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EUR. IT 288: WHY NOT THE LUNGS?

Πυλάδη, δέδορκας τήνδε; τήνδε δ' οὐχ ὀραῖς 285
Ἄιδου δράκαιναν ὡς με βούλεται κτανεῖν
δειναῖς ἐχίδναις εἰς ἔμ' ἐστομωμένη;
†ἦδ' ἐκ χιτώνων† πῦρ πνέουσα καὶ φόνον
περοῖς ἐρέσσει

288 ἦδ' ἐκ χιτώνων L: ἦ 'κ γειτόνων δὲ Jackson, alii alia; post
χιτώνων lac. stat. Wecklein, suppl. <νυκτὶ προσφερῶν ἰδεῖν ἐμοὶ
στομωτόν> ¹

Pylades, do you see this one? Don't you see this one, the she-
dragon of Hades, how she wants to kill me aggressively fringed²
towards me with terrible snakes? This one breathing fire and gore
†from her cloaks† is rowing with wings

The *locus desperatus* ἦδ' ἐκ χιτώνων in line 288 of the *codex unicus* L has long defeated the scholars – anything palaeographically defensible as a slip in minuscule is wanting, as the twenty-one conjectures listed in Wecklein's repertory, including his own suggestion of an interlinear lacuna, and with Markland's ἐχιδνῶν, G. Hermann's both

¹ The text comes from Kearns, and is the vulgate, while the apparatus is a composite affair with Wecklein's name restored in place of Heinisch; among the editors, no positive solution prevails; Diggle initially adopted Jackson's conjecture (1981); his revised second volume (2025) has ἦδ' ἐκ χιτώνων in *crucis*, but the only remedy mentioned in his unusually slim *apparatus* is Jackson's conjecture; Parker has ἐκ χιτώνων in *crucis*, and nothing in the *apparatus*, thus no valid solution at hand; Cropp has likewise nothing in his *apparatus*, and calls this verse “an unresolved problem”.

² Diggle 2021, s.v. στομῶω ad loc. Another possible translation is the one in Cropp ²2023, 181 ad v., ‘brandishing terrible snakes’ or ‘sharpened with terrible snakes’. Elsewhere, all translations mine.

χλιδώνων and κενώνων, A. Kirchoff's τρίτων αὔ, and A. Nauck's ἡ δ' ἐγκυτῖς νῶν among them, amply testify. J. Jackson's ἡ 'κ γειτόνων δὲ³ has found its supporter in J. Diggle, to an extent that Diggle even adopted this "brilliant" conjecture straight into his text back in 1981. His *Last Thoughts on Euripides* reveal a change of mind and a more conservative text of his 2025 revision.⁴

The "mechanics" of corruption as suggested by Jackson and initially approved by Diggle is twofold: either the mechanical γ to χ, producing χιτώνων and at a later point implicating a conscious change in the position of δὲ to rectify the metre,⁵ or originating in the unusual position of δὲ and its (largely also mechanical) transfer "to what was considered its natural place",⁶ followed by further effort on part of some corrector versed in metre.

This conjecture relies not only on the indeed plausible slipping of γειτόνων (unattested in tragedy, which already should have us wary) into χιτώνων, but also on Orestes counting the Furies, or at least spatially arranging them. It is common for Orestes to see a number of Furies,⁷ but a consecutive attack of the more conventional threesome is in no way evident here. Even if they come successively (two in τήνδε of 285 and another one in line 288), Orestes has virtually no time to tell them apart, the Fury is always ἡδε for Orestes, his pressing primary concern. He is grappling only with one, the closest, as we could also judge from οἶμοι, κτενεῖ με of 291. Moreover, if we count, there seem to be no more than two (Nauck produced the third one, κυν<ώπιδα> in line 284 from κυναγὸς ὄς, but few count it in; it is rigid also because the cowherd is quoting, and began and broke off at will).

The adverbial ἐκ γειτόνων, confined to comedy and prose, is idiomatic in the meaning 'in the neighbourhood', 'next door',⁸ but only works in Jackson's conjecture when used attributively and understood way too literally. His genius unperturbed, he sees no problem whatever, stating that "figurative in sense or not figurative... no mere

³ Jackson, 1955, 146–148.

⁴ Diggle 2025; in Diggle 2025, 147, he admits that "valid doubts" have been cast on Jackson's conjecture. He offers no alternative.

⁵ Jackson, 1955, 147.

⁶ Diggle 1981, 79.

⁷ *Or.* 238, 264–265; *IT* 931, 941, 963, 970, thus always referred to in the plural throughout the play.

⁸ See Austin 1970, 14.

colloquialism but an expression fit for the best of company”.⁹ Kearns attempts a translation ‘the one next in line’, but Parker’s commentary is decisive in this respect and her conclusion that ἡ ’κ γειτόνων means ‘the Fury from next door’, and never ‘from beside’ is the only one valid.¹⁰ Thus, this phrase is untenable in our context and should at best be consigned to *apparatus criticus*.

Orestes, on a mission with Pylades to procure the statue of Artemis, is mad again and the timing is as unpropitious for him as it is dramatically effective: discovered by the Taurian cowherds, his fitful hunt for the Furies, their savage attack, and the resulting slaughter of livestock all come narrated through the mouth of one of the Taurians. This is what Euripides loves and does best, lengthy epic narrative, with the descriptions allowing for the immediacy any staging would lack, although he did try his hand another time, in *Orestes*, at staging the fit. Orestes sees the Fury charging, and the Taurian quotes extensively. What Orestes sees can be pieced together to form a single dreadful image, the details are non-contradictory: a hellish she-dragon, facing him with snakes, breathing fire and gore, winged, and carrying in her arms the stone effigy of his mother.

While fire could issue out of any part of such a monster, it is best, since most unnatural from the human point of view, when it comes through the mouth.¹¹ Building on the participle πνέουσα, I suggest reading ἡ ’κ πλευμόνων δὲ instead of ἡδ’ ἐκ χιτώνων, thus restoring the fullness of well-attested tragic idiom (with most cases of πλεῦμον indeed in gen. pl., and the closest parallels in Eur. *Or.* 277 ἀλύω, πνεῦμ’ ἀνεις ἐκ πλευμόνων, *HF* 1092–1093 καὶ πνοᾶς θερμᾶς πνέω <...> πλευμόνων ἄπο and S. fr. 1135 Radt ἐκπνέουσι πλευμόνων ἄπο) without introducing any additional detail. This virtue should however have been a sure safeguard against corruption. The *ratio* is not easy to grasp, but could be due to the dissimilative influence of πνέουσα of the immediate context.

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⁹ Jackson 1955, 147.

¹⁰ Parker 2016, 120 ad loc.

¹¹ Cf. the far-fetched idea of McKay that the text is sound and χιτῶνες are lungs “in quasi-medical use”, McKay 1964, 384–385.

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The author conjectures ἡ `κ πλευμόνων δὲ in Eur. *IT* 288 against the reading ἡδ`ἐκ χιτώνων of L, relying on the tragic idiom.

Автор предлагает читать ἡ `κ πλευμόνων δὲ в Eur. *IT* 288 против рукописного ἡδ`ἐκ χιτώνων, исходя из употребительности сочетания в языке трагедии.

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