

The symposium will be preceded by a graduate seminar for MA- and PhD-students on Monday November 15th 2010.

Keynotes by Jeremy W. Webster (Ohio University) and Christian Biet (Université de Paris X – Nanterre, IUF).

In *Sodom or the Quintessence of Debauchery*, a Restoration closet drama attributed to John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester (1647-1680) and posthumously published in 1684, Bolloxian, King of Sodom, prescribes sodomy as the sole acceptable sexual practice. This simple and straightforward pornographic joke serves as the starting point of a burlesque and satirical parable in which Rochester reveals the libidinous nature state reigning at the court of Charles II, while at the same time radically and unequivocally appealing to the reader's imagination. *Sodom* is only one of many early modern examples in which intellectual criticism and free-thinking go hand in hand with an erotic and sometimes pornographically grotesque universe in which, through its baroque extravaganza, the distinction between the real and the fictional, between the private and the public disintegrates.

This symposium focuses on the 17th-century libertine (sub)culture that seeks to combine the critique of everything public and political with a visual regime that lavishly indulges in the sensuous experience of baroque theatricality. Libertinism is both a means of intellectual (self-)criticism and an utterly performative practice, it is both political reflexion and wilful transgression. It is a locus of self-fashioning, on a sexual level (experimentation with possible sexual roles and identities) and on a political level (as Jeremy Webster explains in *Performing Libertinism*, the debate itself is an integral part of the available political discourse), as much as it is playful make-believe, joyfully investigating the limits of representation itself. Within this complex bias of seemingly conflicting interests the physical body takes up a central role.

Exactly this libertine body will be at the heart of this symposium, which takes a double goal as its starting point. It will address and question the culture of libertinism in terms of baroque performativity in which notions such as immersion and transgression are key-points of investigation. In other words: how does libertine discourse produce the effects it names (and shows)? And, secondly, this symposium seeks to investigate the role and the place of the baroque body in all its performative aspects (the burlesque body, the political-theological body, the satirical body, the pornographic body). We welcome any contributions addressing one or both of these questions through the presentation of concrete case studies that might be related to early modern libertine life in Europe, particularly in France and England.

**Please send your abstract (250 words) and a short biographical notice to [karel.vanhaesebrouck@ehb.be](mailto:karel.vanhaesebrouck@ehb.be) BEFORE September 1st. The definitive program will be published on September 20th.**

This symposium is organized in the framework of the artistic and scientific research project 'The world of the Monkey. An archaeology of baroque culture' (Rits & VUB).