# *How to persuade a saint: supplication in Jerome's Lives of Holy Men*

# Ch. 8: How to Persuade a Saint: Supplication in Jerome's *Lives* of Holy Men

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Among the arguments emerging from this volume is the cardinal position of Jerome in the development of hagiography in general and for ascetic biography in particular. His imaginative responses to the *Life of Antony* set the tone for later adaptations, and their popularity is attested in the vast number of surviving manuscripts.[1] Varied as his three *Lives of Holy Men* are in structure and content, close reading reveals some shared patterns of composition. This chapter identifies one such pattern and discusses its implications for the literary shaping of these hagiographical narratives. It focuses on the scenes of supplication which are found at pivotal points in all of the *Lives*: that is to say, on an intense request at a moment of crisis, articulated in a sequence of actions which combine movement and speech. My discussion has three aims: firstly, to bring out the intertextual relations between the three works; second, to investigate the links of this pattern with earlier texts; and, thirdly (and most importantly), to consider the motivation for using supplication as a literary structure, and to explore what it can tell us about Jerome's construction of sainthood.

## Supplication: What Is It?

In this chapter I treat supplication as a particularly emphatic, ritualised method of asking someone for something. The classic object of such a plea is the life of the suppliant (for example Lykaon in *Iliad* 21.34–135), but it is also suitable for something valued more or less than one's own life (for example, Priam supplicating Achilles for the return of his son Hector's body in *Iliad* 24). Even immortal deities can be portrayed as employing supplication (for example Thetis in *Iliad* 1.495–513). What distinguishes supplication from a mere request is its elaborate form, which Fred Naiden has analysed as consisting of four steps: 1. 'an approach to an individual or a place'; 2. 'a distinctive gesture', usually a physical lowering of the suppliant and often involves touching or clasping a part of the body of the person supplicated; 3. 'the request for a boon', which 'is wholly verbal'; and 4. 'the response of the supplicandus' (the

[1] See Bernard Lambert, *Bibliotheca Hieronymiana Manuscripta: la tradition manuscrite des œuvres de saint Jérôme*, vol. 2 (Stenbrugis: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), 459–514 for the figures: I count 471 manuscripts of the *Vita Pauli*, 285 of the *Vita Hilarionis* (with Edgardo M. Morales' observation that in Lambert's catalogue there is one duplication and one manuscript which does not contain the text, in Pierre Leclerc, Edgardo M. Morales, and Adalbert de Vogüé, *Trois vies de moines (Paul, Malchus, Hilarion)*, Sources chrétiennes 508 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007), 114), and 349 of the *Vita Malchi*.

person to whom supplication is made).[2] According to Naiden, 'supplication emerges as a practice with legal, moral, and religious elements': in this sense, it goes to the heart of a community's most precious values. I am not concerned here with any 'original' archaic Greek beliefs about the efficacy of each of the formal elements of the supplication and their combination;[3] but Jerome's use of the form may provide some hints for the significance and meaning of supplication in a Christian context.

Supplication thus provides a promising angle from which to approach stories about saints. First of all, it represents a recognised form of communication—not even restricted to the ancient world—both in literature and in real life.[4] The ceremonial structure of supplication makes it suitable for stylised representation in literature. In fact, Kevin Crotty has argued that supplication forms a fundamental structure of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.[5] This means that the intertwining of the two strands of supplication's manifestation—historical and literary—goes back at least as far as Homer. This characteristic makes supplication a useful focal point for interpreting hagiography (in as far as it appears in hagiographical texts): after all, the problem of the relationship of a historical saint's real existence with his or her representation in biographical or liturgical texts is a particularly salient one, given that it constantly raises questions about imitability and its limits in life as well as in literature.

## The Rhetoric of Supplication

In Aeschylus' *Suppliants* the daughters of Danaus entreat Pelasgus, the king of Argos, to protect them from being forcibly married to their Egyptian cousins. They appeal to divine protection and to their ancestral kinship with Argos, and they threaten to commit suicide if their plea is not accepted. Pelasgus then leads an assembly of the Argive people to vote in favour of protecting the women (Aesch. *Suppl.* 605–24), and when the Egyptians arrive to carry them off, the Argives stop them (Aesch. *Suppl.* 911ff.). Susanne Gödde shows that the Danaids' speeches—even though they are cast in the form of choral lyric—contain strong elements of 'an orator's line of reasoning aimed at plausibility vis-à-vis an audience' ('die auf Plausibilität bedachte Beweisführung eines Redners gegenüber einem Publikum').[6] In consequence, she

[2] Fred S. Naiden, *Ancient Supplication* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006), 4.
[3] John Gould, "Hiketeia", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 93: 74–103 elaborates the underlying ritual mechanics of supplication in Homer and in Greek tragedy with much insight and some plausibility. His argument is contradicted by Kevin Crotty, *The Poetics of Supplication: Homer's Iliad and Odyssey* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).
[4] Naiden, *Ancient Supplication* is the standard work on the practice and presentation of supplication, with a very helpful appendix of literary and documentary sources. Unfortunately, his discussion of Christian supplication is restricted to an 'Epilogue' (276–9) based on Gregory of Tours' *Historia Francorum*, which mainly deals with supplication at altars in the presence of a member of the clergy, without reference to the phenomenon of the holy man.
[5] Crotty, *Poetics of Supplication*.
[6] Susanne Gödde, *Das Drama der Hikesie. Ritual und Rhetorik in Aischylos' Hiketiden* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2000), 179.

argues, the play reflects an early stage of the culture of democratic oratory which was in the process of being established at Athens.[7]

Despite this close affinity between supplication and rhetoric, ancient rhetorical handbooks offer little discussion on the subject of supplication. The classical genres of oratory—forensic, deliberative, and epideictic—are not primarily geared towards the fulfilment of individual needs but to a common good. The orator's own objective must, of course, be presented as conducive to this shared good, but it does not have logical priority. In order to achieve his aim,[8] the orator has to convince the audience by pleasing them. In Aristotle's *Rhetoric* pity is figured as a negative emotion ('a sort of pain', 2.8.2, 1385b13), arising from witnessing another's undeserved misfortune and imagining that it could be one's own. Therefore pity must not be invoked as the primary emotion in oratory: after all, the aim of oratory is to make the audience feel good about themselves and the decision which they are being persuaded to make. Negative emotions like pity can only have a subsidiary role, especially in perorations.[9] By contrast, the ceremony of supplication at least implies, if it is not wholly based upon, the evocation of pity: the suppliant acknowledges the power of the addressee and begs them to provide the benefit which the suppliant so desperately needs.

In Christian discourse pity is seen more positively. The emotion is ascribed even to God himself, and humans are taught to emulate the divine in this regard, as Jerome's contemporary Gregory of Nyssa makes clear in *On the Beatitudes* 5.2 (124.26–125.2 Callahan): 'If indeed God is called pityful (*eleēmōn*) by the divinely inspired scripture, and the Deity is itself the truly blessed, then the conclusion would appear to follow that if someone, though human, becomes pitiful, he is deemed worthy of divine blessedness.'[10] In Christian thought, at least, the merciful person comes closer to God. However, it is not the improved status of pity alone that recommends supplication to Christians; rather, it is its close affinity with prayer. At Luke 18: 1–8, Jesus tells the following parable to illustrate the efficacy of praying constantly:

> Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. (2) He said: 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. (3) And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, "Grant me justice against my adversary." (4) For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, "Even though I don't fear God or care

[7] Gödde, *Drama der Hikesie*, 179.
[8] Orators in the ancient world are almost always male, and rhetorical handbooks presuppose a male speaker in a misogynistic environment. By contrast, people of any kind and status performed supplications: Naiden, *Ancient Supplication*, 19.
[9] Cf. David Konstan, "Rhetoric and Emotion", in Ian Worthington (ed.), *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric* (Malden, MA and Oxford: 2007), 420–1: in ancient Attic oratory, pity could only be invoked if 'the facts—or a plausible interpretation of them—had already … demonstrated the innocence of the speaker.'
[10] Translation: Stuart George Hall, "Translation of Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Beatitudes*", in Hubertus R. Drobner and Albert Viciano (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: On the Beatitudes. An English Version with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the Eighth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Paderborn, 14–18 September 1998)*. Vigiliae Christianae Supplements 51 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 58. See David Konstan, *Pity Transformed* (London: Duckworth, 2001), 120.

> what people think, (5) yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually come and attack me!'" (6) And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. (7) And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? (8) I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?'[11]

The parable provides an analogue for praying to God in the relationship of two human beings. As a matter of course, one cannot request anything from God except in an attitude of supplication, given the unbridgeable difference in power. Even so, the terms in which the analogy is constructed dignifies the suppliant as someone who deserves to receive what she asks for. In another gospel episode transmitted in Mark 7: 25–30 and Matthew 15: 21–8, Jesus himself is swayed by the arguments of a Syrophoenician (or Canaanite) woman, whose daughter he refused to heal on the basis that she is not Jewish (Mark 7: 27–9):

> (27) 'First let the children eat all they want,' he told her, 'for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.' (28) 'Lord,' she replied, 'even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' (29) Then he told her, 'For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.'[12]

In Matthew 15: 28, Jesus specifies that the woman's repartee shows her faith, which is also the issue at stake in the Lukan parable. Neither story hinges on the evocation of pity; instead they show the value of determination and persistence.

With these developments in mind, let us now look at Jerome's *Lives*. To supplement the gaps in classical rhetorical theory where supplication is concerned, I have found it useful to take recourse to the discipline of linguistic pragmatics to understand what makes supplication effective. Particularly helpful for understanding these verbal aspects of supplication is the influential theory of 'politeness' developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen

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[11] Ἔλεγεν δὲ παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὸ δεῖν πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι αὐτοὺς καὶ μὴ ἐγκακεῖν (2) λέγων· κριτής τις ἦν ἔν τινι πόλει τὸν θεὸν μὴ φοβούμενος καὶ ἄνθρωπον μὴ ἐντρεπόμενος. (3) χήρα δὲ ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ καὶ ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγουσα· ἐκδίκησόν με ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀντιδίκου μου. (4) καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν ἐπὶ χρόνον. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ· εἰ καὶ τὸν θεὸν οὐ φοβοῦμαι οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπον ἐντρέπομαι, (5) διά γε τὸ παρέχειν μοι κόπον τὴν χήραν ταύτην ἐκδικήσω αὐτήν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς τέλος ἐρχομένη ὑπωπιάζῃ με. (6) Εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος· ἀκούσατε τί ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας λέγει· (7) ὁ δὲ θεὸς οὐ μὴ ποιήσῃ τὴν ἐκδίκησιν τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν αὐτοῦ τῶν βοώντων αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός, καὶ μακροθυμεῖ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς; (8) λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ποιήσει τὴν ἐκδίκησιν αὐτῶν ἐν τάχει. πλὴν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐλθὼν ἆρα εὑρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; Greek text from Nestle and Aland; NIV translation used unless otherwise stated.

[12] καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτῇ· ἄφες πρῶτον χορτασθῆναι τὰ τέκνα, οὐ γάρ ἐστιν καλὸν λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων καὶ τοῖς κυναρίοις βαλεῖν. (28) ἡ δὲ ἀπεκρίθη καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· κύριε· καὶ τὰ κυνάρια ὑποκάτω τῆς τραπέζης ἐσθίουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν ψιχίων τῶν παιδίων. (29) καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· διὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ὕπαγε, ἐξελήλυθεν ἐκ τῆς θυγατρός σου τὸ δαιμόνιον.

Levinson.[13] It takes its starting point from a socio-anthropological notion of 'face', a person's image which participants in social interactions construct. According to Brown and Levinson, face 'consists of two specific kinds of desires ("face-wants") attributed by interactants to one another: the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions (negative face) and the desire (in some respects) to be approved of (positive face).'[14] Further, these wants are 'satisfiable only by the actions (including expressions of wants) of others, [and therefore] it will in general be to the mutual interest of two [agents] to maintain each other's face.'[15] Impositions such as requests are perceived as 'face threatening acts' ('FTAs').[16] The extent to and the ways in which they are mitigated through 'politeness strategies' seeking to minimise injury and maximise benefit to the addressee's face reveal not only the relative power and status of the participants but also show up fundamental values of the participants' society.[17] Although the details of Brown and Levinson's discussion have often been queried and refined, it presents a useful tool for describing the verbal aspects of supplication and their motivations.

## Supplication in the *Vita Pauli*

If we follow the chronological sequence, the first extended scene of supplication in Jerome's *Lives* occurs at *Vita Pauli* 9.4–6. Antony has been searching for Paul in the Egyptian desert, guided by a centaur, faun, and a she-wolf, and is finally making his way into the cave where Paul lives. But Paul continues to prefer his solitude: as soon as he notices Antony's approach, he bars his door against him:

> Finally [Antony] saw, through the terrifying darkness, a light in the distance. He hurried on more eagerly, hitting a stone with his foot, which made a noise. At this sound, the blessed Paul closed the door which had stood open and reinforced it with a bolt. 5. Then Antony fell down before the door and kept asking, until the sixth hour and beyond, to be admitted. He said: 'Who I am, from where and why I have come, you know. I am aware that I do not deserve to look at you (*scio me non mereri conspectum tuum*); but unless I see you I will not withdraw. You who welcome wild beasts, why are you turning back a human being? I searched and I have found, I am knocking so that it may

[13] Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
[14] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 13.
[15] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 60.
[16] More specifically, a request is a threat to the addressee's 'negative face wants': Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 65–6. The heightened emotions at play in a supplication additionally threaten the addressee's positive face wants, by giving them 'possible reason to fear him or be embarrassed by him': Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 66. At the same time, the interaction threatens the suppliant's own positive face through the expression of 'apologies', the 'breakdown of physical control over the body', including 'falling down', and 'emotion leakage', including 'non-control of … tears': Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 68.
[17] A successful interaction will leave both participants undamaged and perhaps even enhanced with regard to their face. This is possible wherever both parties acknowledge and cooperate in addressing each other's face wants.

> be opened unto me; but if I do not gain my end, I shall die right here in front of your door posts. I'm sure that you will at least bury my corpse.' These words he spoke and stood firm, rooted to the spot without moving. And the great man gave him his reply in few words: 'No one makes a request by means of threats, no one engages in slander amid tears. And you are surprised if I should not welcome you, seeing that you have come prepared to die?' He smiled at him and opened the entrance. When it stood open, both sides shared in an embrace and they greeted one another by their own names. Together they gave thanks to the Lord.

Antony's response is that of a supplicant: he assumes a dejected pose[18] and begins his speech by emphasising Paul's superior knowledge[19] and his own humility.[20] However, he then leaves behind the conventional strategies of politeness: instead he reproaches Paul for treating him worse than an animal (that is, than the she-wolf who showed him the way). His subsequent adaptation of Christ's words in the gospel ('Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you', Matthew 7:7),[21] although it highlights the shared Christian values of both participants, is designed to make a claim: Paul is obliged to keep Christ's promise.[22] Finally, Antony threatens Paul with having to bury his corpse if he dies before he is admitted.[23] Antony's speech is followed by two verses plucked from Virgil: first, Antony's stance is equated to that of Anchises as he refuses to leave Troy with his family at *Aen*. 2.650 (*talia perstabat memorans fixusque manebat*). The second line introduces the poet Musaeus' response to the Sibyl's question where she and Aeneas may find his father's spirit in the Underworld at *Aen.* 6.672 (*atque huic responsum paucis ita reddidit heros*). The intertextual relationship between the passages is not immediately satisfying: what these lines do for the

[18] Brown and Levinson also note the role gestures play in politeness, including the pose of supplication: e.g. *Politeness*, 190, in connection with asking for forgiveness.

[19] See Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 124–5 for the positive politeness strategies of presuming the addressee's knowledge about the context of a request.

[20] cf. Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 178–9 for the combination of the speaker's self-humbling and raising of the addressee as a negative politeness strategy; see also Williams in this volume, on humility in conversations between Christians.

[21] Αἰτεῖτε καὶ δοθήσεται ὑμῖν, ζητεῖτε καὶ εὑρήσετε, κρούετε καὶ ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν, in the King James Bible translation.

[22] In this sense, the statement refers back to Antony's dogged confidence at *V. Pauli* 7.3: *nec tamen a coepto itinere deducebatur, dicens: 'Credo in Deo meo, quod servum suum, quem mihi promisit, ostendet'* ('Yet he was not diverted from his original path; he said: 'I believe in my God, that he will show me his servant, whom he promised to me')—a passage which itself alludes to the gospel, Luke 2:29 *nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine secundum verbum tuum in pace* ('Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace;). Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 175 n. 44 also notes the relevance of further biblical passages, such as the explicitly erotic Song of Songs 5:2 *vox dilecti mei pulsantis 'aperi mihi soror mea amica mea columba mea inmaculata mea…'* ('[the voice of] my beloved, [who] is knocking: "Open to me, my sister, my darling, my dove, my flawless one…"') and Revelation 3:20 *ecce sto ad ostium et pulso si quis audierit vocem meam et aperuerit ianuam introibo ad illum et cenabo cum illo et ipse mecum* ('Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me').

[23] Paul in his response explicitly calls Antony's reference to his death a threat: *nemo sic petit ut minetur* ('no one pleads by way of threatening'). The strategy of using suicide to blackmail the addressee is familiar from ancient Greek supplication: see Gödde, *Drama der Hikesie*, 19 on the Danaids' threat to pollute the sanctuary by hanging themselves in the sanctuary where they have taken refuge, at Aesch. *Suppl.* 455–67.

*Vita Pauli* here is provide the *mots justes* for emphasising Paul's grand status and the taciturnity which appears to be an aspect of his withdrawal from the world. Their epic associations underline the sense that these two heroes are engaged in a tense battle of the wills: by giving his speech a turn away from politeness, Antony has risked the failure of his quest. Paul's response sounds like a stern rebuke of Antony's mode of framing his demands: he suggests that Antony used the wrong strategy, threatening where he should have begged and mixing his emotional appeal with misrepresentations. At the same time, his laughter defuses the tension as he gives in to Antony's demands.[24] The affection then expressed in the mutual embrace seems at odds with the hostility exhibited so far.

This scene sits almost exactly in the centre of the *Life of Paul*.[25] In its details, Antony's interaction with Paul in this passage follows the four steps which Naiden identifies for supplication: approach, gesture, verbal request, and reaction. First, Antony makes his way to Paul's cave, a journey which takes several chapters to complete (*V. Pauli* 7–9). Secondly, he falls down in front of his locked door (*pro foribus conruens*, *V. Pauli* 9.5). Thirdly, there is his speech, of which the quoted words should be imagined to represent only a small part: we are told that it goes on *ad sextam et eo amplius horam*, and Antony arrived at the entrance of the cave at the first light of dawn. Fourthly and finally, Paul's response, although critical and mocking, is positive: he agrees to welcome Antony into his solitude. The fact that a God-sent raven then provides a whole loaf of bread instead of the customary half-loaf signals divine approval for this decision (*V. Pauli* 10.2–3).

There is much that is intriguing about this meeting of Antony and Paul. Alan Ross in this volume mentions the important parallels between this scene and the *paraclausithyron*,[26] which support the sustained erotic interpretation of Virginia Burrus.[27] Gendered aspects, furthermore, are implicit in the practice of supplication: as Froma Zeitlin has argued, it is a sacrilege to harm people supplicating in a sacred place, and in this regard 'the virgin and the suppliant are isomorphic categories'.[28] If this insight is applied to the *Life of Paul*, Antony

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[24] According to Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 124, '[j]oking is a basic positive-politeness technique' which serve to stress 'shared background knowledge and values.' Perhaps more importantly for our purposes, humour can be used to make a speech act less face-threatening than it actually is (*Politeness*, 229). Also relevant is the observation that 'laughter in conversation is finely attuned to the occurrence of FTAs' ('face-threatening acts') (*Politeness*, 232).

[25] It is preceded by c. 1,200 and followed by c. 1,000 words. If we exclude the preface of c. 150 words, the scene appears even more central; but then it would be consistent to exclude the epilogue as well, which also contains c. 150 words.

[26] Suggested by Pierre Leclerc, "Antoine et Paul: métamorphose d'un héros", in Yves-Marie Duval (ed.), *Jérôme entre l'Occident et l'Orient* (XVIe centenaire du départ de saint Jérôme de Rome et de son installation à Bethléem. Actes du colloque de Chantilly, Sept. 1986, Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1988), 262–3, on the basis of Theodor Wolpers' paraphrase of the encounter in *Die englische Heiligenlegende des Mittelalters: eine Formgeschichte des Legendenerzählens von der spätantiken lateinischen Tradition bis zur Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1964), 51.

[27] Burrus, *Sex Lives*, 30. She also points out that the reference to the clandestine mint present in the cave (*V. Pauli* 5.2), dating from 'the time when Antony was joined to Cleopatra' (*ea tempestate qua Cleopatrae iunctus Antonius est*), invites the association of Paul with Cleopatra as 'Antony's' partner: Burrus, *Sex Lives*, 28.

[28] Froma I. Zeitlin, "Patterns of Gender in Aeschylean Drama: Seven against Thebes and the Danaid Trilogy", in Mark Griffith and Donald J. Mastronarde (eds.), *Cabinet of the Muses: Essays on Classical and Comparative Literature in Honor of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 105, referring to the status of the

simultaneously plays the parts of the *exclusus amator* and the virgin in need of protection. This suggests that the patterns constructed by supplication contribute to the paradox of erotic sublimation constructed by Jerome.

Herbert Kech notes that Paul's refusal to admit Antony after a long and strenuous journey appears 'positively inhuman' ('geradezu unmenschlich')[29]—a revealing phrase for characterising the superhuman asceticism practised by Paul in this text. Kech explains Paul's behaviour by appealing to narratological concerns: it introduces a delay in the narrative and, by provoking Antony's supplication, adds high drama to this climactic point in the plot.[30] Even so, Paul's response to Antony's pleading is awkward in its reasoning. He appears to justify his *initial* refusal by Antony's *subsequent* threats of suicide, thus inverting cause and effect.[31] Kech comments as follows:

> Mit dieser Art Logik ins Recht gesetzt, läßt er sich herab, in lächelnder Pose den ungebetenen Gast zu empfangen … Die Kontroverse wird nicht bis zum Ende ausgetragen, sondern vorzeitig überlagert von Umgangsformen (Umarmung, Begrüßung, Danksagung), die ob ihrer Formalität und Konventionalität nichts darüber aussagen, wer wem nachgegeben hat.[32]

This interpretation of the encounter as a conflict which is not resolved but rather put aside emphasises the text's concern with saving Paul's face.[33] Antony's visit threatens his commitment to absolute solitude; but for the narrative to gain access to him, in the form of Antony and his later report to his disciples, he needs a way to make an exception without losing his ascetic credibility. For the reader, Antony's speech illustrates the effort that is necessary to get Paul to compromise his solitude. In one sense, the self-humiliation expressed through the medium of supplication expresses his inferiority to Paul. But at the same time, this expression also gives him rhetorical power over his addressee: as Susanne Gödde has observed in the case of Aeschylus' suppliants, the act of supplication makes a strength out of weakness.[34] Paul

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Dainaids as virgin suppliants in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*. Cf. also Gould, "Hiketeia", 97–8, for the wife as the quintessential suppliant at her husband's hearth.

[29] Herbert Kech, *Hagiographie als christliche Unterhaltungsliteratur: Studien zum Phänomen des Erbaulichen anhand der Mönchsviten des hl. Hieronymus* (Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1977), 41.

[30] Kech, *Hagiographie*, 41.

[31] Kech, *Hagiographie*, 42.

[32] Kech, *Hagiographie*, 42.

[33] For the notion of face, see besides Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, also the useful discussion in Peter Barrios-Lech, *Linguistic Interaction in Roman Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 32–4. I suggest that the self-humiliation of the petitioner in a supplication ritual may serve both to maintain the addressee's 'positive face' by acknowledging their power and to restore the threat to their 'negative face' caused by the request.

[34] Gödde, *Drama der Hikesie*, 33, with reference to Danièle Aubriot-Sévin, *Prière et conceptions religieuses en Grèce ancienne jusqu'à la fin du Ve siècle av. J.*-C. (Collection de la Maison de l'Orient Méditerranéen 22, Série littéraire et philosophique 5, 1992), 426, who points out the (superficial) connection with the paradoxical logic of Jesus' Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12); cf. also 2 Corinthians 12:10: 'That is why, for Christ's sake, I

therefore frames his response in such a way that he appears to act not so much in reponse to Antony's supplication as in spite of it. He thus compounds Antony's humiliation, albeit unfairly.

Applying Brown and Levinson's concepts of 'positive' and 'negative face' to the depiction of supplication in this scene, I find that these concepts correlate nicely with the communicative needs of the texts. The reader needs to understand that Paul deserves to be honoured for his superlative holiness (~'positive face'), and at the same time that he deserves to be left in the solitude which is the basis of his holiness (~'negative face'). Antony's visit threatens mainly the latter, and so he needs to make the highest possible amends for it, reinforcing perceptions of Paul's holiness by catering to his 'positive face'. Antony's supplication and Paul's response thus enable Paul to compromise his solitude in return for higher prestige.

## Supplication in the *Vita Malchi*

The *Captive Monk* contains three scenes where characters try to change the protagonist's mind by means of supplications, and they take up an increasing amount of space. The first occurs close to the beginning of Malchus' first-person narrative, when his parents try to make him abandon his proposal of becoming a monk at *V. Malchi* 3.1:

> … I was the only son of my parents. When they were trying to force me to marry on the grounds that I was the representative of the line and the heir of the family, I replied that I wanted instead to be a monk. With what threats my father, with what cajoling words my mother hounded me to betray my chastity can be seen from the single fact that I fled both my home and my parents.[35]

The parents' conduct is marked from the start by coercion (*ad nuptias cogerent*). Malchus' preference is met with threats and blandishments, distributed along gender lines: the father uses threats (*minis*), the mother flatteries (*blanditiis*).[36] Both strategies reflect those used by Antony in the *Life of Paul*: he compliments Paul by acknowledging his foreknowledge and admitting that he is not worthy of his sight (*scio me non mereri conspectum tuum*, *V. Pauli* 9.5); and he uses the threat of his own death to gain admission regardless, on which Paul calls him out

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delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong'.

[35] *solus parentibus fui. qui cum me quasi stirpem generis sui et heredem familiae ad nuptias cogerent, monachum potius esse velle respondi. quantis pater minis, quantis mater blanditiis persecuti sunt ut pudicitiam proderem, haec res sola indicio est, quod et domum et parentes fugi.*

[36] Note that 'flattery' is a derogatory way of referring to another's attempt at using positive politeness: cf. Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 73.

(*nemo sic petit ut minetur*, *V. Pauli* 9.6). Further, the parents' attempts at persuasion are classed as 'persecution' (*persecuti sunt*), aiming at a 'betrayal' (*proderem*) of Malchus' 'chastity' (*pudicitiam*, interpreted in the ascetic sense of complete sexual abstinence).[37] The pro-ascetic ethos of the *Captive Monk* endorses the judgement that Malchus' parents are in the wrong: their request that he should marry is an act of aggression which he is obliged to refuse.

Much more troubling is Malchus' reaction to his abbot's remonstrations when he proposes to leave the monastery again to return to his now-widowed mother and to his inheritance at *V. Malchi* 3.6–7:

> My abbot began to shout that this was a temptation of the devil and that under the pretext of a worthy act there lay the wiles of the old foe. This was what it meant for a dog to return to its vomit. This was the way, he said, in which many monks had been led astray; the devil never revealed himself openly. He put before me a great many examples from Scripture, among them the story that in the beginning he also tripped up Adam and Eve through the hope of divinity. And when he failed to convince me, he grovelled at my knees and entreated me not to leave him, not to lose myself, not to look behind my back while holding the plough. 7. Woe to me, poor creature that I am! I achieved a base victory, thinking that his aim was not my best interests but his own comfort.[38]

The abbot first maintains his position of authority in trying to convince Malchus through arguments, using biblical quotations and the deterrent example of the fall of Adam and Eve. When Malchus remains indifferent, the abbot resorts to supplication. Malchus' principal transgression in the text lies in his failure to take pity on the undignified grovelling of his superior. This is marked by the switch to the narrator's perspective at *V. Malchi* 3.7: if the text is read without quotation marks indicating the change of speaker, *vae misero mihi* could at first sight be taken to be the abbot's direct speech, using the vocabulary of misery appropriate to supplication.[39] In fact, of course, it is the aged Malchus lamenting his younger self's

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[37] In classical Rome *pudicitia* covers appropriate sexual behaviour, including virginity for unmarried girls and marital fidelity for matrons. See Rebecca Langlands, *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[38] *clamare hoc coepit abbas meus diaboli esse temptationem et sub honestae rei occasione antiqui hostis astutias. hoc esse reverti canem ad vomitum suum. sic multos monachorum esse deceptos. numquam diabolum aperta fronte se prodere. proponebat mihi exempla de Scripturis plurima, inter quae illud, ab initio quod Adam quoque et Evam spe divinitatis supplantaverit. et cum persuadere non posset, provolutus genibus obsecrabat ne se desererem, ne me perderem, ne aratrum tenens post tergum respicerem. 7. vae misero mihi! vici pessimam victoriam, reputans illum non meam utilitatem sed suum solacium quaerere.*

[39] Such laments are appeals to pity, which form a conventional (but not ubiquitous) part of supplication: see Gödde, *Drama der Hikesie*, 118–123 (on maternal mourning in Euripides' *Suppliants*); cf. Naiden, *Ancient Supplication*, 97–100.

wrongheadedness. Unlike in the conflict with Malchus' parents, the narrator here takes a different view from the protagonist.

The most extended supplication scene is *V. Malchi* 6.7–8. As in the *Vita Pauli*, this scene comes just after the arithmetic centre of the text. The protagonist-narrator Malchus, formerly a monk and now a captive of the pagan Saracens, has just consented under pressure to marry a female fellow-slave whose husband disappeared during the same raid in which they were both captured. Malchus then resolves, in a monologue, to commit suicide rather than consummate this union (*V. Malchi* 6.4–6). The woman reacts with a supplication:

> Then she rolled before my feet and said: 'I beg you in the name of Jesus, I ask you by the crisis of the present hour not to pour out your blood. Or, if you are determined to die, turn the sword against me first. Let us be united in that way instead. Even if my husband should return to me I would preserve the chastity which captivity has taught me; indeed, I would perish rather than lose it. Why are you dying to avoid being joined to meI myself would die if you wanted to join yourself to me. Therefore take me as your partner in chastity, and love the bond of the soul more than that of the body. Let the masters think you my husband, Christ will know that you are my brother. We shall easily convince them of our marriage when they see this mutual love of ours.' 8. I confess I was dumbfounded. I marvelled at the woman's virtue and loved her more than a spouse.[40]

The woman's point of view has been unknown (or perhaps rather ignored) until the point of her supplication. By performing the gesture of self-humiliation, she forces the self-absorbed protagonist to pay attention to her. She deftly uses the formula of the oath to surprise Malchus with a reference to his own god, Jesus, to prevent him from accomplishing his plan. Her first rhetorical move is thus claiming shared ideological ground.[41] Her next move is to retreat from her initial plea, as she permits him to go ahead with his suicide—as long as she is killed first, which would result in a union preferable to marriage. This suggestion illustrates her own commitment to sexual abstinence, which, she claims, she is prepared to uphold even in the event of recovering her original husband. Since she is in agreement with Malchus, it would be absurd for him to escape the situation by means of violence. The absurdity is expressed in a double polyptoton of *morior* and *iungo* in her reproachful pairing of question and answer: *Cur*

[40] *tunc illa provoluta pedibus meis 'per ego te,' inquit, Iesum, per huius horae necessitatem rogo, ne effundas sanguinem tuum. uel si mori placet, in me primum verte mucronem. sic nobis potius coniungamur. etiam si vir meus ad me rediret servarem castitatem quam me captivitas docuit; vel interirem ante quam perderem. cur moreris ne mihi iungaris? ego morerer, si iungi velles. habeto me ergo coniugem pudicitiae et magis animae copulam amato quam corporis. sperent domini maritum, Christus noverit fratrem. facile persuadebimus nuptias cum nos viderint sic amare.' 8. fateor, obstupui; et admiratus virtutem feminae coniuge plus amavi.*

[41] Cf. Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 103–4 for the strategy of claiming common ground.

*moreris ne mihi iungaris? Ego morerer, si iungi uelles*. If both parties prefer death to intercourse, suicide becomes unnecessary.

The woman shows great creativity of thought in interpreting the notion of 'joining' (*iungo* and compounds/cognates): it can be achieved through death, so there is no point of using death in an attempt to avoid it. This semantic flexibility prepares the ground for her central proposal: she offers herself as a *coniunx pudicitiae*, echoing and developing a concept used by Malchus in his suicide speech: *habet et pudicitia servata martyrium suum* ('the preservation of chastity also has its own martyrdom', *V. Malchi* 6.5). *Pudicitia*, associated by Malchus with death, now replaces death, in the woman's reasoning, as a basis of union. The phrase *coniunx pudicitiae* appears as an oxymoron only if the sexual aspect is foregrounded in the definition of *coniunx*. However, if other foundations—for example, death—are admissible, a shared commitment to sexual abstinence seems no worse a basis than a shared readiness to die for its sake (even though this completely inverts the original meaning of *coniunx*). All that is required, the woman claims, is to privilege the soul over the body—in another close echo of Malchus' earlier suicide speech, where he impressed on his soul that its 'death is more to be feared than that of the body' (*V. Malchi* 6.5: *tua magis mors timenda est quam corporis*, countered by the woman's *magis animae copulam amato quam corporis*). Further, in the circumstances, this mutual love of souls is not an end in itself: a display of genuine affection will also prevent their owners from suspecting that the marriage is not, in fact, genuine.

The woman's speech is a sophistic tour de force: she combines the urgency of a supplication with acute observation of Malchus' mind and a cunning redefinition of the crucial concept of (*con*)*iungo*. It is no wonder that she leaves him flabbergasted (*V. Malchi* 6.8: *obstupui*). His admiration leads to affection, in accordance with her proposition, and as a result he does not only refrain from killing himself, but is moved to enter into the relationship which makes them so distinctive as a pair.[42] Malchus' concern with his own monastic purity and solitude gives way to a narrative where the first person plural predominates as the couple agrees to escape from the Saracens.[43] In a final dramatic development, they are saved from death at the hands of their pursuing master through the action of a lioness, in a scene which serves as proof of divine recognition of their chaste union (*V. Malchi* 9). Although this event is less

[42] The primary narrator, the young Jerome, encounters them living together at *Vita Malchi* 2.2, and it is his curiosity about their way of life which prompts Malchus' autobiographical narrative: see especially Klazina Staat's chapter in this volume.

[43] *Vita Malchi* 8.2 *invadimus iter … portantes*; 8.3 *pervenissemus*; *aquis nos credimus … subremigantes*; *conscenderamus*; 8.4 *bibimus … praeparantes*; 8.5 *currimus*; *aspicimus*; *promovemur*; 9.1 *respicimus*; *timemus*; *nos proditos intelligimus*; 9.2 *timentes … intravimus*; *nos foveae credimus … progredientes*; *fugimus*; *incurreremus*; *habemus* (twice); 9.3 *quid putas fuisse nobis animi?*; 9.5 *nos … protrahat*; *nostrum exspectat adventum*; 9.6 *nobis … videntibus*; 9.7 *aspicimus*; *quid tunc nobis terroris … fuit*; *spectabamus hostem nostrum*; 9.8 *nostras latebras*; 9.9 *bestia pro nobis dimicaret*; 9.10 *pavemus*; *ne movere quidem nos ausi praestolabamur … saepti*; 9.11 *nobisque cedit hospitium*; *erumpimus*; *exspectamus*; *egredi cogitantes illius semper figuramus occursum*; 10.1 *eximus*; *videmusque*; *refocilati … venimus*; 10.2 *oblati … pandimus*; *transmissi … accepimus*. Roughly every fifth word in the passage down to 10.2 contains a reference to the first person plural. For the problem of their separation at the end of the narrative, where Malchus states: 'I returned myself to the monks; this one I handed over to the virgins' (*Vita Malchi* 10.3: *me monachis reddo; hanc trado virginibus*), see Staat in this volume.

miraculous than the bread-bearing raven of the *Vita Pauli*, it fulfils a similar function of confirming that the protagonist's response to being supplicated was the correct one.

Each of the supplications in the *Captive Monk* represents an attempt to make Malchus connect with others. His parents want to integrate him into secular society through marriage; his abbot tries to keep him in the community of monks; and the woman proposes a chaste partnership to avoid Malchus dying in solitude, and this turns out to be the first step in rehabilitating him as a cenobitic monk (*V. Malchi* 10.3) and, eventually, as a highly respected inhabitant of the village of Maronias (*V. Malchi* 2.2–3). It appears that supplications are the narrative's favourite method for dramatising Malchus' crises of conscience and thus to make clear to the reader what is at stake in each of his decisions.

## Supplication in the *Vita Hilarionis*

As in the other two texts, supplication plays a key part in reconciling the solitary and the communal aspects of Hilarion's holiness in the *Life of Hilarion*.[44] Like Paul, he is in danger of becoming a mere rumour thanks to his strict solitude—until a woman from Eleutheropolis makes a journey of approximately thirty miles to ask for his help in curing her infertility (*V. Hilarion.* 7.1–4):

> He had already been living in the desert for twenty-two years and was known to all, albeit only by his reputation, which had spread through all the cities of Palestine. One day a certain woman from Eleutheropolis, who found herself held in contempt by her husband on account of her infertility (in a period of fifteen years she had not produced any marital offspring), was the first who had the courage to break through to the blessed Hilarion. He had expected nothing of that kind, but she immediately fell down before his knees and said: 'Forgive my daring, forgive my desperation. 2. Why are you turning away your eyes? Why are you shrinking from your petitioner? Do not look on me as a woman but look at my misery. This is the sex which gave birth to the Saviour. It is not the healthy who need a physician but those who are unwell.' 3. At last he relented. Seeing a woman after such a long stretch of time, he questioned her about the reason for her coming and her weeping. 4. And after he learned it, he lifted his eyes to heaven and asked her to have faith. He accompanied her with tears as she left, and after a year had passed he saw her with a son.[45]

[44] Dieter Hoster, "Die Form der frühesten lateinischen Heiligenviten von der *Vita Cypriani* bis zur *Vita Ambrosii* und ihr Heiligenideal", Ph.D. diss., Cologne (1963), 79: 'Überhaupt geht es Hieronymus weniger darum, ein Lehrbuch für werdende Mönche zu schreiben, sondern den wunderbaren Vorgang darzutun, wie Mönche, die einsam in der Wüste leben, in aller Welt berühmt werden.'

[45] *Viginti et duos iam in solitudine habebat annos, fama tantum notus omnibus, et per totas Palaestinae vulgatus urbes, cum interim mulier quaedam Eleutheropolitana, cernens despectui se haberi a viro ob sterilitatem—iam enim per annos quindecim nullos coniugii fructus dederat—prima irrumpere ausa est ad beatum Hilarionem, et nihil tale suspicanti, repente genibus eius advoluta: 'Ignosce,' inquit, 'audaciae, ignosce necessitati meae.* 2.

The encounter is partly inspired by the story of Hannah at 1 Samuel 1:1–20, who pours out her desperation at her infertility to God in the Temple: 'Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head' (1 Sam. 1:11). The manner of her intercession draws the ire of the High Priest Eli, who assumes that she is drunk. She corrects him and asks: 'Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief' (1 Sam. 1:16). Eli responds: 'Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him' (1 Sam. 1:17). Eli's switch from disapproval to blessing is an indication that her wish will be granted: Hannah falls pregnant and names her son Samuel, 'Because I asked the Lord for him' (1 Sam. 1:20).

The Eleutheropolitan woman uses supplication to negotiate a difficult encounter with a less-than-welcoming servant of God. After completing the first two steps of approaching Hilarion stealthily and surprising him by falling down at his feet, she first pre-empts a more hostile reaction by asking him to forgive her boldness (*'ignosce,' inquit, 'audaciae'*, *V. Hilarion.* 7.1).[46] She then repeats the request, but replaces *audaciae* with *necessitati* ('need'). This substitution suggests an attempt of justifying her *audacia* by means of her *necessitas*: she would not have approached him but for her desperation.[47] Hilarion is taken aback by her request, as appears from her next speech act: *'quid avertis oculos? quid rogantem fugis?'* (*V. Hilarion.* 7.2). These two questions are both urgent and reproachful: as Rodie Risselada has shown, the use of *quid* in place of *cur* expresses dismay at another's action.[48] There is not much in these questions that can be taken as politeness: a cooperative hearer must assume that the urgency of the woman's predicament has made her dispense with good manners.[49] She correctly identifies her gender as a main stumbling block and asks Hilarion to foreground another aspect of her person: *Noli me mulierem aspicere, sed miseram*.[50] Her conceptual

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*Quid avertis oculos? Quid rogantem fugis? Noli me mulierem aspicere, sed miseram. Hic sexus genuit Salvatorem. Non habent sani opus medico, sed qui male habent."* 3. *Tandem substitit, et post tantum temporis visa muliere interrogavit causam adventus eius ac fletuum.* 4. *Et postquam didicit, levatis ad caelum oculis, fidere eam iussit, euntemque lacrimis prosecutus exacto anno vidit cum filio.*

[46] Apologising is categorised as negative politeness: Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 187–90.

[47] This is a switch to positive politeness, insofar as the notion of justification indicates a degree of shared understanding: cf. Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 103, 128.

[48] See Rodie Risselada, *Imperatives and Other Directive Expressions in Latin: A Study in the Pragmatics of a Dead Language* (Amsterdam Studies in Classical Philology, Leiden: Brill, Amsterdam: Gieben, 1993), 208–10 on the difference between 'relatively neutral' questions with *quid* or *cur* on the one hand, and on the other the 'expressive' use of interrogative *quid* 'not to obtain an explanation for the realization of a state of affairs that is (being) realized …|… but to express the speaker's (negative) emotions with respect to whatever motivation he can think of. The expressive force involved may be just surprise, but more usually it involves outright disapproval … When a *quid* interrogative is combined with a second person present tense predication, it invariably has the conventionalized implicit directive force to put an end to the behaviour that is explicitly mentioned.' The corpus to which these statements refer is Plautus.

[49] Cf. Brown and Levinson *Politeness*, 95–6: 'In cases of great urgency or desperation, redress would actually decrease the communicated urgency.'

[50] The background seems to be a rule that the holy man must remain separate from others. See Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976[2]; first published under the title *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: le système totémique en Australie*, Paris: Alcan, 1912), 299–325. The woman here transgresses the demands of 'negative cult', a concept which inspired Brown and Levinson's

division of the aspects under which she may be perceived suggests a similar sophistication as that shown by Malchus' partner, who redefined aspects of *coniugium* at *V. Malchi* 6.7.[51] Her misery is what qualifies her as a suppliant who deserves a hearing. As for her gender, she adds that it is not without merit: *Hic sexus genuit Salvatorem*. This reference makes clear that she shares Hilarion's Scriptural reference points, while at the same time hinting at the problem for which she seeks help: she wants to be able to procreate, just like the mother of Christ. In fact, there is every reason to suppose that she is Christian, especially since she caps her claim by quoting Jesus' own words: *Non habent sani opus medico, sed qui male habent.* This phrase is found in all three synoptic gospels (Matthew 9:12, Mark 2:17, Luke 5:31). Thus the woman assumes Christ's authority for her own cause: she is unwell (and, moreover, metaphorically unwell because of the inferiority of her sex). As such, her right to ask for help has been endorsed by Jesus himself. It can be argued that, among the suppliants in the *Lives*, the Eleutheropolitan woman makes the cleverest use of her material: she has come to ask for fertility, and her choice of references to birth and to sickness alludes to the nature of her suffering while she is only asking Hilarion to listen to her.[52] Hilarion only relents at the end of this speech (*Tandem substitit*, *V. Hilarion.* 7.3), which suggests that each of its parts is vital to persuade him to listen to her. Once he has heard her out, he answers her weeping with his own tears. As in the case of Hannah, their hard-won understanding is followed by the birth of a son in the following year.

The Eleutheropolitan woman is the first person to elicit a healing miracle from Hilarion. She is followed immediately by a more assertive and powerful suppliant, Aristaenete, whose demands on Hilarion are even less modest, at *V. Hilarion.* 8.1–5:

> 1. This sign, his first, was soon made more renowned by another greater sign. Aristaenete, the wife of Helpidius who later became praetorian prefect, was a very distinguished woman among her own class and even more distinguished among Christians. When she returned with her husband and her three children from the blessed Antony, she halted at Gaza because they felt unwell. 2. For in that place, whether because of its rotten air or, as transpired later, on account of the glory of Hilarion, the servant of God, they were all seized with a semi-tertian fever, and the physicians despaired of them. ... 4. But when [Aristaenete] learned that there was a certain hermit in the neighbouring desert, she forgot the trappings of her status as a matron (she only knew herself to be a mother) and walked accompanied by her maidservants and eunuchs; her husband could scarcely persuade her to make the journey riding on a donkey. 5. And when she had reached him, she said: 'By Jesus, our most merciful God, I call on you, by his cross and his blood, to give me back my three children; and let the

'negative politeness.' According to this framework, Hilarion's fasting and self-mortification has conferred ritual purity on him (cf. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 310–11), which is threatened by contact with a woman, especially one who is sexually active and thus clearly 'profane' rather than 'sacred'.

[51] See above, 000.

[52] For hints and 'association clues' as aspects of politeness see Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 213–16: they are ways of concealing an imposition by leaving the addressee the choice of interpreting it as a request.

> name of our Lord and Saviour be glorified in the city of the gentiles, and let his servant enter Gaza, and let Marnas fall down.'[53]

The Eleutheropolitan woman had used supplication to break the first barrier, to make Hilarion listen and speak to her. Aristaenete asks for more: she needs Hilarion to leave his hermitage in the desert and to enter the nearby city of Gaza in order to heal her three children from a raging fever. Her high status allows her to elaborate the ritual of self-humiliation.[54] The first words of her speech echo those of Malchus' companion at *V. Malchi* 6.7: *per ego te ... Iesum*, and she likewise repeats *per* to appeal to a related subject, Jesus' cross and blood.[55] After this invocation, she states her request, *ut reddas mihi tres filios*, which is immediately followed by reference to the subsequent benefits for Christianity in its struggle against paganism. The use of the present subjunctive presents the possibility, or rather the wish, that Hilarion's healing presence in Gaza will cause the city's patron god Marnas to topple.[56] By implying that Hilarion is invested in this goal, she makes it appear that her appeal is helping him to obtain what he desires.[57]

Only when Hilarion refuses to act as she asks does she assume the full pose of the suppliant by prostrating herself (*V. Hilarion.* 8.6–7):

> He refused and said that he would never go out of his cell and was not in the habit of entering even a farm, let alone the town. She prostrated herself on the floor and kept shouting over and over: 'Hilarion, servant of Christ, give me back my children. Antony kept them safe in Egypt, now let them be saved by you in Syria.' 7. All those who were present were crying, and Hilarion himself was crying as he kept refusing her request.

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[53] *Hoc signorum eius principium maius aliud signum nobilitavit. Aristaenete, Helpidii, qui postea praefectus praetorio fuit, uxor, valde nobilis inter suos et inter Christianos nobilior, revertens cum marito et tribus liberis a beato Antonio, Gazae propter infirmitatem eorum remorata est.* 2. *Ibi enim, sive ob corruptum aerem, sive, ut postea claruit, propter gloriam Hilarionis, servi Dei, hemitritaeo pariter arrepti omnes a medicis desperati sunt.* 3. *Iacebat ululans mater et quasi inter tria filiorum discurrens cadavera, quem primum plangeret, nesciebat.* 4. *Agnito autem quod esset quidam monachus in vicina solitudine, oblita matronalis pompae—tantum se matrem noverat—vadit comitata ancillulis et eunuchis, vixque a viro persuasum est ut asello sedens pergeret.* 5. *Ad quem cum pervenisset: 'Per eum te,' ait, 'Iesum, clementissimum Deum nostrum, obtestor, per crucem eius et sanguinem, ut reddas mihi tres filios, et glorificetur in urbe gentilium nomen Domini Salvatoris, et ingrediatur servus eius Gazam, et Marnas corruat.'*

[54] The depiction of this elaboration seems slightly parodic: although completely oblivious of her *matronalis pompa* (NB the echo of Hilarion's torments, which include hearing a *planctum quasi muliercularum* at *V. Hilarion.* 3.7, followed by a *pompa* at 3.8), Aristaenete still arrives in a procession of maidservants and eunuchs.

[55] Note that a reference to Christ's blood would have confused Malchus' woman's speech, whose initial argument is concerned with whose blood should be shed. Cf. also the Eleutheropolitan woman's repetition of *ignosce* with two separate objects at *V. Hilarion.* 7.1.

[56] In fact, Hilarion's victory over Marnas comes not when he finally acceded to Aristaenete's request but at a later point, in chapter 11, and even then it does not achieve the complete downfall of the god and his cult.

[57] See Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 125 for offers and promises as a positive politeness strategy.

> What more is there to say? The woman only left after he promised her to enter Gaza after sunset.[58]

The sequence is the same as that observed in the request made of Malchus by his abbot,[59] and it seems to reflect the high status of the petitioner. Aristaenete's second speech is full of urgency. The complex periodic structure of the first plea gives way to simple parataxis with a bald infinitive (*redde*), followed by an analogy between Hilarion and his great mentor, Antony. As a result, everyone cries, including Hilarion; but whereas in the case of the Eleutheropolitan woman his tears only appeared after he had responded favourably to her plea, here he still holds out against Aristaenete. His tears show that pity threatens to overwhelm his resolve, but it takes more persistence on Aristaenete's part for him to abandon his refusal. The emphasis on the length of time taken up by her supplication recalls the hours Antony spent supplicating Paul at *V. Pauli* 9.5.[60] Aristaenete finally extracts a promise from Hilarion, which comes with a further delay: he only enters Gaza after sunset. By contrast, once he has arrived, his presence is immediately effective, with emphasis placed on the boys' swift recovery through temporal adverbials (*V. Hilarion.* 8.8):

> And after he arrived, he inspected each little bed and the children's burning limbs and called on Jesus. And by his wonderful power sweat immediately (*statim*) broke out simultaneously (*pariter*) as though from three springs; and within the same hour (*eadem hora*) they accepted food, recognised their grieving mother, and, blessing God, kissed the holy man's hand.[61]

Overall, Aristaenete's supplication succeeds not because of her her promises and self-humiliation but thanks to her persistence. In this, her strategy is comparable to that of Antony in the *V. Pauli* passage, who threatens to besiege Paul's door until he (Antony) dies. Once Hilarion gives in to Aristaenete's tenacious begging and enters Gaza, he becomes a celebrity, not only in Palestine but in Syria and Egypt (*V. Hilarion.* 8.9–10):

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[58] *Renuente illo et dicente numquam se egressurum de cellula nec habere consuetudinem, ut non modo civitatem sed ne villam quidem ingrederetur, prostravit se humi crebro clamitans: 'Hilarion, serve Christi, redde mihi liberos meos. Quos Antonius tenuit in Aegypto, a te serventur in Syria.'* 7. *Flebant cuncti qui aderant, sed et ipse negans flebat. Quid multa? Non prius mulier recessit quam ille pollicitus est se post solis occasum Gazam introiturum.*

[59] See above, 000.

[60] See above, 000.

[61] *Quo postquam venit, singulorum lectulos et ardentia membra considerans, invocavit Iesum. Et, o mira virtus, statim quasi de tribus fontibus sudor pariter erupit; eadem hora acceperunt cibos, lugentemque matrem cognoscentes et benedicentes Deum sancti manus deosculati sunt.*

> After this became known and spread about far and wide, the people of Syria and Egypt competed in running to him, with the result that many became Christians and announced that they would be monks. 10. For at that time there were no monastic establishments in Palestine and no one knew a monk before the holy Hilarion. 11. He was the first founder and instructor of that committed way of life in this province. The Lord Jesus had the aged Antony in Egypt, and in Palestine he had the younger Hilarion.[62]

Thus it is again thanks to supplication that the holy man's exploits become known; by extension, the two women's supplications lead Hilarion to provide Jerome with the bulk of the material presented in his *Life*. In consequence, the pattern all but disappears from the narrative,[63] where Hilarion now continues to work miracles without being pressed.

## Concluding Discussion

The preceding analysis suggests that the practice of supplication is deliberately employed throughout the three *Lives*. Particularly extended supplications addressed to the protagonist come at key points in the plot development; unlike some other instances, these set-piece scenes invariably have a positive outcome. This pattern is unlikely to be a coincidence. It appears to be inspired by various scenes in the *Life of Antony*,[64] whose Latin translation by Evagrius was the most important inspiration for Jerome's hagiographical construction, but supplication is much more prominent and elaborate in Jerome than in his model.[65] By constructing supplication in an emphatic and dramatic manner, Jerome's *Lives* convey an ambition to be considered a supremely engaging class of literature, one which appeals not only to the theological and moral curiosities of his Christian audience but also to their appetites for a good tale.

A further point which emerges from the discussion is the close connection between the suppliants' arguments and the values of asceticism. The overwhelming commitment of Jerome's protagonists to solitude is an extreme instance of 'negative face wants' according to the terminology of Brown and Levinson.[66] In view of this fact it is only logical that the

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[62] *Quod postquam auditum est et longe lateque percrebuit, certatim ad eum de Syria et Aegypto populi confluebant, ita ut multi Christiani fierent et se monachos profiterentur.* 10. *Necdum enim tunc monasteria erant in Palaestina nec quisquam monachum ante sanctum Hilarionem in Syria noverat.* 11. *Ille fundator et eruditor huius conuersationis et studii in hac provincia primum fuit. Habebat Dominus Iesus in Aegypto senem Antonium, habebat in Palaestina Hilarionem iuniorem.*

[63] The only exception is *V. Hilarion.* 23.2–4, where the monks of Bruchium unsuccessfully petition him (albeit in indirect speech) to stay with them. Hilarion knows that he is being persecuted by the Gazans by order of the emperor Julian, so his refusal is an act of kindness to the monks.

[64] Especially chapters 48 and 71, where Antony's readiness to help is contrasted with his desire to be left alone.

[65] There is no space in this chapter to elaborate on this assertion. In any case a thoroughgoing analysis of the detailed correspondences between Jerome's *Lives* and the *Life of Antony* remains a desideratum.

[66] Note that the terminology is adapted from Emile Durkheim's concepts of 'negative cult' and 'positive cult'. Durkheim includes asceticism in his discussion of negative cult: Durkheim, *Elementary Forms* 299–325.

strategies of positive politeness dominate the suppliants' rhetoric: there is no point trying to minimise the extent of the imposition on one who desires most to be left in peace altogether. Positive politeness is riskier than its negative counterpart.[67] Suppliants portray themselves as having nothing to lose, and risky strategies appear in keeping with this presentation. This consideration also accounts for the elements of the suppliants' petition which cannot be analysed as polite in any sense, such as the Eleutheropolitan woman's indignant questions about Hilarion's attempts to withdraw from her. Her rudeness must necessarily be ascribed to her desperation, otherwise they would appear as shocking arrogance. Paradoxically, the use of supplication turns a person's weakness into a strength.[68] What seems an expression of abjection becomes a means of exerting force.[69] This fact may explain why women are so often chosen to perform supplication in Jerome's *Lives*: perhaps their lesser social power makes their pleas more compelling.[70]

It seems reasonable, then, to ascribe the prominence of supplication in our texts to Jerome's championing of asceticism. Compensating the protagonists for their compromises, the suppliants provide a justification for connecting both perfect exemplars like Paul and Hilarion and less perfect monks like Malchus with the needs of a wider society. In this regard, the *Lives* put a particular spin on the notion that supplication leads to a reintegration into society.[71] In the case of the supplicated ascetic, it is they themselves as well as their suppliants who are reclaimed for humanity at large. The fact that Paul rescues Antony from his threatened death means that his story becomes known through Antony and can be recorded by Jerome for posterity. Malchus' acquiescence to the woman's proposal is the first step towards his return and monastic reintegration. Without her, he would have perished as a renegade and suicide. Finally, the concerns of the Eleutheropolitan woman and Aristaenete with their offspring symbolises their non-ascetic affiliations. Supplication allows Hilarion to connect with them while showing his reluctance.[72] On the level of the text as a whole, supplication therefore enables the telling of at least a significant chunk of the story in the first place. In religious terms, it serves as an expiatory rite for violating the ascetic's mandatory isolation.[73] The high energy required for this ceremony illustrate the great awe in which ascetics ought to be held—including, naturally, the ascetic author of the texts himself.

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[67] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 73: 'Note that positive politeness precedes negative politeness in the continuum of FTA 'danger' for the following reasons. Positive politeness redresses by means of fulfilling [the hearer's] want that some others should want some particular desires of his. To pursue this strategy [the speaker] must make the assumption that he is a member of the set of these others; the efficacy of his redress is totally vulnerable to [the hearer's] concurrence in this assumption.'

[68] Gödde, *Drama der Hikesie*, 33, and Aubriot-Sévin, *Prière et conceptions religieuses*, 426; see above, 000.

[69] Gödde, *Drama der Hikesie* 181, 187.

[70] Brown and Levinson, *Politeness*, 29–33, only outline the complexities added by the factor of gender in analysing politeness, rather than including it systematically in their study.

[71] See Naiden, *Ancient Supplication*, 103, for this notion and criticism.

[72] Kech, *Hagiographie*, 115, observes that the need for supplication is part of the textual strategies aiming at edification.

[73] Cf. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 150, on crisis situations.

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