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ROCHESTER, DEHÉNAULT, VOLTAIRE AND A CHORUS FROM SENECA'S "TROADES": NEGATION AS A SOURCE OF LYRICISM

The French Libertine poets and the English Restoration poets shared two veins of inspiration coming from the ancient world, as to their expression, but reflecting directly the contemporary world, as to their content and opportunity. The first is the *carpe diem* of Horace, which is to be found everywhere in the works of the Epicurean poets in both countries; the second is represented by the *post mortem nihil est* of a chorus in Seneca's *Troades*, a theme which excludes the comfortable belief that all wrongs will be set right in a future life and makes inequity in this world intellectually unacceptable.

The first of these two themes which had often been repeated in both languages since Ronsard wrote:

Cueillez dès aujourd'hui les roses de la vie

and Herrick:

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,

counselled the acceptance of this life, even while it insisted upon its transience. Throughout the seventeenth century it expressed a quiescent attitude to contemporary society. The second is associated with frustrated idealism and a mood which sometimes turned to misanthropic condemnation, though never, in the work of the poets, to that clear-sighted revolt and forward-looking rejection of the contemporary social structure that one finds in the clandestine prose writings of the country *curé* named Jean Meslier, in the early years of the next century. To prose also belongs the wry humour of negation in the manner of Lucian of Samotrace. In Rochester the theme inspired sombre eloquence:

Nothing, thou elder brother e'en to shade,
Thou hadst a being e'er the world was made,
And, well fixed, art alone of ending not afraid¹.

¹ *Poems* by John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester. Edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto, London 1953, p. 77. The poem first appeared anonymously about 1679.

In Rochester's time, the terms "Perfect Being" and "Infinite Being" were much used by the theologians and it was fashionable for metaphysicians to talk comfortably of the divine intelligence which ordered all things for the best and filled the universe with goodness. Rochester, on the other hand, chose as the subject of the poem from which the above lines are taken, "Nothingness", using the term in a sense with which J.-P. Sartre's *l'Être et le Néant* has familiarized us in recent years, to refer to a positive idea of non-being:

Great Negative, how vainly would the wise
Enquire, define, distinguish, teach, devise,
Did'st thou not stand to point their dull philosophies!

The term "dull philosophies" is echoed in another poem which is usually ascribed to Rochester:

Grown men which argue and discuss and prate,
And vent dull notions of a future state,
Sure of another world, yet do not know
Whether they shall be saved or damned, or how.

These lines are taken from a satire on man as relentless as the more developed *Satire on man* which is certainly by Rochester. It bears the title *As concerning man*². Both poems are far more radically misanthropic than any utterance of the misanthrope of antiquity, Timon of Athens.

As concerning man begins with the following lines:

To what intent or purpose was man made,
Who is by birth to misery betrayed?

The *Satire on man* contains the following lines:

I'd be a dog, a monkey or a bear,
Or anything but that vain animal
Who is so proud of being rational...
Birds feed on birds, beasts on each other prey,
But savage man alone does man betray³.

This is not the whimsical therophily of Montaigne. Beside it the gruff Boileau is a mere beslippered, arm-chair critic. There is the same hard, sharp edge on Rochester's tongue as on that of Alceste, in Molière's *le Misanthrope*:

Je hais tous les hommes;
Les uns parce qu'ils sont méchants et malfaisants,
Et les autres pour être aux méchants complaisants.

(I, 1)

² *Ibidem*, p. 131. First published, anonymously, in 1701.

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 118, 121. Published in 1685, but probably written circa 1675.

But Alceste is situated, like Lucian's Timon, in the comic sphere; he is petulant and he is in process of losing a lawsuit. Shakespeare's Timon is a tragic figure, but he is also the creation of a dramatist's mind. Rochester speaks in his own name; he is a lyric poet. It would doubtless be a mistake to see in him a social reformer or a revolutionary; on one occasion at least he speaks, in his poems, as a disgruntled royalist, carping at the restored king for having forgotten his old supporters:

Old Cavaliers, the crown's best guard,
He lets them starve for want of bread⁴.

He even posits the doctrine of the divine right of kings in order to use it sarcastically against Charles II and Louis XIV:

To say such kings, Lord, rule by thee,
Were most prodigious blasphemy⁵.

But he was no swashbuckling roisterer either. He has commonly been accused of having been a coward for having refused to fight a duel with the Duke of Buckinghamshire; it may well be that he did not in fact earn the credit for such a refusal⁶, because the officers of the House of Lords prevented the duel from taking place, but he at least deserves praise for having written the line:

For all men would be cowards if they durst⁷.

This statement is sufficient to show what little store he set on the current prejudice of his class, of gentlemen who wore swords, the code of the *point d'honneur*. His misanthropy had a certain disinterested quality; it was not a mere personal reaction against wrong suffered by himself. His alienation from his fellow men had a deeper cause; he felt the lure of the void, *le goût du néant*. And for that reason, there could, and did, well up from the bottom of him a softened mood, a musicalized form of his metaphysical anxiety, a cast of mind of exquisite sadness, as in these lines taken from one of his love lyrics:

When wearied of a world of woe
To thy safe bosom I retire,
Where love and peace and truth does flow,
May I contented there expire,

Lest once more wandering from that heaven,
I fall on some base heart unblest,
Faithless to thee, false, unforgiven,
And lose my everlasting rest⁸.

⁴ *A Lampoon*, 1676, published 1707; *ibidem*, p. 109.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. XXIII; for the story itself see Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets* (article on Rochester).

⁷ *Satire on man*, l. 158.

⁸ *A Song*, *Poems*, ed. de Sola Pinto, pp. 18–19.

Rochester was an unbeliever, but the religious vocabulary of this poem has not a blasphemous intent; it reveals a yearning for reconciliation. The effect is similar to one which Baudelaire was to achieve in the most musicalized of all his poems, *le Balcon*, by appealing at one and the same time to two different sets of aesthetic experience in the reader's memory, mother love and the love of a mistress:

Mère des souvenirs, maîtresse des maîtresses!

The mood of retreat is, however, unusual in Rochester's work; he is normally tense and minatory in his attitude towards the contemporary world.

Jean Dehénault, sometimes referred to as Hesnault, was like Rochester a professed rake, but like Rochester also, he was incapable of the true sensualist's absorption in himself. He was no Sybarite. Would a Sybarite choose, as the subject of a sonnet, an abortion?

Toi qui meurs avant que de naître,
Assemblage confus de l'être et du néant,
Triste avorton, informe enfant,
Rebut du néant et de l'être,

Toi que l'amour fit par un crime,
Et que l'honneur défait par un crime à son tour,
Funeste ouvrage de l'amour,
De l'honneur funeste victime,

Donne fin aux remords par qui tu es vengé,
Et du fond du néant où je t'ai replongé,
N'entretiens point l'horreur dont ma faute est suivie.

Deux tyrans opposés ont décidé ton sort:
L'amour, malgré l'honneur, t'a fait donner la vie;
L'honneur, malgré l'amour, te fait donner la mort⁹.

The idea of the void into which the inchoate being is replunged gives to this poem a kind of metaphysical horror, which fascinates more strongly than the mother's desperate deed repels. The word *néant*, used three times, echoes through the poem.

Dehénault was a man of a proud and independent spirit, desiring above all things to be captain of his own soul, whilst recognizing that he could not be master of his fate. So it is not surprising that he turned to Seneca. Two of his best poems are adaptations of passages from Seneca's plays. One of them is on the theme which explains the use the term *esprit fort* as applied to the free-thinkers of the seventeenth century; it could be applied to that form of rationalism which looked towards

⁹ *Oeuvres*. Éd. F. Lachèvre, Paris 1922, p. XIII.

mathematics for real and substantial truth, the rationalism ascribed to Maurice of Nassau, who said on his deathbed

Je ne suis pas en état de faire de longs discours, ni de vous rendre compte de ma créance par le menu. Je vous dirai seulement, en peu de mots, que je crois que deux et deux font quatre et quatre et quatre font huit¹⁰.

Remembering this story, Molière attributed the same opinion to his Don Juan, who certainly did not lack courage in the face of death! Dehénault states the essential theme as follows:

On est roi, quand on peut, sans craindre pour sa tête,
Voir serpenter en l'air le foudre menaçant,
Quand, comme un roc battu d'un orage impuissant,
On est inébranlable aux coups de la tempête;
Et quand dans un vaisseau que disputent les flots
On ne connaît la peur qu'au front des matelots¹¹.

The other poem is the chorus from the *Troades* which Rochester also translated. It was a well known passage and had been one of the favourites of Claude Belurgey, a freethinking scholar of the beginning of the century, according to Guy Patin:

On lui demanda un jour, sur quelque mot qu'il avait lâché, de quelle religion il était; il répondit qu'il était de la religion des plus grands hommes de l'antiquité, Homère, Aristote, Cicéron, Pline, Sénèque, duquel il faisait grand cas pour un *chorus* qui est in *Troadibus* qui commence par ces mots: "Verum est an timidus fabula decipit umbras corporibus vivere conditis?"

There are to be heard echoes of it in Cyrano de Bergerac's tragedy entitled *la Mort d'Agrippine*:

J'ai beau plonger mon âme et mes regards funèbres
Dans ce vaste néant et ces longues ténèbres,
J'y rencontre partout un état sans douleur,
Qui n'élève à mon front ni trouble ni terreur;
Car, puisque l'on ne reste, après ce grand passage,
Que le songe léger d'une légère image,
Et que le coup fatal ne fait ni mal ni bien;
Vivant, parce qu'on est, mort, parce qu'on n'est rien,
Pourquoi perdre à regret la lumière reçue,
Qu'on ne peut regretter, après qu'elle est perdue?
Pensez-vous m'étonner par ce faible moyen,
Par l'horreur du tableau d'un être qui n'est rien? (V, 6)

¹⁰ See G. de Balzac, *Socrate chrétien*, 1652, p. 181; G. Tallemant des Réaux, *Historiettes*. Éd. Monmerqué. 2nd edition, Paris 1840, II, pp. 131, 493 n.

¹¹ *Oeuvres*, éd. Lachèvre, p. 9.

It echoes again in Voltaire's rendering of Hamlet's soliloquy:

Demeure; il faut choisir, et passer à l'instant
De la vie à la mort, ou de l'être au néant.
Dieux justes, s'il en est! éclairez mon courage!
Faut-il vieillir courbé sous la main qui m'outrage,
Supporter ou finir mon malheur et mon sort?
Qui suis-je? qui m'arrête? et qu'est-ce que la mort?
C'est la fin de nos maux, c'est mon unique asile;
Après de longs transports, c'est un sommeil tranquille;
On s'endort, et tout meurt. Mais un affreux réveil
Doit succéder peut-être aux douceurs du sommeil;
On nous menace, on dit que cette courte vie
De tourments éternels est aussitôt suivie¹².

While it is true that Voltaire did not favour literal translation, this attitude does not explain the manner in which he departs here from the original; he did, moreover, make a perfectly faithful rendering of *To be or not to be* at a later date. In the adaptation printed in the *Lettres philosophiques* the interpolated themes reflect quite obviously the element of negation and revolt that was ever present in Voltaire's philosophy of life, even at the time when he was most impressed by the optimism of Alexander Pope, the author of the *Essay on man*, with its:

Whatever is, is right.

The revolt against an Order of the World that systematizes inequity comes out often in Voltaire's work before the time of the *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne* and *Candide*. It is revealed in his special use of the word "republican"¹³, in his hatred for Jansenist theology, his admiration for the abbé Meslier, the most radical atheist and materialist of the generation immediately preceding his own, even in his refusal to agree with Pascal that justice is not possible amongst men¹⁴, for willed disorder would be the worst order conceivable and a world planned and governed by an inhuman deity the least acceptable of all worlds.

Voltaire was no Petronius; there was always the stuff of a Lucretius in him; it gave a special temper to his intellect. His friend Frederik the Great had also a powerful intellect, though one of a coarser complexion. It was to Seneca's *Post mortem nihil est* that Frederik turned for an introduction to a simple statement of his beliefs in the year 1770. In a letter to Voltaire, dated 30 octobre 1770, he wrote, "Un philosophe de ma connaissance [himself], homme assez déterminé dans ses sentiments, croit que nous avons assez de degrés de probabilité pour arriver, à la certitude que *post mortem nihil est*"¹⁵.

¹² *Lettres philosophiques*, lettre XVIII.

¹³ Letter to Thiriot, London, October 26, 1726: "I am weary of courts [...] all that is king [*sic*] or belongs to a king, frights my republican philosophy". (He is explaining that he will not ask for financial help at the English court in order to publish his *Henriade*).

¹⁴ *Lettres philosophiques*, lettre XXV.

¹⁵ *Correspondence*. Ed. Besterman, Geneva 1953-1964, vol. 77, p. 55.

As the above series of references demonstrates, the chorus from the *Troades* was a constantly recurring theme in the literature of 17th and 18th century free-thought, whether taken direct from the Latin original, or from the adaptations of Rochester and Dehénault. Voltaire certainly knew the work of Rochester; he translated a passage from the *Satire on man*, using it in the same way as he used the soliloquy of Hamlet:

Vil atome importun, qui croit, doute, dispute,
Rampe, s'élève, tombe, et nie encore sa chute;
Qui nous dit: «Je suis libre», en nous montrant ses fers,
Et d'un oeil trouble et faux croit percer l'univers.
Allez! révérends pères, bienheureux fanatiques!¹⁶

These lines render a passage in which Rochester criticizes the Reason of the metaphysicians of his time, distinguishing it from "right reason" which, as befitted a disciple of Hobbes, he defined as:

That reason which distinguishes by sense,
And gives us rules of good and ill from thence¹⁷.

In the original the passage runs as follows:

And 'tis this very Reason I despise,
This supernatural gift, that makes a mite
Think he is the image of the infinite,
Comparing his short life, void of all rest,
With the eternal and the ever blest.
This busy, puzzling stirrer up of doubt,
That frames deep mysteries, then finds them out,
Filling with frantic crowds of thinking fools
Those reverend Bedlams, colleges and schools,
Borne on whose wings each heavy sot can pierce
The limits of the boundless universe¹⁸.

The general influence of Rochester on Voltaire seems to be indubitable. That of Dehénault seems to be just as clear in the case of his rendering of *To be or not to be*. Dehénault writes:

Quand par un trépas généreux
Un malheureux s'arrache au pouvoir de l'envie,
Cet héroïque malheureux
Perd-il sa mort avec sa vie?

Rencontre-t-il encore ailleurs
Les malheurs dont il se délivre,
Ou mourant une fois pour jamais ne revivre,
Dans le sein du néant porte-t-il ses malheurs?¹⁹

¹⁶ *Lettres philosophiques*, lettre XVIII.

¹⁷ *Satire on man*, ll. 101–102.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, ll. 75–84.

¹⁹ *Oeuvres*, éd. Lachèvre, p. 6.

And Voltaire goes on after the lines quoted above:

O mort! moment fatal! affreuse éternité!
 Tout coeur à ton seul nom se glace, épouvanté,
 Eh! qui pourrait, sans toi, supporter cette vie,
 De nos prêtres menteurs bénir l'hypocrisie,
 D'une indigne maîtresse encenser les erreurs,
 Ramper sous un ministre, adorer ses hauteurs
 Et montrer les langueurs de son âme abattue
 À des amis ingrats qui détournent la vue?
 La mort serait trop douce en ces extrémités,
 Mais le scrupule parle et nous crie: «Arrêtez!»
 Il défend à nos mains cet heureux homicide
 Et d'un héros guerrier fait un chrétien timide²⁰.

The words "heureux homicide" and "héros guerrier" are not unlike the expressions used by Dehénault: "Héroïque malheureux", "trépas généreux" but the fact that Voltaire may well have known Dehénault's translation of Seneca's chorus as he knew Rochester's does not of course mean that he was not acquainted at first hand with the original of this well known passage. It is no more possible to distinguish the direct from the indirect influence in this case than it is when one considers the direct and the indirect influence of Lucretius's *De rerum natura* on the same generation of poets.

Rochester's translation begins at "post mortem nihil est" and keeps closely to the Latin text²¹:

After death nothing is and nothing death

Post mortem nihil est, ipsaque mors nihil

The utmost limits of a gasp of breath.

velocis spatii meta novissima.

Rochester's "gasp of breath" represents the shortness of life's span, the rapidity of the race of life, of the "spatium vitae".

Let the ambitious zealot lay aside

His hopes of heaven (whose faith is but his pride).

Let slavish souls lay by their fear.

Spem ponant avidi, solliciti metum.

Rochester loses concision here, along with the chiasmic figure; his amplification introduces an idea which is not in the Latin, namely that the zealot's incapacity

²⁰ *Lettres philosophiques*, lettre XVIII.

²¹ *Poems*, ed. de Sola Pinto, p. 49; Seneca, *Troades*, act II, ll. 394 ff.

to conceive his own annihilation is an expression of his pride. A French contemporary, Madame Deshoulières, expressed it more generally thus:

N'être plus qu'un peu de poussière
Blesse l'orgueil dont l'homme est plein.

Rochester's contemporaries were familiar with the theme.

Nor be concerned which way or where,
After this life they shall be hurled;
Dead we become the lumber of the world
And to that mass of matter shall be swept,
Where things destroyed with things unborn are kept.
Devouring Time swallows us whole

Quaeris quo iaceas post obitum loco?
Quo non nata iacent.
Tempus nos avidum devorat et Chaos.

The amplification here adds no new elements to the original.

Impartial Death confounds body and soul.

Mors individua est, noxia corpori,
nec parcens animae.

The English, here more concise than the Latin, is also faithful, seeing that "impartial" had, in Rochester's time, though rarely, the sense of "entire, not fragmentary", according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which quotes the example: "An impartial and complete obedience". In its ordinary sense, the word also translates "nec parcens", so the ambiguity may be looked upon as a figure. Dehénault uses the same device, but he also completes the sense in completing the measure:

La mort, sans souffrir de partage,
Confond l'âme et le corps et leur fait même outrage²².

"Sans souffrir de partage" may be looked upon as passive or as active, expressing indivisibility or impartiality.

For Hell and the foul fiend that rules
The everlasting fiery gaols,
Devised by rogues, dreaded by fools,
With his grim, grisly dog that keeps the door,

Taenara et aspero
regnum sub domino, limen et obsidens
custos non facili Cerberus ostio,

The "foul fiend" and the "fiery gaols" come from contemporary religious teaching and make the poet's intention manifest, as do also the "rogues" and "fools", for, although the words "dreaded by fools" recall the words "timidos fabula decipit"

²² *Réflexions morales*, 1963; *Oeuvres*, 1753, vol. 2, p. 67.

which appear earlier in the chorus, the rogues who "devise" such fables are the men who, in contemporary free-thinking works, are declared to have founded religions for political ends.

Are senseless stories, idle tales,
Dreams, whimsies and no more.

Rumores vacui, verbaque inania,
et par sollicito fabula somnio.

Dehénault does not follow the Latin so closely as does Rochester. He has rethought and refelt the whole and amplifies it considerably, producing, thanks to the Alexandrine metre, a sombre poem of compelling eloquence²³:

Lorsque dans les yeux des humains,
Une éternelle nuit succède à la lumière,
Et que les conjugales mains
Baissent notre faible paupière,

Que nos corps entrent au tombeau,
Ou que l'urne en reçoit la cendre,
Est-il vrai qu'aux enfers il nous faille descendre,
Et que notre ombre passe en un monde nouveau?
Ou n'est-ce qu'une histoire feinte,
Que mettent en crédit l'ignorance et la crainte?

Quand par un trépas généreux,
Un malheureux s'arrache au pouvoir de l'envie,
Cet héroïque malheureux,
Perd-il sa mort avec sa vie?
Recontre-t-il encore ailleurs
Les malheurs dont il se délivre?
Ou mourant une fois pour jamais ne revivre,
Dans le sein du néant porte-t-il ses malheurs?
Et son âme en l'air échappée
Avec le dernier souffle est-elle dissipée?
Tout ce qu'environne la mer,
Ce que voit le soleil de ses voûtes sublimes,
Le Temps d'un pied vite et léger
L'emportera dans ses abîmes.

Ces errants ministres du sort
Dont la course règle la nôtre,
Les astres sans repos tournent d'un pôle
à l'autre,
Sans repos tous leurs pas nous mènent à la mort,
Et, sur la redoutable rive,
On fond dans le néant aussitôt qu'on arrive.

Verum est? an timidos fabula decipit
umbras corporibus vivere conditis?
Cum coniunx oculis imposuit manum,
supremusque dies solibus obstitit
et tristis cineres urna cohercuit,

non prodest animam tradere funeri,
sed restat miseris vivere longius?
An toti morimur, nullaque pars manet
nostri, cum profugo spiritus halitu
immistus nebulis cessit in aera,
et nudum tetigit subdita fax latus?

Quicquid sol oriens, quicquid et occidens
novit, caeruleis Oceanus fretis,
quicquid bis veniens et fugiens lavat,
aetas Pegaseo corripit gradu;
quo bis sena volant sidera turbine
quo cursu properat volvere saecula
astrorum dominus, quo properat modo
obliquis Hecate currere flexibus,
hoc omnes petimus fata, nec amplius
iuratos superis qui tetigit lacus

²³ *Oeuvres*, éd. Lachèvre, pp. 6–8.

Comme se perd en un moment
 Cette portion d'air dans les corps enfermée,
 Que le plus actif élément
 Développe et pousse en fumée,
 Comme au souffle des aquilons,
 On voit bientôt évanouie
 Une grosse nuée ou de grêle ou de pluie,
 Qui d'un déluge affreux menaçoit les vallons,
 Ainsi s'épand cette âme vaine
 Qui meut tous les ressorts de la machine humaine.

usquam est; ut calidis fumus ab ignibus
 vanescit, spatium per breve sordidus
 ut nubes gravidas quas modo vidimus,
 arctoi Boreae dissipat impetus,
 sic hic, quo regimur spiritus effluet.

Tout meurt en nous quand nous mourons,
 La mort ne laisse rien et n'est rien elle-même;
 Du peu de temps que nous durons
 Ce n'est que le moment extrême.

Cesse de craindre ou d'espérer
 Cet avenir qui la doit suivre;
 Que la peur d'être éteint, que l'espoir de revivre
 Dans ce sombre avenir cessent de t'égarer;
 L'état dont la mort est suivie
 Est semblable à l'état qui précède la vie;

Nous sommes dévorés du temps;
 La nature au chaos sans cesse nous rappelle;
 Elle entretient à nos dépens
 Sa vicissitude éternelle.

Comme elle nous a tout donné,
 Elle aussi reprend tout notre être;
 Le malheur de mourir égale à l'heur de naître
 Et l'homme meurt entier, comme entier il est né.
 La mort, sans souffrir de partage,
 Confond l'âme et le corps et leur fait même outrage.

Tout ce qu'on nous dit des enfers,
 Et du tyran qui règne en ces royaumes sombres,
 Ces cachots, ces feux et ces fers
 Où sont les criminelles ombres,

Ce monstre si prodigieux
 Et ce portier si redoutable
 Qui rend du noir palais l'entrée épouvantable
 Et qui fait fuir au loin les mortels curieux,
 Tout cela n'est, ou qu'un mensonge
 Ou qu'un discours en l'air, ou que l'horreur d'un songe.

For the English burgesses of the next century, confident in themselves, justified in the eyes of men, properly installed in a world which, according to Alexander Pope, was ordered according to divine providence, the attitude of mind of the *esprits forts* was merely an anti-social excess. In France, the ideal of inde-

pendence and the ideal of ordered justice were to divide the minds of progressive thinkers like Rousseau and Diderot, against themselves all through the century, and give to their prose its arresting literary quality, its tension and density. When, with Byron, the patriot without a country, the spirit of revolt began to spread throughout Europe, it sprang from a sense of alienation and injustice similar in form, though not in origin, to the deep anxiety of which we have seen the lyrical expression in an earlier age.

ROCHESTER, DEHÉNAULT, VOLTAIRE I JEDEN Z CHÓRÓW W „TROADES” SENEKI: ZAPRZECZENIE JAKO ŹRÓDŁO LIRYZMU

STRESZCZENIE

Idea nicości, podobnie jak idea pełni, jest wzruszająca sama w sobie, i stąd jest zdolna stać się źródłem liryzmu. Wiąże się ona często z postawą protestu wobec niesprawiedliwości. Wyraża się poprzez nią wtedy wyobcowanie się poety w społeczeństwie o niesprawiedliwym ustroju. Nosicielem tego odczucia i tej postawy protestu był dla „poetów libertynów” w XVII w. i „filozofów” w XVIII w. jeden z chórów tragedii Seneki, *Troades*. Jego tematem jest, że „po śmierci nie ma niczego i ona sama niczym jest” („Post mortem nihil est, ipsaque mors nihil”). Chór ten naśladowali jeden z poetów francuskich i jeden z poetów angielskich, a inni często czynili do niego aluzje.

Przełożyła *Stefania Skwarczyńska*