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HECUBA IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD: MARINA CARR'S USAGE OF REPORTED SPEECH

Soltan Jaber[1], University of Szeged

Abstract

Marina Carr relocates Euripides' Hecuba from a women-empowering myth into a twenty-first century colonial piece. Her choice stems from the fact that she "writes in Greek" (McGuiness, 2003) and highlights "contemporary issues through the plight of a marginalised, gendered individual" (Kurdi, 2010). Her rewriting centers around the Irish colonial struggle by introducing a new, vulnerable Hecuba who loathes war and reveals colonial motifs. What Carr also does is employ reported speech throughout the play to replace dialogue that is "at the heart of every dramatic encounter, whether in theatre or in the classroom" (O'Neil, 1989). Her usage of reported speech invites the audience to investigate the different motifs behind it. In Carr's adaptation, the whole play is written in reported speech. Carr, I assume, experiments with a new narration method that was exclusive to messengers as a part of their duty of delivering a message. She instead reconstructs this way of narrating to include monarchs and noblemen like Agamemnon and Odysseus. Her play centers around ancient colonial motifs and agenda that still exist in our days. Furthermore, according to Greg Myers (1999), "reported speech both depicts the experience of the original utterance and detaches reported utterance from the reporting speaker", which contributes to the objectivity of the story. In view of that, my research will focus on the motifs behind the use of reported speech as a way of voicing the silenced, providing evidence, shifting the frame, and acquitting Hecuba.

Keywords: reported speech, Greek tragedies, Irish drama

[1] Email address: sultan.japer@yahoo.com
Corresponding address: Becsi krt 8-16C B, fsz,5, 6725, Szeged, Hungary

1. Introduction

Reported speech, typically a messenger's duty, substitutes dialogue in Marina Carr's (2015) adaptation of Euripides' *Hecuba*, also known as Queen of Troy. The whole play is crafted in reported speech and Carr repurposes the story as Linda Hutcheon (2006: 14) reminds us that adaptation is "a product and a process of creation and reception". Carr recycles the ancient tragedy into a modern context with colonial motifs and manifests what Douglas Lanier (2014: 36) terms "radical creativity". Frank McGuiness (2003: 89) states that Carr "writes in Greek", and Carr herself declares her attempt to 'correct' Euripides because she believes in the unfairness of the Euripidean text. Carr re-orients the story because her "adaptation rewrites Euripides explicitly in order to rescue Hecuba from misrepresentation, but in doing so diminishes the protagonist's agency and complicates the play's capacity to speak to a contemporary feminist anger" (Wallace, 2019: 514).

Mikhail Bakhtin (1981: 338) states in *The Dialogic Imagination* that:

> The topic of a speaking person has enormous importance in everyday life. In real life we hear speech about speakers and their discourse at every step. We can go so far as to say that in real life people talk most of all about what others talk about-they transmit, recall, weigh and pass judgment on other people's words, opinions, assertions, information; people are upset by others' words, or agree with them, contest them, refer to them and so forth.

The significance of reported speech in Carr's play resides in its ability to replace dialogue, voice the marginalised, and convey what is being reported. Patricia Sawin (2004: 68) contends that "in many instances the reported conversation and the relationship between actors therein depicted or the relation between words and actions is very much the point of the narration". Aristotle (1907: 23) states that tragedy is an "imitation of an action that is serious and complete and of a certain magnitude…through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions". In contemporary Irish drama, Aristotle's imitation extends beyond actions to life itself. Carr holds up a "mirror to nature" (HAM 3.2.21-33). Narration in Carr's adaptation becomes not only the means of conveying meaning but also the meaning itself.

In doing so, Carr allows her characters to mimic and accurately depict previous conversations with the same tone and attitude. Usually, in discourse, dialogue serves primarily as the main realm from which the audience derives implications and transforms them into meaningful interpretations. But instead, reported speech, a narration method often associated with messengers in ancient times, is exclusively employed in Marina Carr's colonial adaptation of the play where she attributes the story to a modern frame. I aim in this paper to examine Carr's usage of reported speech throughout the play in comparison to Euripides' dialogues, I also study some functions of reported speech in her narration and try to provide insight into her colonial implications.

2. Reported speech replaces dialogue

Cecily O'Neill (1989: 528) claims in her *Dialogue and Drama: The Transformation of Events, Ideas, and Teachers* that "dialogue is at the heart of every dramatic encounter, whether in theatre or in the classroom", which is particularly true in virtually all literary products. Theatre specifically requires an enactment of the written dialogue. If we are to examine Euripides' tragedy, we detect the systematic dialogue in which there is a speaker who speaks for themselves and another who responds, e.g., the dialogue between Hecuba and Odysseus:

> "Hekabe: I curse the knowing of you.
> You ruin friends lightly,
> so long as it helps you please your constituency".
> Odysseus in return replies:
> "Hekabe, take a lesson.
> And do not, in your passion, harden your mind against good counsel."
> (Euripides, 2006: 113)

Looking at the above scene from Euripides' drama, translated by Anne Carson, one observes that each character presents their own speeches and ideas without any obstruction from others. The heart of Greek dramatic works lies in dialogues that teach moral lessons and narrate a myth for a better understanding of the era and their literary canon. Dialogues, in fact, serve as Plato's early form of juggling ideas, they constitute abstractions of the universe and can and have been developing ever since. But what happens if we neglect an imposed dialogue throughout a play and construct one instead?

2.1. Marina Carr's usage of reported speech

Marina Carr evidently develops the concept of dialogue by using reported speech instead. She has individuals speak for each other in many instances throughout the play: Agamemnon describing his dialogue with Hecuba upon their meeting, Odysseus persuading Agamemnon to sacrifice Hecuba instead of her daughter, and many more. A good example of such dialogue can be found in Agamemnon's description at the onset of the play:

> Agamemnon: I tell her there's no time, she has to get on the ships, but she's not listening, she's losing it. We're evacuating Troy, burning it to the ground, this city of liars and rapists. She's listening now, turns on me, blood rising, hands shaking with rage, goes into a reel, spittle on her lips as she gives vent. You came as guests she hisses. (Carr, 2015: 15)

Agamemnon narrates his words, Hecuba's reaction to them, and, ultimately, her words too. His narration gives him the upper hand over the narrative, allowing him to warrant the Greek invasion, but, at the same time, provides a description of their meeting and Hecuba's actions and words. Reported speech here serves as the only source of information: "I tell her", "she's losing it", and "you came

as guests she hisses" (Carr, 2015: 15), and they all help interpret what happens in the play.

Although, according to Kathleen Ferrara and Barbara Bell (1995: 265), dialogue "can heighten the performance value of their stories, thus making them more vivid", instances of reported speech were always considered a part of the dialogue because "reported speech both depicts the experience of the original utterance, and detaches reported utterance from the reporting speaker" (Myers, 1999: 376). In ancient Greece, the line between direct and indirect speech is blurred due to the orality of their literary traditions which, I argue, grants Carr the liberty of using reported speech throughout her play.

In his *Intermediate Ancient Greek Language*, Darryl Palmer (2021: 102) argues that "all dramatic dialogue is, by its nature, direct speech; but it is not directly reported speech. However, in drama short passages of direct speech may be quoted within a longer speech. Most commonly, this may occur within a messenger's speech". Naturally, a messenger's speech would contain fragments of reported speech as a part of their duty, however, Carr seems to include reported speech intensively in the speeches made by royals to voice the marginalised, provide evidence, and shift the frame.

Prior to delving into the functions of reported speech in the play, it is important to note that in employing reported speech instead of dialogue in her *Hecuba*, Carr bids the audience to imagine what is being reported. William Gruber (2010: 7) defines this approach as The Theatre of Imagination where narrative "tends to impede any further inquiry into the ways in which mental image-making on the part of the audience—as distinct from scenic enactment by the figures on stage—constitutes a functional and important part of classical tragic dramaturgy". Audiences "shift the grounds of imitation from the stage to the imagination" (Gruber, 2010: 6). Carr encourages the audience to envision the narrative unfolding on stage, thereby offering fresh avenues for interpretation. In doing so, she redefines the roles of reported speech, as we shall see.

2.2. Functions of reported speech

Hecuba voices the silent characters in Euripides' play, the Trojan women who were taken as slaves. In Euripides' version, the female servant is only a conveyer of news, Polydorus' death is announced by her. The servant states:

> "I bring Hekabe pain.
> Evils all around. Not easy to say something happy." (Euripides, 2006: 128)

Her announcement voices Hecuba's suffering only, Trojan women are marginalised in Euripides' version. This is because ancient tragedies focused solely on the actions of high heroes and left low-class individuals on the periphery (Miller, 2015). By contrast, Carr's Hecuba voices these marginalised females and grants them the freedom of wailing about their loss and expressing it on stage. Instead of the servant being a messenger who reports the deed, Carr reveres the roles, and the servant becomes voiced by herself in a move that aims to capture the suffering of

those below Hecuba. The servant in Carr's (2015: 23) version replies to Hecuba's lament of the war and reminds Hecuba that the Greeks "put a sword through my son's heart as we got on the ship. He's seven. Then they flung him into the sea" and continues: "He was all I had. His father died for Troy. He fell early on. He was all I had". This moving conversation highlights Carr's unwavering dedication to the strategy of amplifying the voices of the marginalized and elevating the unheard narratives that are often disregarded in traditional historical accounts.

Carr also corrects Euripides in the sense that she acquits Polymestor of the crime of killing Polydorus for the gold sent by Priam and Hecuba should Troy fall. She rather ascribes the deed to Agamemnon, the coloniser, who killed Polydorus to guarantee the end of Priam's bloodline. In Euripides' play, it is Polymestor, the king of Thrace, who murders the boy and throws his body in the sea, his motifs being gold and:

> "Prudence and foresight.
> I had a fear that if this boy-your enemy- survived,
> He would resurrect Troy,
> Then if the Greeks heard a son of Priam was alive
> They'd make a second expedition
> And devastate Thrace
> And we'd suffer once again
> For being neighbors of the Trojans,
> As we have in the past" (Euripides, 2006: 152)

Euripides only alludes to Agamemnon's ability to expand his colonial territories and presents him as a sympathetic leader who allows Hecuba to avenge her son. Carr transposes Agamemnon to being a real-life coloniser who seeks to expand his empire at any cost. In Carr's adaptation, Agamemnon kills Polydorus and Polymestor's sons too. When Polydorus pleads for his life, Agamemnon replies: "I can't. I wish it were otherwise but I can't" (Carr, 2015: 37), which indicates his intention of annihilating the legacy of Troy, perhaps even Thrace.

Moreover, Polydorus' ghost is present in Euripides' play only at the beginning where he narrates what happened to him and what will happen to Troy. Euripides writes:

> "But when Troy perished,
> And Hector perished,
> And my father's hearth was razed to the ground
> And my father himself slaughtered at the gods' altar,
> By Achilles's bloodyminded son,
> Then Polymestor cut me down
> To get the gold-
> That guestfriend of my father- tossed me in the sea
> And kept the gold for himself" (Euripides, 2006: 102)

While in Carr's version (2015: 39), Polydorus is present in the flesh and more vocal upon his meeting with Agamemnon, Polydorus asks Agamemnon:

> "Why? He says, why? Why do away with us like this? There are laws around the conduct of war. Why torture a vanquished people, why burn their city to the ground, throw salt on the fields, decimate the livestock, poison the rivers, the lakes, the very sea. Why slaughter the old, the weak, the young?".

His refutation of war and its calamities makes Carr's argument clearer, he reinforces the notion of resistance presented earlier in the play. Polydorus appears in this version to also acquit Polymestor of his murder, the guestfriend of Hecuba and Priam kept his promise of safekeeping the boy and the gold, but had to sacrifice his promise to save his children who were also eventually killed by Agamemnon.

Patrice Pavis (1998: 230) argues in her *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis* that "the narrative cannot, however, take on too much importance in the body of the play without running the risk of destroying its theatrical quality". Nevertheless, Carr balances narrative and action while simultaneously highlighting the importance of both of them. Carr melds stage directions and narrative into a cohesive entity, for instance, Agamemnon describes Hecuba: "She rattles on about their paved streets, their temples, their marbled libraries, their Holy Joe priests, their palaces of turquoise and pink gold. I say, where's Helen? We can't find her" (Carr, 2015: 15). In this context, the narrative does not dominate the action (or the stage direction) but rather collaborates with them to foster an immersive experience.

Later, by having Cassandra, the prophecy-doomed daughter of Hecuba, narrate the end of Carr's play, her narrative gains more credibility, but that is also the function of reported speech because it "provide[s] evidence; it can do this because of the sense of 'direct experience' arising from depiction, the conveying of how it was said as well as what was said" (Myers, 1999: 386). Carr indeed presents the audience with the reality of war, the truth behind colonial motifs (Carr (2015: 00.44) says in an interview with the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama that Helen is a "rack." And that she thinks "it is the excuse nations make up to go in and take and do what they were going to do anyway"). She uses reported speech intensively to make her story lifelike and accurate. Hecuba says: "I pretend I don't know who he is. And you are? I say. You know damn well who I am he laughs, and you may stand" (Carr, 2015: 13). Hecuba narrating Agamemnon's words as they were uttered by him implies Carr's intention of voicing and empowering her despite her different portrayal in the play.

In the final speech by Cassandra, Hecuba is acquitted, and all the horrible vengeful deeds accredited to her are absolved. In this case, Carr not only corrects Euripides, but she also clears Hecuba's reputation after centuries of misjudgment. Cassandra speaks of Hecuba's accusations, saying: "they said many things about her after, that she killed those boys, blinded Polymestor, went mad, howled like a dog along this shore", but later she reminds the audience that the Greeks were "the wild dogs, the barbarians, the savages who came as guests and left an entire civilisation on its knees" (Carr, 2015: 57). Carr rewrites the story of Hecuba because, for her, "the process of adaptation starts to move away from simple proximation towards

something more culturally loaded" (Sanders, 2016: 27), she loads an ancient tragic war tale with a modern cultural frame, and this is where her usage of reported speech serves the process.

Another function of reported speech is frameshift. The "proximation towards something more culturally loaded" requires a frameshift from the source text's cultural, religious, political, and philosophical frame to the present-day frame. This frameshift was introduced by Grey Myers (1999: 379) where he examines the function of reported speech and states that reported speech "mean[s] something more like Goffman's frame shift from the primary frame that we take to be immediate reality, to another frame shared for the purposes of interaction". As Euripides writes in the immediate reality, his tragedy is filled with dialogue. In her work, Carr offers a powerful framework that encompasses the intricate cultural, political, and philosophical elements present in today's society. With this shift, the nuances within reported speech are revealed, showcasing its crucial role in navigating the complexities of cultural adaptation and interpretation.

Additionally, Carr shifts frames when she uses reported speech because the source text and the present-day colonial and feminist topics interact on different levels, they both share a theme of exile and war, although they are set in different settings. In Carr's adaptation, and within the speech by Hecuba pleading Odysseus to take her instead of Polyxena, she narrates Hecuba, Odysseus, and Cassandra's interaction upon Odysseus's refusal of her proposal:

> But if it's a human sacrifice you want isn't one as good as another? And I can't believe I'm having this argument, that there are words for this. The women have started to wail. No, he says, it's Polyxena they want. Agamemnon's command. I don't know his thinking, I just obey. Get up, Mother, Cassandra says and drags me to my feet. So you were right after all I say. (Carr, 2015: 38)

As Odysseus and Cassandra speak, their words transport us from the ancient setting of Greece to the present day. Within this modern context, they boldly delve into discussions of colonial themes and issues."The aim", as James Andreas (1999: 107) writes about adaptation, "is not replication as such, but rather complication, expansion rather than contraction", which is clearly illustrated in Carr's adaptation. She complicates the plot by infusing a sexual encounter between the coloniser and the colonised, expands the tragedy to include Cassandra, and contracts the play into a shorter narrative.

Furthermore, Elizabeth Holt and Rebecca Cliff (2006) suggest that reported speech is used to make a complaint and evaluate the addresser's intentions. In Carr's work, the addresser and the addressee are equal in their ability to report each other's speeches despite their different positions in the war. Agamemnon is holding power here and Hecuba is defeated, yet Carr matches them in terms of reporting each other. Agamemnon reports his superior position while meeting Hecuba for the first time, saying:

> And she's looking me up and down. She has an eye on her. Eighteen children I'm told. I wonder if they're all Priam's. I wouldn't mind making a son with her. Only way to sort a woman like that out is in bed. Take the haughty sheen off her, the arrogance

> even while she's skidding in blood, stepping over corpses, the lip curling. This is my husband's head she says, brandishing it at me. You didn't even have the decency to give me back his body. (Carr, 2015: 13)

Here, "the recipient can be given 'access' to a reprehensible comment enabling him or her to offer a negative assessment of it and thus support the teller's own evaluation. Thus, Drew (1998) and Holt (2000) find that reported speech is recurrently associated with recounting the climax of a story involving a complaint" (Cliff &Holt, 2006: 15). Noticeably, the whole play is written in reported speech as a parody of war. The objectivity of the royals, who are supposed to be men of honour and truth, when reporting all the events in the play suggests the colonial motifs behind it.

3. Different portrayals of Hecuba

The portrayal of Hecuba's relationship to Agamemnon differs in the two versions. Hecuba cooperates with Agamemnon in Euripides' play, while in Carr's Agamemnon defeats her by the end of the play. For instance, in Euripides's version, Agamemnon is portrayed as the coloniser and yet Hecuba trusts him to help her with her vengeance plan. She even declares that even though she is enslaved, she would still want an honourable death after her vengeance and ironic honouring of Achilles. Hecuba states:

> "Now me, no matter how meager my life from day to day,
> I'm satisfied-
> So long as I see my tomb decorated as it deserves.
> The grace lasts a long time." (Euripides, 2006: 114)

While for Carr, Hecuba is weak, defeated, and more concerned with the damage the coloniser brought upon her land, she publicly accuses the Greeks of being barbarian colonisers, who destroy and abuse the Trojans' resources as well as their culture. Carr's Hecuba is more outspoken than Euripides' about their living conditions and the catastrophes the war brought upon them. Carr (2015: 15) writes: "you came as guests, rolling in here stinking of goat shit and mackerel and you came with malice in your hearts. You saw our beautiful city, our valleys, our fields, green and giving. You had never seen such abundance. You wanted it. You must have it. You came to plunder and destroy". The above sentences epitomise the core of colonialism in history and are used by every coloniser to justify their deeds.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, Hecuba resurfaces in the twenty-first century as a rejector of colonialism, an emblem of freedom, and an acquitted queen of Troy on account of Marina Carr. What I like to call "Carr's Greek sensation" serves her process of writing and adapting plays that reflect the modern world. She uses reported speech

to provide evidence to her colonial argument, blurring the line between reality and her fiction. She also shifts the frame from ancient Greece to the modern world for purposes of interaction, voices the marginalised, and acquits Hecuba. Her usage of reported speech is certainly suggestive of not only feminist but also colonial implications.

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HEKUBA U SAVREMENOM SVETU: UPOTREBA NEUPRAVNOG GOVORA KOD MARINE KAR

Apstrakt

Marina Kar premešta Euripidovu Hekubu iz mita koji osnažuje žene u delo s kolonijalnim kontekstom iz 21. veka. Njen izbor proizilazi iz činjenice da ona „piše na grčkom jeziku" (Mekginis, 2003) i ističe „savremene probleme kroz sudbinu marginalizovane, rodno određene individue" (Kurdi, 2010). Njena obrada fokusira se na irsku kolonijalnu borbu, uvodeći novu, ranjivu Hekubu koja mrzi rat i otkriva kolonijalne motive. Pored toga, Kar koristi neupravni govor kroz celu dramu kako bi zamenila dijalog, koji je „srž svakog dramskog susreta, bilo u pozorištu ili u učionici" (O'Nil, 1989). Njena upotreba neupravnog govora poziva publiku da istraži različite motive koji stoje iza njega. U adaptaciji Marine Kar, cela drama napisana je u neupravnom govoru. Pretpostavljam da Kar eksperimentiše s novim metodom pripovedanja koji je ranije bio rezervisan za glasnike kao deo njihove dužnosti da prenesu poruku. Umesto toga, ona rekonstruiše ovaj način pripovedanja, uključujući monarhe i plemiće poput Agamemnona i Odiseja. Njena drama fokusira se na drevne kolonijalne motive i ciljeve koji i dalje postoje u našem vremenu. Pored toga, prema Gregu Majersu (1999), „neupravni govor istovremeno prikazuje iskustvo originalnog iskaza i odvaja preneti iskaz od govornika koji ga prenosi", što doprinosi objektivnosti priče. U tom smislu, ovo istraživanje će se usredsrediti na motive za upotrebu neupravnog govora kao načina davanja glasa onima koji su ućutkani, pružanja dokaza, pomeranja okvira i oslobađanja Hekube.

Ključne reči: neupravni govor, grčke tragedije, irska drama