

MISZELLEN

Aeschylus *Persae* 683

ὦ πιστὰ πιστῶν ἤλικές θ' ἤβης ἐμῆς
Πέρσαι γεραιοί, τίνα πόλις πονεῖ πόνον;
στένει κέκοπται καὶ χαράσεται πέδον.

683 στένει, κέκοπται, codd. : στόνω κέκοπται Broadhead

Broadhead's verdict on 683 is a difficult line of which 'no wholly satisfactory explanation has been given, and many scholars consider it

corrupt.' I hope to show that the traditional text may stand if both commas are expunged.

Darius here asks the Chorus what is troubling the city, and then, in the explanatory asyndeton of 683, gives his reasons for assuming that such trouble exists. It seems reasonable to accept Broadhead's view that *κέκοπται* refers to the striking of the earth by the *θρήνοι* and *γόοι* of the preceding invocation. Thus *πέδον* is established as the sole subject of the line.

Three problems now remain: the interpretation of *στένει*, the tense of *κέκοπται*, and the meaning of *χαράσσειται*. I accept Broadhead's explanation of the last of these viz. that the earth 'is furrowed' or 'fretted' by the effects of the sounds, and also his analysis of the sequence of tenses: thus the present *χαράσσειται* follows the perfect *κέκοπται* because 'the Greek perfect marks not simply a completed action, but one whose consequences persist in the present' (in other words the earth *κέκοπται* so that *χαράσσειται*), but he spoils an otherwise satisfactory interpretation by emending *στένει* to *στόνω*. What he and the other editors have not realised is that *στένει* is the dative of *στένος* = 'straits', 'distress': cf. *Hymn to Apollo* 532-3

οὐ μελεδῶνας
βούλεσθ' ἀργαλέους τε πόνους καὶ στείνεα θνυμῶ.

That the word was familiar to Aeschylus is shown by *Eum.* 521 *σωφρονεῖν ὑπὸ στένει*.

We thus translate: '(For) the ground has been struck and is furrowed by (its/your) distress.'¹

1) This interpretation of *στένει* has occurred independently to R. D. Dawe: his analysis of the line is very briefly presented in *The Collation and Investigation of the Manuscripts of Aeschylus*, C. U. P. 1964, p. 176. However, a little elaboration of the point would seem to be called for, and I part company with Dawe in preferring *πέδον* rather than *πόλις* as subject.