

## The Language of Hecuba as a Suppliant in her Eponymous Play\*

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### La lengua de Hécuba como suplicante en la tragedia homónima

In this article, we compare Hecuba's two supplications alongside other successful and unsuccessful supplications from the perspective of politeness theory. This comparison will enable us to track the evolution of her language throughout the plot. The differences in the language of her first and second supplications may shape the way in which she is characterized.

*Key words:* Politeness theory; supplication; linguistic characterization; Euripides.

Comparamos las dos súplicas de Hécuba junto con otras súplicas aceptadas y rechazadas desde la perspectiva de la teoría de la cortesía. Esta comparación nos permitirá trazar la evolución de su manera de expresarse a lo largo de la trama. Las diferencias entre su primera y segunda súplica en cuanto a la estrategia comunicativa a la que recurre el personaje pueden contribuir a su caracterización.

*Palabras clave:* Teoría de la cortesía; súplica; caracterización lingüística; Eurípides.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to analyse Hecuba's performance by comparing her two supplications (and other supplications in Euripides) through linguistic parameters. We will make use of politeness theory and also of some concepts from Conversation Analysis<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For a brief introduction to politeness theory within the study of Classics, see Unceta Gómez 2017, pp. 140-143; Berger 2017, pp. 249-252; on Conversation Analysis, see van Emde Boas 2017, pp. 9-13.

The voluntary sacrifice by Polyxena and the revenge plot are considered the two dominating elements of the first and second part of *Hecuba*, respectively (Gregory 1999, p. xxix). The interaction between Polyxena and Hecuba has recently been explored by Martin (2018), who discusses matters related to textual criticism. Other scholars focus on Polyxena's performance in light of other voluntary sacrifices carried out by young characters in Euripides (e.g., the maidens in *Heraclidae*, *Erechtheus*, *Iphigenia at Aulis* and Moeneceus in *Phoenician Women*)<sup>2</sup>. Other studies use different acts of revenge from Greek literature to morally judge Hecuba's revenge (see Mossman 1995, pp. 170-180; cf. Battezzato 2018, p. 15). Battezzato (2018, pp. 14-15) provides an overview of moral assessments about the old queen (see also Battezzato 2010, pp. 143-153). In response to these proposals (see e.g., Conacher 1961, pp. 20-21), Mossman (1995, p. 121; Ch. 6, p. 164 ff.) also addresses Hecuba's alleged moral decline<sup>3</sup>. Besides, Mossman (1995, p. 166) pays attention to Hecuba's development as a character in the transitional part of the play (E., *Hec.* 681-904). All these elements are beyond the scope of our study here. According to Mastronarde (2010, p. 231): «the revenge-action in the second half of *Hecuba* is tied to the sacrifice-action in the first half by the recurrence of the motif of supplication». Even though there are two *hikesia*-scenes, the suppliant element of the drama has received less attention than the voluntary sacrifice, the revenge plot, and the moral assessment of the characters. Accordingly, a comparison between Hecuba's first and the second supplication becomes all the more relevant to potentially shed light on our interpretation of the eponymous character of the play. In her first supplication (*Hec.* 218-443), Hecuba pleads with Odysseus, who arrives reporting the Greek commanders' decision to sacrifice Polyxena in honour of Achilles' tomb. She is unsuccessful in her plea for her daughter. Polyxena herself refuses to supplicate Odysseus (*Hec.* 342-347) and, instead, offers herself voluntarily for sacrifice. The second time, Hecuba supplicates Agamemnon (*Hec.* 726-863) and successfully avenges her son Polydorus's murder at the hands of Polymestor. It is not clear what Hecuba is after. At first, it seems that she wants Agamemnon to be involved in her revenge in some way,

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Schmitt 1921; Wilkins 1990; see Battezzato 2018, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion on whether Hecuba becomes morally depraved or not, see Mossman 1995, p. 164, n. 2; p. 165, n. 3.

but in the end all she needs is for nobody to stop her from achieving her aims. It is not clear either whether Agamemnon accepts Hecuba as a suppliant or not, but we do know that no one prevents her from enacting her revenge.

To further support our findings from the comparison between Hecuba's first and second supplication, we compared the two scenes with a larger corpus already addressed in Rodríguez-Piedrabuena 2020b and 2022b. The corpus includes a selection of suppliant scenes (E., *Heracl.* 55-287; *Supp.* 110-597; *Andr.* 515-746; *Hec.* 218-443, 726-863; and *Or.* 380-724), which provide interactions in comparable contexts, since they follow a story pattern and present a fixed set of roles (Kopperschmidt 1966) minimally consisting of a suppliant (ἰκέτης) and a *supplicandus* (σωτήρ). This minimal structure involves a bilateral supplication, in which the role of the *supplicandus* can shift towards that of an opponent if the suppliant is eventually rejected. A third character can be added to the scheme, often as an opponent (ἐχθρός) of the suppliant (e.g., the Heralds in E., *Heracl.* and E., *Supp.*), thus resulting in a triangular supplication (see Kopperschmidt 1966, pp. 47-51). The two suppliant scenes in *Hecuba* (*Hec.* 218-443, 726-863) are both bilateral. It is striking that in the first *hikesia*, Polyxena is at the same time the object of the supplication and the character who objects to it.

Naiden (2006, pp. 4, 25, 103, *passim*) defines a supplication in four steps. The first step is the approach to the *supplicandus* or a sacred place. The second step involves the formulaic gestures and words, while the third step incorporates the requests and arguments. The fourth step is the response of the *supplicandus*.

In the approach to the *supplicandus*, the suppliant has to ponder his / her options before making a decision. Hecuba's second supplication is developed along these lines, as it involves an unusual sort of aside (E., *Hec.* 736-751), which is otherwise conspicuous by its absence in Greek tragedy<sup>4</sup>. It should be noted that it is not a total aside, since Agamemnon «overhears but does not understand» what Hecuba says (Gregory 1999, p. 132; Collard 1991, p. 168).

The third step is defined by Naiden (2006, p. 69) as «the what and the why of an act of supplication». From a propositional standpoint, the arguments are mostly of a legal or moral nature. Our intention here is to analyse how these arguments are conveyed in terms of politeness theory and deter-

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<sup>4</sup> See Matthiessen 2010, p. 347; Schadewaldt 1926, pp. 30, 210.

mine the communicative strategies implemented by Hecuba on the two occasions when she supplicates. We will compare and contrast these with the other aforementioned supplication scenes in order to provide a more comprehensive analysis.

Unlike step two (the suppliant's gestures and performatives), the acceptance of the *supplicandus* is not marked in the texts by any distinctive gesture (Mercier 1990; Kaimio 1988). Most important for our purpose here is that there is no consensus as to whether Agamemnon accepts Hecuba's second supplication or not (see e.g., Matthiessen 2010, pp. 345-346; Gregory 1999, p. 146; Mossman 1995, pp. 54ff, 65ff, 142-209).

## II. (IM)POLITENESS STRATEGIES

From the perspective of politeness theory, an act of supplication can be analysed as a binding request from a participant of low power (lower status) and, mostly, high distance (low familiarity). Therefore, supplication, as well as its acceptance or refusal, can prompt FTAs (Face Threatening Acts)<sup>5</sup>, which, in turn, can trigger the use of politeness strategies. With this in mind, a number of (im)politeness strategies from the typologies proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987) and House & Kasper (1981) were examined according to their distribution by the type of character involved in the suppliant scenes. On the one hand, we analysed the downgraders, identified here with politeness strategies and, on the other, the upgraders, identified here with impoliteness strategies as counterparts of the downgraders. Although the now canonical approach by Brown & Levinson (1987) seems to address politeness and impoliteness in a dichotomic way, Leech (1983, p. 144) and postmodern authors such as Watts

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<sup>5</sup> A key concept for Politeness theory according to Brown & Levinson (1987, p. 61) is *face*: «the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, consisting in two related aspects: (a) negative face: ... freedom of action and freedom from imposition; (b) positive face: the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants». Factors such as the difference in status (*power*), the degree of familiarity (*distance*) and the intersection among them (Brown & Levinson 1987, p. 250), *inter alia*, can have an impact in the conversational strategy chosen by a speaker in order to save his own face and, at the same time, avoid threatening the addressee's face, that is, avoid *Face Threatening Acts* (FTAs, Brown & Levinson 1987, pp. 65-68).

(2003, 2005) have explored in more detail how there is no such dichotomy in the use of polite and impolite strategies. Speakers may use politeness to cause offence, by being overpolite, and may use impoliteness to increase familiarity, becoming underpolite (*affective impoliteness*, cf. Culpeper 2011, pp. 221-225). Politeness strategies are typologically based, while over- and under-politeness are built upon the conventions of a given language and the shared conversational history between the participants that determines what is more or less salient between them. Overpoliteness is certainly present in Euripides (Rodríguez-Piedrabuena 2020a).

### 1. *Downgraders*

The following are the most relevant downgraders analysed here:

1.1. *Deference*. The expression of respect can be found in the three politeness axes adapted from the model by Comrie (1976), namely, the speaker-hearer (hereinafter S-H) axis, the speaker-point of reference (S-PR) axis and the speaker-bystander (S-B) axis. It is a matter of addressing the Hearer directly, addressing something related to the Hearer or defocalize the addressee by a reference in the third person. The following exchange between Heracles and his son at the end of Sophocles' *Trachiniae* is an example of the use of the S-B axis instead of the S-H axis:

- (1) S., *Tr.* 1238-1240 (translation by Jebb 1883-1896): ἀνὴρ ὄδ', ὡς  
 ἔουκεν, οὐ νεμεῖν ἐμοὶ | φθίνοντι μοῖραν· ἀλλά τοι θεῶν ἀρὰ | μενεῖ σ'  
 ἀπιστήσαντα τοῖς ἐμοῖς λόγοις.  
The man will render no due respect, it seems, to my dying prayer. No,  
 be sure that the curse of the gods will await you for disobeying my  
 commands.

Jebb (1892, p. 177) already remarked that «this is not an “aside”; but the speaker's amazement precludes a direct reply». Heracles seems to be complaining about his son's reaction and shifts to the S-B axis with a diminishing attitude towards him. Note, however, that deference in the S-H axis, that is, compliments directly addressed to the recipient, can fail in Greek, as they can be interpreted as flattery (e.g., E., *Supp.* 163-165; 191); in other words, it can sound overpolite to the hearer (see also Rodríguez-Piedrabuena 2022a, p. 180).

1.2. *Hedges*. There are different types of hedges, such as committers (*I think, I guess*):

- (2) E., *Supp.* 510 (translation by the author): καὶ τοῦτ' ἐμοὶ τάνδρεϊον, ἡ προμηθία.  
And that is, to my mind, what bravery is, namely forethought.

There are also hedges relating to the felicity conditions. In (3), Demophon is addressing the elders of the chorus to inquire about the supplicants:

- (3) E., *Heracl.* 120-123 (translation by Kovacs 1995): ἐπεὶπερ ἔφθης πρέσβυς ὢν νεωτέρους | βοηδρομήσας τήνδ' ἐπ' ἐσχάραν Διός, | λέξον, τίς ὄχλον τόνδ' ἀθροίζεται τύχη;  
Since, old as you are, you have outstripped younger men in coming to help here at this altar of Zeus, tell me, what misfortune causes this crowd to assemble?

1.3. *Pessimism* (Brown & Levinson 1987, pp. 173ff), e.g., *I don't imagine there'd be any chance of you* .... Similarly, from the standpoint of Conversation Analysis, mechanisms are conceived which involve anticipating non-preferred seconds (Sidnell 2010, p. 80).

1.4. *Impersonalization*. This strategy is subdivided into purely gnomic expressions (herein referred to as generic reference) and agent avoiders, a term coined by House & Kasper (1981, p. 168). The latter will be herein referred to as defocalizers, since what is avoided is not the *expression* of the agent but its *identification* (cf. Haverkate 1984, p. 79), especially when the referent is the speaker or the hearer. The term 'defocalizer' is perhaps a better description in these instances (cf. Haverkate 1992, p. 516). Consider the following example, typically uttered by a parent to a child:

- (4) P: Someone's eaten the icing off the cake  
C: It wasn't me<sup>6</sup>

It should be observed that, although the child's reaction is apparently irrelevant from a Gricean perspective, it is motivated by the easy identification

<sup>6</sup> Leech 1983, p. 80.

of that ‘someone’ with the hearer and of the whole utterance as an accusation. Leech (1983, pp. 81-82) advanced that this utterance «can easily tip over into ironic interpretation». In the following example, Demophon alludes to Co-preus with an indefinite *τις* that does not minimise the FTA:

- (5) E., *Heracl.* 248-249 (translation by Allan 2001, p. 77): ὄμως δὲ καὶ νῦν μὴ τρέσῃς ὅπως σέ τις | σὺν παισὶ βωμοῦ τοῦδ’ ἀποσπάσει βία.  
Still even now do not be afraid that anyone will tear you | and the children from this altar by force.

In this vein, Bond (1981, p. 260) remarks that «*τις* referring obliquely to a definite person ... is primarily menacing». A particular gaze or intonation would clarify the speaker’s intention when using *τις*, which in principle generalizes.

1.5. *Forewarnings* and *reluctance* (≈ hedged performatives, Leech 1983, pp. 139-140). These can consist of metacomments on an FTA, as in the following example:

- (6) E., *Or.* 544-550 (translation by Coleridge 1938): ὦ γέρον, ἐγὼ τοι πρὸς σέ δειμαίνω λέγειν, | ὅπου σέ μέλλω σὴν τε λυπήσειν φρένα. | ἐγὼ δ’ ἀνόσιός εἰμι μητέρα κτανών, | ὅσιος δέ γ’ ἕτερον ὄνομα, τιμωρῶν πατρί. | ἀπελθέτω δὴ τοῖς λόγοισιν ἐκποδῶν | τὸ γῆρας ἡμῖν τὸ σόν, ὃ μ’ ἐκπλήσσει λόγου, | καὶ καθ’ ὁδὸν εἶμι· νῦν δὲ σὴν ταρβῶ τρίχα.  
Old man, I am afraid to speak before you, | in a matter where I am sure to grieve you to the heart. | I am unholy because I killed my mother, I know it, | yet holy on another count, because I avenged my father. | Only let your years, which frighten me from speaking, | set no barrier in the path of my words, | and I will go forward; but now I fear your grey hairs.

1.6. (*Mitigating via*) *exaggeration*. Brown & Levinson (1987, p. 189) speak of this strategy in terms of giving «overwhelming reasons», with examples such as *I can think of nobody else who could...* It consists of presenting information in a disproportionate way in the context of an FTA. While the intensifier (see § 2.4) is an upgrader consisting of an intensification that *increases* the impact of the FTA, with this strategy the opposite effect is pursued, viz. its *mitigation*. In (7) Andromache exaggerates in order to convey the urgency with which she summoned Peleus. Note that Stevens (1971, p. 165) speaks of a «rather wild exaggeration»:

- (7) E., *Andr.* 560-562 (translation by Kovacs 1995): τί σοι λέγω; | οὐ γὰρ μιᾶς σε κληδόνος προθυμίᾳ | μετῆλθον, ἀλλὰ μυρίων ὑπ' ἀγγέλων.  
What shall I say to you? I have sent you not one but countless fervent messages.

1.7. *Understaters*. The term *understater* belongs to the typology by House & Kasper (1981, p. 167), which is defined in the following terms:

Adverbial modifiers by means of which X underrepresents the state of affairs denoted in the proposition, e.g. *a little bit, a second, not very much* (see also Leech 2014, pp. 147-148).

Brown & Levinson (1987, pp. 176-177) offer examples of the type *I just want to...* The following example (ἐν τούτῳ μόνῳ) illustrates an understater, by which Aethra mitigates criticism towards Theseus:

- (8) E., *Supp.* 303 (translation by Coleridge 1938): σφάλλη γὰρ ἐν τούτῳ μόνῳ, τᾶλλ' εἶ φρονῶν.  
For in this one single point you fall, though well-advised in all else.

## 2. Upgraders

The following subtypes are analysed as upgraders:

2.1. *Lexical intensifiers*, viz. explicit insults in the three axes (S-H, S-PR, S-W).

2.2. *Personalization*. There is personalization whenever the explicit use of the first or second person<sup>7</sup> increases the impact of an FTA. The following (9) is an example of second-person personalisation:

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<sup>7</sup> According to Dik (2003), there are cases in which postpositive nominative pronouns ἐγώ and σύ do not have focus, but highlight the following word. I find it difficult to understand why this happens. The explicit use of personal pronouns in Greek, unlike English, is expletive, since the verbal endings already convey person and number (CGCG § 26.7; § 29.4). Moreover, the nominative pronouns ἐγώ and σύ do not have enclitic counterparts (Dik 2003, pp. 535-536).

- (9) E., *Or.* 585-586 (translation by Coleridge 1938): σύ τοι φυντεύσας θυγατέρ', ὃ γέρον, κακὴν | ἀπώλεσάς με.  
You, yes! You, old man, have been my ruin by begetting a wicked daughter.

The first-person personalization is identified here with the +*committers*. PlusCommitters, in turn, can be understood as counterparts to the committers in the sense that, in certain contexts, the explicit reference to the first person can be used politely and thus labelled as a committer. When labelled as a +committer, however, the explicit reference to the first person is used for impoliteness. Again, there is no one-to-one relationship between form and function. According to House & Kasper (1981, p. 170), +committers are «sentence modifiers by means of which X indicates his heightened degree of commitment vis-à-vis the state of affairs referred to in the proposition».

2.3. *Overstaters*. An overstater «overrepresents the reality denoted in the proposition» (House & Kasper 1981, p. 169). In the following example, the intensifier οὐ-ποτ' can be identified as an overstater:

- (10) E., *Or.* 520-521 (translation by Coleridge 1938): Ἐλένην τε, τὴν σὴν ἄλοχον, οὐποτ' αἰνέσω | οὐδ' ἂν προσείποιμι'.  
Helen, too, your own wife, I will never commend, nor would I even speak to her.

2.4. *Intensifiers*. Whereas overstaters have the utterance as their scope, intensifiers perform *within* the propositional level, an intensifier being an «adverbial modifier used by X to intensify certain elements of the proposition of his utterance» (House & Kasper 1981, p. 169):

- (11) E., *Andr.* 540-543 (translation by Kovacs 1995): σοὶ δ' οὐδὲν ἔχω φίλτρον, ἐπεὶ τοι | μέγ' ἀναλώσας ψυχῆς μόριον | Τροίαν εἶλον καὶ μητέρα σὴν | ἧς ἀπολαύων | Ἴαίδην χθόνιον καταβήση.  
I have no cause to love you since I expended a great part of my soul in capturing Troy and with it your mother. It is the benefit you derive from her that you now go down to the Underworld.

Both overstaters and intensifiers can be understood as counterparts to understaters.

2.5. *Aggressive interrogatives*. These are not prototypical interrogatives in that, rather than requiring information, the speaker is doing something else. The speaker does not even expect an answer and therefore the system of adjacency pair is flouted —often by clusters of interrogatives—. They can be uttered in a reproachful or indignant tone as in *Μενέλαε, προσφθέγγη νιν, ἀνόστιον κάρα*; «Menelaus, are you speaking to that godless wretch?» (E., *Or.* 481, translation by Coleridge 1938).

It goes without saying that there is no interlinking relationship between these strategies and their linguistic realisations. It is only the overall context that determines whether a certain form should be labelled as an up- or down-grader. For instance, the particle *δή* in the context of a dispreferred second pair part would be an upgrader if stressing disagreement. Nothing prevents the same particle from appearing in the context of a praise or a preferred second pair part, in which case it should no longer be classified as an upgrader.

In addition to the distribution of im-/politeness strategies, we will also consider the argument structures that were first considered by Pulleyne (1997, p. xv) on prayer<sup>8</sup>. As we will see, the analysis of the *da-quia-dedi* ('give-because-I gave') argument is especially relevant for building up the different characterization between accepted and rejected suppliants.

### III. DATA AND RESULTS

Hecuba's first (*Hec.* 218-443) and second supplication (*Hec.* 726-863), as well as the rest of the accepted and rejected supplications of the sample, were compared from the standpoint of politeness theory. From our analysis we are able to conclude that Hecuba changes her conversational strategy after her first supplication. She is rejected by Odysseus when supplicating for the first time, while she takes revenge after her second supplication, even though the explicit acceptance of Agamemnon is far from clear. Indeed, the diplomatic attitude of the latter would merit yet another paper.

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<sup>8</sup> The main structures are: (1) *da quia dedi*, (2) *da quia dedisti*, (3) *da quia dedit*, (4) *da ut dem*. On this argument structures in the corpus, see Rodríguez-Piedrabuena (2022b, pp. 111-116).

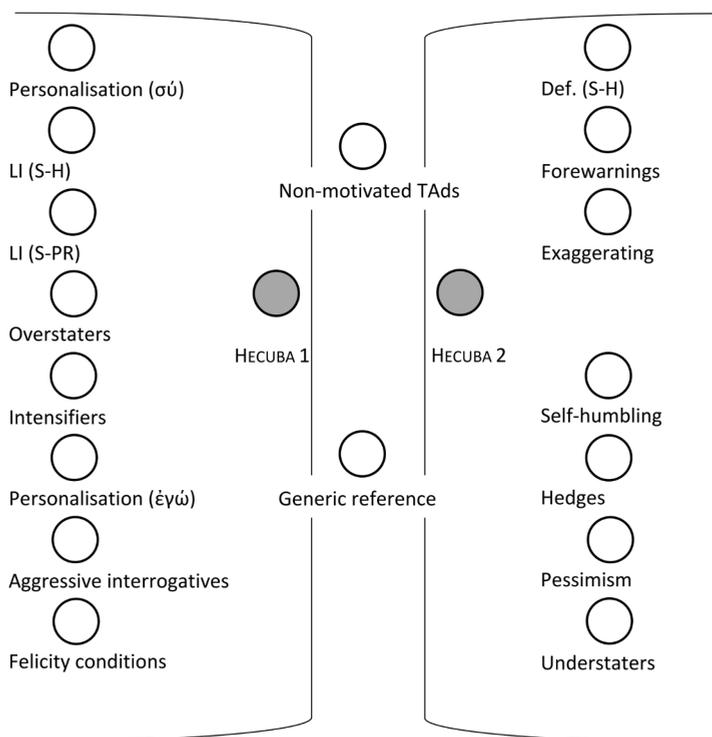


Figure 1. Comparison diagram: Hecuba 1 (E., *Hec.* 218-443) with Hecuba 2 (*Hec.* 726-863). LI (S-H): lexical intensifiers in the S-H axis; LI (S-PR): lexical intensifiers in the S-PR axis; TAds: terms of address; Def. (S-H): deference in the S-H axis.

Three comparison diagrams (see Figures 1-3) were automatically generated after coding the sample with qualitative data analysis (QDA) software<sup>9</sup>. The diagrams display how many nodes are shared by two given characters and how many of them are not shared. This allows us to gauge the degree of similarity between

<sup>9</sup> In order to better analyse the intersections between the strategies and the characters of the corpus, tests such as the comparison diagrams were run using qualitative data analysis (QDA) software. «Once the whole corpus had been ... read through and analysed, the strategies were coded in different categories called ‘nodes’, from which the software provided an accurate tally of words and automatically generated results relating to the distribution of the proposed features among the characters» (Rodríguez-Piedrabuena 2020b, p. 278). The texts were retrieved from the *TLG*, although several editions and commentaries were checked in each case. On this QDA software applied to the study of the corpus, cf. Rodríguez-Piedrabuena (2020b).

two characters. The nodes here are the (im)politeness strategies discussed in Section II. All the examples included in the nodes related to Hecuba's speech are either explicitly discussed in the following pages or referred in abbreviations.

In the first comparison diagram (see Figure 1), Hecuba's two supplications are compared. Only the nodes located in the middle of the diagram are common to the two supplications. Figure 1 shows the scant similarities between Hecuba's first (Hecuba 1) and second (Hecuba 2) supplication. The nodes common to both are strategies that are not exclusively associated with politeness (Rodríguez-Piedrabuena 2020b), such as non-motivated forms of address and the use of generic reference (E., *Hec.* 282-283; 799-801; 831-832; 844-845). Forms of address are classified as non-motivated as long as they are used for functions other than establishing contact, selecting the next addressee or allocating the next turn<sup>10</sup>. Still, unlike when addressing Agamemnon<sup>11</sup>, Hecuba only utters non-motivated terms of address to Odysseus once (ὦ φίλον γένειον, *Hec.* 286).

On the other hand, the main differences are to be found in the upgraders used in her first supplication (left side of the diagram), which are absent from the second: second-person personalization (see 12: δεῖ σ', ἀνθάπτομαί σου, ἰκετεύω τέ σε); lexical intensifiers<sup>12</sup>; overstaters (see 13 and *Hec.* 247; 249; 258-259); intensifiers (see 13); first-person personalization (see 12, 13, 14, and *Hec.* 267-268; 386-388); and aggressive interrogatives (see 14 and *Hec.* 258-263). In contrast, there are only downgraders in her second supplication (right side of the diagram): deferential expressions (see 15 and *Hec.* 841-843), forewarnings (see 16), exaggerating (see 18), self-humbling (see 22-24), hedges (see 24?); pessimism (see 16, 17), and understaters (*Hec.* 835<sup>13</sup>; perhaps εἰ καὶ μηδὲν ἔστιν in *Hec.* 842-843, see 23). All considered, the main differences between her first and second supplication lie in the use of impo-

<sup>10</sup> Haverkate 1984, p. 69: «the attention-getting function of the vocative needs to be set apart from its other functions, since it is not related to the internal structure of the speech act». It goes without saying that the here so-called non-motivated terms of address can be, and surely are, motivated with regard to performing other functions.

<sup>11</sup> E., *Hec.* 752, 784 (Ἀγάμεμνον); 759, 828 (ἄναξ); 841 (ὦ δέσποτ', ὦ μέγιστον Ἑλλησιν φάος).

<sup>12</sup> There are lexical intensifiers (sc. insults) in E., *Hec.* 254 (ἀχάριστον ... σπέρμ', see 14) and in 258 (σόφισμα), see Battezzato 2018, p. 111.

<sup>13</sup> E., *Hec.* 835: ἐνός μοι μῦθος ἐνδεῆς ἔτι «my speech lacks only one further point» (translation by Battezzato 2018, p. 184).

liteness strategies. Whilst in her first supplication we find upgraders, in her second there are none.

The following is a more detailed description of the upgraders and the downgraders employed in her first and second supplication, respectively. The upgraders in the first supplication are frequently combined, that is, more than one appear in one utterance. Firstly, it is striking how Hecuba conveys the *da-quia-dedi* argument in a bald-on-record way with first- and second-person personalization:

- (12) E., *Hec.* 272-276 (translation by Collard 1991, p. 71): ἀ δ' ἀντιδοῦναι  
 δεῖ σ' ἀπαιτούσης ἐμοῦ, | ἄκουσον· ἦψω τῆς ἐμῆς, ὡς φῆς, χερὸς | καὶ  
 τῆσδε γραΐας προσπίτων παρηίδος· | ἀνθάπτομαί σου τῶνδε τῶν  
 αὐτῶν ἐγὼ | χάριν τ' ἀπαιτῶ τὴν τόθ' ἱκετεύω τέ σε.  
 Now hear what you must grant me in return, now I require it from you:  
 | you clasped my hand, as you say, | and my old cheek here in suppli-  
 cation; | in turn I clasp these same parts of you myself | and require  
 from you the favour which was give then, and I beseech you.

Among the overstaters, we find impatience questions with δῆτ'<sup>14</sup> (E., *Hec.* 247; 249) as well as an aggressive interrogative with a lexical intensifier (σόφισμα) introduced by ἀτὰρ τί δὴ ...; (*Hec.* 258-259). The following example is most significant as regards the display of impoliteness:

- (13) E., *Hec.* 394-397 (translation by Collard 1991, p. 77): Ὀδ. ἄλις κόρης  
 σῆς θάνατος, οὐ προσοιστέος | ἄλλος πρὸς ἄλλωι· μηδὲ τόνδ' ὠφείλομεν  
 | Εκ. πολλή γ' ἀνάγκη θυγατρὶ συνθανεῖν ἐμέ. | Ὀδ. πῶς; οὐ γὰρ οἶδα  
 δεσπότης κεκτημένος.  
 ODYSSEUS: It is enough your daughter dies | one death must not be  
 added to another. And I wish we were not adding hers! | HECUBA:  
 Well, it is very necessary I die with my daughter. | ODYSSEUS: How  
 so? I am not aware of having acquired masters.

In (13), Hecuba is rebuking οὐ προσοιστέος with an overstater (γ') —the particle marks her statement as a rebuking reaction to the previous turn by Odysseus—, together with an intensifier (πολλή), which seems slightly redundant alongside the strong word ἀνάγκη. Mossman (1995, p. 118) consid-

<sup>14</sup> On δῆτα in questions, see *LSJ* s.v. δῆτα I 2; *PAGD* III 3.3. §86-88.

ers that «this phrase, like similar phrases, is used in tragedy in answers and arguments, and it is in character essentially logical and rational». However, this phrase is too strong to be used by a slave to address a superior (and for a suppliant to engage in a *supplicandus*). This is made clear by Odysseus' startled reaction<sup>15</sup>, and the parallels that Mossman (l. c.) herself provides (in which the speaker is of an equal or superior status to the addressee)<sup>16</sup>.

The remaining upgraders are also combined. For instance, there is first-person personalization in 396 (ἐμέ) from example (13), as well as in the context of an aggressive interrogative (ἐξ ἐμοῦ; οὐδὲν ἡμᾶς εὖ) in (14), which is followed by the insult in 254 (ἀχάριστον ... σπέρμ'):

- (14) E., *Hec.* 251-254 (translation by Collard 1991, p. 69): οὐκ οὖν κακόνηι τοῖσδε τοῖς βουλευμασιν, | ὄς ἐξ ἐμοῦ μὲν ἔπαθες οἷα φηῖς παθεῖν, | δρᾶς δ' οὐδὲν ἡμᾶς εὖ, κακῶς δ' ὅσον δύναι; | ἀχάριστον ὑμῶν σπέρμ' ...  
Then are you not degraded by these designs of yours? | You had from me the kind treatment you say you had, | yet you do me no good, rather as much harm as you can. | An unlovely breed you are ...

As we will see, Hecuba is presenting her request as a matter of a direct debt between her and Odysseus, even though she is supplicating not for her but for her daughter. Therefore, the use of explicit personal pronouns, dispensable as they are, becomes even more salient. As seen in example (12) above, there is first-person personalization (ἀπαιτούσης ἐμοῦ; ἐγώ) combined with second-person personalization (δεῖ σ'; σου; σε) in (12)<sup>17</sup>. The clusters of different types of upgraders are telling, because, as in this case, the explicit use of the first and second person pronouns (ἐγώ, ἐμέ, σύ, σέ, etc.) may well be syntactically expletive but not impolite by itself. Finally, there is an aggressive interrogative in E., *Hec.* 258-263 with a derogatory use of σόφισμα in 258.

In her second supplication, Hecuba opts out of using upgraders and turns to downgraders instead. We do not find insults anymore but deferential expressions:

<sup>15</sup> Battezzato 2018, p. 127: «Odysseus reacts to ἀνάγκη (396), a word which implies “slavery”». On the overpolite tone of Odysseus' reaction, see Rodríguez-Piedrabuena 2020a.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Med.* 1013 (Medea-Tutor), S., *Tr.* 295 (Deianeira-Lichas / Chorus), *OT* 986 (Oedipus-Iocaste), *El.* 1497 (Aegisthus-Orestes).

<sup>17</sup> The remaining instances of first-person personalization are found in E., *Hec.* 267-268; 386-388.

- (15) E., *Hec.* 802-805 (translation by Collard 1991, pp. 99; 101): ὅς [sc. νόμος] ἐς σ' ἀνελθὼν εἰ διαφθαρήσεται, | καὶ μὴ δίκην δώσουσιν οἴτινες ξένους | κτείνουσιν ἢ θεῶν ἱερὰ τολμῶσιν φέρειν, | οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδέν τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἴσον.  
If this law shall be referred to you and corrupted, | and no justice given by those who kill their guest-friends | or dare to plunder what is sacred to the gods, | there is nothing safe in men's affairs.

The reasoning behind these lines becomes laudatory to Agamemnon and is not just mere flattery, whereas 841 (ὦ δέσποτ', ὦ μέγιστον Ἑλληνισιν φάος «oh master, the greatest light among the Greeks») is an outright compliment at the end of Hecuba's speech. Pessimism and forewarning are combined in example (16):

- (16) E., *Hec.* 824-825 (translation by Battezzato 2018, pp. 182-183): καὶ μὴν ἴσως μὲν τοῦ λόγου κενὸν τόδε, | Κύπριν προβάλλειν, ἀλλ' ὁμως εἰρήσεται<sup>18</sup>.  
And yet it is possible that this part of the speech <is> ineffective | to put forward Cyprus, but it will be mentioned nonetheless.

Although it seems to be a forewarning, there are issues relating to the textual transmission of E., *Hec.* 236 that prevent it from being a reliable source for discussion here (see Battezzato 2018, p. 108). Another instance of pessimism is (17):

- (17) E., *Hec.* 788-790 (translation by Collard 1991, p. 99): εἰ μὲν ὄσια σοι παθεῖν δοκῶ, | στέργοιμ' ἄν· εἰ δὲ τοῦμπαλιν, σύ μοι γενοῦ | τιμωρὸς ἀνδρός ἀνοσιωτάτου ξένου.  
If you think I suffer in accord with holy law, | I might bear with it; but if the contrary, you be | my avenger on that man, that most unholy ally.

Example (18) can be interpreted as an instance of exaggeration:

- (18) E., *Hec.* 836-840 (translation by Collard 1991, pp. 101, 103): εἴ μοι γένοιτο φθόγγος ἐν βραχίοσι | καὶ χερσὶ καὶ κόμαισι καὶ ποδῶν βάσει | ἢ Δαιδάλου τέχναισιν ἢ θεῶν τινος, | ὡς πάνθ' ὁμαρτῆ σῶν ἔχοντο γουνάτων | κλαίοντ', ἐπισκῆπτοντα παντοίους λόγους.

<sup>18</sup> On the punctuation of these lines, see Battezzato 2018, p. 182.

If only I had a voice in my arms | and hands and hair, and the motion  
of my feet, | either through the craft of Daedalus or of some god, | so  
that together they all might hold your knees, | in tears, pressing all  
kinds of arguments upon you!

Lines 759 (οὐδέν τι τούτων ὧν σὺ δοξάζεις «it has nothing to do with what you are thinking») and 756-757 (τοὺς κακοὺς δὲ τιμωρουμένη | αἰῶνα τὸν σύμπαντα δουλεύειν θέλω, see 19) are not authentic according to Battezzato (2018, p. 173)<sup>19</sup>. The scholar states that «in the rest of the play Hecuba associates punishment with Agamemnon's intervention (749, 790, 843). It would be rhetorically less apt if she attributed to herself the enactment of the revenge here, instead of asking for Agamemnon's help». However, as the revenge is eventually carried out by Hecuba herself, these lines actually make sense. Through this strategy, we see a stark contrast between what the old queen requests at the beginning and what she ultimately needs from Agamemnon: she asks for more than she actually needs. It is clear that all she is after is Agamemnon's complicity (Collard 1991, p. 142). Instead of requesting it straightaway, however, she is, by a string of negotiation, «minimizing the degree of imposition» of her request (Brown & Levinson 1987, pp. 176-178). Hecuba ends up revealing her intentions (E., *Hec.* 869-875), even if euphemistically (Battezzato 2018, p. 189), and this is something for which Agamemnon is ultimately prepared (*Hec.* 901-904)<sup>20</sup>. In this way, Hecuba and Medea use the same strategy —although obviously the latter is even more secretive about her eventual course of action<sup>21</sup>—. Medea has her revenge against Jason already plotted out in her mind, as she cryptically reveals to the

<sup>19</sup> Pace Mastronarde 1988, pp. 156-157. On the conjectures about missing lines or transpositions, see Gregory 1999, p. 135. On a different interpretation of these lines as regards Hecuba's characterization, see also Matthiessen 2010, pp. 350, 417; see likewise Reckford 1985, p. 123.

<sup>20</sup> Mossman (1995, pp. 130; 181-183) interprets Agamemnon's reaction as a rejection, but, at the same time, admits Agamemnon's passive complicity: «instead of simply either granting or refusing the request for vengeance ... Agamemnon takes a middle way, ... offering cooperation (861 ff.) ... Agamemnon actually seems to suggest that she resort to self-help (861 ff.), and she accepts his suggestion (875)». After the act of revenge takes place, «Agamemnon delivers his verdict (κρίνειν, 'judge', 1240) in her favour» (Mossman 1995, p. 137).

<sup>21</sup> For further comparisons between Hecuba and Medea, see Mossman 1995, p. 181; Battezzato 2018, p. 190.

chorus (E., *Med.* 259-266) before Creon comes on stage. In order to achieve her purpose, she needs just one more day in the city. However, she starts asking Creon for more than she actually needs, namely to dwell on his land (313-314: τήνδε δὲ χθόνα | ἔἄτε μ' οἰκεῖν). By this, she is minimizing what she is eventually asking for: it is just a matter of one more day, not a whole lifetime of living there. In light of this, could we maintain that Hecuba fails in her revengeful purpose? The only thing that Hecuba does not achieve is Agamemnon's active involvement, but is that what she is asking for? Is Medea asking to remain in Corinth forever? These revengeful women are minimizing the importance of their requests in order to accomplish their intentions. In short, as Mastrorarde (2010, p. 233) has pointed out, «Hecuba is ultimately successful enough for her purposes» and here lies the difference between the outcome of her first and her second supplication.

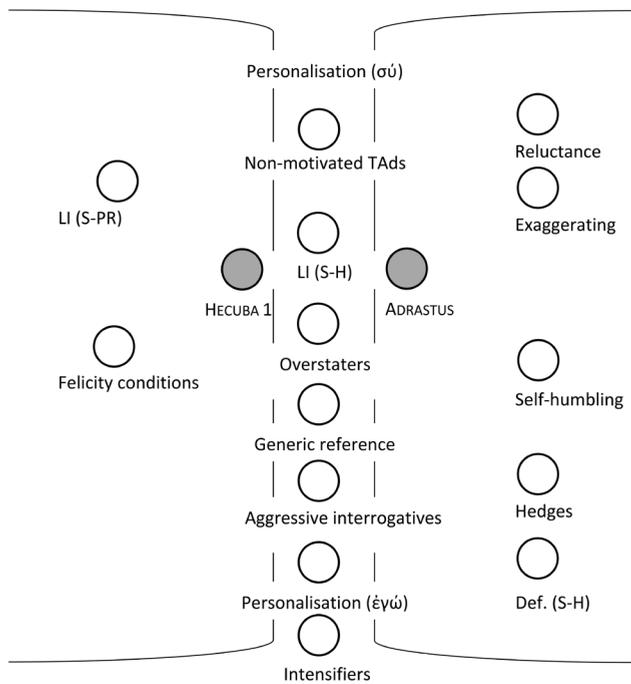


Figure 2. Comparison diagram: Hecuba 1 (*Hec.* 218-443) with Adrastus (E., *Supp.* 110-597). LI (S-PR): lexical intensifier in the S-PR axis; TAdS: terms of address; LI (S-H): lexical intensifier in the S-H axis; Def. (S-H): deference in the S-H axis.

Comparing Hecuba's first supplication with those by other rejected suppliants can shed light on the linguistic characterization of Hecuba 1 as a rejected suppliant<sup>22</sup>. Thus, the comparison diagrams illustrate that, in her first supplication, Hecuba shares more nodes (in the centre of the diagram) with other rejected suppliants, such as Adrastus (Figure 2) and Orestes (Figure 3), than with herself in her second supplication (Figure 1). This means that, in the first supplication-scene, Hecuba is more similar to Adrastus and Orestes than to herself when she supplicates for the second time.

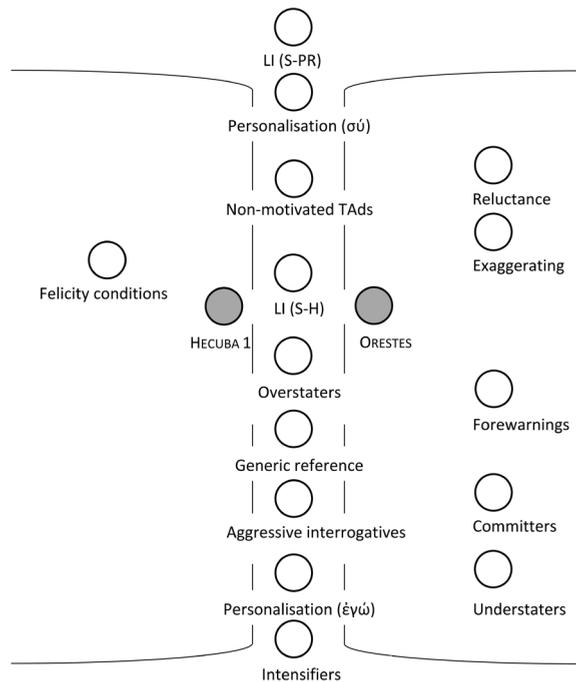


Figure 3. Comparison diagram: Hecuba 1 (E., *Hec.* 218-443) with Orestes (*Or.* 380-724). TADs: terms of address; LI (S-H): lexical intensifier in the S-H axis; LI (S-PR): lexical intensifier in the S-PR axis.

<sup>22</sup> See Rodríguez-Piedrabuena (2022b, pp. 224-226) for the remaining comparison diagrams between the accepted and rejected suppliants in the corpus.

According to Naiden (2006, p. 80-81), «supplicandi do not like to be reminded of services done to them». However, the *da-quia-dedi* ('give because I gave') argument is frequent among suppliants, including those who are successful. In the case of Hecuba, Battezzato (2010, p. 75) remarked a common point between her first and her second supplication, namely the use of the *charis*- and justice-arguments<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, Hecuba employs the *da-quia-dedi* argument when she is bluntly rejected by Odysseus (E., *Hec.* 239) and when she accomplishes her revenge after Agamemnon's vague reply (*Hec.* 826-830). The *da-quia-dedi* argument in Hecuba's first supplication is remarkable in that the story adduced by Hecuba (Odysseus' debt to her) is an innovation of Euripides (Matthiessen 2010, pp. 286-287), who claims that Odysseus was once saved by Hecuba. In this regard, Gregory (1999, p. 74) remarks, «the detail is crucial to Euripides' purposes ... because it enables Hecuba to raise the issue of χάρις (136-7n) with Odysseus» (see also Collard 1991, p. 144). The key differences between accepted and rejected suppliants do not depend on whether they use *da-quia-dedi* argument or not, but on the strategies chosen to put their argument across. Thus, accepted suppliants employ downgraders, whereas rejected suppliants explicitly phrase the debt (*bald on-record*), as in (12), and even use upgraders (Rodríguez-Piedrabuena, 2020b). There are further differences between the first and the second time in which Hecuba adduces the *da-quia-dedi* argument beyond the distribution of im-/politeness strategies. Thus, in her second supplication Hecuba starts by using the *da-ut-dem* ('give so that I give') argument:

- (19) E., *Hec.* 756-757 (translation by Collard 1991, p. 97): τοὺς κακοῦς δὲ τιμωρομένη | αἰῶνα τὸν σύμπαντα δουλεῖν θέλω.  
If I avenge myself on evil men | I am willing to be a slave for my whole lifetime.

Unlike the first supplication, it is only when Agamemnon starts taking his leave (E., *Hec.* 812), that Hecuba resorts to the *da-quia-dedi* argument:

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<sup>23</sup> See also Mastrorarde 2010, pp. 232-234; Battezzato 2018, p. 12. On the concepts of *philia*, *charis* and *xenia* in this play, see Battezzato 2018, pp. 9-14.

- (20) E., *Hec.* 826-830 (translation by Collard 1991, p. 101): πρὸς σοῖσι πλευροῖς παῖς ἐμὴ κοιμίζεται | ἡ φοιβάς, ἦν καλοῦσι Κασάνδραν Φρύγεσ<sup>24</sup>. | ποῦ τὰς φίλας δῆτ' εὐφρόνας δείξει<sup>25</sup>, ἄναξ, | ἧ<sup>26</sup> τῶν ἐν εὐνῇ φιλάτων ἀσπασμάτων | χάριν τιν' ἕξει παῖς ἐμὴ, κείνης δ' ἐγώ; You have sleeping quietly at your side my daughter, | the prophetess of Phoebus, whom the Phrygians call Cassandra. | So what value will you set on those nights of love, my lord? | Will my daughter get any thanks for her loving embraces in bed | and I for her?

Just like the scholiasts, many scholars have addressed from different perspectives Hecuba's use of Cassandra and Agamemnon's affair as an argument in favour of her request<sup>27</sup>. Collard (1991, p. 173) renders χάριν τιν' as 'any thanks' and refers back to E., *Hec.* 252ff, 272-276; that is, to Hecuba's first supplication to Odysseus. The comparison is limited if we take into consideration not just what is said but also how it is conveyed. This is what could linguistically characterize Hecuba and her character's evolution throughout the play. Unlike in (20), the debt of reciprocity is much more directly uttered (bald on-record) by Hecuba when she first supplicates to Odysseus (see 12 and *Hec.* 252ff). As we have seen, there are clusters of aggressive interrogatives (see 14 and *Hec.* 258-263) and even insults (*Hec.* 254-258: ἀχάριστον ... σπέρμ'; σοφισμα). In contrast, Example (20) is introduced by a forewarning, a hedge and pessimism (see 16). Besides, Hecuba returns to a deferential form of address (*Hec.* 828 ἄναξ), instead of the first name used previously (*Hec.* 784) and afterwards (*Hec.* 895), once she has already made her request. This is similar to the behaviour of Iolaus. The accepted suppliant first addresses Demophon as ἄναξ (E., *Heracl.* 181), but goes on to use Δημοφῶν (214), ὦ τῶν (321), ὦ παῖ (381), once the familiarity has increased and the risk of rejection has diminished. However, Iolaus returns to ἄναξ when addressing Demophon in a dispreferred second pair part (E., *Heracl.* 348), as

<sup>24</sup> Line 827 is thought to be an interpolation, cf. Gregory 1999, p. 143; *pace* Collard 1991, p. 173; see Matthiessen 2010, pp. 360-361.

<sup>25</sup> Diggle 1994, p. 237 (= 1982, pp. 322-323) conjectures λέξεις. Collard (1991, p. 173) and Gregory (1999, p. 143) agree with him.

<sup>26</sup> On the reading ἧ... τιν' instead of ἧ... τίν', see Diggle 1994, pp. 237-238 (= 1982, pp. 322-323).

<sup>27</sup> For an overview on this issue, which is beyond the scope of this paper, see Mossman 1995, p. 127, n. 88.

well as in a request (E., *Heracl.* 453). Moreover, Hecuba first presents Cassandra as the creditor of the debt and then herself only because of her daughter (E., *Hec.* 830: κείνης δ' ἐγώ)<sup>28</sup>, even if this was not the best course of action in light of Agamemnon's reaction (*Hec.* 854-856). It is also important to note that Agamemnon assumes that Hecuba is plotting Polymnestor's death (cf. Gregory 1999, p. 147), even though the old queen is not explicit in this respect (cf. Gregory 1999, pp. 165-166). This is very different from the way in which Hecuba uses the *da-quia-dedi* argument when she first addresses Odysseus. Thus, she presents Odysseus' direct debt to her with bald on-record utterances without mitigation (see 12), even when she is not supplicating for herself but for Polyxena. Odysseus later uses this fact to reject her (*Hec.* 301-302). In turn, when she supplicates to Agamemnon, Hecuba does so for herself and yet she presents herself as an indirect creditor of the debt because of Cassandra. This is similar, again, to Iolaus' interaction with Demophon in his successful supplication, as can be seen in (21). Iolaus likewise resorts to the *da-quia-dedi* argument in an indirect way, by speaking to Demophon merely as a spokesperson for the children of Heracles (E., *Heracl.* 220: ἀπαιτοῦσιν «they ask»):

- (21) E., *Heracl.* 220-222 (translation by Allan 2001, pp. 75; 77): ὦν ἀντιδοῦναί σ' οἷδ' ἀπαιτοῦσιν χάριν, | μήτ' ἐκδοθῆναι μήτε πρὸς βίαν θεῶν | τῶν σῶν ἀποσπασθέντες ἐκπεσεῖν χθονός.  
 These children request that you grant a favour in return for these things, | and they not be handed over or dragged in violence to your gods | and expelled from the land.

In light of how the *da-quia-dedi* argument is presented, Hecuba's second supplication resembles more Iolaus' successful supplication than her first one, which is a complete failure. The debtor-creditor duty is mitigated in successful supplications, unlike what happens in those that are rejected, such as for example Orestes' (E., *Or.* 380-724) and Adrastus' (E., *Supp.* 110-597)—without Aethra's mediation.

<sup>28</sup> And because of her son Polydorus, too, cf. E., *Hec.* 834-835, who she introduces as κηδεστήν. The word κηδεστής, here 'brother-in-law,' is carefully selected, see Matthiessen 2010, p. 362; Collard 1991, p. 173.

## IV. DISCUSSION

1. *Characterization*

A point made by Mossman (1995, e.g., pp. 105-106) is that Hecuba's first supplication is an effective piece of rhetoric. It is here argued that, regardless of the possible rhetorical decomposition of Hecuba's speech, her strategy is actually *not* effective from a pragmatic standpoint if we analyse her words in light of politeness theory. Even if her first and her second supplication are a display of rhetoric<sup>29</sup>, we can see how her performance evolves from her first *hikesia* to her second try when addressing Agamemnon. All in all, it is not just a matter of the logic (Mossman 1995, p. 118) of the arguments but of the facework implemented in the presentation of them. In light of the results just provided here, Pohlenz's (1954, p. 281) interpretation that Hecuba was «die erste Gestalt der Tragödie, die eine innere Wandlung durchmacht» or in other words, the first character in Greek tragedy to develop (Mossman 1995, p. 165) actually makes sense, despite Mossman's suggestion (1995, pp. 102-103). Thus, we can see that undergoing changes (as any tragic character does) is not the same as actually implementing them. Here the action is the same, namely the act of supplication, upon which Hecuba *does* implement changes through her own experience of failure. Mossman (1995, pp. 103, 113-116) thinks that Odysseus is «arrogant and unjust» whereas Hecuba remains the great orator of the play. However, it is Hecuba who loses her temper (e.g., E., *Hec.* 254, 396) while Odysseus displays his skills sophisticatedly (e.g., *Hec.* 299-302), in line with his somewhat proverbial characterization<sup>30</sup>. It is Hecuba and not Odysseus who remains in a disadvantaged position as a suppliant slave. For this reason, we might expect her arguments to be presented by implementing some mitigation. Odysseus, in turn, is not under the same pressure. Surprisingly, the contrary occurs: Odysseus, the *supplicandus*, is more moderate than Hecuba, the slave suppliant. All this cumulates in the

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<sup>29</sup> Even so, of the parallels adduced (Mossman 1995, p. 111), that of Adrastus (E., *Supp.* 162ff., 187, outright flattery more than persuasion of any kind) reveals by itself how unsuitable both Hecuba and Adrastus' performances are, as Adrastus is also rejected by Theseus and becomes successful only after Aethra's intervention.

<sup>30</sup> The portrayal of Odysseus is indeed increasingly negative across Greek literature (Worman 2002, pp. 115-122).

total failure of Hecuba's request. With regard to how the argument of χάρις is presented both when addressing Odysseus and Agamemnon, Mossman (1995, p. 128) does recognize that Hecuba is much more respectful towards Agamemnon than she is towards Odysseus:

Unlike that appeal [sc. to Odysseus] it is carefully apologised for, partly because it is of far more intimate nature, and partly because in general Hecuba treats Agamemnon with more respect than she does Odysseus, unsurprisingly given the clear difference in their social and moral status and the fact that Hecuba is Agamemnon's slave.

The reasons for Hecuba's shift in attitude as stated by Mossman are too weak to account for the change in Hecuba's performance because the difference in status also applies to the interaction between Hecuba and Odysseus. Hecuba is a slave anyway, as she herself tells Odysseus (E., *Hec.* 233), and she is also a hopeless suppliant in need of support. Mossman (1995, p. 124) also speaks of Hecuba's «greater confidence in Agamemnon» (in comparison to Odysseus), which makes little sense, given the old queen's hesitancy represented by her long and unusual aside (*Hec.* 736-751). The results in Section III made it possible to specify how Hecuba is characterised from a linguistic standpoint. Thus, the evolution of her character throughout the plot can be partly described linguistically by the different distribution of downgraders and upgraders. In order to analyse the evolution of a character, it is worth considering the work by De Temmerman (2014, pp. 18-21), according to whom characterization can be *static* or *dynamic*. In turn, within dynamic characterization we can speak of *evolution* whenever the dynamism is not sudden but gradual. On the other hand, based on ancient notions about character, dynamic characterisation can be either by *revelation* or by actual *change*. The former (De Temmerman 2014, p. 20) is not a matter of character change but of a latent φύσις that becomes apparent by some external stimulus (cf. Plu., *Arat.* 51.4 on Philip V: οὐκ ... μεταβολή φύσεως, ἀλλ' ἐπίδειξις ... κακίας ... ἀγνοηθείσης, 'not ... a change of nature, but a display of a wickedness ... unknown'). In light of this, it is worth comparing Hecuba with Alcmena, a suppliant in *Heraclidae* together with Iolaus. She does not take part in the supplication scene itself, but she is present in the second part of the play (E., *Heracl.* 646). Hecuba and Alcmena are both old suppliant female characters who take revenge. The two types of dynamic characterization, either by revelation or by evolution, are exemplified by Alcmena and Hecuba, respectively. Hecuba presents a dynamic cha-

racterization by *evolution*, which is linguistically represented by the shifting distribution of (im)politeness strategies. In turn, Alcmena presents a dynamic characterization by *revelation*. First, Alcmena bursts onto stage in a contentious manner (E., *Heracl.* 646). This can be interpreted as a hint of her true character, which becomes evident in the play's fatal denouement. (It should be noted that the first words uttered by a character are relevant for their characterization)<sup>31</sup>. Shortly afterwards, Heracles' mother represses herself by denying herself her turn at talk (E., *Heracl.* 665), until she finally *reveals* her character in the absence of Hyllus and Iolaus (E., *Heracl.* 941ff), when she takes revenge, even against the will of the leaders.

## 2. *Self-humbling?*

In the expression of deference, Brown & Levinson (1987, p. 178) consider that «there are two sides to the coin: ... one in which S humbles and abases himself, and another where S raises H». By way of example, they speak of (Brown & Levinson 1987, p. 182) «the appropriate raising or lowering of the referent by using an honorific or dishonorific label (e.g. 'your palace', 'my hovel')». The examples of self-humbling that we found in the corpus are uttered by the elders, Adrastus<sup>32</sup> and Hecuba:

- (22) E., *Hec.* 809-811 (translation by Collard 1991, p. 101): τύραννος ἦ ποτ', ἀλλὰ νῦν δούλη σέθεν, | εὐπαις ποτ' οὔσα, νῦν δὲ γραῦς ἄπαις θ' ἄμα, | ἄπολις ἔρημος, ἀθλιωτάτη βροτῶν.

I was a queen once, but now I am now your slave, | blessed with children once, but now old and childless too; | without city, desolate, most abject of mankind.

- (23) E., *Hec.* 842-843 (translation by Collard 1991, p. 103): πιθοῦ, παράσχες χεῖρα τῇ πρεσβύτιδι | τιμωρόν, εἰ καὶ μηδέν ἐστίν, ἀλλ' ὅμως.

Be persuaded, give an old woman your hand in vengeance, although it is nothing, do it nevertheless!

<sup>31</sup> See Katsouris 1975, pp. 37, 58, 74, 79, 139; de Vito 1988, p. 176; Rutherford 2012, p. 101.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., E., *Supp.* 166; *Supp.* 170; 187-188 (S-PR axis).

If εἰ καὶ μηδὲν ἔστιν means «although it is nothing», these lines could be analysed as another politeness strategy, namely, as an understater<sup>33</sup>. According to Battezzato (2018, p. 185) «the usual interpretation (Gregory: “even if she is nothing”, in reference to Hecuba) is incompatible with Hecuba’s suggestion that Agamemnon consider Polydorus his relation by marriage (834)». However, Gregory’s (1999, p. 145) interpretation still makes sense: even if Battezzato’s remark is logically valid, Hecuba keeps putting herself down (see 22). She is seeking for effectiveness more than overall logic.

Example (24) deserves attention, since the way in which ἴσως ‘perhaps’(?) is interpreted is key for classifying this example as an instance of self-humbling:

- (24) E., *Hec.* 798 (translation by the author): ἡμεῖς μὲν οὖν δοῦλοί τε κάσθενεῖς ἴσως<sup>34</sup>.  
We are, certainly, slaves, and weak, in the same way.

At first, if ἴσως is interpreted as ‘perhaps’, it would seem that Hecuba employs ἴσως as a hedge to introduce a remark about where authority should lie (E., *Hec.* 824-825). This being the case, the adverb would modify κάσθενεῖς in order to establish a contrast between the fact she is a slave (μὲν οὖν) and the probability (ἴσως) she is weak. By this, Hecuba would leave open the possibility that captives are actually not so weak. All in all, it does not make much sense to translate ἴσως as ‘perhaps’ because there is no need for Hecuba to mitigate how weak she is as a suppliant slave with regards to Agamemnon. Therefore, the interpretation of ἴσως ‘in the same way’, ‘to the same extent’ in its etymological sense<sup>35</sup>, seems like a better option<sup>36</sup>. The whole utterance would be an example of self-humbling. The function of ἴσως would actually be the opposite to the ‘perhaps’-interpretation because ἴσως (note its

<sup>33</sup> Battezzato 2018, p. 185: «Hecuba flatters Agamemnon’s pride: punishing Polymnestor will not take him much effort».

<sup>34</sup> On the interpretation of *Hec.* 798-801 and 814-817, see Battezzato 2008, pp. 57-61; 2010, pp. 87-101; Avezzù 2019, pp. 11-13.

<sup>35</sup> There are examples in Classical Greek of ἴσως in its etymological sense ‘in the same way’ (Pl., *Lg.* 805a).

<sup>36</sup> Matthiessen 2010, p. 355: «‘in gleicher Weise schwach’ oder ‘ebenso schwach’, nicht etwa ‘vielleicht’. Ich sehe keinen Anlass für eine (etwa ironische) Einschränkung der Aussage Hekabes».

somewhat strange position at the end of the clause), is not mitigating but strengthening the self-humility.

Hecuba's self-humbling attitude is no more successful than Adrastus' self-abasement. Agamemnon's reaction to (22) and (24) is to start taking his leave (E., *Hec.* 812). This forces Hecuba to shift to a different strategy, namely, the indirect use of the *da-quia-dedi* argument. Once she has managed to hold Agamemnon back, she returns to the expression of deference in the S-H axis (E., *Hec.* 841) —as seen in (23), it is not clear whether she conveys self-humbling again in E., *Hec.* 842-843—. As a result, Agamemnon lets her have her way, but does not lend the old queen his 'vengeful hand' (χεῖρα τιμωρόν).

Nor is self-humbling well-attested among the deferential forms of address. An illustrative example of this is the following remark by Dickey (2010, p. 336):

In the late antique and Byzantine periods there is an interesting tendency for writers to use conventionalized abasement of themselves as a way of showing respect for the addressee ... Thus we find writers referring to themselves with terms like ὁ δοῦλός σου «your slave» or with abstractions such as ἡ ἐμὴ ταπεινωσις «my lowliness» ... ; linguistic self-abasement of this type is almost entirely absent from most Greek before the fourth century CE.

In light of this, self-humbling seems to work less efficiently as a downgrader than other strategies, at least in the context of tragic suppliant scenes. It is not well attested in the sample (two of the three examples by Hecuba are doubtful) and it is uttered by characters who employ this strategy unsuccessfully.

## V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Hecuba is portrayed as a specific type of character, namely as a suppliant. However, she is first characterized as a rejected suppliant when addressing Odysseus. Her portrayal is achieved linguistically by the striking use of upgraders. In this regard, she is more like other rejected suppliants, such as Orestes (E., *Or.*) and Adrastus (E., *Supp.*), than herself when she supplicates for the second time. When she addresses Agamemnon in her second supplication, she does not use upgraders anymore but employs more downgraders instead. Hecuba is not the same: she has learnt how to supplicate and has taken her revenge.

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