech norms, shows the same markers. This can be explained with the difference framework, in the same way that boys and girls are socialized to behave as females or males. For the purpose of this dissertation, the English and the German languages in particular will be compared on the basis of their gender features. Even though most of the features in 2.1 have been formulated for the English language, the analysis of the e-mails in 2.5 demonstrates that it is applicable to the German language as well. Both the English original and its translation into German of the documentary *Venus Boyz* will therefore be analyzed by means of the same constituents mentioned in 2.1 and presented in a more clearly arranged table in 3.2.



## 3 DATA & METHOD

*Venus Boyz* is a documentary by the Swiss filmmaker Gabriel Baur. She accompanies and interviews members of the drag king scene on and off stage in New York. In this undergraduate dissertation, eight extracts, each under one minute of duration, will be analyzed on the basis of the gendered language they contain. The first of the sequences is a drag queen performing for the documentary only, but not on stage. The second sequence is a drag king performance on stage. The third and the fourth sequences are a biological male getting dressed in one sequence, and being dressed in the other, as a drag queen. He is talking for the purposes of the documentary, answering questions that he has been asked by the director. The last four sequences are all one and the same person, a biological female, but in two different gender roles. In the first of those four sequences, the person talks about an incident when waiting for a cab on the street – once as a woman and once as one of her male stage characters. The last two sequences are this same person talking, again once in the role of a female and once in the role of a male, but these last sequences are not connected thematically as the preceding two are. The eight sequences have been selected for the representative quality of the linguistic gender behavior observed in previous research. The gender performances in these sequences range between male and female and include possibilities along the male-female continuum. The gender identities have the same range as well. This range has been chosen to see how language manages to construct a perception of gender that is not only male or female, but also something between.

### 3.1 Data

All individuals whose speech will be analyzed in chapter 4 are briefly introduced by their real name and that of their drag persona, their sexuality, and their personal position on the issue of gender. Physical appearance will also be commented on if it appears to be a significant statement on the gender issue. If known, a note is added on the choice of their drag persona as well as on their decision to perform drag in general. What they all share is the desire to entertain an audience, the joy of entertaining, and to parody existing gender

roles. They all form part of the drag king (and queen) scene in New York and many of them are friends or acquaintances.

**\*Anonymous**

This first sequence presents the speech of a male in drag. It is assumed that he is homosexual. His drag queen persona is wearing a blond wig. The wig has bleached hair with roots showing, which gently ironizes the drag queen he performs. The person in this sequence interprets the binary gender behavior of the Western culture he lives in as a universal wish to conform (universal, that is, for the aforementioned Western world he lives in). His worldview on the issue of gender behavior corresponds very closely to the difference framework, and he believes that people are socialized into gender-based forms of behavior. He criticizes the consequences of that framework and states that it is the outsiders who, in the end, make what they want of themselves and do not let themselves be pushed into an expected gender role. They are the winners (at least personally) in this system. This can be seen as his motivation for doing drag. Gender, to him, is an undefined concept: “It [gender] is what you make of it” (*Venus Boyz*, 2001).

**\*Shelly Mars – Damian Corson**

Shelly Mars is a homosexual female, although her homosexuality is not explicitly stated but only assumed. She believes that there are many different degrees between the two gender poles, but that society does not allow such differentiation. It is erotic for her to perform as a man. In this sequence, her Drag King persona is Damian Corson, whom she calls “dot-com-digital-guy,” a young man who has a passion for film and poetry.

**\*Zanthy Preston – Queen Bee Luscious**

Zanthy Preston is a male African American who performs in the Drag Queen persona of Luscious. Although his comment on line 10 of the second sequence (see 4.2) suggests he may be attracted to Mildred and could thus verbally indicate heterosexuality, his overall appearance suggests homosexuality. Also his statement “gay mean happy” in combination with the comment “[a]s long as you’re not bothering nobody [...] you do what you want” indicate him as being homosexual and as having experienced hostility for this reason. The choice of the name of his female alter ego is an unmistakable indicator of female attractiveness.

### **\*Mildred Gerestant – Dréd Gerestant**

Mildred is a female homosexual African American who performs as a drag king. Dréd is her masculine alter ego. She says that “Everybody has a masculine and a feminine side but not everybody chooses to explore the other side” (*Venus Boyz*, 2001). She herself does want to explore both her sides; she wants to experience them according to how she feels at the moment: It is impossible for her to put herself into one category or the other because her gender identity is very fluid. Likewise, her performance includes a mixing of genders, for example by showing some cleavage in a drag king performance. She states that drag kings make fun of the characters they play. Nonetheless, Dréd seems to be less of a parody of the male images she has in her mind than a side in her that has become a character she really likes and that has helped her to like herself better. In the sequences in which her speech is analyzed for its gender features, she talks twice as Mildred, and twice as Dréd. Dréd in this case is not a stage performance, and thus may be considered a milder performance of a masculine gender identity. She is made up fully in drag, but she is not “officially” performing. Nonetheless, she is Dréd at this point and not Mildred, although Dréd’s masculinity does not come across as strongly as it does when she is performing on stage.

## **3.2 Method**

The chosen extracts were transcribed from the screen, with the same standards for transcription that Thorsten Schröter used for his article *Quantity and Quality in Screen Translation* being applied (Schröter, 2003: 106). The German subtitles were copied as they were displayed on the screen. The spoken English original version accounts for everything that is uttered. Punctuation was added to reconstruct the natural flow of speech for the reader, and the generally accepted symbols to mark paralinguistic features such as intonation or non-verbal utterances were used.

The symbols used are specified in the following: A question mark indicates questions and a rising or high ending intonation; a full stop indicates an ended thought, usually implied when the intonation of the voice falls; a comma indicates a short hesitation but continuation of the same thought; a semi-colon indicates that a thought has been stopped and is followed by a new thought. If a word is not completed, this is indicated with a dash;

if the speaker pauses, this is indicated by one or more dashes in a bracket, depending on the length of the pause. The length of one dash can be determined by seconds, but for simplicity's sake, one dash marks a short pause, two dashes mark a medium pause, and three dashes mark a long pause in this dissertation. Where the speech of a sequence is interrupted on the DVD, this is indicated according by standard ellipsis ([...]). The reason for printing a sequence as a linear monologue in this dissertation although it is not, strictly speaking, the same on the DVD is that sometimes during a selected sequence, other material fades in and out for artistic or supportive reasons. When easily definable gestures or mimicry was involved and this was relevant for the creation of gender, this has been indicated in brackets.

Personal pronouns referring to the speaker indicate the performed gender. Should that gender not clearly be male or female, the personal pronoun refers to the speaker's biological sex.

The length of each analyzed sequence is indicated before the analysis itself by the precise time (hh:mm:ss) of its appearance on the DVD, marking the time it starts and ends. The dissertation will first present an analysis of the spoken English language of a sequence and, immediately after, an analysis of the German subtitles of that same sequence. Such a scheme facilitates a comparison between the two versions. The analysis will be based on the gendered speech features first introduced in 2.1. The constituents of the model of analysis are indicated according to their grammatical function in the table below.

Table 1: Male and Female Speech Features

Female speech	Male speech
<u>Lexis:</u> -differentiated vocabulary in trivial areas -weaker swear words -adjectives evoking frivolity and triviality -more intensifying adverbs	<u>Lexis:</u> -stronger swear words -"neutral" adjectives
<u>Syntax:</u> -tag question -hedges -subordinate clauses -average length of sentences -introductory adverbial clauses -standard language norms	<u>Syntax:</u> -colloquial language -dialect -elliptic sentences -directives
-more polite -minimal reactions to show interest -cooperative conversational style	-locatives (factual) -relating to quantity (factual) -I-focus

-more personal -relate to emotions	-judgmental utterances
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Even though the focus of this dissertation is on language conveying gender, notes on paralingual features are made as well. The reason for this is to explore, by comparison, how important the role of language itself is when gender is constructed.

### 3.3 Note on Subtitling and Translation of Gendered Language

Subtitling is one form of Audio Visual Transfer (AVT) (Gottlieb, 1992:162-164). The type of subtitling realized in *Venus Boyz* is interlingual subtitling. It integrates two kinds of transfers: From oral to written lines and from one language to another. Subtitling is subject to certain constraints due to the media it is functioning in. Henrik Gottlieb divides those constraints up into two categories: Formal (quantitative) constraints and textual (qualitative) constraints (Gottlieb, 1992: 164-5). The formal constraints concern the factors of space and time. Spatial constraints are related to the size of the (television) screen combined with a font that is still legible to the viewer (Gottlieb, 1992: 164). Consequently, two rows of 35 characters each cannot be exceeded. This limit reduces the freedom of a translator and limits the possibilities of achieving adequacy. The reading speed of the viewers must also be taken into account, since it is considered slower than the talking speed of the characters to be subtitled. The frequency of the subtitles following each other is thus also restricted. As a result of both the space and the time factor, the subtitles reduce the dialogue quantitatively by about one third in most European television subtitling departments (Gottlieb, 1992: 164). The textual constraints are concerned with where and when the subtitles enter the screen, as well as the adequate reflexion of the dialogue, which includes style, speed, syntax, and effect (Gottlieb,1992: 165). All together, the translator is faced with the particular difficulty of transmitting the oral dialogue of language A to the written lines of language B. There are several types of strategies at hand, namely expansion, paraphrase, transfer, imitation, transcription, dislocation, condensation, decimation, deletion, and resignation (Gottlieb, 1992: 166). For an explanation of each strategy, see table 2 (based on Gottlieb, 1992: 166). It lies in the nature of subtitling that the strategy of condensation, or in other words of condensed, concise expression, is the most commonly used.

Table 2: Types of Strategies for Subtitling

Type of Strategy	Character of Translation
Expansion	Expanded expression, adequate rendering (culture-specific references etc.)
Paraphrase	Altered expression, adequate rendering (non-visualized language-specific phenomena)
Transfer	Full expression, adequate rendering ('neutral' discourse – slow tempo)
Imitation	Identical expression, equivalent rendering (proper nouns, international greetings etc.)
Transcription	Anomalous expression, adequate rendering (non-standard speech etc.)
Dislocation	Differing expression, adjusted content (musical or visualized language-specific phenomena)
Condensation	Condensed expression, concise rendering (normal speech)
Decimation	Abridged expression, reduced content (fast speech of some importance)
Deletion	Omitted expression, no verbal content (fast speech of less importance)
Resignation	Differing expression, distorted content ('untranslatable' elements)

Another important aspect in considering the subtitles of the documentary *Venus Boyz* is that of transferring gendered language. Keith Harvey has addressed this topic in his article *Translating Camp Talk: Gay Identities and Cultural Transfer* (1998). He mentions those difficulties specific to the translation of gender identities which a translator is faced with, such as the close examination and knowledge of

*identities and communities* predicated upon same-sex object choice in the target culture; [...] the existence or absence of an established *gay literature* in the target culture; [...] the stated *gay objectives* [...] inherent in the undertaking of the translation and publication of the translation (for example, whether the text is to be part of a gay list of novels); [...] the *sexual identity* of the translator and his or her relation to a gay subcultural group, its identities, codes and political project (Harvey, 1998: 296).

Harvey's article examined speech in fictional dialogues of purely male gay characters. Yet, because of the triangle of homosexuality, camp, and drag, it touches on some of the same issues as those covered in this undergraduate dissertation. The languages of his study are English and French, both being once the source and once the target language. Even though the languages of study in this dissertation are English and German, the creation of gender identity and the translation of this gender identity into another language is undeniably relevant to the subtitling of *Venus Boyz* as well. Harvey cites examples of linguistic features creating femininity, such as emphatics and hyperbole (Harvey, 1998:

299), that need to be rendered adequately in the target language to have an equivalent perlocutionary effect on the listener. In Harvey's article, the ultimate aim of this effect is the creation of a homosexual identity through camp. Although camp and drag are closely intertwined, this undergraduate dissertation is more concerned with the effect of gender creation and performance. Camp may well be a constituent of that performance, but the focus shifts from camp to the type of gender identity that is created. Translation from this point of view may not be equally important to the aforementioned difficulties specific to the translation of camp. Harvey's investigation of the translation concerns the homosexual context. The creation and translation of sexuality is what is important. This dissertation investigates how gender identity is created and translated. In both cases, gendered language plays a role in creating an identity, because the issue of gender is important for both identities, although the result achieved with the use of such language differs.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Anonymous

*Venus Boyz*, Sequence 1; Time: 00:13:48 – 00:14:01

a) English spoken version

- (01) Well, I'd like to stay hang out with the drag kings all night long,  
(02) but I'm off to L.A. to see Hugh Hefner,  
(03) to be the first drag queen ever pictured in Playboy magazine.  
(04) But I wanna tell all those hot sexy studs tonight:  
(05) Good luck (-) drag kings. You rock New York.  
[blows kiss to the camera]

In this sequence, there is little to indicate one or the other gender by means of the locutionary act. Femininity is performed mainly through intonation and gesture, and through semantics. The drag queen's voice is soft-sounding and conveys sympathy and care.

Semantically, line one explicitly expresses the wish to share something with the audience. It is a means by which she establishes common ground with her audience, which could also be seen as her conversational partner. The expressive function of the illocutionary act in line one implies consideration for others, in contrast to the I-focus typical of male speech. In line two, she introduces the real life persona of Hugh Hefner, editor of Playboy magazine, and line three continues the Playboy theme: She announces that she will be the first drag queen to be published in this magazine. These two lines thus imply what she already announces through her looks: She is the stereotypical sexy woman with bleached hair and big breasts; a woman stereotypical men are attracted to and want to see in a magazine like Playboy. The nature of her aspirations serves to please men. In line four, the words "hot sexy studs" create gender on the lexical level, since the preceding adjectives and the word "stud" connote compliments and attraction expressed by a female about males.



b) German subtitles

- (01) Ich würde gerne die ganze Nacht mit den Drag Kings abhängen,
- (02) aber ich fahre nach L.A. zu Hugh Hefner
- (03) um die erste Drag Queen im Playboy zu werden!
- (04) All den heissen Hengsten hier sage ich:
- (05) “Viel Glück, Drag Kings, ihr lasst New York beben!”

Because of the short length of the spoken text of this sequence, none of the strategies specific to subtitling had to be applied here. The German subtitles are an almost literal but adequate translation of the English version. Thus, the effect and the creation of gender are very close to the English. The illocutionary act in line one, containing an instance of the expressive function also found in the English version, is a little modified by the word “abhängen.” It even loses some of the gender-identity performance, because while “hang out” is a very common expression for individuals of most gender, status and age, the German “abhängen” has an air of being somewhat artificially constructed. It also connotes the slang of teenagers, and not the speech of a superficial woman in her twenties, which is the character the drag queen seeks to parody. The German translation of line one is too marked. Line two and three also introduce Playboy magazine, stressing the speaker’s attractiveness and connoting sex in a manner identical to the English version. In line three, the explicit mention of “being pictured” in the English version is lacking. However, the perlocutionary effect does not suffer as a result, since the audience will still be able to imagine her picture in Playboy magazine. Line four translates the “hot sexy studs” as “heissen Hengsten,” leaving out the “sexy.” This is probably done for space purposes, and because time and reading constraints precluded the use of a second line. Semantically, both denotations are covered in the German “heissen.” A further reason to not translate the “sexy” may have been to maintain the alliteration in the source text. The illocutionary expression attempts to flatter the audience, and although the expression is not as idiomatic as the English is, the effect succeeds.

## 4.2 Shelly Mars –Damian Corson

*Venus Boyz*, Sequence 2; Time: 00:15:20 – 00:16:03

a) English spoken version

(01) My name's Damian Corson.

(02) I'm an independent (-) digital (-) filmmaker.

[...]

(03) Film.

(04) I'm makin' a film.

(05) I'm makin' a' independent film.

(06) I'm a filmmaker.

(07) I'm writin' a film.

(08) I'm writin' a' independent film.

(09) Read my script you idiot!

This sequence shows a number of markers of male speech. The whole sequence is dominated by self-importance shown through I-focus phrases. Each phrase (except for the key-word utterance in line three) contains either the personal pronoun “I” or the possessive pronoun “my”. Line nine is loaded with male speech markers in every word: the imperative “read”, followed by the possessive pronoun, and then “you idiot,” which presents a judgment of the audience. The whole sequence is very repetitive; only lines one, two, and nine introduce new information. As far as pronunciation is concerned, the sequence is also marked with what is considered a feature of male speech. All –ing forms become –in’: *makin'* in line four and five; *writin'* in line seven and eight. The language used in this short text is therefore very colloquial, which is further supported by the excessive repetition that gives the impression that Damian is speaking as he thinks, without caring about the form of his utterances. This sloppiness can also be interpreted as rudeness towards the audience, thus presenting another marker of the negative judgment the speaker makes of them. All Damian's sentences are either very short, or elliptical, as in line three.

Intonation and mimicry also play an important role in constructing Damian. The word “film” is given special emphasis through the slowness and prolongation of its locution. Five out of nine phrases end with the word “film,” adding further stress to the word. “Film” or “filmmaker” relate to Damian himself –what he is or what he does. Therefore, this particular stress on the word can be seen as an I-focus achieved through intonation. Damian’s mimicry reveals self-importance and arrogance. He appears to feel almost revulsion at the audience, with a clear implication that he detests all people other than himself. This adds to the I-focus and the judgment of the audience, both of which serve to further construct masculinity in the way described. The over-stereotyping of these character traits is used to humorous ends so as to ridicule the male gender’s self-importance. The perlocutionary effect is achieved: The audience laughs at Damian, the man.

b) German subtitles

- (01) Ich heisse Damian Corson.
- (02) Ich bin ein unabhängiger digitaler Filmmacher...  
[...]
- (03) Film...
- (04) Ich mache gerade einen Film.
- (05) Ich mache einen unabhängigen Film.
- (06) Ich bin Filmmacher.
- (07) Ich schreibe gerade einen Film
- (08) Ich schreibe einen Independent-Film.
- (09) Lest mein Drehbuch, ihr Idioten!

As in the previous one, this second sequence also contains only sentences and phrases short enough to fit on one line each without the need to use the subtitling strategy of condensation, with the result that the semantic meaning of the English version is contained fully in the German subtitles. Because it was possible to translate this sequence with Damian quite literally and make it remain equivalent at the same time, the gender features on the locutionary level match their original. The German subtitles also contain numerous

phrases with I-focus, and the same number of personal pronouns. Also the imperative “Lest” in line nine and the exclamation “ihr Idioten!” at the very end are as gender loaded as the English original. However, the subtitles fail to translate the colloquial endings of the verbs in lines four, five, seven, and eight. The German version of these verbs is completely unmarked, following the standard spelling of the conjugated forms of the verbs, even though the option of abbreviating them with an apostrophe (mach’; schreib’) would have been available. Therefore, on these four occasions, the translation lacks the gender markings that the English version contains. Considering the German’s absence of the channels available to the spoken version, such as intonation, stress, or prolongation, the whole sequence with Damian is much more gendered in the English version than in the text of the German subtitles. The fact that the audience sees his mimicry and hears the aforementioned vocal features may compensate for this to some extent.

### **4.3 Zanthony Preston – Queen Bee Luscious**

*Venus Boyz*, Sequence 3; Time: 00:29:12 – 00:29:22

a) English spoken version

- (01) So she’s like, uhm, “excuse me, excuse me.”
- (02) So, I was like (–) “yes?” (covering lower half of face with hand)
- (03) But I had my mustache,
- (04) so I didn’t want her to see my face.
- (05) So she was like, uhm: “excuse me?”
- (06) I say: “yes?” She say:
- (07) “Oh, how you doin’?” You know, ‘cause she see
- (08) that I was a man, so –

Here, Luscious is in the process of getting ready for his drag performance. He is wearing women’s clothes and make up. But the transformation into his drag persona is not yet complete, and he is not performing. He is telling the interviewer about the time when he and Mildred met in his natural mode of speech. Other than the “so she’s like and so I was

like...,” which, partly through its hedging, has overtones of teenage girl talk, there is not much within the text itself to mark one gender or the other. Moreover, a certain femininity is evoked by the gestures of his hands and by his playfulness. Since he is still more man than woman visually, this femininity is perceived as a marker of sexuality rather than of gender.

Prior to the indicated sequence, Mildred has commented on his appearance: “... in front of me there was this beautiful ass.” Zanthony’s flirtatiousness could be interpreted as a reaction to this compliment. His mimicry indicates both amusement and joy at what has been said and at his own narration. The extensive hand gestures underline what is being said and evoke a sort of humorous artificiality. Although the sum of Zanthony’s gestures do not necessarily mark the feminine gender, they do mark a variation of the stereotypical masculine gender, and although perceived as a man without doubts, his manners do not conform to stereotypical male behavior. As described in Thomas A. King’s *Performing Akimbo* or Susan Sonntag’s *Notes on Camp*, the non-polar, and therefore unbiological, unnatural, and artificial, or marked, position of gender performed by Zanthony presents a shade that is read as homosexuality. Narrating the event of him and Mildred meeting in a very theatrical manner (performing what they both said in the way they said it) adds to the perception of him as artificial, and ultimately as homosexual.

In her article on African American drag queens, Rusty Barrett (1997: 321-323) points out that they do not usually use African American Vernacular (AAV), but rather attempt to talk like white, middle-class women. Zanthony may not be performing his female persona in this sequence, but he is performing a gender shade that is different from, and perceived as more feminine than, the one following. Here he does almost never use AAV, whereas in the subsequent sequence he does. Contrary to the African American drag queen performances described by Barrett, Zanthony does not speak formally or like a white, middle-class woman. The reason for this may again be the degree of gender he is performing. The ambiguity of his costume at this point is underpinned by the fact that he is not clearly speaking like a woman nor like a man. He is speaking camp.

b) German subtitles

- (01) Sie sagte: “Entschuldige.”
- (02) Und ich: “Ja?”
- (03) Sie sollte
- (04) Meinen Schnurrbart nicht sehen
- (05) Sie sagte: “Entschuldige.”
- (06) Und ich: “Ja?” Und sie:
- (07) “Oh, wie geht’s?”, da sie sah, dass
- (08) ich ein Mann bin.

As seen in the analysis of the English version of this sequence, much of the construction of gender and sexuality is realized through paraverbal features such as voice, mimicry and gesture. The German subtitles cannot account for any of this, only the audience’s awareness of these features can compensate for the unavoidable loss of identity creation in the transfer from oral English text to written German text.

Other features marking gender and sexuality in the English version are Zanthony’s use of AAV. Much of the AAV used involves pronunciation features, but in line seven, the presence of an unconjugated verb in “cause she see (that I was a man)” makes a sociolectical marker visible in the locutionary act itself. The German does not account for this in any way, the translator using strategy number nine – of deletion – or number ten – resignation (it is not clear which of the two was used, see table 2 above, p. 26). Reasons for this may well be the cultural difference and the fact that the German-speaking world does not have a black population comparable to that of United States, with no equivalent to AAV existing in German. Also, the numerous hedges rendering Zanthony’s speech somewhat agitated are not accounted for in the subtitles. All in all, the German on its own shows no gender or sexuality marker other than the explicit statement in line seven and eight “da sie sah, dass ich ein Mann bin.” However, except for the aforementioned problem in line seven, it is the transfer from oral to written text that prevents these features from being translated into the target language, partly because the features are of a paraverbal nature, and partly because of space constraints.

a) English original

- (01) Gay mean happy.
- (02) 's long as you're not bothering nobody (–) hey, you do what you want.
- (03) You 'bout to go into town now (–) and start (–) a riot?
- (04) A good one that is.
- (05) Well, I got the pussy boots on.
- (06) The kings are coming along
- (07) Dréd is - she's a powerful one.
- (08) She keeps me on my feet, you know?
- (09) Oh, we good friends, good good friends.
- (10) She thought she'd be my girlfriend, unfortunately (–) I was a man,
- (11) so we became good friends.

In lines one to five, Zanthony's appearance is the same as in the previous sequence. In lines six to eight, he is not visible. Finally, in the last three lines, he is fully dressed in drag. Regardless of the interplay of speech and image, he is throughout perceived as more masculine than in the sequence before, when his looks were consistently less female. Thus, the perception of masculinity has much to do with the sound of his voice. Compared to the previous sequence, the pitch of his voice drops and is calmer than before. Voice and a complete absence of gestures lead to an unmarked performance which, as we have seen, indicates the unmarked norm, masculinity, or indeed heterosexual masculinity. Only the female clothes, wig, and make up lend Zanthony an air suggesting that the perceived heterosexual masculinity may not be for real. This time it is not only the paraverbal features that create this perception, but also markers within the text itself. Lexically, "start a riot" in line three and "I was a man" in line ten hint (in the case of the former) or explicitly state (in the latter case) that the speaker is male. The adverb "unfortunately", possibly feeding the argument that Zanthony neglects his masculinity semantically, relates to Mildred's point of view and does not actually detract from his maleness. The unconjugated verb in line one ("Gay mean happy"), the use of "nobody" instead of "anybody," and the absence of a verb in line nine ("we good friends") demonstrate the use of AAV. The abbreviations in line one ("s long") and two ("bout") reveal Zanthony's

colloquial speech. All in all, even though the pun in the locutionary act of the first line (“Gay mean happy”) almost explicitly identifies Zanthony as a homosexual, his speech renders his identity as that of a heterosexual male.

b) German subtitles

- (01) “Gay” heisst glücklich.
- (02) Solange du keinen störst, kannst du tun, was du willst.
- (03) Gehst du jetzt in die Stadt und legst los?
- (04) Ich hab die Pussy-Stiefel an.
- (05) Die Kings sind am Kommen
- (06) Dréd ist eine Wucht.
- (07) Sie hält mich auf Trab, versethst du?
- (08) Wir sind echt gute Freunde.
- (09) Sie wollte meine Freundin sein, aber leider war ich ein Mann
- (10) So wurden wir Freunde.

The German subtitles of this section tend to be unmarked by gender. The semantic content remains the same as in the English version, but the sociolectal features from the spoken version fail to be translated. However, since the audience will see the paraverbal features marking masculinity and his calmness, and hear his voice over the subtitles, he will be perceived as more masculine than in the sequence before, even by German speakers. Nevertheless, the actual subtitles do not contribute to the construction of gender. With the exception of line nine, which contains the words “[...] war ich ein Mann,” they are kept neutral and ungendered

#### **4.4 Mildred Gérestant – Dréd Gérestant**

Sequence 5 consists of Dréd talking about an incident when trying to catch a cab and about the difficulties he experienced because of his race. Sequence 6 portrays Mildred talking about the same incident. The two scenes are set up in a very similar way. Both Dréd and Mildred are lying on the couch as they talk about their experiences, Dréd is



facing one side and Mildred the other, with the two scenes blending into each other. These two sequences will not be analyzed individually but in comparison.

*Venus Boyz*, Sequence 5; Time: 00:37:47 – 00:38:11

a) English spoken version

- (01) You know, the first time Dréd was tryin' – I was tryin' to catch a cab,
- (02) it was nighttime
- (03) and uhm, just waiting for a cab,
- (04) it took like a good (–) hour.
- (05) If I caught a cab and
- (06) and this (–) white woman comes in front of me and is trying to catch a cab
- (07) and I'm like: "look (?) you don't see I'm staying here tryin' to catch a cab?"
- (08) And she's like: "Oh, I'm sorry man, I'm sorry man."
- (09) And then she walked away,
- (10) (–) but it's just very frustrating, so –

*Venus Boyz*, Sequence 6; Time 38:13 – 38:29

a) English spoken version

- (01) And so that felt really bad
- (02) when I, you know, realized that it was, you know,
- (03) the stereotypes they have in their heads
- (04) of black men,
- (05) like they won't pay
- (06) or they'll rob 'em or something like that, which is really stupid and –
- (07) So sometimes it's really hard for me to – (–) for Dréd
- (08) to catch a cab,
- (09) and even as a woman
- (10) I experienced that too at times.

In both of these sequences, the blending of the images of Dréd and Mildred strongly suggests that her identities are not clearly separated. This is further underlined by lexical mistakes made by the speaker. In the first line of sequence 5, Dréd, already visually in the masculine role, starts talking about Dréd in the third person. A correction is added in the same line and, as the name of Dréd is used in the first person, the speaker's voice changes. It becomes deeper and more masculine: The biological female has transformed into the male Dréd now. In sequence 6, Mildred mixes up her personas briefly in line seven, but other than her correcting this immediately afterwards, there are no further gender-related changes. The pitch of voice in the two sequences, however, is very different. Dréd talks in a deeper voice and sounds more determined, whereas Mildred talks in a very soft way and in a higher tonal range. Other striking paralingual features are the gestural hand movements used by both Dréd and Mildred, though there are clear differences between these. Dréd's hands operate individually. Their movements can be described as the typical gestures hip hoppers use. Mildred's hand gestures can be described as a sort of play between two hands: They roll around each other and they touch each other. Her movements are much less hasty than Dréd's, adding to her softer appearance.

There are other strong differences between the two sequences. Dréd's narration is marked by almost complete absence of hedges, whereas Mildred hedges a total of four times; twice in line two, once in line five and once in line six. Dréd's hedge in line three ("uhm") is much less stressed than the "you know"s in Mildred's speech, making her hedging much more obvious, while Dréd is hardly seen to hedge. The pace of speech differs as well. Dréd talks faster and without hesitations, lending his speech a more determined air than Mildred's, which is slower. Together with the soft-sounding voice, this slower pace gives her narration a notion of chattiness. Dréd pauses two times in his speech (lines four and six), each time with rhetoric effect, to stress a particular detail of his narration. Mildred pauses once in her speech in line seven, but this is caused by her confusing Dréd and Mildred. These two different reasons for pausing add to the perception of Dréd's greater resolution and of Mildred speaking more randomly.

Dréd abbreviates all -ing endings in his speech, which can be seen as colloquial use of typically male language patterns. There are no comparable -ing forms in Mildred's speech. There, "them" becomes "'em" in line six, but this is not necessarily a marker of colloquial language, since elision of this kind is very common and natural.

There is also a difference in the grammatical correctness of Dréd's and Mildred's speech. As the gender features imply, Dréd's speech shows syntactical mistakes, whereas Mildred talks in grammatically correct language.

When talking about the feelings this incident evoked, they use different expressions. Dréd calls it "frustrating," and Mildred says that it "felt really bad." Frustration implies some form of aggression, whereas "feeling really bad" suggests merely sadness. Dréd's lexical choice is therefore clearly more indicative of the male gender, Mildred's of the female gender. Also interesting is the time when these two expressions appear. Dréd waits until the very end (line ten) to add the comment that he experienced the incident as frustrating. Mildred, on the other hand, expresses her emotions at the very beginning, in line one, with rhematic focus on the words "felt really bad."

b) German subtitles (Sequence 5)

- (01) Als Dréd..., als ich mal versuchte,
- (02) ein Taxi zu nehmen, es war nachts
- (03) hat allein
- (04) das Warten eine gute Stunde gedauert.
- (05) Jedes Taxi bremste
- (06) und fuhr dann weiter
- (07) Dann 'ne weisse Frau, stellt sich
- (08) vor mich, und ich: "Ich warte hier!"
- (09) Und sie: "Tut mir leid, Mann."
- (10) Und geht davon.
- (11) Aber es ist
- (12) einfach sehr frustrierend.

b) German subtitles (Sequence 6)

- (01) Mir ging es echt schlecht
- (02) als ich merkte,
- (03) was es für Stereotype
- (04) über männliche Schwarze gibt,
- (05) dass sie nicht zahlen oder
- (06) stehlen oder solchen Unsinn.
- (07) Manchmal ist es schwer für Dréd,
- (08) ein Taxi zu kriegen,
- (09) und sogar als Frau,
- (10) hab ich das erlebt.

The translation of these two sequences by Dréd and Mildred manages to include some of the gender features of the source text. As in the English version, the illocutionary expressives in line twelve and one respectively adequately translate the notion of the masculine gender in sequence 5 and the feminine gender in sequence 6 because of the word choice and their position in the monologues as a whole. What is more, the subtitles of Dréd's speech are more factual than those of Mildred's speech. The sentences in sequence 5 are shorter and the text comprises five sentences. These are not always syntactically well-formed but rather a telegram-like enumeration of what had happened, which achieves equivalence to the English version. Mildred's speech contains only two sentences distributed over ten lines, which makes them longer than Dréd's. The translation also accounts for the difference in the grammatical accuracy of the two sentences. Moreover, Mildred's longer sentences are better formed.

Dréd's use of "in" for the -ing forms is somewhat compensated for by the technique of using the elliptical "ne weisse Frau" in line seven. All the words in the German subtitles of Mildred's speech are spelled correctly. Her speech appears more accurate, and thus accords with the gender features indicated on p. 24f as marking femininity. In line six, she says "solchen Unsinn," a rather weak expression considering the implications of the prejudice and racism she experiences. This expression adds a notion of triviality to her statement, which again could be interpreted as modesty or the unwillingness to express the true emotional effect which that incident had on her.

a) English original version

- (01) A lota people think that Dréd have all the women
- (02) Every night a woman and all that
- (03) But it's not even like that I'm – I'm very shy
- (04) and Dréd is shy too, but
- (05) Dréd is very respectful, I feel.
- (06) Like I go I perform and the ladies all screamin'
- (07) and sometimes they throw their bras at me
- (08) and stuff (laughs), but uhm,
- (09) but that's as far as it goes pretty much at the shows.

As in the preceding sequence, this one shows Mildred hedging: “and all that” in line two, “like” at the beginning of line six, “and stuff” in line eight, and “pretty much” in line nine. The “I feel” in line five does not refer to her feelings as such, but it does qualify the objective truth of her statement that Dréd is respectful, which could also be interpreted as another hedge. Mildred overtly states that she is shy in line three, by which she admits a weakness. The I-focus of this sentence is thus relativized, since the illocutionary force of this utterance is not self-importance but the contrary. Her speech is very colloquial in this sequence. Her voice is again soft sounding and shows a wide range of pitch: In lines three and four, for example, her voice rises to lend weight to the illocutionary force of what she says, by means of which she plays down the assumption that others might have of Dréd.

b) German subtitles

- (01) Viele denken, dass Dréd alle Frauen
- (02) hat, jede Nacht eine andere,
- (03) aber so ist es nicht, ich bin
- (04) sehr schüchtern und Dréd auch.
- (05) Dréd ist vor allem sehr respektvoll.
- (06) Bei Auftritten kreischen die Frauen,
- (07) manchmal werfen sie
- (08) BHs nach mir und so was.
- (09) Aber viel weiter geht es nicht in den Shows

In the spoken version of sequence 7, female gender identity is created through acoustic elements and the use of the female speech feature of hedging. Naturally, the acoustic elements cannot be transferred to the translation of the subtitles. The hedges are also substantially reduced, only line eight containing a hedge (“und so was”). The “I feel” from line five of the spoken version is not represented in the German at all, which makes the statement in the same line of the subtitles one without qualification or any trace of hedging. There is a clear loss here of some of the aspects of feminine speech. All in all, it can be said that the German subtitles of sequence 7 are not as gendered as their English spoken version, partially because of the transfer from audio-visual to visual only, but also because the speech acts indicating the female gender have not been translated.

*Venus Boyz*, Sequence 8, Time: 00:45:13 – 00:45:29

a) English spoken version

- (01) Yeah, what does masculine mean, what does feminine mean?
- (02) One – one of my dolls, yo.
- (03) She matching me today, we’re wearin’ the green today,
- (04) You know what I’m saying?
- (05) This beautiful feminine doll.
- (06) Spiritual thing o’ my peoples.
- (07) Gave ‘er a little bell.

Sequence 8 shows Dréd speaking again. As when talking about the cab incident, he is lying on the couch, fully dressed in drag. This time, however, he seems more absent-minded and less concentrated. This can be seen by his elliptical way of speaking: Lines five to seven seem to be mere outbursts of thoughts expressed just as they occur to him. Such unorganized speech behavior has already been observed in sequence 2, with Damian Corson. Although Dréd does not appear to be revolted by his audience, he does not seem very interested in achieving proper communication with his listener, who is in this case Gabriel Baur, the filmmaker. He seems absorbed by his own thoughts, and is almost talking to himself.

The locutionary “yo” in line two and the “you know what I’m saying?” in line four indicate gender and culture at the same time, because as a woman, Mildred does not make use of AAV to this extent. Dréd’s speech thus categorizes him as an African American male. The absence of a conjugated verb in line three can be interpreted the same way, and the plural “s” in “peoples” also adds to the chain of AAV male speech markers. The abbreviated –ing form in line three, the short “o” and the abbreviation “er” are not necessarily sociolectal markers, but they do count as colloquial speech, and thus as features of masculine speech. Due to ambiguous pronunciation in the last line, it is possible that instead of “gave ‘er a little bell,” Dréd actually just says “gave a little bell.” In that case, he would use an elliptical sentence structure that also indicates masculinity.

b) German subtitles

- (01) Was heisst maskulin, was feminin...
- (02) Eine meiner Puppen...
- (03) Wir tragen heute beide Grün
- (04) Diese schöne, feminine Puppe...
- (05) Etwas spirituelles von meinem Volk.
- (06) Sie hat ein Glöckchen

As has been seen earlier, the translation of AAV into German presents a problem. As a result of the combination of male and AAV indicators, the male speech features of the subtitles of this sequence are significantly reduced. The subtitles completely ignore the

expression “you know what I’m saying,” and they only produce well-formed locutionary utterances without any coloring of identity. The only feature that has been transferred to the subtitles is the elliptic sentence structure. The broken thoughts are marked with “...” and capitalization of the first word of the subsequent phrases.

In this chapter it was shown that the speech of all four protagonists contained some of the identified gender features. Sometimes it was also the absence of the features of the opposite gender that indicated gender, like for example in the first example of the drag queen in 4.1. In 4.2, the I-focus was the predominant feature indicating masculinity in the speech of Damian Corson. The use of colloquial language, AAV in particular, by Zanthony Preston in 4.3 created the masculine gender. Finally, in 4.4, Mildred and her male alter ego Dréd performed gender through language features such as emotional or colloquial speech. Next to the language features, other elements played an important role in constructing and performing a gender identity. Their importance in relation to the language features will be examined in the next chapter of this dissertation.



## 5 DISCUSSION

To create a certain identity of themselves, people will consciously and unconsciously perform that identity. Language is one form of performance. The conventions of linguistic behavior of men and women are drawn from for the performance of the felt and desired gender identity of a person. The aforementioned conventions are based on the natural speech behavior of the genders as well as on the ideologies of gendered speech behavior within a society. A number of speech features marking masculinity or femininity are listed in section 3.2. In the analysis of the speech of four people appearing in the documentary *Venus Boyz*, several of those features have been shown to indicate gender: The performance of conventions has created a gender identity. Depending on how often or how obvious features of one or the other gender were used, the speakers were perceived as more masculine or more feminine.

The first person whose speech was analyzed was that of a drag queen. If it was her speech that created femininity, than it was more the absence of male speech features than the presence of female speech features. Mainly though, the desired effect of femininity was achieved through paraverbal features: The sound of her voice and her appearance.

The second person whose speech was analyzed is Damian Corson. The most outstanding feature of his speech was the frequent use of I-focus. However, paraverbal features such as mimicry and intonation were equally important in constructing masculinity in his performance. Some of those paraverbal features could be interpreted as the basis of the gender features indicated, for example his mimicry, which implies additional I-focus, or the judgment passed on the audience. But even if some of the implications of the speech features concord with the interpretation of paraverbal behavior, the chief factor pointing to the masculine gender was not the speech features themselves. In the case of Damian Corson, only in combination with paraverbal features did gendered language manage to construct a gender identity.

Zanthy Preston's speech was analyzed next. As in the preceding examples, Zanthy performs his gender mainly through paraverbal features like his posture and movements. Unlike the other two examples, Zanthy's appearance is ambiguous because he is in the process of changing from his biological sex to his female stage character. Therefore, the listener does not interpret the appearance of feminine speech features as a performance of

femininity, but of sexuality. Zanthony creates a (homo)sexual identity rather than a gender identity. These findings would indicate that paraverbal features are the main indicator for sexuality and gender, and linguistic features play merely a subordinate role in this identity creation and performance. However, when the second sequence of Zanthony's speech is analyzed, although his appearance portrays complete femininity, he is perceived as masculine by the way he speaks. The main indicator for masculinity of femininity in Zanthony's linguistic behavior are the presence or the absence of AAV, while in his paralinguistic behavior is the level of calmness he conveys.

Finally, in the analysis of Mildred and Dréd's speech, calmness and determination are also prime indicators of gender, together with the pitch of voice. Linguistically, it is again the presence or absence of AAV that marks the masculine or the feminine gender.

Generally, most of the findings for the creation of gender through speech are valid for both the English original and the German subtitles. An exception is the use of AAV; there is no socio-linguistic community comparable to the African American speech community in the German-speaking community. AAV thus remains untranslatable. Since the German-speaking audience will receive the paralinguistic elements such as intonation, pitch of voice, mimicry, and gesture to the same degree as an English-speaking audience, the inability of interlingual transfer to account for such elements in the source text is bypassed. A deeper voice accompanying the language of the subtitles – gendered or not – is a type of gender performance that will help create gender in the minds of both English- and German-speaking viewers. In the case of the second sequence with Zanthony Preston, for example, where AAV used is not rendered at all in the target language, it is the paraverbal feature exclusively (a deep, calm, determined voice), that creates gender in the German viewers' mind. It is very likely that the perceived masculinity is the same for both. Here, too, it seems that the paraverbal features are more relevant in gender creation than the actual speech of a person.

Interestingly, much of the material showing the actual on-stage performances of the drag kings on the *Venus Boyz* DVD contains no spoken text other than song lyrics. Most of the time, the drag kings on stage are shown singing or miming, and dancing. Thus, it can be said that the drag kings confirm the greater relevance of paraverbal features in the creation and performance of gender. Their performance of masculinity relies on movement rather than on gendered linguistic conventions. When Esther Newton speaks of the drag queens' verbal virtuosity (Newton, 1979), then this must be one big difference in gender

construction between drag queens and drag kings. It is tempting to hypothesize that the history of drag kings could show a development from more to less verbal performances, reflecting a process of trial and error in the search for the most effective construction of masculinity. It is also possible that the performers intuitively preferred paraverbal channels to create their opposite gender identity. In contrast to the construction of masculinity, it seems that femininity can be performed better through speech. It is open to further research to explore the reasons for this.

Given that the different speech features for men and women do not play such an important role in gender construction, it seems appropriate to question the validity of positing such features in the first place. It is likely that ideology plays a key role in attributing certain speech features to men and others to women.

In the analysis of the English source and the corresponding German subtitles, two languages with similar backgrounds were tested for their translatability of gendered language. Different language pairs may cause other difficulties. In languages where the conventions for both genders are indirect and polite speech, the translator is faced with the decision of either adding gender features to a target language with other conventions or leaving it ungendered. It also must be said that the analysis of gendered language was mostly done for the language of a certain social class. Other social classes may show to have varying gender features, so that the ones established cannot necessarily count as generally valid.

With regard to translation, the transfer of gendered language from spoken English to written German subtitles does not present problems very different from general translational difficulties. The two language cultures are similar enough in their gender ideologies for no in-depth study or knowledge of the gender culture to be needed for the adequate transfer of such texts. The situation would be different, however, in the case of translating sexual identity from English into German, as Harvey (1998) has convincingly demonstrated (see page 26). When the prime aim of identity construction is centered on the homosexual contexts (which may also be the case for translation of drag kings' and queens' speech, but not in the sequences selected for analysis in this dissertation), knowledge of that social community in both the target and the source language is essential. Gender identity or gendered language will play a big role in such identity construction, but it is not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is the construction of a sexual identity.

Finally, with regards to the differences of speech of men and women, a shortcoming of this dissertation should be mentioned. Ulchida (1990) criticizes Tannen and Maltz and Borker for only studying the speech of same-sex peer groups. That criticism may also apply to analysis in this dissertation, which does not account for holistic gendered speech behavior. The speakers' conversational partners are either a large audience or the interviewer. No real conversation takes place, and their speech behavior is not subject to any external influences that would occur naturally in discourse – be it in same-sex or mixed-sex groups. The speech behavior analyzed here, then, only holds for the specific case of monologue, my results should therefore be judged only in this light.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This undergraduate dissertation has investigated the use of gendered language by drag kings and queens and the translation of such language from spoken English words into German subtitles. As was shown, men and women seem to talk in different ways. A set of features characterizing the speech of men and women was compiled on the basis of relevant works and theories in the field of gender linguistics. According to these, women tend to speak more grammatically correct and use more well-formed sentences, speak more politely, and have a tendency to facilitate and foster conversations. They also tend to ask more questions, to hedge more frequently, and to speak in a more personal and emotion-related way. Men's speech, on the other hand, includes more colloquial language, is more direct and factual, and revolves more consistently around themselves. Explanations for the differences point to boys and girls being socially trained to behave male or female. The differences seem to be linked to a different social status of men and women, and women holding a disadvantageous role in society that is deficient or subordinate to that of men. This deficiency or subordination is then expressed in language. Although there are interpretations of gendered language that deny an existing deficiency or subordination of women in language, the language features as such strongly suggest a power imbalance in society between the sexes. However, this power imbalance may be based stronger on ideology than on reality, and likewise also the established language features, because otherwise, the separation of men and women into those two groups just seems too strict and too absolute.

If the genders talk in different ways, then a person can construct a sort of "customized" gender identity by using different combinations of the conventional language features. Adding the aspect of camp to that language creates a sexual identity because it puts the speech in the context of homosexuality. This is again linked back to a gender identity, because homosexuality's social status automatically stirs up gender questions.

The established features were used to analyze the speech of four drag kings and queens in the documentary *Venus Boyz* in terms of the gender identity they created. It was interesting to analyze the speech of people who cannot easily be placed into one of the poles of gender. The protagonists do not simply accept their biological sex as a given that directs them to behave accordingly, therefore automatically questioning the conventional concepts of gender. Intuitively or consciously, they used the tools of conventional

gendered language to perform a gender identity. Their speech did show several of these features as part of gender identity construction. It was found that, while their speech did show a number of those features to be part of gender identity construction, it was more often the paraverbal features which lent weight to that identity.

The created gender identity was then translated by means of the language features marking masculinity or femininity in the target language. Since both the English original and its translation as German subtitles were analyzed on the basis of the same constituents, it could be convincingly demonstrated that the two language cultures have very similar gender ideologies, and that a translator can adequately render the text in the target language without any specific knowledge of the gender culture in question. In subtitling, audio-visual material is transferred to one or two written lines on the screen. However, the paralinguistic features adding to identity construction are not completely lost on the German-speaking viewer, and this makes up for any semantic deficiencies imposed by the narrow constraints of this genre, or type, of translation

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