THE FURY’S COATS

The vulgate reading at Eur. I.T. 288 ἡ δ’ ἔχει χιτώναν πῦρ πνέουσα καὶ φόνον πετροῖς ἐρέσατι may safely be described as friendless. Lexicographers 1) treat it with suspicion; others speak more bluntly: “Plainly impossible” 2). That the Fury has a chiton is pardonable, perhaps even that the plural is used (although Plutarch is not the most reassuring of witnesses to the application of the plural to one person); but of course the fire cannot issue from the clothing. In 1898 Wecklein listed twenty-one attempts to find a better reading, apart from the notorious lacuna ex machina, and more recently we have had J. Jackson’s ξενετόνων, “in the neighbourhood” 3). I think that we have done Euripides an injustice, and that the text is sound.

This train of thought was started by R. B. Onians’ argument that the φρένες were originally the lungs 4). In this connexion he cited Aesch. Pers. 115 μελαγχίτων φρένας as possibly having a physical basis apart from such overtones of mourning and emotional disturbance as the poet attaches to the expression 5). “Black- (or dark-) tunicked”, like the Homeric φρένες ἀμφι μέλαναι (A 103, etc.), and in contrast with the λευκαὶ φρένες of Pindar (Pyth. 4, 109) 6), refers to the normal dark exterior of the healthy lung. This seems to me highly probable, for “lungs”: “μελαγχίτων lung”: χιτών is a regular progression. Χιτῶν is used in the medical writers of a large number of membranes covering various bodily organs, but Onians himself (p. 25 n. 2) supplies the important link in his remark that “medical writers seem to have called the pleura in which each lung is clothed χιτών (e.g. Galen, de Plac. VIII 715)” 7). Whether Euripides would then be building upon Aeschylus, or whether χιτών was more readily understood of the pleura than of any other membrane, are questions not easily answered, but in this context a quasi-medical use of χιτώνες could reasonably be associated with the lungs.

One of the reasons why we think of fire proceeding from “that humdrum aperture, the mouth” 8), when Greek monsters are under discussion, is that

1) E.g. Liddell-Scott-Jones, s.v.; Allen-Italie, A Concordance to Euripides, s.v. It is worth noting that this is the only occurrence of χιτών in the extensive remains of Euripides.
2) Platnauer, C.R. 6 (1956), 114.
3) Marginalia Scaenica (1955), 146 f. = C.Q. 35 (1941), 176 f. Platnauer (loc. cit.) pronounces the reading “far too colloquial”.
4) Origins of European Thought (Cambridge 1954), 23 ff. In view of the extensive development which ϕρένας underwent, I cannot see it as a telling objection that not every example can be placed under this rubric.
6) This interpretation is now supported by Burton, Pindar’s Pythian Odes (1962), 157 f.
7) Onians’ “seem to have called” is misleading. Cf. Galen, De Anatomicis Administrationibus VII 2 (Kühn II, 591, 593), where χιτών is the name given by “some” to the pleura.
8) Jackson, loc. cit.
hexametric poetry cannot admit πλευμόνων. However, where the metre will permit it (as in iambics), we may expect fire, no less than breath 1), to issue reasonably from the lungs. We may safely take it for granted that this happened when Sophokles discussed the fire-breathing bulls in the Jason story, despite the lacunose text which has come down to us: ... ἐκ πλευµόνων (Nauck; πλευµόνων Bergk; πλευµάτων codd.) ἀπὸ (fr. 336). Euripides seems to have made a very eclectic use of medical vocabulary 2). I suggest that this use of χιτών as “pleura” > “lung” deserves to be added to the list.

University of Melbourne, Vic., Australia

K. J. McKay

1) Cf. Eur. H. F. 1093 πνεύµα τερματικὰ πνέω ... πλευµάτων (L², πν- LP) ἀπ’; Or. 277 πνεύµ’ ἄρεις ἐκ πλευµόνων (Brunck; πν- codd.).


A NOTE ON THEOPHRASTUS, CHAR. II 10

Καὶ τῶν ἐστιωμένων πρῶτος ἐπινέασε τὸν ὁλόν καὶ παραπεμένον εἰπεῖν “ός μαλακῶς ἐσθίεις”, καὶ ἄρας τί τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς πραπέξις φθάσαι τούτω ἄρα ὡς χρηστὸν ἐστί”, καὶ ἐρωτήσας, μὴ μιγοῦ, καὶ εἰ ἐπιβάλλεσθαι βουλέται, καὶ εἰ τι περιστελλὴ αὐτὸν . . .

This is more or less the textus receptus of this passage among modern editors. It is read in this form by Ilberg (in the ed. by the Leipzig Phil. Ges.), Diels, Kuiper (with an unimportant change, εἰπεῖν ὡς Μαλακῶς), Pasquali - de Falco, Ussher and Steinmetz. Though no serious scholar would pretend that it reproduces exactly Theophrastus's autograph, it is probably the best we can print. Whatever παραπεμένον may mean, Navarre's change and transposition (ἐπινέασα τὸν ὁλόν καὶ εἰπεῖν . . . καὶ ἄρας τί τῶν παραπεμένων ἀπὸ τῆς πραπέξις), though very elegant, are not an improvement, nor are they needed.

What is the meaning of μαλακῶς? Coraes (Coray), in his edition (1799), following a hint by R. Newton, translated “sans appetit”. This was not accepted. Ilberg (1897) chose “fein”. Fraenkel and Groeneboom (1901), however, rendered μαλακῶς by “weinig” (little), but in 1902 Wilamowitz pronounced ex cathedra that μαλακῶς “in solchen Verbindungen” means “fein” (Gr. Lesebuch II 2, p. 188). The subsequent translators agreed or gave in: Groeneboom (n.d., but after 1902), Edmonds-Austen (1904), Jebb-Sandys (1909), Navarre (1920), Pasquali - de Falco (1956), Ussher (1960), Steinmetz (1962), all follow Wilamowitz's precept. Some dissenters, however, remained. Edmonds, whose mind was always independent, for better or for worse, had second thoughts, and in his Loeb-edition (1929) rendered μαλακῶς by "nothing". So did Rüdiger (as reported by Steinmetz; I have not seen his work); and Kuiper (1936) rendered the word by "lusteloos" (= "sans appetite"), thereby vindicating Coraes's interpretation.

This, however, is regarded as "somewhat pointless" by Ussher. Before looking into that, let us see whether it is possible. LSJ bring the different