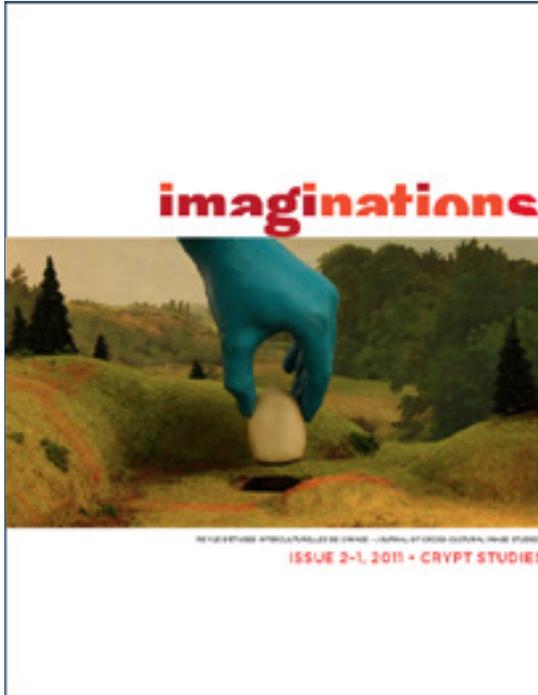


# IMAGINATIONS

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## "Preface"

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## PREFACE

AUTHOR • LAURENCE A. RICKELS  
ARTIST • POLA SPERBER

Laurence A. Rickels moved to the Coast in 1981 upon completing his graduate training in German philology at Princeton University. While in California he established his reputation as theorist and earned his license in psychotherapy. He has published numerous studies of the phenomenon he calls “unmourning,” a term that became the title of his trilogy: *Aberrations of Mourning*, *The Case of California*, and *Nazi Psychoanalysis*. His more recent publications include *The Devil Notebooks* and *I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick*. In April 2011 Rickels followed the call or “Ruf” to the Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe, where he is Klaus Theweleit’s successor as professor of art and theory.

Pola Sperber, currently enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe, class of John Bock, worked from 2005-2009 as sculptor for theater design at the Südwestrundfunk (SWR) in Baden-Baden. In 2009 she received the Baden-Baden Award for “best sculptor.”

Laurence A. Rickels déménage sur la côte Ouest en 1981 lorsqu’il termine ses études de troisième cycle en philologie à l’Université de Princeton. En Californie, il se fait une réputation de théoricien et il obtient un permis d’exercice de psychothérapie. Il publie des nombreux textes sur le phénomène qu’il appelle « unmourning », appellation qui devient le titre de sa trilogie : *Aberrations of Mourning*, *The Case of California*, et *Nazi Psychoanalysis*. Des plus récentes publications sont *The Devil Notebooks* et *I Think I Am : Philip K. Dick*. En avril 2011 il répond à l’appel ou « Ruf » de l’Académie des beaux-arts de Karlsruhe pour succéder à Klaus Theweleit au poste de professeur d’arts et de théorie.

Pola Sperber, actuellement inscrite à l’Académie des beaux-arts de Karlsruhe sous la direction de John Bock, travaille comme sculpteur scénographique au *Südwestrundfunk (SWR)* à Baden-Baden. Elle reçoit le *Baden-Baden Award* du meilleur sculpteur en 2009.

By “crypt study,” I mean to emplace each reading in this dossier in specialized relationship to the “case study” genre. While the metapsychology or system that Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok sought to convey with their reading of the “cryptonymy” of Freud’s case study of the Wolfman has been lost or integrated within the host of re-readings of psychoanalysis after Freud, discrete insights into and images of the melancholic condition surrounding the “crypt” have continued to open condemned sites of identification. With the conclusion of the last sentence, we have already entered, by metaphor, the radically anti-metaphorical status of melancholia’s crypts.



From the start of his theorization of psychic reality, Freud set melancholia apart, first as narcissistic neurosis (in contrast to the transference neuroses), then as psychosis at the front of the line of the ever deepening distance from transference understanding and treatment. In relation to schizophrenia, for example, melancholia is the original borderline psychosis drawing the line of legibility between neurosis and psychosis inside psychosis itself. In my 2010 study of Philip K. Dick’s oeuvre and its intertexts, I tried to explore and construct, on an endopsychic-genealogical basis, if not in fact, the way in which melancholic encryption leads, like a kind of spirit guide, to the stabilization, encapsulation, and legibility of such extreme psychotic states as Daniel Paul Schreber’s paranoid schizophrenia. It was in his study of Schreber that Freud advised that the details of delusional formation do more than reflect or illustrate an inside view of the illness itself; they constitute, as endopsychic perception, a duplication down to these details of the very theory that understands the illness on the turf and terms of psychic reality. Sometimes psychoanalysis is what it talks about. And that is how psychoanalysis relates to, internalizes, or syndicates outside influences and references. No longer will genealogy be possible without this endopsychic relationship to mourning and its aberrations.

What Freud accomplished in the short hand of theory over the read body of Schreber’s *Memoirs* was reopened by Ludwig Binswanger in the long hand of phenomenology via his case studies of the separate words and worlds of psychosis. Following Binswanger, we learned how to explore the outer space of psychotic illness with the openness to detail and impression that the first mapping of an unknown territory requires. The immersion in the object of study, rather than the application of theory, lends to crypt study, too, the quality of encounter with the other that upholds those standards of legibility which cannot be subsumed by explanation. It follows,



therefore, that crypt students not only read better, but they also take more risks with their writing.

While the shell shock victims of WWI introduced into psychoanalytic theory the upward mobilization of doubling, it was the victims of Nazi persecution who brought home the doubling of trauma to a point of no return, no return on the investment in loss's deposit, the point beyond or before metaphor and substitution. It is out of the lexicon of Holocaust survival that Abraham and Torok carried forward the concept of the crypt. While philosophers during and after WWII turned to psychoanalysis for their mourning address, psychoanalysis itself delved ever more deeply and complexly into the study of mourning until the overriding theorization to which this study henceforth belonged became more accurately comprehensible as that of unmourning.

I will not summarize in advance the studies comprising this dossier. But I will sketch the outlines of their diversity as a group. I do so because the authors invited to contribute were not exogamous choices, but are all, albeit in varying degrees, my former students. While four worked closely with me in California, another was attached to me briefly in person as post-doc at UC Santa Barbara. Two more attended seminars I offered while guest professor at New York University, where they were the students of the other leader in the field of crypt study, Avital Ronell. During my stint as ghost-*Arbeiter* in New York, somewhere between my past life in California and the new prospect of a career move to Germany, I decided to compile this document of a teaching, which, as the contributors in their own writing introduce and model, can be recognized as a new praxis.



In four studies, a specific encryptment of loss inside a literary corpus comes under scrutiny. Of these four, two supplement the tracking of the crypt with considerations of endopsychic genealogy (like the history of media of which psychoanalysis is as much a component part as a reflection upon it). A fifth study considers how encryptment impinges on processes of understanding within historical perspectives that are properly academic. Crypt study insinuates itself thus as a new kind of psychoanalytic contribution to the collection of disciplines known as cultural studies. One more study could be characterized as a failed crypt study: in addressing the transmission of crisis, this study uncovers a phantasmatic installation of successful mourning in the trappings of encryptment, but from which the crypts of attachment have been evacuated as contaminants. Finally there is a study that, following the transmission of the crypt of more generalized trauma, presents its results

in the domain of metapsychology, thereby contributing directly to the re-reading of Freud's science. Thus the selection concludes within the full range of what I have tried to model as endopsychic genealogy.

While I was concluding the edition of these texts, I had already commenced teaching at the Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe. I encountered in the art work of several of the students attending my opening seminar, "Germany. A Science Fiction," other openings into crypt study, which, though I would rather not identify them as such as yet, I nevertheless add in juxtaposition to the text portion. I do so more in my capacity as curator of group exhibitions than as editor seeking illustrations. At this border of unidentified seeing or theorizing, I sign my preface with affirmation.

Image Notes

p.3 Evi p.4 Nanna und Chrischan p.5 Zuhause