

AESCHYLUS, PROM. 680

680 ἀπροσδόκητος δ' αὐτὸν ταίφνιδιος† μόρος
τοῦ ζῆν ἀπεστέρησεν ... (Page, OCT)

Page writes ταίφνιδιος†, and Griffith¹) commenting on 680 also seems dissatisfied with the reading of the codd.: “The MSS give ἀπροσδόκητος δ' αὐτὸν αἰφνίδιος μόρος, with impossible metre and the awkward doublet of adjectives without connective. Porson’s transposition is a simple correction (αἰφνίδιος αὐτόν, giving ◡-◡-◡- | -◡-◡-◡-◡- | -◡-◡-); so is the adverbial ἀπροσδοκῆτως, avoiding the doubled adjectives. Of alternatives, Elmsley’s ἀφνίδιος gives an unattested form (though cf. ἄφνω and Hesychius s.v. ἀφνίδια) and resolution in weak position (ἄφν-, cf. 2n.). Better would be Headlam’s ἄπτερος (from Hesych. s.v. ἄπτερος· προσηγής, ταχύς, αἰφνίδιος; see Fraenkel on Aesch. Ag. 276).” In his text appears ‘Porson’s transposition’ along with his own ἀπροσδοκῆτως.

It is true that the position of αἰφνίδιος²) creates a fifth-foot anapaest unparalleled in tragedy³); Elmsley’s ἀφνίδιος would in this case offer an instant remedy, yielding a τριβραχύς in the fourth foot, but – as also Griffith points out – it would give an unattested form. Headlam’s ἄπτερος restores the metre and gives appropriate sense, however it is a very rare word in this meaning⁴) (cf. LSJ⁵ s.v. iii).

Porson’s transposition may not be considered as ‘a simple correction’ only, especially if it is accompanied by an additional ‘simple’ correction, namely Griffith’s transformation of ἀπροσδόκητος into an adverb. But (I) ἀπροσδοκῆτως is not stylistically better than the adjective, which occurs another three times in tragedy (A. Supp. 712, S. El. 1017, E. IA 1610), whereas the adverb otherwise first appears in Thucydides (4. 29.3, 7. 21.4); (II) since ἀπροσδόκητος appears in the codd. one is hardly justified in interfering with it, especially since, in other respects, there is nothing wrong with the adjective. The problem remains with αἰφνίδιος.

For all corrections above, which for some reason or other either lack credibility or evidence I would prefer ἐξαίφνης in the place of αἰφνίδιος⁵). ἐξαίφνης may

1) M. Griffith, *Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound* (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics), Cambridge Univ. Press 1983.

2) αἰφνίδιος does not occur elsewhere before Thucydides (twelve times in all as adj.); it is worth mentioning, however, that the first time it appears in Thucydides it is coupled with ἀπροσδόκητος (2. 61.3).

3) Seven times in Sophocles and twenty four in Euripides that an anapaest in the fifth foot occurs – cf. M. L. West, *Greek Metre*, Oxford 1982, p. 82 – it is restricted to proper names.

4) On disputes about ἄπτερος and its meanings see CQ 30 (1936) 3, 105, 151.

5) Th. Gaisford was the first to propose ἐξαίφνης in this passage, ad Heph. pp. 242–3 (Hephaest. Alex. Enchiridion ..., Oxonii 1810). According to him “supra αἰφνίδιος MS. Seldenianus scriptum habet ἐξαίφνης ... Codex ..., ut videtur, non interpretamenta solum sed lectiones etiam diversas singulis lineis interpositas habuit”), cf. his augmented ed., Lipsiae 1832, p. 261, and finally his new ed. of the Enchir. in two Vols. Oxonii 1855, ii, p. 43, footn., where actually he prefers Hermann’s αἰφνίδια, ἐξαίφνης considered as an ‘interpretatio’ to it. F. H. M. Blaydes (Advers. in Aesch., Halis Saxonum 1895, p. 36) accepts Gaisford’s suggestion, “Qu. ἐξαίφνης (aut ἄφραστος)”, cf. also his Spicil. Tragicum (Hal. Sax.

be better than ἄπτερος, perhaps easier than the transposition⁶), and better supported by evidence than αἰφνίδιος (though this last would otherwise be the lightest change palaeographically). With ἐξαίφνης the metre runs quite normally: ἀπροσδόκητος δ' αὐτὸν ἐξαίφνης μόρος.

This adverb occurs in Pr. 1077 (anap.), and in a lyric line of S. Aj. 170. All other times that ἐξαίφνης occurs in tragedy, six in Sophocles (Ant. 417, Tr. 912, Ph. 751, OC 1610, 1623, 1625), and four in Euripides (Hipp. 434, IT 1394, Ph. 1144, 1469) it always stands in one and the same metrical position within the trimeter, viz. followed by a two-syllable word to close the (metric) line. On this account ἐξαίφνης might offer a good solution to the metrical problem in Pr. 680.

Athen

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1902, p. 68), but in his *Analecta Tragica* (Hal. Sax. 1906, p. 27) Blaydes prefers Porson's αἰφνίδιος αὐτὸν. Unaware of all this E. Braun (*Lesefrüchte* iv, *MVPhW* 9 [1932] 104–5) proposed ἐξαίφνης against Wilamowitz's ἐκ Διὸς (for αἰφνίδιος). His point is that “eine manus corrigens in Analogie zum Adjektivum ἀπροσδόκητος auch das Adverbium ἐξαίφνης in adjektivischer Form ohne Wissen um die metrische Anstößigkeit eingesetzt hat” (p. 105).

6) C. Prato, *L' anapesto nel trimetro tragico*, *SIFC* 32 (1961) 110: “Il Porson aveva tentato, con scarso successo, la transposizione αἰφνίδιος αὐτὸν.” Prato (*ibid.*) actually defends αἰφνίδιος on the account of Thucydides' use of the same combination, φρόνημα τὸ αἰφνίδιον καὶ ἀπροσδόκητον (2. 61.3); to this add the late αἰφνίδιος γὰρ αὐτοῖς καὶ ἀπροσδόκητος φόβος ἐπεχύθη (v.l. ἐπῆλθεν), *LXX Sap. Salom.* 17.14.