

The Arrogant-Making Hand:  
“Manus” and “Dextra” in *Hercules Furens*

**Characterization of Seneca’s Hercules**

Psychological view: His madness is a natural phenomenon due to tragic flaw.

Jo-Ann Shelton, Karl Galinsky

Stoic Paragon view, revisited: He is merely persecuted by Juno.

Anna Lydia Motto and John R. Clark, Gilbert Lawall

My View: Such reversals are inevitable, and worse for those with power, which is double-edged.

**Hand Motif**

76 instances of *manus* or *dextra*.

Non-Hercules Senecan average: 32.57

Ranging from 26 (*Octavia*) to 42 (*Oedipus*)

*Hercules on Oeta*: 107.

Instances-to-line ratio - HF: 0.056, HO: 0.054

Categories:

Violence/Ability: 31

Pollution: 28

Bad Kings: 18

Supplication: 10

Gentleness: 5

Snakes: 6

**Violence/Ability**

(1) 113-116: “Let him return strong of hand. I have found a day when the hated *virtus* of Hercules will be of help to me. Has he conquered me? Let him conquer himself...”

*...manuque fortis redeat, inveni diem, / invisam quo nos Herculis virtus iuvat. / me vicit: et se vincat...*

(2) 118-120: “I will stand by and as the arrows depart the sure bowstring, I will balance, I will guide his weapons as he rages.”

*Stabo at, ut certo exeant / emissa nervo tela, librabo manu, / regam furentis arma.*

(3) 1271-1272: “Bring out my weapons; let Fortune be conquered by my right hand.”

*Effer arma; vincatur mea / fortuna dextra.*

(4) 1195-1198: “Now I see my weapons which are stained with the Hydra’s blood. I do not need to ask whose hand was responsible. Who was able to bend the bow, what right hand was able to bend the string that barely yields to me?”

*Tincta Lernaea nece / iam tela video nostra, non quaero manum. / quis potuit arcum flectere aut quae dextera / sinuare nervum rite cedentem mihi?*

### **Pollution**

(5) 121-122: “After the crime is done, his father may allow those hands into heaven!”  
*scelere perfecto licet / admittat illas genitor in caelum manus.*

(6) 483-484: “The altars dripping with guest-blood justly drank the blood of Busiris”  
*...qui hospitali caede manantes foci / bibere iustum sanguinem Busiridis.*

(7) 918-919: “Son, first cleanse your hands dripping with bloody gore of an enemy.”  
*Nate, manantes prius / manus cruenta caede et hostili expia.*

(8) 1254-1256: “I fear whatever king that rages in the whole world, with guilt on his hands or altars.”  
*Quisquis in toto furit / rex saevus orbe, manibus aut aris nocens, / a me timetur.*

### **Supplication**

(9) 1259-1261: “Now I have lost everything good: my mind, weapons, reputation, wife, children, hands - even my rage!”

*Cuncta iam amisi bona, / mentem arma famam coniugem gnatos manus, / etiam furorem.*

### **Snakes**

(10) 1115-1120: “And you, which long hung from his neck as a decoration and weapon, strong arrow and heavy quiver, whip his untamed back savagely; let the powerful wooden trunk cut his strong shoulders and weigh down his breast with harsh knots.”

*Et tu collo decus ac telum / suspensa diu, / fortis harundo, pharetraeque graves, / date saeva fero verbera tergo; / caedant umeros robora fortes / stipesque potens / duris oneret pectora nodis.*

### **Philosophical Works**

(11) *Ep.* 66: “...with that stump of a hand [Mucius] conquered two kings.”

*Illa manu trunca reges duos vicit.*

(12) *De. Const.* 2.2: “Cato did not grab wild beasts with his hands [...] he tangled with ambition, an evil of many forms, and with the boundless desire for power.”

*Cato non cum feris manus contulit, quas consecrari venatoris agrestisque est [...] cum ambitu congressus, multiformi malo, et cum potentiae immensa cupiditate.*

(13) *Ep.* 83: "...intemperance in drinking and that deadly wine cup of Hercules buried [Alexander]."

*Intemperantia bibendi et ille Herculaneus ac fatalis scyphus condidit.*

(14) *Ep.* 74: "The gods are not scornful or envious; they let us up and offer a hand as we climb. "

*Non sunt di fastidiosi, non invidi; admittunt et ascendentibus manum porrigunt.*

(15) *Ep.* 9: "But for living blessedly [a wise man] needs a soul that is both upright and despises Fortune."

*...opus est, ad [beate vivendum] tantum animo sano et erecto et despiciente fortunam.*

(16) *Ep.* 91: "[Fortune] summons our own hands against us [...] No time is immune; in our pleasures themselves arise the causes of grief. War springs up in the middle of peace, and our forces of security change into reasons for fear; a friend becomes an enemy, ally becomes foe." [...] We should therefore consider everything, and should strengthen our minds against what is capable of happening."

*[Fortuna] nostras in nos manus advocat [...] Nullum tempus exceptum est; in ipsis voluptatibus causae doloris oriuntur. Bellum in media pace consurgit et auxilia securitatis in metum transeunt; ex amico inimicus, hostis ex socio. [...] Cogitanda ergo sunt omnia et animus adversus ea, quae possunt evenire, firmandus.*

### **Note on Charts**

Values of 1: 1 category for instance.

Values of 1.5: 2 categories for instance.

Values of 2: 3 categories for instance.

### **Select Bibliography**

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