

Wordplay and the rhetoric of the Silen – Erasmus, Rabelais and Bruno

Steffen Schneider

Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

François Rabelais and Giordano Bruno frequently use wordplays in their works. These are, on the one hand, a successful way of producing comic effects on the reader; on the other hand, they are embedded in a larger theory of literary meaning, which refers to Erasmus' *Sileni Alcibiadis* (1515). This *adagium* is used by Rabelais and Bruno as a metaphor by which they reflect on the possibility of conveying a serious meaning through the comic or grotesque use of words. My talk will analyse the uses and forms of wordplays and discuss if, and how, they can be understood as an expression of 'serious' concerns.