

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Event: DANIEL HELLER-ROAZEN
Dark Tongues: The Art of Rogues and Riddlers

Date & Time: Saturday, November 16, 2013 — 7PM

Miguel Abreu Gallery and Sequence Press are pleased to announce a reading and presentation by Daniel Heller-Roazen of his recently published book, *Dark Tongues: The Art of Rogues and Riddlers* (Zone Books). The event will take place at the gallery with a book signing to follow.

Dark Tongues constitutes a sustained exploration of a perplexing fact that has never received the attention it deserves. Wherever human beings share a language, they also strive to make from it something new: a cryptic idiom, built from the grammar that they know, which will allow them to communicate in secrecy. Such hidden languages come in many shapes. They may be playful or serious, children's games or adults' work. They may be as impenetrable as foreign tongues, or slightly different from the idioms from which they spring, or barely perceptible, their existence being the subject of uncertain, even unlikely, suppositions.

The first recorded jargons date to the time of the Renaissance, when writers across Europe noted that obscure languages had suddenly come into use. A varied cast of characters — lawyers, grammarians, and theologians — denounced these new forms of speech, arguing that they were tools of crime, plotted in tongues that honest people could not understand. Before the emergence of these modern jargons, however, the artificial twisting of languages served a different purpose. In epochs and regions as diverse as archaic Greece and Rome and medieval Provence and Scandinavia, singers and scribes also invented opaque varieties of speech. They did so not to defraud, but to reveal and record a divine thing: the language of the gods, which poets and priests alone were said to master.

Dark Tongues moves among these various artificial and hermetic tongues. From criminal jargons to sacred idioms, from Saussure's work on anagrams to Jakobson's theory of subliminal patterns in poetry, from the arcane arts of the Druids and Biblical copyists to the secret procedure that Tristan Tzara believed he had uncovered in Villon's songs and ballads, *Dark Tongues* explores the common crafts of rogues and riddlers, which play sound and sense against each other.

Daniel Heller-Roazen studied literature and philosophy in Toronto, Baltimore, Paris and Venice and now teaches in the Comparative Literature Department and the Council of the Humanities at Princeton University. He is the author of The Fifth Hammer: Pythagoras and the Disharmony of the World (2011); The Enemy of All: Piracy and the Law of Nations (2009); The Inner Touch: Archaeology of a Sensation (2007); Echolalias: On the Forgetting of Language (2005); and Fortune's Faces: The Roman de la Rose and the Poetics of Contingency (2003). These books have been translated or are forthcoming in translation in Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Italian, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish. He has also edited the Norton Critical Edition of The Arabian Nights (2010) and has edited, translated and introduced Giorgio Agamben's Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy (1999).

For more information, please contact the gallery:

Gallery hours: Wednesday – Sunday, 11:00 AM to 6:30 PM
Subway: F to East Broadway; B, D to Grand Street; J, M, Z to Delancey / Essex Street