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, / invisa quo nos Herculis virtus iuvet. / 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.”
   Ila 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 consectari 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.

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