

## NOTES ON SENECA'S *HERCULES FURENS*

JOHN G. FITCH  
University of Victoria

illinc timendum ratibus ac ponto gregem  
passim vagantes exerunt Atlantides. 10

No doubt finding *ac ponto* otiose, Karsten conjectured *ex ponto*, and this approach perhaps deserves more attention than it has received.<sup>1</sup> In itself Karsten's conjecture is not acceptable, since *exerere* is one of those verbs with which *ex* is not repeated (*TLL* 5.2.1854.69 ff.). But if conjecture is thought necessary, one could easily substitute *a ponto*, for which cf. Luc. 5.598 *primus ab oceano caput exeris Atlanteo*. Similar phrases with *exerere* include Ov. *Met.* 2.271 f. *Neptunus aquis cum torvo braccia vultu / exerere ausus est*, 13.838 *nitidum caput exere ponto*, *Fasti* 1.458 *patriis exerit ora vadis*, Sen. *Ag.* 484 *ora Corus Oceano exerens*, 554 *Neptunus imis exerens undis caput*.

Despite these parallels, however, I am not inclined on balance to alter the text. Senecan parallels for *exerere* of heavenly bodies (*HF* 594, *Pha.* 747) prove, if proof is needed, that an indication of place whence is not *de rigueur*. The suggestion that the sea fears storms is paradoxical, but paradox is part of the lifeblood of Senecan tragedy. Also characteristically Senecan is the exploitation of the idea of sentient nature: for examples with *timere* cf. *Thy.* 119 *timentque veterem nobiles Argi sitim*, 594 f. *hic ubi ingenti modo sub procella / Cyclades pontum timuere motae*. There is a touch of zeugma about the pairing of ships and sea, but that too is not unSenecan (e.g., *Pha.* 1101 f., 1178).

una me dira ac fera  
Thebana tellus nuribus sparsa impiis  
quotiens novercam fecit. 20

So *E* (the *A* MSS omit the passage), but line 20 is unmetrical in this form. Attempts at emendation have been ill-fated. Bücheler's *Thebana tellus sparsa nuribus impiis*, accepted by most modern editors, is almost as

<sup>1</sup> Karsten's notes on Senecan tragedy, on pages 45–61 of his *Spicilegium Criticum* (Lyons 1881), have often been overlooked by critics: thus his excellent emendation *quidquid uberis cingit soli* at *HF* 333 is universally attributed to Mueller, who made it some 17 years later.

unmetrical by Senecan standards as the version it seeks to emend.<sup>2</sup> The rearrangement which had been the vulgate before Bücheler, *Thebana nuribus sparsa tellus impiis*, introduces a metrical pattern at line-end which Seneca generally avoids,<sup>3</sup> and a most awkward word-order, in which the referent of *dira ac fera*, i.e., *tellus*, is postponed until after a further adjective and a participial clause. Baehrens' suggestion *Thebana tellus nuribus a! sparsa impiis* has won little acceptance, and with good reason: to judge by the three fairly certain instances of the interjection *a* in the tragedies, its use occurred to Seneca only in very restricted circumstances, i.e., when he was speaking of the passions with emotional anaphora and/or apostrophe (*Tro.* 1013 *semper a semper dolor est malignus*, *Med.* 139 f. *melius a melius, dolor / furiose, loquere*, 930 *melius a demens furor!*).

I would suggest *Thebana tellus nuribus aspersa impiis*, which creates the familiar metrical pattern of word-break with elision in the fifth foot. *Aspersa* will convey the same meaning as *sparsa*, i.e., that Jupiter's women are scattered throughout Thebes, cf. Mela 1.91 is (sinus) *parvis urbibus aspersa est*, *Ov. Pont.* 1.4.1 *iam mihi deterior canis aspergitur aetas*, Pliny *H.N.* 37.155 (gemma) *quae . . . aureis guttis aspersa sit*. It may also carry some of its familiar moral sense, "sullied": an instance where this moral sense is present together with a physical sense (though not that seen here) is *Tro.* 255 f. *quid caede dira nobiles clari ducis / aspergis umbras?*

revocabo in alta conditam caligine,  
ultra nocentum exilia, discordem deam,  
quam munit ingens montis oppositi specus.

94

The purpose of this note is to identify a problem rather than propose a definite solution. Commentators apparently have no difficulty with line 94, but I find it puzzling. The word *oppositi* would suggest that what keeps Discordia prisoner is the whole bulk of the mountain which stands between her and the rest of the underworld. But if she is confined *within* the mountain in a *specus*, what keeps her prisoner is the fact that the mountain surrounds her on all sides, and that is difficult to reconcile with *oppositi*.

Since Discordia seems to be imprisoned in a manner similar to the prisoner of Etna mentioned a few lines earlier (80 *Siculi verticis laxa specum* e.q.s.), one solution would be to alter *oppositi* to *impositi*. An

<sup>2</sup> Seneca avoids an iambic fifth foot in trimeters: this rule is broken only five times in the genuine tragedies, and then only to accommodate a final quadrisyllabic word (*Tro.* 195, 1080, *Med.* 512, 709, *Thy.* 115; cf. *HO* 804).

<sup>3</sup> He dislikes a word-break without elision in the fifth foot *when the final cretic begins with a vowel*: there are only seven instances in the genuine tragedies of such a word preceded by a disyllabic word as in *tellus impiis* (Strzelecki, *De Senecae Trimetro Iambico* 18, note 2, and 19, note 1).

alternative would be to focus suspicion on *specus*, since in a context of imprisonment it would be more natural to mention the vastness (n.b. *ingens*) of the barrier than the spaciousness of the prison. One might then write *quam munit ingens montis oppositi latus*, but conjecture of this kind can only be *exempli gratia*.

signum celsi glaciale poli  
septem stellis Arcados ursae  
lucem verso temone vocant

130

As transmitted in this way by *E* (*A* again omits the lines) the text is open to objections on linguistic, astronomical and mythological grounds. First, the singular *signum* in 129 would not naturally refer to two constellations. Second, the phrase *septem stellis* clearly alludes to the term *septentriones*, as at Acc. *trag.* 566 R<sup>2</sup> *sub axe posita ad stellas septem*, Sen. *Tro.* 439. *Septentriones* may be used either of the Great Bear or of the Lesser, but it would be an obvious error in astronomy to describe the Bears jointly as having seven stars. Third, there is no mythological justification for the phrase "the bears of Arcas." Arcas is of course closely associated with the Great Bear; according to the version familiar from Ovid (*Fasti* 2.153 ff., cf. *Met.* 2.409 ff.), he was transformed into the Bear-Ward, Arctophylax, when his mother became Ursa Major. But this gives no connection with Ursa Minor, and indeed the versions which link the catasterism of the two Bears are incompatible with the Callisto-myth<sup>4</sup> (cf. Arat. *Phaen.* 30 ff., Roscher 869–72).

It therefore seems necessary to correct to *ursa . . . vocat*.<sup>5</sup> As Arcas in the heavens can be called *Custos Ursae* (Ov. *Fasti* 2.153), so the Great Bear can reasonably be described as *Arcados ursae*. (For the metrical pattern cf. 1056 *mobilis unda*.) Other suggestions are unsatisfactory. Leo deletes 130 *in toto*, presumably regarding it as interpolated (as does Zwierlein, *WJA N.F.* 2 [1976] 183, note 11), but this leaves the colon insipid. To take *ursae* as genitive singular (Ageno) creates an intelligible allusion to Ursa-Callisto as "the Arcadian Bear," cf. Nonnus 2.182 Ἀρκάδος Ἀρκτου; but it also creates intolerably awkward syntax, with *Arcados ursae* as defining genitive and *septem stellis* as descriptive ablative both dependent on *signum*.<sup>6</sup>

Fas omne mundi teque dominantem precor  
regno capaci teque quam tota inrita

<sup>4</sup> The only exception known to me is the obscure version in Schol. Arat. 27 (p. 343 Maass), according to which U. Minor is not a bear at all, but the hunting-dog of Callisto.

<sup>5</sup> The *recentiores* already change *vocant* to *vocat* to agree with the singular subject of 129.

<sup>6</sup> The Renaissance conjecture *Arcades ursae* fails since there are no grounds for describing U. Minor as "Arcadian." Furthermore the conjecture does not satisfy the first two objections raised above to *E*'s text.

quaesivit Aetna mater, ut iura abdita  
et operta terris liceat impune eloqui.

660

Critics have been so busy worrying at the inoffensive phrase *tota . . . Aetna* that they have not noticed the more serious problem of *iura* in 660, but in fact it is quite uncertain what the word means here. Various meanings are conceivable, e.g., "judgments," "powers," "laws," but none receives much support from the immediate context,<sup>7</sup> and indeed the abstract *iura* seems out of keeping with the physical words *abdita et operta*. "Judgments" might be thought a strong contender, since Theseus later describes trials and punishments in the underworld for crimes committed in life. But that is not his only topic, and he does not reach it for some 60 lines: nothing in the present context suggests that meaning (contrast 728, where the context leaves no doubt that the word has this sense), and the emphasis on concealment in the words *abdita et operta* would be pointless.

In fact what Theseus is asking permission to describe is not some special aspect of the underworld, but the underworld in general. That is clear from the description into which he launches immediately, and it is confirmed by the Vergilian source of these lines, *Aen.* 6.264 ff. *di quibus imperium est animarum . . . / sit mihi fas audita loqui, sit numine vestro / pandere res alta terra et caligine mersas*. There can be little doubt, therefore, that Seneca wrote *iure abdita / et operta terris*, "things properly hidden and buried below the earth" (cf. Vergil's *res alta terra . . . mersas*). The simple correction, found already in Par. Lat. 8034,<sup>8</sup> permits a convincing explanation of the corruption, i.e., accommodation of the noun to *abdita et operta*. Seneca's use of these participles as substantives governed by *eloqui* was perhaps suggested by the phrase *audita loqui* in the Vergilian source-passage.

## MEGARA

Quo tendis amens? sanguinem fundes tuum? 1021

## AMPHITRYON

Pavefactus infans igneo vultu patris  
perit ante vulnus, spiritum eripuit timor.  
in coniugem nunc clava libratur gravis:  
perfregit ossa, corpori trunco caput 1025  
abest nec usquam est. cernere hoc audes, nimis  
vivax senectus? si piget luctus, habes  
mortem paratam: pectus in tela indue,

<sup>7</sup> The Loeb translator chooses "powers," but whose powers are meant? *Vestra* cannot be supplied from the preceding phrases as it would not suit *fas omne mundi*; but it is difficult to know whose powers could be in question if not Pluto's and Proserpina's.

<sup>8</sup> Critics have little excuse for overlooking it, as it was published by Pierrot in the *editio Lemairiana*, vol. 1 (Paris 1829) 187.

vel stipitem istum caede monstrorum inlitum  
 converte, falsum ac nomini turpem tuo  
 remove parentem, ne tuae laudi obstrepat. 1030

Editors to a man have followed the A MSS in assigning line 1021 to Megara and 1022–31 to Amphitryon, but it should be noted that the E-branch MSS present 1021–31 as a single speech, which must be Amphitryon's.<sup>9</sup> I am inclined to prefer this arrangement for two reasons. First, during the two previous murders Seneca avoids the tendency for Amphitryon to become an impersonal narrator by permitting him to react with horror *as the murders take place* (991 *quo se caecus impegit furor?*, 1004 *scelus nefandum, triste et aspectu horridum!*): 1021 would serve the same function here if spoken by Amphitryon. (1025<sup>b</sup>–1031 is different, a deliberate response to the fact that the murders have happened rather than an instinctive reaction as they occur.) Second, A not infrequently tampers with speaker-attributions (the clearest examples of deliberate alterations in this play are 634<sup>b</sup>–636, 915–18, 1237 and 1239, 1263 f. and 1265 f.) and has just tampered with the text at the end of 1020.<sup>10</sup> Similarity of line 1021 to Megara's words at Eur. *Herakles* 975 f. ὦ τεκῶν, τί δρᾶς; τέκνα / κτείνεις; is not a strong argument for attribution to Megara. Those words in Euripides occur at quite a different point in the madscene, *before* any of the murders; Seneca in this section of the scene, i.e., from 1008 on, is almost completely independent of Euripides.

This leaves the vexed problem of lines 1028–30: is Amphitryon addressing himself or Hercules with the words *pectus in tela indue / vel stipitem istum caede monstrorum illitum / converte*? The immediately preceding phrases, from *cernere hoc audes* to *mortem paratam* (1026<sup>b</sup>–1028<sup>a</sup>), are clearly self-address; the immediately following phrases in 1030 f. are equally clearly directed at Hercules. But where does the change occur, and why is it not more clearly marked?

One solution would be to end self-address after *indue*, with *tela* taken in the general sense of "weapons." It will then be necessary to emend *vel* at the beginning of 1029. The best replacement would, I think, be *en*, used to attract Hercules' attention (on this use of *en* see further below); other possibilities would include *huc* or *iam*.

However I am more inclined to think that the balance offered by the paradosis between *tela* "arrows" and *stipitem* "club" is genuine, and that

<sup>9</sup> E ascribes it in error to Hercules, but Σ must have given the speech to Amphitryon, as that ascription is found in N and M and in Giardina's O (Neap. Orat. CF 4.5).

<sup>10</sup> E. correctly writes *sed ante matrem parvulum hoc monstrum occidat*; A replaces *occidat* with *auferam*. The A interpolator may have thought (wrongly) that *occidat* must mean the child dies *coram populo*, and therefore substituted *auferam* to avoid a breach of the Horatian rule.

both clauses are therefore addressed to the same person. Are they self-address? That view seems unlikely because of the difficulties which it entails. First, the phrase *caede monstrorum illitum* becomes pointless in self-address, and we shall have to alter *monstrorum* to *nostrorum* with Schmidt; admittedly not a major difficulty.<sup>11</sup> More serious is the fact that *pectus in tela induere* will have to mean “press your breast upon his arrows,” an odd thought to say the least. Another serious objection lies in the fact that if Amphitryon begins to address Hercules at *falsum ac nomini turpem tuo*, there is no indication whatsoever of the change of addressee in the Latin.

I therefore turn to the alternative possibility, namely that Amphitryon begins to address Hercules immediately after the words *mortem paratam* in 1028. It is noteworthy that Seneca nowhere else, in verse or prose, repeats *in* with *induere*, and Mueller persuasively suggested that the *in* of 1028<sup>b</sup> conceals an original *en*.<sup>12</sup> For *en* used to attract the attention of another to oneself cf. *Pha.* 54 *ades en comiti, diva virago*, and for closely similar situations in which the speaker uses *en* in inviting an attack upon himself/herself cf. *Med.* 966 *lania, perure, pectus en Furiis patet*, *HF* 1172 f. *en nudus asto; vel meis armis licet / petas inermem*. This, then, gives the much-needed indication of the point at which Amphitryon begins to address Hercules. Unfortunately Mueller’s conjecture in full, *pectus en telo induere*, is less persuasive: I do not know what it would mean if addressed to Hercules as Mueller intended, nor did Mueller explain. Instead I would propose *pectori en tela induere*, “Here, plunge your arrows into my breast.” For a parallel usage of *induere* cf. *Phoen.* 180 *nunc manum cerebro induere*, “Now plunge your hand into the brain.” No alteration to the paradosis will now be needed in 1029.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Some have thought further emendation necessary to indicate the direction in which the *tela* are to be turned, but *convertere* can have the sense *convertere in se*, “attract, turn toward oneself,” and while the object in this usage is normally other people’s gaze or attention, there is a parallel for weapons at *Sil.* 9.392 f. *tandem convertit fatalia tela Nealcae / fulminei gliscens iuvenis furor*.

<sup>12</sup> In *Senecae tragoedias quaestiones selectae* (Berlin 1898) 10 f.

<sup>13</sup> One will not, of course, now alter *monstrorum* to *nostrorum*: Amphitryon is attempting to fall in with Hercules’ heroic delusions (as in 1030 f. and 1039–42), not to dispel them. *Converte* will now mean simply “turn,” the direction being easily supplied from the context.