TWO VEXED PASSAGES OF SOPHOCLES' OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

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876-7.

In L these lines read ἀκρόταταν εἰςαναβᾶσαν ἀπότομον ὄρωσεν εἰς ἀνάγκαν. Because these words neither correspond metrically with 866-7 of the strophe nor are interpretable, every editor has had to make a conjectural emendation 2). Most changes clearly rest on the assumption that the words cover very deep corruptions, for they amount to mere rewritings of these verses. So Hermann wrote ἀκρότατα᾽ ἐσκυμβιβάσασιν ἀπότομον ὥ. ὧ. ὧ., based on the scholium ὅμωρ ... εἰς δύσβατον ἄκρωρειαν ἄναββάσασα, but this does not produce an acceptable metrical correspondence with 866-7. Changes like this require alterations in 866-7 also, although διὰ κ. ἀκε. in ὀφρνίαν δι᾽ ἄκρεα is unexceptionable; see Kühner-Gerth i § 434 ii (p. 483). One of the most extreme rewritings is Sheppard's ἀκρότατα τες ἀναβας ἀπότομον ἀνήρ ὥ. ὧ. ὧ. 3). Wolff's reading 4) too departs considerably from the MSS. and seems slightly odd: ἀκρότατα γείσι' ἄναβας' ἀπὸ στεμάτων ὥ. ὧ. ὧ. As far as 876 is concerned, this conjecture has been surprisingly successful 5), for Jebb, Pearson, and Dain took it over. For γείσιν Wolff and Jebb compared especially Eur. Phoen. 1180.

1) I am much indebted to Prof. J. C. Kamerbeek, who saved me from many errors. In particular, also, I have learned much from and profited by his paper Problemen van de eenheid en de zin van Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus, Meded. Kon. Ned. Akad. v. Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde, N.R. 29, No. 6 (1966). For all faults remaining I alone am responsible.

2) Only Bellermann, it seems, tried to explain the MS. reading. He took ἀπότομον as a feminine substantive ("der Abhang"), for which he accounted by the scholium rec. εἰς ἀκροτατην ἀπορρόγα, and compared ἡ ἐρήμος etc. But he admitted that the MS. text was very likely to be corrupt, because the expression would be unparalleled and the metres are not correct.


4) See the Anhang of Wolff-Bellermann's comm. (1876).

5) Although Bellermann did not retain it.
Yet it seems clear that the corruption must be in and/or near ἀπότομον, for, observing the rule of the Attic correptio, ὑψίποδες οὔρανίαν (_____ ____) correspond with ἀκροτάταν ἐισαναβία (______ ____) and -κωφθέντες ἤν ὶλυμπος with ἄφοεσεν εἰς ἀνάγχαν (______ ____). The rhythmical difference in the correspondence of ὑψίποδες and ἀκροτάταν (which can best be taken as resolved cretics in place of an iambic metre) is remarkable but quite acceptable, although there is no parallel in the other resolved cretics in Sophocles’ lyrical passages 1). The nearest parallel I could find is O.T. 192/205 φλέγει μὲ περι- (______) corresponding with βέλεα θέλων (______ ____). The first syllable of ἄκρος is short “by nature” 2).

And I think that for the lyrical passages, too, although there the exceptions are somewhat more numerous, we ought to start from the Attic correptio as a general rule 3). So there is no reason to doubt and it is statistically safe to accept ἀ-κροτάταν as well as τε-κωφθέντες. My conclusion is that ἀπότομον has to be supplemented and/or altered so as to give an iambic metre, corresponding with δ’ αὐθέρα τε- (______ ____) .

A supplement may be either ἀπότομον — or — ἀπότομον. Jebb agreed with Wecklein in preferring Schnelle’s ἀποτομοτάταν (scanned —_____— like δ’ αὐθέρα τεκν-!), and Campbell wrote ἀπότομον ἔξωφοσεν. Not very probable. Another way out is the supplying of a small word, e.g., Arndt’s αἰπος, Lushington’s ὤρος, Jebb’s ἄχρον (in his commentary), or Mazon’s ἑφρ. In all such cases the result is that ἀκροτάταν, the reading of all the MSS., has to be altered also. Making a conjecture that necessitates another conjecture that is not in itself necessary is an unacceptable method of procedure.

The best method is to limit the conjecture to the space between εἰσαναβία and ἄφοεσεν, further preserving the reading of the MSS. This can best be done by assuming that a dissyllabic word of the feminine gender in the accusative has dropped out. But then

2) See Ellendt, Lex. Soph., at “prior syllaba in thesi, qua longe crebrior, corripitur, in asris producitur”.  
3) In the lyrical passages of the O.T. I counted some 44 (perhaps 46-48) cases, whereas I found only 6 certain exceptions, of which in the second stasimon the second ὅσπις (873) is the only instance; cp. O.C. 883, and Ai. 304, all in arsî iambica.