# The King is Tired. A Few Notes About Politics, Theatre and Melancholy

# Karel Vanhaesebrouck

ABSTRACT
This contribution will investigate how baroque theatre, or more precisely baroque theatricality, tried to find a way out of early modern melancholy, as it consistently tried to represent both the instability and the disenchantment of the world. The sovereign, struggling to meet his personal desires with the responsibilities coming with his function, served as a pivotal point in a theatrical culture in which the mere idea of spectacle largely exceeded the confines of the stage. We will thus investigate the theatricality of melancholy, by focusing on the libertine writings of John Wilmot, for whom pornography functioned as an impossible antidote to his own melancholy, but also on more contemporary artefacts such as Vincenzo Consolo's *Lunaria*, Ken Russell's *The Devils* and *Colossus*, a recent play by the Belgian company Abattoir Fermé. Theatrical illusion, as I will argue, functions in all these cases as both a symptom of and an antidote to melancholy.

More than ever, it seems, we live in a world of representations and illusions. Reality seems to be fundamentally unknowable. Still, we work our way through what Guy Debord so aptly describes as the spectacle society, against our better judgment. This fundamental impossibility to get a grip on the theatre we call reality may be at the basis of the present-day pathology par excellence. Spectacle and theatricality feed the illusion that human beings may be able to shirk the last, hard reality of the (suffering, enjoying, decaying) body, but they also brutally confront that same body with its own temporality. This split is not new, but forms the beating heart of our modernity, as we will argue in this contribution.

Baroque and melancholy find one another in a specific historic situation of newly acquired autonomy, but also of increasing confusion and self-questioning. At the end of the Middle Ages the unifying culture that gave a mental cohesion to the entire European continent disappears. The Reformation makes the first cracks in the blazon of religion which up to then had found an unequivocal answer to all questions of life. The colonial discoveries confront the Europeans with an unknown universe that is sometimes frightening, but also fascinates and even eroticizes. There is a quietly growing awareness that Copernicus, that strange bloke, may be right: man is no longer the centre of his own universe, but a minuscule particle in an ever expanding universe, the contours of which he can hardly grasp. After the euphoric self-consciousness of the Renaissance only a gaping dark emptiness remains. Only melancholy seems to provide a way out for brooding man. But what precisely is the relation between melancholy and the disenchantment of the world? And why is the sovereign most susceptible to this mental state? As the temporary representative of God on earth he should know better. And most of all: what can this early-modern wringing teach us about our delightful tinkering in our con-

fusing (post)-ideological world, in which nothing is an illusion anymore and precisely therefore all the more theatre? A few examples of early-modern theatre life, in which the sovereign as well as the libertine play a leading part, will show us how baroque theatricality and melancholy are closely interwoven. Subsequently we will show that not only the baroque shines through in our time, but also that melancholy is an inherent part of that same time.

*Melancholy as a baroque pathology*

Between 1647 and 1711 the three successive doctors of Louis XIV keep a detailed diary of the physical and psychic condition of their sovereign entitled *Journal de la santé de Louis XIV.* In 1693 Fagon, the last of them, explains why, years earlier when visiting Calais in 1658, the king was troubled with "a permanent loss of bodily fluids"[1]: he suffered from melancholy.

> There is no doubt that the disposition of the king is that of a hero and a great lord and that this melancholy, which is a constituent element of his blood, influences his health. When this health is disturbed by diseases, melancholy will altogether prevail. The length during which all kinds of diseases manifested themselves and thwarted one another, seems to be a very clear evidence, as was exemplified by his serious illness at Calais, the several outbursts of fever and gout, a tumor and, subsequently, a fistula. M. de Aquin, who first diagnosed an overspill of bile, had to admit that his melancholy, which only became clear languidly, led to a slow process of festering.[2]

Fagon immediately links heroism and melancholy. Which is nothing new: in his work *On Melancholy* (2010) Aristotle also pointed out that this state of mind could be considered to be a privilege of the great of the earth. Deep waters, profound thoughts, something of the kind. In *La Parole mangée* Louis Marin aptly describes Fagon's diagnosis as a "portrait pathétique du corps malheureux" of the melancholic king.[3] In

..............................
1        Giavarina 2003, p. 543. 'un écoulement continu de matières'

2        Fagon 1862, p. 210. 'Peut-on douter que le tempérament du roi ne soit celui des héros et des grands hommes et que l'humeur tempérée mélancolique du sang n'en compose le mélange dans sa santé et qu'étant altérée dans ses maladies, l'humeur mélancolique n'y ait toujours prédominée comme on l'a remarqué manifestement par la longueur avec laquelle les plus considérables se sont déchirées et entre autres, sa grande maladie de Calais, les différents mouvements de fièvre et de goutte qui lui sont arrivés, et la tumeur qui a été suivie de la fistule, que M. d'Aquin, contre ce qu'il avait avancé de l'humeur bilieuse excédante, a été obligé d'avouer que l'humeur mélancolique avait produite et rendu si lente à se déclarer, et si difficile à disposer à la suppuration.'

3        Marin 1988, p. 246

the seventeenth century melancholy seems to be typical of the baroque sovereign. As he is not able to reconcile his own passions with his political responsibilities the sovereign becomes a tyrant – he puts himself outside the law and proclaims a state of national emergency[4]– or he wallows in melancholy (as he lacks the strength to act as a tyrant: 'Incapable to act and to proclaim the state of exception, the sovereign sinks into depression or dies of incompleteness, suffering from melancholy, the disease which Benjamin identified as typically baroque').[5] The early-modern ruler's melancholy at once opens the door to madness: he does not manage to control his passions and falls prey to his own anger and insanity. The melancholic monarch is a powerless king, who is delirious but nevertheless still represents sovereign power. And early-modern theatre makers eagerly use precisely this doubleness. They confront their spectators with a human being whose power they must trust, but who does not at all control his own impulses, as Walter Benjamin writes in his well-known book about German tragedy: 'What keeps on fascinating me in the final decline of the king, is the contradiction the historical era goes through, between his impotence, his depravity on the one hand and the absolute faith in the sacro-saint power of his function'.[6] Thus the theatre king, who invariably looks suspiciously like their own sovereign, becomes an unguided, unpredictable projectile, no longer able to deal with his own power. Consider the personage of Néron in *Britannicus* (1669) by Jean Racine: the person who should use his power to govern his people turns out to be an unpredictable hothead who is prepared to destroy his own power and therefore also his citizens' empire to satisfy his personal lust. Royal melancholy is therefore always interwoven with the problem of the double body of the king: he is doomed to be the temporary incarnation of an eternal duty (hence "Le roi est mort, vive le Roi"). The baroque sovereign is torn between the eternal statute of his function and the finiteness of the person who must hold the position, namely he himself. Furthermore he does not manage to match the ideal image he has of himself as a ruler to his actual, public image. He is doomed to remain estranged from himself.

For the melancholic or moonstruck prince love always has a pathological side. Melancholy often involves extreme variations of mood, as Kristeva argues in *Soleil Noir*: 'we will use the notion of melancholy when describing a series of pathological symptoms of inhibition and asymbolism momentarily or chronically taking over an individual, mostly alternat-

..............................
4        Vanhaesebrouck 2008, pp. 88-91

5        Jobez 2004, p. 45. Incapable d'agir et de proclamer l'état d'exception le souverain sombre soit dans la dépression et meurt d'incomplétude, souffrant de mélancholie que Benjamin identifie comme une maladie baroque typique

6        Benjamin 1985, p. 74. Ce qui ne cesse de me fasciner dans la chute finale du tyran, c'est la contradiction que l'époque ressent entre l'impuissannce, la dépravation de sa personne et la foi absolu dans le pouvoir sacro-saint de sa fonction

ing with a so-called maniacal phase of exaltation'.[7] At the basis of regal melancholy and therefore of his changes of mood, from contemplative introspection to mania and back, is a deep conflict between his public role and his personal desires and passions – heroism and tragedy go together irreconcilably.

And the tragedy drifts on the imagination of his rival with the woman of his dreams (Néron goes literally mad by imagining how 'his' Junie is cherished by Britannicus). The enamoured melancholic puts himself in a space-time he does not belong in, his dreams feed a slumbering state of being in which the sovereign can shirk the responsibility that oppresses him: he refreshes himself as a spectator of his own phantasm. Melancholy is therefore always theatrical, does always assume a phantasmatic view. The most important cause of melancholy is, in other words, often a love that is not shared and has to find a counterweight in an imagined perception of that desire. That is precisely why there is always a profound discomfort lurking behind the sexual and scatological pranks of early-modern libertines such as John Wilmot, even an abysmal existential fear for the emptiness of one's own existence. Melancholy always stems from a want, as Yves Bonnefoy writes: 'Melancholy is the art of adoring an image of the world of which we know that it is just an image and which prevents us to return to that very same image we desire, true, but without accepting the price to pay'.[8] And this phantasm precisely holds the toppling point between the early-modern "lunaria" on the one hand and tyrannical rulers on the other hand: the latter realizes his own theatrical phantasm.

*The impossibility of pleasure*

Early-modern melancholy is, as a theatrical dispositive, closely interwoven with the then historical context, as Christian Biet argues. At the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century melancholy functions as a necessary antidote against the historical violence of the religious wars. Early-modern man retreats onto himself, distances himself from community life and stages alternative realities for himself. He lives thanks to the phantasmatic detour, which he finds, for instance, in the theatre. This quest, argues Biet, is closely linked to the then popularity of the pastoral, in literature but also in theatre, idyllic love stories of shepherds and shepherdesses who take the spectator away from his

present, but who, at the same time, offer the possibility to withstand that same present from an ironic distance – because that same spectator really does understand the *campy* representation of reality:

> If one takes as a starting point that melancholy is an integral part of the universe of the pastoral and that, in a certain way, that role of the shepherds is to demonstrate that it is possible to get rid off this dark red liquid irrigating our present times (...) to observe it, from far away, lingering in their rural retreat, and to linger in their black humour, one can at that moment consider that sometimes the melancholic experience entails some sort of satirical perspective on the world and/or that melancholy "cures" man from the poetical and political violence, exactly because it is a retreat, a distant meditation.[9]

In other words, the pastoral functions as a sort of therapeutic time space. But precisely this very same pastoral, phantasmatic universe brings the melancholic back to the violence and the anger he tries to flee from.

The melancholic never succeeds in escaping his deeply rooted discomfort. This gnawing discomfort has a simple yet ponderous reason: even if man thinks himself irreplaceable, he is an ephemeron. He flees from his own mortality, tries to escape time slipping by. The melancholic thrives on a vision of eternal pleasure, a general, absolute dissatisfaction, that can never ever be stilled. The wanton behaviour of the libertines is only an attempt to withstand that dissatisfaction, in vain. And the more he looks for pleasure, the greater the disappointment. In the magnificent poem 'The imperfect enjoyment' John Wilmot, the Second Earl of Rochester (1647-1680), describes how his own desire confronts him time and again with his literal ànd symbolic impotence:

> I sigh, alas! and kiss, but cannot swive.
> Eager desires confound my first intent,
> Succeeding shame does more success prevent,
> And rage at last confirms me impotent.[10]

The love poems of Wilmot are not about love in the first place, but about

7        Kristeva 1989, pp. 18-19. 'on appellera mélancolie la symptomatologie asilaire d'inhibition et d'asymbolie qui s'installe par moments ou chroniquement chez un individu, en alternance, le plus souvent, avec la phase dite maniaque de l'exaltation'

8        Bonnefoy 2005, p. 15. 'La mélancolie, c'est d'aimer une image du monde dont on sait qu'elle n'est qu'une image, et qu'elle prive donc de ce retour que l'on désire, c'est vrai, mais sans accepter d'en payer le prix'

9        Biet 2006, p. 3-4. Si l'on considère que la mélancolie est précisément ancrée dans l'univers de la pastorale, et que, d'une certaine manière, les bergers sont là pour montrer qu'il est possible de s'écarter du liquide vermeil qui irrigue l'Histoire du temps présent (...) pour la regarder, de loin, de leur retraite champêtre, et se complaire dans l'humeur noire qui est alors la leur, on peut alors concevoir que l'expérience mélancolique est parfois une sorte de regard satirique sur le monde, et/ou que la mélancolie « guérit » de la violence poétique et politique par le fait même qu'elle est un écart, une retraite, une méditation distanciée

10        Rochester 1993, pp. 50-51

86        The King is Tired. A Few Notes About Politics...

87        The King is Tired. A Few Notes About Politics...

the immeasurable emptiness that this love entails: '[a]t the centre of Rochester's poems on love … there is an empty space'.[11] The libertine has only one strategy left to confront his own melancholy: he dips his pen into aggressive obscenity which undermines the pornographic pleasure instead of feeding it. Thus John Wilmot writes the scabrous satire *Sodom or the quintessence of debauchery.* In this short satirical play Bolloxian, king of Sodom (and a hardly concealed parody of Charles II), decides that sodomy between men becomes acceptable. Thereupon General Bugger-anthos promptly reports that the new policy is enthusiastically received by the soldiers (as less money goes to prostitutes), but has baleful con-sequences for the women in the realm who have to resort to dildos and … dogs. With barely hidden amusement Wilmot has his filthy satire go off the rails: what at first seems playful-erotic becomes abysmal and repul-sive. He conscientiously makes the reader the victim of his own erotic thrill.

In his doctoral thesis (2014) Pol Dehert describes how the porno-graphic theatricality of *Sodom* does not only push Rochester himself (for whom writing is always a form of self-staging) right into the arms of early-modern melancholy, but also the reader (as Rochester wrote *Sodom* as a 'closet drama', i.e. it was meant to be read): in Rochester's hilarious trag-edy there is no real pleasure, every ejaculation is premature. At the same time, Dehert argues, *Sodom* is an auto-satire: the play pricks the libertine habitus itself. And that is the true essence of Rochester: he exposes his own libertarianism ("debauchery") and that of his companions as an ex-istential way-out In other words, *Sodom* is not only a satire, but also, and maybe even in the first place, an auto-satire.

The melancholy of a libertine such as Wilmot is existentially linked to early modernity and is therefore fundamentally baroque. Early-modern man learns that there is no great godly plan: 'Rien de plus triste qu'un Dieu mort', according to Kristeva.[12] The world has lost its charm, his-tory is no longer messianic, it is pointless, empty, because without any God. "After Death nothing is, and nothing Death", as Rochester writes in his translation of Seneca.[11] This atheism precisely urges the insatiable appetite of the libertine: 'if God does not exist anymore, only the (sinful) body remains. And that (sinful) body is a mortal body.'[12] Behold the driv-ing wheel of the libertine melancholy: all of a sudden life seems very short (because there is nothing after death) so you have to go for it flat out whenever and wherever you want it, but just because of his unbounded behaviour the libertine will be confronted even more harshly with his own mortality.

*Melancholy and spectacle*

In his beautiful play *Lunaria* (1988) Vincenzo Consolo poignantly stages the melancholic habitus of the early-modern sovereign and the baroque theatricality as a cause of and an antidote against that same melancholy. His main character *Casimiro*, "vice-king of Sicily", blatantly suffers from melancholy. His wife is all too exuberant, his family is greedy - he is depressed by both. But above all he hates the power he must incarnate. Just like Hamlet he observes the world of shams around him in a lethargic astonishment as he is the only one to see how reality is disintegrating ever more. One night he dreams that the moon falls. Subsequently it re-ally disappears, causing a great panic and even more responsibilities for the sovereign himself: 'the vice-king is almost submerged by a fit of his melancholy but he cannot give in, he has to resist: he cannot abandon his role as a sovereign, certainly not on a moment as gloomy, as disquieting as this, when everybody is petrified by the terror'.[13] There is not only his overpowering responsibility as a sovereign, he also needs to withstand the typical early-modern, Pascalian cosmic shiver, the realization that one is only part of something that transcends any understanding: 'His-tory is melancholy. There is nothing beyond the Universe, this circle of which the centre is everywhere but its borders nowhere to be found, this immense and balanced anarchy. But if history is melancholy, the bound-less, the Eternal are anxiety, vertigo, panic, terror'.[14] In order to withstand this historically determined melancholy early-modern man retires to the theatre, to experience the illusion of a quiet and orderly existence and, at the same time, to enjoy the fact that this illusion is only a sham: 'Against these sentiments we build sets, confined and familiar theatre, foppery, illusions, barriers of fear '.[15] In other words, melancholy and theatre are closely interwoven in early-modern times.

Indeed, theatre becomes the means to fight the fear of the void, the *horror vacui*. The terrifying reality becomes a spectacle in which eve-rything is illusion and role play. In other words: the theatre becomes the means par excellence to let go at this melancholic confusion, precisely by staging it in full regalia. What is real? What is illusion? What can I believe in? The baroque theatre eagerly takes up these questions. And religion becomes part of that grandiose spectacle. It is no coincidence that in the

......................................
11      Thormählen, pp. 82-83.

12      Kristeva 1998, p. 18

......................................
13      Consolo 1988, p. 31. ' [I]e vice-roi est presque submergé par un accès de sa mélancolie, mais il ne peut céder, il doit résister: impossible d'abandonner son rôle de souverain, surtout en ce moment si sombre, si inquiétant, alors que tous […] sont pétrifiés par la terreur'

14      Consolo 1988, p. 59. 'L'Histoire est mélancolie. Il n'existe que l'Univers, ce cercle dont le centre est partout et la circonférence nulle part, ce cataclysme incessant et harmonieux, cette im-mense anarchie équilibrée. Mais si l'histoire est mélancolie, l'Infini, l'Eternel sont anxiété, vertige, panique, terreur'

15      Consolo 1988; p. 59. 'Contre ces sentiments, nous bâtissons les décors, les théâtres finis et familiers, les duperies, les illusions, les barrières de l'angoisse'

seventeenth-century dictionary of Antoine Furetière the notion of illusion is described as 'diabolical' and therefore dangerous. The then theatre greedily leans towards that danger by playing with the question whether what happens on stage can also be real. That is why authors such as Corneille (*L'illusion comique*) or Molière (*L'impromptu de Versailles*) will explicitly thematize theatre itself.

The baroque theatre tries to outplay the existential fear for a reality in which everything is changeable with spectacle and effects, precisely by showing this variability in full regalia. And thus identities are exchanged, men become women or vice versa, designers play with perspectives, craftsmen design 'gloires' or passing clouds and the techniques of the spectacular mystery plays from the Middle Ages are used to astound the spectator with various effects. This spectator perfectly knows that the effects are not real (as he hears the rumbling of the stage pulleys), but, at the same time, he likes to be swept along. This split precisely is the essence of the baroque: to take the spectator up and away in an illusion and, simultaneously, to surprise that same spectator with a number of visible effects. 'It is just like real', he thinks, and at the same time he knows it is not. Everything must be literally filled up. The melancholic emptiness is literally filled with spectacle. And in the middle of all that raging and thundering stands the human body, as the last remains of an authentic presence. The body of the saint, the body of the martyr, of the king, of the criminal, after the execution or on the dissection table in an anatomical theatre. And even that body becomes a spectacle.

*Baroque is the new black*

We have never been closer to the baroque than today, at a time when reality is still unknowable and further expands, a time when warriors behead journalists and then turn their deed into a media spectacle, a time when fear for the future has become the driving force behind all political actions. Reality is hiding behind an extravagant media spectacle. And we keep on acting, as perfect clowns, in order not to have to confront the large black hole, and thus our own melancholy. Whoever wants to understand our present-day world, in which everything that seemed stable has become fundamentally changeable, will find a mirror in early-modern theatre and understand that our reality, in which everything is representation, is not all that far away from the early-modern crisis.

In *The Devils*, Ken Russell's masterly film from 1971, the Catholic priest Urbain Grandier (Oliver Reed) is accused of witchcraft: an Ursuline convent in Loudun (France) was supposed to be visited by the devil. The sexually frustrated nun Jeanne (Vanessa Redgrave), whose real object of desire is Grandier himself, accuses the priest of being the cause of the diabolic visits. Russell uses this historical fact as a starting point and a perfect excuse to show the sexual escapades of the nuns in his dazzling

cinematographic style. Russell stages their religious mania in a long orgiastic scene that is interrupted by a disguised Louis XIV. He claims to have a holy relic that will promptly chase the devils. The nuns are only too happy to be "cured" by this relic, but are subsequently dumbfounded as they find that Louis' box is empty. Their carefully staged reality turns out to be fiction. With one gesture Louis XIV undoes the spell of the fiction called religion.

A similar game is played in *Colossus* (2014), the more than four hours long baroque total spectacle of the Belgian company Abbatoir Fermé directed by Stef Lernous. For this dashing exploit Lernous and his companions built a dilapidated little theatre, a theatre-in-the-theatre. We find ourselves in a far-away, not clearly defined future, a sort of Mad Max-like post-apocalyptical world in which about everything is a transplant or a mutant, and we meet Onderling (Underling), a slightly overconfident amateur director, and his family (a wilted cleaning lady, a teenage daughter who has just had her consciousness removed and who joins gangbangs as a sort of fitness exercise, and *junior,* an incomprehensibly prattling adolescent zombie). Father Onderling is invited to apply for a job with the Ministry of Restructuring, which really cheers up his wife ("at a ministry appointments do happen"). That ministry, of which nobody really knows what it is there for, is 250 floors underground and can only be reached with a lift that only goes down, never up. Onderling's descent into hell – the selection procedure turns out to be very special indeed – is interrupted by a rather grand interlude in which the collaborators of the ministry themselves become spectators of Onderling's amateur play *Mundus in Dolore.* We are treated to a baroque machine play that holds the middle between a didactic Jesuit drama and an Ed Wood B-film. Onderling's pretentious melodrama is not really successful and the end of his play is the beginning of yet more gargantuan *tableaux*. Only at the very end of the play, when the spectator has gone all pulpy along with Onderling, Lernous reveals the true existential bearing of this total spectacle. Apparently Onderling has meanwhile been crowned king and has slipped into his moonstruck frenzy and the setting around him is completely dismantled, until only a gaping void is left, with the small, naked body of that same underling raving and shivering in the darkness. No more theatre, no more illusion – *Ecce homo*, this is man.

Thus Lernous perfectly grips the essence of early-modern, seventeenth-century existence, but also our own postmodern confusion. Behind the burlesque baroque in which identities are always roles a deeply rooted existential fear is hiding, as if the apocalypse has just happened and is already there again. Behind the spectacle lurks the void. No matter how hard we try to give our world its spectacular charm again, again and again we realize that this enchantment is only an illusion, that what we call desire is only a profound *tristesse* and that there is always disappointment after the high. *Colossus* shows us the deadlock of modernity, the blowhole that also Anish Kapoor reveals in his fascinating *Dark Brother* (2005). The work is

nothing more than a pitch-black surface that is somewhere on the museum floor of the MADRE in Naples. When one bends forward one does not see a surface, but an immeasurable depth. Kapoor does not only play with our view, but also shows us a metaphysical void beyond religious kitsch. 'I only go down', says the liftboy in *Colossus* to the main character Onderling, as the ultimate metaphor for his existential melancholy. Therefore: *baroque is the new black.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY
Aristote 2010, *Over melancholie.* Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij.
Benjamin, Walter 1985, *Origine du drame baroque allemand.* Paris: Flammarion.
Biet, Christian 2006, "Le Rouge et le noir, le rose et le vert, ou la pastorale homosexuelle de Jacques de Fonteny (1587)." In Alain Mothu (ed.), *Mélanges offerts à Madeleine Alcover.* Paris: Champion, 1-12.
- - 2011, "Rêver, peut-être...Tragédie, rêve et fantasme au XVIIe siècle" in David Lescot, Raphaëlle Moine, Christophe Triau (eds.), *Rêves cinéma|théâtre,* R.I.T.M (Revue du Centre de recherches interdisciplinaires sur les textes modernes), Hors Série 4, Paris: Publidix.
Bonnefoy, Yves 2005, 'La mélancolie, la folie, la génie – la poésie' in Jean Clair (ed.). *Mélancolie. Génie et folie en Occident.* Paris: Gallimard, 11-22.
Consolo, Vincenzo 1988, *Lunaria.* Paris: Le Promeneur.
Dehert, Pol 2014, *Rochester's world. The world of a|the Monkey. Een anatomie van de barokke theatraliteit.* PhD thesis. Brussels: VUB.
Fagon 1862, *Journal de la santé du roi Louis XIV de l'année 1647 à l'année 1711.* Ed. J.A. Le Roi. Paris: August Durand.
Giavarani, Laurence 2003, "Mélancolie du prince, héroïsme et représentation dans la tragédie racinienne." In Gilles Declercq, Michèle Rosselini (eds.). *Jean Racine 1699-1999. Actes du colloque du tricentenaire (25-30 mai 1999).* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 543-569.
Kristeva, Julia 1989, *Soleil noir. Dépression et mélancolie.* Paris: Gallimard.
Jobez, Romain 2004, *La question de la souveraineté dans la tragédie baroque silésienne.* PhD Thesis. Paris : Université de Paris X – Nanterre.
Marin, Louis 1988, *La parole mangée et autres essais théologico-politiques.* Paris: Klincksieck.
Merlin, Hélène 2000, *L'absolutisme dans les lettres et la théorie des deux corps: passions et politique.* Paris: Champion.
Rochester (John Wilmot) 1993, *Complete poems and plays.* Ed. Paddy Lyons. London: Everyman.
Vanhaesebrouck, Karel 2008, *Tragédie classique, souveraineté et droit. Le cas de* Britannicus. In Arthur Cools, Thomas Crombez, Rosa Slegers, Johan Taels (eds.). *The Locus of Tragedy.* Studies in contemporary phenomenology 1. Leiden: Brill, 81-101.
- - 2009, *Le mythe de l'authenticité. Lectures, interprétations, dramaturgies de* Britannicus. New York / London: Rodopi.