Choral Ritual Performers in Euripides' *Electra*: Brides and *Laudators*[*]

Hiromi Hamamoto

Choruses have attracted a wide range of critical attention. The importance of choral performance in ancient Greece, often called 'song culture,'[1] has been widely recognized and invited scholars to see Greek tragedy as one of the chorus genres and institutions. While it is widely acknowledged that a tragic chorus has a ritual identity as participants in the City Dionysia as well as their mimetic identity such as Theban old men or foreign slave women,[2] their ritual function in the mimetic world seems to be less emphasized.[3] I suggest the chorus in a tragic drama can assume a ritual identity not only as Athenian citizens but also as a chorus performing rituals in the dramatic action. The recent strand of critical approaches to tragedy with an awareness of choruses outside drama could obtain insights from critical explorations of uses and misuses of rituals in tragedy, especially sacrifice, as choral performances constituted an essential part of the ritual nexus in the society within which Greek tragedies were originally performed.[4]

Euripides offers intriguing examples which show the evocative force of choral rituals enacted in the fictional world. In his tragedies, choral rituals are not only alluded to but also sometimes almost actually enacted in the orchestra. Ion's monody of *paean*, drawing on the choral genre, is an act of worshipping Apollo in the world of the play (*Ion* 82-183).[5] Moreover, Hippolytus leads the male chorus to sing a cultic hymn to Artemis (*Hipp*. 58-71). This cultic performance dramatically establishes Hippolytus' character through his relationship with the male peers following him as well as his devotion to the goddess of virginity. He cherishes a bond with a group of youths, abhors sexuality and thus refuses to grow up into an adult and full-fledged member of the community. The very existence of the Chorus of the play allows the tragedian to appropriate the choral ritual performance to serve

[*] I am grateful to two anonymous referees for their helpful comments and suggestions.

[1] Billings, Budelmann and Macintosh aptly rephrase this as 'song-and-dance culture' ([2013], 1).

[2] See Henrichs (1994/5), 58-59; and among others Calame (2013), 37.

[3] Easterling suggests the importance of the chorus' presence in rituals performed in the dramatic action and discusses the dramatic rituals like burial and lamentation ([1993], 8ff.).

[4] See e.g. Foley (1985).

[5] Ion's monody may be seen as deviating from the conventions of the *paean* performance, which was originally a choral genre (cf. Swift (2010), 91-92).

as a tool for presenting the protagonist and major themes in the play in a particular light.[6]

In this paper, I will examine how choral performances are employed to explore the main character's distance from the community in Euripides' *Electra*. In her systematic study of allusions to choral genres in Greek tragedy, L. A. Swift takes up this drama among other Euripidean tragedies as a case study for investigating allusions to the epinician genre, and also briefly discusses it in terms of parthenaic poetry.[7] While offering many insights into the play and its uses of choral genres, her study, based on genre divisions, has little room for recognizing how choral ritual performances of different genres, examined together, offer significant clues to understanding the Chorus who perform them, the protagonist and their relationship in Euripides' *Electra*.

The allusions to the extra-dramatic choral genres inevitably entail self-reflexive indications to the Chorus in the orchestra. Parthenaic and epinician choral performances are not just evoked in motifs and imagery in this play, but dramatized in performance by the Chorus of Argive women. Electra twice declines to join their dance. Their dance and Electra's distance from it are intertwined with the themes of female sexuality, and further with their relationship to the wider community. I will first examine the *parodos*, which vividly presents how Electra is socially alienated through a choral ritual performance prefigured by the Chorus of Argive maidens. I will go on to discuss the Chorus' epinician performance concerning Orestes' murder of Aegisthus, which not only further delineates Electra's distance from the Chorus and the *polis* of Argos but also invites us to evaluate ritual dynamics in the heroic and dramatic action of *Electra*.

The Chorus of Argive Brides[8]

At first glance, the *parodos* appears to depict a close relationship between Electra and the Chorus. Electra's monody (112-66) and the following *parodos* (167-212) are closely linked in meter, though not in content, and the Chorus enters the orchestra while addressing her. The *parodos* is composed of their alternate singing.

[6] I use 'Chorus' when referring to a particular ensemble in a dramatic work. Although it is difficult to estimate the effects of this appropriation of choral ritual performance in *Hippolytus*, cultic gestures embedded in the tragic *mimesis* could exercise a powerful impact on the audience since, employing ritual phrases and gestures, they could perhaps penetrate into the world outside the dramatic illusion. This penetrating thrust is entangled with an uneasy and fundamental question as to how they can envisage the relationship between Artemis in the play and Artemis in their real life.

[7] Swift (2010), 156-70, 189-91.

[8] This section is a revision of a part of my earlier article, Hamamoto (2006).

Their mutual addresses (φίλαι, 175; παῖ, 197) suggest their mutual trust.[9] Their close companionship can be detected elsewhere in the drama. When Electra reveals without concern in the Chorus' presence the secret that her marriage is unconsummated, Orestes explicitly acknowledges their friendship (αἵδ᾽ οὖν φίλαι σοι τούσδ᾽ ἀκούουσιν λόγους; 272).[10]

Entering the orchestra, the Chorus tells Electra that the festival of Argive Hera will be held in a few days:

ἀγγέλλει δ᾽ ὅτι νῦν τριταί-
αν καρύσσουσιν θυσίαν
Ἀργεῖοι, πᾶσαι δὲ παρ᾽ Ἥ-
ραν μέλλουσιν παρθενικαὶ στείχειν. (171-74)
[In Argos, he [a Mycenaean man] reports, they [the Argives] are proclaiming a sacrifice two days from now; the maidens one and all will go in procession to Hera.] [11]

Electra replies to the Chorus:

οὐκ ἐπ' ἀγλαίαις, φίλαι,
θυμὸν οὐδ᾽ ἐπὶ χρυσέοις
ὅρμοις ἐκπεπόταμαι
τάλαιν᾽, οὐδ᾽ ἱστᾶσα χοροὺς
Ἀργείαις ἅμα νύμφαις
εἰλικτὸν κρούσω πόδ᾽ ἐμόν. (175-80)
[No fineries, my friends, no golden necklaces give flight to my wretched heart; nor setting dances along with the brides of Argos shall I pound out my whirling step.]

[9] Denniston (1939) supposes that Electra feels ill at ease among unmarried girls 'naturally from her age' (ad 311-13). However, his estimation of her age (about 25) proposed with a reservation depends on mere conjecture (xxvi n.1). Rather, following Cropp (1988), a relatively young age of below or above 20 seems acceptable (xxxvi). Still, the difference in age from girls ready to marry (about 14 or so) could be pointed out, but we do not have adequate grounds to assume that Electra finds any difficulty to make friends with the Chorus members because of her age.

[10] Orestes' remark allows us to detect here a subtle deviation from the tragic convention of asking the Chorus to keep silence (see Barrett (1964), ad 710-12).

[11] I quote texts from Basta Donzelli's edition and Cropp's translation with necessary modifications for my points.

This opening exchange uncovers Electra's social alienation.[12] The *Heraea*, a festival dedicated to Argive Hera, the guardian goddess of the *polis* as well as of marriage, present a pertinent setting for exploring the socially isolated situation of Electra. Because of her expulsion from the palace and her unconsummated marriage, Electra in the Euripidean play cannot take part in the religious festivals, which renew and confirm the social bond among the members of a group, nor does she belong to any community either of married or unmarried women. Due to her unconsummated marriage, Electra calls herself 'a maiden' (311).[13] I will examine their verbal exchange more closely to show how it informs both Electra's affection for and distance from the Chorus.

While the Chorus tells her μέλλουσιν παρθενικαὶ στείχειν, Electra declines using different expressions: οὐδ' ἱστᾶσα χοροὺς/ Ἀργείαις ἅμα νύμφαις (178-79). Electra replaces παρθενικαί with νύμφαι, and στείχειν with χοροί.[14] Perhaps, it has no other significance than a mere metrical demand or an avoidance of repetition. Procession and dance can refer to a series of ritual acts, for people occasionally dance on the way of procession.[15] The alteration between παρθενικαί and νύμφαι, however, requires deeper elucidation as these two terms, when used in contrast, imply the different social statuses of women: παρθενικαί apply to unmarried girls, whereas νύμφαι designate either brides or wives.[16] Despite this usage, the term νύμφη sometimes also refers to an unmarried woman.[17] Appropriating this wide application of the word, Electra calls νύμφαι (180) the same female group as the Chorus indicate by the term παρθενικαί (174). The Chorus is composed of unmarried women, as an address to them later in the play clarifies (παρθένοι Μυκηνίδες, 761), and thus they themselves go to the festival of Hera.[18]

The subtle replacement of verbal expressions on Electra's part points to precisely the matter of female social status, which is at stake in her present situation.

---

[12] Zeitlin (1970), 648-50; Hirata (2002), 64-66.

[13] Concerning the line 311 (ἀναίνομαι γυναῖκας οὖσα παρθένος), Kovacs (1985) proposes an emendation 'ἀναίνομαι γὰρ γυμνὰς οὖσα παρθένους' (306-10). However, Seaford (1985) sufficiently argues against it and supports the widely accepted text quoted here (319 n.38). While Kovacs' proposition could not be tenable, he perceptively observes that this line of Electra evokes the exchange in the *parodos* (309).

[14] παρθενικαί and νύμφαι refer to the same group of woman (Cropp (1988), ad 179).

[15] E.g. [Hes.] *Sc*. 277-80; Plut. *Alc*. 34. 3 (see Burkert (1985), 102; Kavoulaki (1999), 300).

[16] Zeitlin (1970) notices this replacement in verbal expressions, yet does not examine it further (650 n. 22). Of νύμφη implying the social distinction *Ody*. 11. 38-40 (cf. Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989), ad loc.); of a bride *Il*. 18. 492; of a married woman *Il.* 3. 130, *Ody*. 4. 743, 11. 447, E. *El.* 1033, *Tro*. 250, *Med*. 150 (cf. Mastronarde (2002), ad loc.).

[17] Of an unmarried woman *Il.* 9. 560, S. *Trach*. 527.

[18] Cf. Cropp (1988), 111-12.

She is socially a married woman as Aegisthus has forced her to marry a farmer, but her marriage has not been consummated, as is made clear by her husband himself: παρθένος δ' ἔτ' ἐστὶ δή [she is still in fact a maiden] (43). Later, Orestes speaks: φασὶ γάρ νιν ἐν γάμοις/ ζευχθεῖσαν οἰκεῖν οὐδὲ παρθένον μένειν [they say she now dwells in wedlock, no longer a maiden] (98-99). The ambiguity in her situation is thus underlined in the earlier scenes of the play: she is married, yet remains a maiden.

Considering this, it is not clear what the Chorus intend to urge Electra to do when they tell her about the festival in which they will soon participate. Electra is not socially a maiden unlike the Chorus members, who belong to πᾶσαι … παρθενικαὶ [the maidens one and all] (173-74). Certainly, the Chorus encourage her to go to the festival, yet it remains unclear in what way they invite her to take part in the festival. They might suggest that she attend it as a spectator rather than join a group of unmarried women in procession and dance. Spectators were also important participants in festivals. For all the incongruities posed by her social status as a married woman, Electra assumes that she is invited to lead a dance of unmarried women at the festival, which she rejects (175-89). Leading a chorus, or playing a *choregos*, is an appropriate role for a daughter of a royal family, yet she is no longer socially a maiden or a royal member.[19] Her marriage in the remote countryside deprives her both of the maiden status and royal membership.

Referring to χοροί, Electra foregrounds the choral ritual from which she is debarred. She then complains about her appearances as if they were the main reason for her not participating in the festival: σκέψαι μου πιναρὰν κόμαν/ καὶ τρύχη τάδ' ἐμῶν πέπλων,/ εἰ πρέποντ' Ἀγαμέμνονος/ κούραι τᾶι βασιλείαι [Observe my sordid hair, this filthy clothing of mine; see if they are seemly for Agamemnon's royal child] (183-87). In fact, Electra mourns her father's death, which gives her a sufficient reason not to participate in the festivals.[20] Underlining her sordid appearance, however, she superfluously explains why she declines to play the role of leader of a chorus.

Swift examines the *parodos* in the light of parthenaic genre and astutely calls Electra 'anti-Hagesichora', drawing on Alcman's first *Partheneion*.[21] As suggested

[19] For leading a chorus as a royal member's role, see Denniston (1939), ad 178; Zeitlin (1970), 649; Hirata (2002), 66; for the discrepancy between Electra's social status and her rejection, see Zeitlin (1970), 649; Rosivach (1978), 191; Hirata (2002), 66.
[20] Lloyd (1986), 6-7 ; cf. also Stehle (2004), 136 nn. 9 et 10.
[21] Swift (2010), 189-91; see 186-8 for Athenian knowledge of Spartan *partheneia*. On this intensely studied poem of Alcman, among others see Calame (1977); Robbins (1994); Stehle (1997), 30-39, 73-88, Swift (2010), 178-83, with further bibliography.

by the name 'leading a chorus', Hagesichora is presumably a *choregos* figure in Alcman's parthenaic poetry. The parthenaic choral ritual concerns the rite of passage to marriage and motherhood. The *choregos* in a parthenaic chorus purports to outshine other girls and be most desirable as exemplified in the figure of Helen in the Spartan cults described in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (ἀγεῖται δ᾽ ἁ Λήδας παῖς/ ἁγνὰ χοραγὸς εὐπρεπής, 1314-15).[22] Electra in her shabby appearance represents the opposite of this ideal.

The Chorus offer to lend Electra clothes and adornments, which suggests that they are already in splendid costumes fit for the festive occasion (190-92).[23] The Chorus presumably dance as well as sing while entering the orchestra, and thus visually and physically prefigure the choral performance at the festival of Argive Hera in their actual performance before the audience in the theater. The Chorus and Electra thus make a stark visual contrast, which vividly highlights the social alienation of Electra through her displacement from the choral ritual.

Electra's rejection of the dance and her grounds for it insinuates her sensibility to her own ambiguous situation and her mixed feelings towards the festive occasion. Even if she borrowed clothes from the Chorus (190-92), they would not make her a princess again. When Electra, no longer socially a maiden, replaces the expression παρθενικαί with νύμφαι, she is probably aware of the ambiguity of the term as designating either a married or an unmarried woman. The range of the term allows her, a married woman, to belong to the same group as the Chorus. She employs the term νύμφαι which can apply both to the Chorus and herself, though in a different way, so as to mitigate the incongruity of her surplus rejection of joining their dance. Electra's twist in verbal expression accordingly suggests her affection towards the Chorus, making herself belong to their group and softening the incongruity in which a married woman needlessly refuses to take part in the choral performance of maidens.

The term νύμφη, however, if carefully examined, also painfully underlines Electra's distance from the Chorus. Several scholars have attempted to explicate this elastic term with a wide range of applications from an unmarried girl to a wife after childbirth. Andó, for example, argues that the most fundamental characteristics of the word is the implication of sexuality, meaning that having sexual attractiveness is

[22] Cf. Calame (1977) II, 121-27.
[23] Kubo (1967), 23; Foley (2001), 235; Hirata (2002), 66; cf. Zeitlin (1970), 647 n.11. On the other hand, Hammond (1984) opposes this view on the ground that the festival will be held in three days (374). Foley (2003) points out the general importance of the visual effect in competitive choral performances (3), which would make preferable for the Chorus to wear festive attire.

the core requirement for a woman to be called νύμφη. However, he explains female sexuality as physical maturity unconnected to the social institution of marriage, despite resultant discrepancies between his analysis of its usages and his definition of it. According to Chantraine, however, νύμφη originally means a bride, which indicates the intrinsic interrelation between νύμφη and the social institution of marriage.[24]

Calame, on the other hand, characterizes νύμφη as a social status situated between an unmarried girl and a wife after the first childbirth.[25] He thus posits three principal stages in a woman's social status, instead of the well-established two stages, an unmarried girl and a mother. While fruitfully foregrounding the specific liminal stage of a woman before and after the first childbirth, he skirts the problem of the wider application of νύμφη. It seems more sensible to understand this term as designating a certain aspect of a woman rather than a woman of a certain social status clearly distinguished from others.

Preceding Calame and Andó, Detienne elucidates more integrally both the aspect of female sexuality and that of marriage as a social institution found in νύμφη. He understands it as encompassing both a young woman just before marriage and a wife before the first childbirth and thus places it between a daughter (κόρη) and a mother (μήτηρ). A woman called νύμφη exercises a sexual appeal so as to become a mother, and at the same time this required sexuality puts her in a dangerous liminal state.[26] He successfully situates a woman's sexual facet in the social institution of marriage through her reproductive function. Νύμφη is accordingly defined as a female figure in which sexuality and reproductive function coincide in the context of marriage.

Detienne, however, mainly deals with a newly wedded wife. I would like to propose a modification to his analysis. The female sexuality leading to childbirth in marriage is not only found in a newly wedded wife before the first childbirth, but

[24] Andó (1996), 47-79; Chantraine (1946/47), 230.

[25] Calame (1999), 125ff. He introduces as obvious evidence for his own understanding of νύμφη the myth narrated by Apollonios Rhodios (2. 508-09), which, however, remains elusive. Calame argues that 'The chronological and social limits of the specific status of a νύμφη are defined for us most clearly' in this mythical account (126), yet the figure in the myth could be assumed to remain a νύμφη even after childbirth. Moreover, he asserts a clear distinction between the three stages of women in the religious law of Cyrene. It is unclear, however, whether the term νύμφη refers to a married woman. Besides, the law code regarding γυνά concerns miscarriage. More fundamentally, Calame accepts Sokolowski's supplement παρθένος into the text (115A.73f. Suppl.), but not all the editors agree to it (e.g. Rhodes and Osborne n. 97). For the distinction commonly recognized between women before and after childbirth, see e.g. Lys. 1. 6.

[26] Detienne (1974), 56-75 (cf. Calame (1999), 123-24 et 127).

also both in an unmarried girl and a wife after the first childbirth.[27] An unmarried girl is called νύμφη when she is represented as a future bride with enticing sexuality, while a wife after childbirth is equally designated as νύμφη if her aspect of sharing the conjugal bed is emphasized.

In the case of an unmarried woman, she can be called either νύμφη or παρθένος (or παρθενική) depending on the context.[28] Besides, παρθένος not only indicates her social status as an unmarried girl, but also implies her attitudes of avoiding marriage and keeping away from the sexual realm, as symbolized in the virgin goddess Artemis. In this respect, the two terms make a clear contrast against each other. The fundamental discrepancy between the two terms thus lies in contrasting implications regarding sexuality and marriage.

Electra is socially a newly wedded wife and can be appropriately called νύμφη, but she is far from the proper figure of a bride or young wife because of her hair cut short and filthy clothes (183-84). The Chorus, in contrast, probably wear the 'golden necklace' (176-77), which evokes the sexual attractiveness of its wearer.[29] The visual contrast between Electra and the Chorus with festive attire, perfectly fit for the sexually charged term νύμφη, is thus quite telling. The Chorus members will become brides and eventually full-fledged wives through childbirth, while Electra is married but remains a maiden and her marriage will never be fulfilled. She thus fails to play the proper role of *choregos* in the parthenaic choral performance. Her choice of word νύμφη sits well in the parthenaic choral context. The festival of Hera, the marriage goddess, underlines the marriage associations. The choral context accentuated by the term of νύμφη cruelly discloses the distance between the Chorus, full of expectations for the future, and Electra, without any hope in the present situation but Orestes' return and revenge.

Nuanced by Electra's subtle twist of the words designating women, the choral performance of the future Argive brides, prefiguring the anticipated ritual occasion, thus foregrounds Electra's trust in and distance from the Chorus.

The Epinician Chorus

[27] Νύμφη referring to a woman after childbirth, *Od*. 4. 743, 11. 447, E. *Andr*. 140, *El.* 1033, *Med*. 150, *Tro*. 250; of Helen, who is supposed to give birth to a daughter Hermione before the Trojan war, *Il.* 3. 130.

[28] Antigone is called νυμφεῖα as a fiancée of Haimon, but παρθένος after the suicide (S. *Ant*. 568, 1237; cf. 633, 797). Cf. also S. *Trach*. 858, 894, 1219.

[29] For golden necklaces with sexual connotations, see Buxton (1982), 36-38; for dance and marriage, see Lonsdale (1993), 206ff.

I have clarified that the choral ritual performance alluded to and prefigured in the *parodos* and Electra's alteration in verbal expression reveal her complex relationship with the Chorus. Their distance, moreover, can be pinned not only on their contrasting situations in terms of marriage but also on their divergent attitudes to the *polis* of Argos.[30] The polis-wide event of the *Heraea* would be consolidating the present king Aegisthus' reign, which is certainly one reason for Electra to decline to take part in it.[31] The peaceful festive occasion suggests that the usurper has been establishing his control over the *polis* and his status as the king. Festivals and rituals can exert a power to construct and develop social and political order.[32]

Festivals like the *Heraea* are social as well as religious occasions, which strengthen and reconfirm the bond among the members of the community. Electra disdains attendance at the communal festival while the Chorus members happily participate in it. Their verbal exchange in the *parodos* (171-80) also betrays their difference in this respect.

When speaking of Ἀργείαις ἅμα νύμφαις (179), Electra echoes the Chorus' word (Ἀργεῖοι, 173). Ἀργείαι νύμφαι are none other than women who are to marry the Argives. The Chorus members are thus represented as ones who, through marriage and childbirth, will sustain the future community. The Chorus are closely linked to the *polis* of Argos, making a poignant contrast with Electra, who is indeed a bride of Argos (35, cf. 248) but perceives her marriage to an Argive as θανάσιμον γάμον [a fatal marriage] (247). Far from giving Electra a tie with Argos, her marriage deprives her of her royal status and a sense of truly belonging in Argos.

Forced to live in the borderline area, Electra augments the sense of alienation from the *polis*, which reflects on her own self-recognition. She represents Agamemnon as the leader of the Greeks rather than the king of Argos, persistently

[30] Swift (2013) highlights the conflict between the multiplied facets of identity of the Euripidean chorus (133, 153 et passim). In the case of *Electra*, on the other hand, the Chorus's gender-identity and local identity are intimately intertwined so as to accentuate the social alienation of Electra.
[31] Cf. Rosivach (1978), 191.
[32] Cf. Connor (1987) on the significance of festival and ritual in the political life of Archaic Athens. As a perverted dramatic example, Clytemnestra in Sophocles' *Electra* is said to monthly celebrate the date of Agamemnon's death with choral and sacrificial rituals (χοροὺς ἵστησι καὶ μηλοσφαγεῖ/ θεοῖσιν ἔμμην᾽ ἱερὰ, S. *El.* 280-81). The political aspect of the festival, however, is only a facet of communal festivities. In Euripides' *Electra*, the rural setting of the *skene* and the characterization of the Chorus as local women underplay the political implications of the festival. The Chorus find the center of the city far from their life: πρόσω γὰρ ἄστεως οὖσα τὰν πόλει κακὰ/ οὐκ οἶδα [Out here, far from the city center, I do not know the troubles in the city] (298-99). The Chorus here employ the term πόλις in a narrower sense, referring to the central area of the city (cf. 595), while it designates more often the city as a whole in terms of its political as well as geographical extension (587, 611, 848, 1250, 1313).

referring to his expedition to Troy (160-61, 186-89, 336, 681, 880-81, 916-17, 1082). She also describes the ancient scepter of Agamemnon as 'the scepter with which he commanded the Hellenes' (321), while the farmer characterizes it as the symbol of Aegisthus' usurpation of the royal status.[33] She defines herself less as a princess of Argos than a daughter of the king of Greece who conquered Troy (cf. 21). In contrast, as native women in the rural area and future brides of Argives, the Chorus belong to the community without any complications.

The murder of Aegisthus highlights the difference between Electra and the Chorus's attitudes to the *polis* of Argives. Electra fears that the Argive people might support Aegisthus. Her sense of alienation and self-definition steering away from the *polis* ferment her distrust in the Argives. Hearing a voice from afar while waiting for the news about Orestes' murder of Aegisthus, Electra asks the Chorus: Ἀργεῖος ὁ στεναγμὸς ἢ φίλων ἐμῶν; [Is it Argive this groaning, or does it come from my friends?] (755). She speaks as if the Argives were standing by Aegisthus to help him.

Orestes betrays the same fear when he discusses how to attack Aegisthus. He asks: πόσων μετ᾽ ἀνδρῶν; ἢ μόνος δμώων μέτα; [With how many men? Or was he [Aegisthus] alone with his slaves?] (628). The old man answers: οὐδεὶς παρῆν Ἀργεῖος, οἰκεία δὲ χείρ [No Argive was there — only his household troop] (629). Orestes' question about the number of citizens discloses his assumption that some Argives would be there to aid his enemy.

Orestes' murder of Aegisthus leads to another choral performance in the orchestra, which again Electra fails to join. As soon as he enters the orchestra, the messenger addresses them ὦ καλλίνικοι παρθένοι Μυκηνίδες [O maidens of Mycenae, glorious in victory] (761). As in the case of Ἀργείαι νύμφαι [brides of Argos], the term designating women is employed in connection with Argos (or Mycenae).

It is worthwhile noticing that an actor rarely addresses the Chorus of a tragic drama 'παρθένοι' [maidens].[34] This address can be accordingly more charged than a simple address to the Chorus. It seems appropriate to understand that the

[33] Electra's representation of Agamemnon as the leader of Greeks emphasizes how great a hero he was and how atrociously Clytemnestra killed him (Denniston (1939), xviii). In doing so, she fails to take a particular heed to the *polis* of Argos. She refuses to confine her father's greatness in one singular *polis*. A similar characterization is found in Euripidean Heracles (Bond (1981), 153-54; Hamamoto (2000), 108-23).

[34] In the extant tragedies, except here, only one instance in a singular form can be found (S. *Trach*. 1275), though in this example also it remains ambiguous whether it refers to the Chorus or not (cf. Easterling (1982), ad loc.). In the cases of an unmarried female Chorus, they are normally addressed as γυναῖκες (e.g. E. *Phoe*. 278, 991, S. *Trach*. 225, 385, 663, 673).

messenger mainly addresses Electra, who is the very person to whom the news of Aegisthus' death is delivered. Addressing Electra and the Chorus together, the messenger includes her in a group of unmarried women. The Chorus stand close to her at this point, as they try to stop Electra from committing suicide just before the messenger enters.[35] By addressing Electra and the Chorus in this manner, the messenger insinuates that Aegisthus' death will annul her present marriage and make her again '*παρθένος*' in a fuller sense.[36]

The local adjective *Μυκηνίδες* in the messenger's address invites a choral association, for choruses of young women are often given this type of collective names, composed of -ιδ- or -αδ- and designating a parental or local connection, such as *Δηλιάδες*, *Νηρηίδες* and *Πιερίδες*.[37] Mycenae, rather than Argos, emphasizes old lineage and loyalty in this play.[38] The messenger therefore addresses Electra and the Chorus as if they constitute a chorus of Mycenean maidens closely tied to its locale, anticipating that they will make a choral group together.

Besides, the other adjective *καλλίνικοι* [glorious in victory] in the messenger's address evokes the epinician genre, which celebrates the athletic victory.[39] This phrasing thus encourages the audience to perceive the Chorus' celebration after the messenger's speech in the light of this particular genre.

The epinician genre, typically performed in the victor's own *polis* and of public importance, involves political dynamics of power in the community. A victorious athlete can be too prominent and dangerous an individual to be safely re-integrated into the community. While athletic victory presupposes an individual's preeminence and conveys aristocratic associations, epinician poetry emphasizes the importance of community and honors the *polis* as a whole, and thus helps re-integrate the *laudandus* into his community. Victory odes extend the range of the victor's glory over the community and present the glory as beneficial to the communal good. This genre became unpopular for actual performance by the mid- to late fifth century in

[35] Cropp (1988), 111.
[36] On the possibility that Aegisthus' death leads to change Electra's situation, see Hirata (2002), 69-70.
[37] Calame (1977), 70-74.
[38] Denniston (1939), ad 35; Cropp (1988), ad 6.
[39] The epithet *καλλίνικος* found in Pi. *O.* 9.2, *P.* 1.32, 5.106, *N.* 3.18, 4.16, *I.* 1.12, 5.54. On the image of Orestes as athlete see Easterling (1988), 104-6; Swift (2010), 157-70. Some scholars argue for solo performance of the epinician odes. On this issue see e.g. Carey (1991); Heath and Lefkowitz (1991). For further bibliography see Peponi (2013), 30 n. 67.

Athens, either because outdated or politically dubious, or both; and yet the audience seemed to be at least generally familiar with it and its conventions.[40]

Swift argues that the epinician genre is evoked in celebrating Orestes' victory over Aegisthus so as to be undermined by the way of his actual killing.[41] Orestes' murder has indeed a dubious nature. He breaks the law of hospitality and attacks the victim from behind in the middle of a sacrificial ritual. The mimetic performance of *epinicion* by the Chorus in the orchestra, however, might also function in another way.

The Chorus invite Electra to join them in their choral celebration:[42]

θὲς ἐς χορόν, ὦ φίλα, ἴχνος, ὡς νεβρὸς οὐράνιον
πήδημα κουφίζουσα σὺν ἀγλαΐᾳ.
νικᾷ στεφαναφορίαν
† κρείσσω τοῖς † παρ᾽ Ἀλφειοῦ ῥεέθροις τελέσας
κασίγνητος σέθεν. ἀλλ᾽ ὑπάειδε
καλλίνικον ᾠδὰν ἐμῷ χορῷ. (860-65)

[Set your feet dancing, dear friend, fawn-like nimbly leaping sky-high in festive joy. Your brother has won, has completed a crown-contest surpassing those by Alpheus' streams. Come, sing with my dance a song of glorious victory.]

This joyous invitation accompanied by choral performance is clearly modeled on victory odes, employing characteristic terms like στεφαναφορίαν and καλλίνικον as well as the reference to Olympian games. Besides, the meter is dactylo-epitrite, commonly used in the victory odes of Pindar and Bacchylides.[43] If Electra accepted this offer, she could have fulfilled the audience's expectation for an epinician chorus by herself acting as its *choregos*, anticipated in the messenger's address ὦ καλλίνικοι παρθένοι Μυκηνίδες (761).

Instead, however, Electra speaks in iambic trimeter, not joining them in choral celebration. After invocations to the Sun, Earth and Night, she rejoices at the change in her fate:

νῦν ὄμμα τοὐμὸν ἀμπτυχαί τ᾽ ἐλεύθεροι,

[40] See Swift (2010), 106-15 with further bibliography.
[41] Swift (2010), 157-63.
[42] The Chorus perform a lively 'hyporchematic' dance (Denniston (1939), 154; Cropp (1988), 157).
[43] As Swift (2010) puts it: 'The athletic language is clustered around choral passages, and is construed as athletic praise-song, not simply athletic imagery' (170).

ἐπεὶ πατρὸς πέπτωκεν Αἴγισθος φονεύς.
φέρ᾽, οἷα δὴ ᾽χω καὶ δόμοι κεύθουσί μου
κόμης ἀγάλματ᾽ ἐξενέγκωμαι, φίλαι,
στέψω τ᾽ ἀδελφοῦ κρᾶτα τοῦ νικηφόρου. (868-72)
[Now am I free to open up my eyes; for my father's murderer, Aegisthus, is fallen. Come, friends, let us bring out such adornments for his hair as I possess stored away within my home. I shall crown the head of my victorious brother]

After these lines, she enters the house in order to fetch wreaths for Orestes.[44] Wreaths are also familiar in victory odes. Using epinician vocabulary and imagery, Electra indeed joins the Chorus in presenting his murder as athletic victory. However, an actor's iambic response interrupting a strophic choral song addressed to the actor is rare in tragedy.[45] Electra's speech in iambic is much more controlled than the Chorus' joyful song and dance in dactylo-epitrite. This unusual iambic response marks her distance from a choral performance enacted by the Chorus members in the orchestra.

Electra disappears while the Chorus sings the antistrophe, which explicitly expresses their clear understanding of the political consequence of Aegisthus' death accomplished by Orestes:

νῦν οἱ πάρος ἁμέτεροι
γαίας τυραννεύσουσι φίλοι βασιλῆς,
δικαίως τοὺς ἀδίκους καθελόντες.
ἀλλ᾽ ἴτω ξύναυλος βοὰ χαρᾷ. (876-79)
[Now shall the former dear rulers of our land be masters in it, with justice, now they have cast down the unjust. Come, let us shout with the aulos, joyfully.]

The Chorus celebrates the change of the sovereignty. Their recognition seems to be already suggested in the messenger's address ὦ καλλίνικοι παρθένοι Μυκηνίδες, combining victory and the name of the locale. He presumably anticipates that Electra and the Chorus, as members of Argos (Mycenae), will

[44] Kubo (1967) suggests that Electra stays in the orchestra (23-24), which seems unconvincing on the ground of the preceding exchange between her and the Chorus.
[45] Cropp (1988), 157 (cf. S. *Phil*. 827ff. where Neoptolemus responds in dactylic to a strophic choral song; insertions of an actor's iambic lines into the Chorus' strophic songs are found in A. *Pers*. 256ff., 694ff. *Supp*. 348ff., *Eum*. 778ff.).

celebrate Orestes' victory as the legitimate king's return to the throne by choral performance.

Electra is absent, however, when the Chorus sing of this passage. Her retreat to the *skene* before the Chorus finish the strophic pair succinctly represents a discrepancy in their responses to Aegisthus' death. Even if Electra can now belong to the same chorus of unmarried women as the Chorus members, her sense of alienation from the community of Argos remains. For her, Aegisthus is one 'who slew your [Orestes'] father and mine,' just like Clytemnestra (σὸν πατέρα κἀμὸν ὤλεσε, 885, πατέρα σὸν ἥδε κἀμὸν ὤλεσεν, 970); and thus it is Clytemnestra's death that counts as the full achievement of revenge for Agamemnon's death (cf. 281). While Electra rejoices in her own liberation owing to the death of her father's murderer, the Chorus confer on it a political importance for the community of Argos. The occasion of the choral performance thus vividly delineates the distance between Electra and the Chorus, performers of the choral ritual in the mimetic world.

In the Euripidean drama, moreover, Orestes' claim to revenge and the ancestral scepter appears rather shaky owing not only to the way of his killing but also to his uncertain position in the *polis* of Argos. Aegisthus has children with Clytemnestra who would inherit the land and power he has usurped (62).[46] He forced Electra to marry a farmer lest she should produce a noble son who would revenge his grandfather's death and claim the scepter. In addition, he 'pledged gold to whoever should kill him [Orestes]' (33), which naturally makes Orestes highly cautious and easy to become fearful.

Orestes chooses to come to the rural area where Electra lives in order partly to be ready to flee from Argos if someone recognizes him (96-97). He conceals his identity even after he meets Electra, which suggests a certain reluctance on his part to pursue his vengeance. The scene of the murder of Aegisthus is symbolically displaced from the royal palace at the center of Argos, underplaying the fact that it is a regicide.

After killing Aegisthus in a watered orchard, Orestes fears the Argive citizens might pursue him on behalf of his enemy (ἐκ Μυκηνῶν μῶν βοηδρόμους ὁρῶ; [I do not see helpers from Mycenean people, do I?] (963).[47] He is not sure whether the citizens will accept him as a legitimate king or reject him as their king's murderer. His fear is not completely groundless in the *polis* where Electra's laments over

[46] Also in Sophocles, Clytemnestra has children by Aegisthus (S. *El.* 589). Children between them do not seem to belong to previous versions of the myth (Cropp (1988), ad 62).
[47] Diggle (1994), following Camper, attributes this line to Electra. In that case, this line gives another example of Electra's distrust in the Argives and fear of their antagonism against her and her brother.

Agamemnon's death find no followers. Lamentation is usually composed of a main mourner and followers who respond with refrains.[48] Friendly and sympathetic as they are, the Chorus invite her to the joyous festival rather than joining her in her lament. Her laments thus fail to urge followers to take their part so as to make a collective polyphony.

Aeschylean Electra, in contrast, gains full support both in laments and practical advice from the Chorus. Dressed in dark cloaks, they lament along with her in the *parodos* and perform the elaborate *kommos* with both the siblings (*Choe*. 11, 22-83, 306-478).[49] Besides, they not only instruct her on how to pray in the libation to Agamemnon's tomb but also voluntarily aid Orestes' murder by suggesting the nurse tell Aegisthus to come by himself, without a weapon (109-23, 771-72). The Chorus in Sophocles' *Electra* indeed try to dissuade her from continuing laments. Electra is, however, still lamenting in front of the royal house. Compared with these Electras, Euripidean Electra is characteristically dislocated in the remote rural area, left behind in the civic and public activities in *polis*, at the center of which the usurper has produced his own heirs to inherit the scepter and is thus consolidating his reign, one manifestation of which is the celebration of the *Heraea*.

The Chorus' mimetic *epinicion* celebrating Orestes' victory over Aegisthus, explicitly referring to the return of the legitimate royal heir, serves less as a description of an uncontroversial event than as a proclamation that chorally advocates Orestes' claim to the scepter.[50] Choral performances accord the Choral members, politically powerless women as they are, some power through its traditional and public nature. Certainly, female tragic choruses show emotions and moral judgments suitable for their gender, thus not always corresponding to the communal values of the city.[51] However, even in the cases of socially marginal groups, such as women, foreigners, slaves, or old men, which predominantly make up a tragic chorus, the tragic choral voices 'draw their authority from a broadly

[48] Alexiou (2002), 12-13, 132; Foley (2001), 152.
[49] If the Euripidean Chorus are dressed in festive trappings, they considerably diverge from their predecessors, the Chorus dressed in black in *Choephori*.
[50] I suggest the similar performative force in the second stasimon in Eurpides' *Heracles* in Hamamoto (2000), 117.
[51] Foley (2003), 10; Stehle (1997) suggests that a chorus at a public occasion can be seen as representing the community as a whole despite its specific gender and social status (26-29 et passim).

shared musical and ritual poetic tradition which belongs to the political and religious culture of the city'.[52]

The epinician genre evoked in the representation of Orestes' murder of Aegisthus and the epinician choral performance played out by the Chorus in the orchestra, while complicated by the way of his actual killing, seek to work effectively as a proper *epinicion* which celebrates his victory as being beneficial to the wider community and helps re-integrate the victor into it. Considering the implicit uncertainty about whether Orestes should be favorably received to the *polis* of Argos, this performance can be even seen as urging the community to support his vengeance, recognize it as an act of justice, and receive him as their legitimate king. In the world of the play, the Chorus perform their private celebration in front of the farmer's cottage for themselves. Yet, they have a full audience of the Theater of Dionysus, and could involve them in the problematic questions about the justice of revenge by inviting them to support Orestes' cause of justice.[53]

Choral ritual performances thus enact Electra's distance from the Chorus both in parthenaic and epinician genres. She is different from the Chorus members in terms of sexuality and marriage, which is in turn inexorably intertwined with their contrasting relationship to the *polis* of Argos. The Chorus' epinician performance bestows a political importance on Orestes's vengeance, exercising its performative force. The Chorus' ritual function in the dramatic world, enabled by the presence of the Chorus in the orchestra and allusions to extra dramatic choruses, thus plays a crucial role in the dynamics of the protagonists' characterizations, human relationships and power struggles in the *polis* in Euripides' *Electra*.

Works Cited

Alexiou, M. (2002) *The Ritual Lament in Greek Traditon.* 2nd Edition. Revised by D. Yatromanolakis and P. Roilos. Lanham.

Andó, V. (1996) 'Νύμφη: La Sposa e le Ninfe.' *QUCC* 52, 47-79.

Barrett, W. S. (1964) *Euripides: Hippolytus*. Oxford.

Basta Donzelli, G. (2002) *Euripides: Electra*. Monachii.

[52] Calame (2013), 41; see Goldhill (1996), 252-55. Goldhill critically responds to Gould's argument: 'It is that 'social' marginality that in the first place deprives the chorus of tragic authority' ([1996], 221). Concerning 'choral authority', see also Foley (2003), 2 n. 6; Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 281-82.

[53] Dramatic illusion in the theater was not rigid. Eumenides, for instance, need to assure the audience that their malevolence does not reach them (*Eum*. 312-15, cf. Calame (2013), 46). Cf. also Hopman (2013), 75-77.

Billings, J., F. Budelmann and F. Macintosh (2013) 'Introduction.' In Billings, Budelmann and Macintosh edd. 1-11.

Billings, J., F. Budelmann and F. Macintosh edd. (2013) *Choruses, Ancient and Modern*. Oxford.

Bond, G. W. (1981) *Euripides: Heracles*. Oxford.

Burkert, W. (1985) *Greek Religion* (trans. by J. Raffan). Harvard.

Buxton, R. G. A. (1982) *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge.

Calame, C. (1977) *Les Choeurs de Jeunes Filles en Grèce Archaïque*. 2 vols. Rome.

— (1999) *The Poetics of Eros in Ancient Greece* (tr. Janet Lloyd). Princeton.

— (2013) 'Choral Polyphony and Ritual Functions of Tragic Songs.' In Gagné and Hopman (edd.) 35-57.

Carey, C. (1991) 'The Victory Ode in Performance: The Case for the Chorus.' *CPh* 86, 192-200.

Chantraine, P. (1946/47) 'Les noms du mari et de la femme, du père et de mère en grec.' *REG* 59/60, 230.

Connor, W. R. (1987) 'Tribes, Festivals and Processions; Civic Ceremonial and Political Manipulation in Archaic Greece.' *JHS* 107, 40-50.

Cropp, M. J. (1988) *Euripides: Electra*. Warminster.

Denniston, J. D. (1939) *Euripides: Electra*. Oxford.

Detienne, M. (1974) 'Orphée au miel.' In J. Le Goff and P. Nora (edd.) *Faire de l'histoire* III. Paris, 56-75.

Diggle, J. (1994) *Euripides.* Vol. III. Oxford.

Easterling, P. E. (1982) *Sophocles: Trachiniae*. Cambridge,

— (1988) 'Tragedy and Ritual: "Cry 'Woe, woe' but may the good prevail!".' *Metis* 3, 87-109.

— (1993) 'Tragedy and Ritual.' In R. Scodel (ed.) *Theater and Society in the Classical World*. Ann Arbor, 7-23.

Foley, H. P. (1985) *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides*. Ithaca.

— (2001) *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy*. Princeton.

— (2003) 'Choral Identity in Greek Tragedy.' *CPh* 98, 1-30.

Gagné R. and M. G. Hopman edd. (2013) *Choral Mediations in Greek Tragedy*. Cambridge.

Goldhill, S. (1996) 'Collectivity and Otherness — The Authority of the Tragic Chorus: Response to Gould.' In Silk (ed.) 244-56.

Gould, J. (1996) 'Tragedy and Collective Experience.' In Silk (ed.) 217-43.

Hamamoto, H. (2000) 'The Murder of Lycus in Euripides' *Heracles*.' (in Japanese) *Historia Philosophiae* 42, 108-23.

— (2006) 'The Brides of Argos: the Chorus in Euripides' *Electra*.' (in Japanese) *Historia Philosophiae* 48, 41-59.

Hammond, N. G. L. (1984) 'Spectacle and Parody in Euripides' *Electra*.' *GRBS* 25, 373-78.

Heath, M. and M. Lefkowitz (1991) 'Epinician Performance.' *CPh* 86, 173-91.

Henrichs, A. (1994/5) 'Why Should I Dance?: Choral Self-referentiality in Greek Tragedy.' *Arion* 3, 56-111.

Heubeck, A. and A. Hoekstra (1989) *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey.* Vol. II. Oxford.

Hirata, S. (2002) *Common People in Euripidean Tragedy: Athenian Citizens' Perception of Self and Others.* (in Japanese) Tokyo.

Hopman, M. G. (2013) 'Chorus, Conflict, and Closure in Aeschylus' *Persians*.' In Gagné and Hopman (edd.) 58-77.

Kavoulaki, A. (1999) 'Processional Performance and the Democratic Polis.' In S. Goldhill and R. Osborne edd. *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy*. Cambridge.

Kovacs, P. D. (1985) 'Castor in Euripides' *Electra* (*El*. 307-13 and 1292-1307).' *CQ* 35, 306-14.

Kubo, M. (1967) 'The Norm of Myth: Euripides' *Electra*.' *HSCPh* 71, 15-31.

Lloyd, M. (1986) 'Realism and Character in Euripides' *Electra*.' *Phoenix* 40, 1-19.

Lonsdale, S. H. (1993) *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion*. Baltimore.

Mastronarde, D. (2002) *Euripides: Medea*. Cambridge.

Peponi, A.-E. (2013) 'Theorizing the Chorus in Greece.' In Billings, Budelmann and Macintosh (edd.) 15-34.

Rhodes, P.J. and Osborne, R. edd. (2004) *Greek Historical Inscriptions: 404-323 BC*. Oxford.

Robbins, E. (1994) 'Alcman's *Partheneion*: Legend and Choral Ceremony.' *CQ* 44, 7-16.

Rosivach, V. J. (1978) 'The 'Golden Lamb' Ode in Euripides' *Electra*.' *CPh* 73, 189-99

Seaford, R. (1985) 'The Destruction of Limits in Sophocles' *Electra.*' *CQ* 35, 315-23.

Silk, M. S. ed. (1996) *Tragedy and the Tragic: Greek Theatre and Beyond.* Oxford.

Sourvinou-Inwood, C. (2003) *Tragedy and Athenian Religion*. Lanham.

Stehle, E. (1997) *Performance and Gender in Ancient Greece: Nondramatic Poetry in Its Setting*. Princeton.

— (2004) 'Choral Prayer in Greek Tragedy: Euphemia or Aischrologia?' In P. Murray and P. Wilson edd. *Music and the Muses*. Oxford, 122-55.

Swift, L. A. (2010) *The Hidden Chorus: Echoes of Genre in Tragic Lyric*. Oxford.

— (2013) 'Conflicting Identities in the Euripidean Chorus.' In Gagné and Hopman (edd.), 130-54

Zeitlin, F. I. (1970) 'The Argive Festivals of Hera and Euripides' *Electra*.' *TAPhA* 101, 645-69.

Kyushu University
hamamoto@flc.kyushu-u.ac.jp