

Fellows



Eric L. Santner
IFK_Gast des Direktors

Duration of fellowship
01. March 2011 bis 30. June 2011

Eric L. Santner

PROJECT-TITLE

The Royal Remains. The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty

PROJECT-DESCRIPTION

Eric L. Santner works on the book project, "The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty", by way of a close reading of representative passages in Rilke's great novel, one that links the fate of his young protagonist on the streets of modern Paris to the distress of

early modern sovereigns.

One of the central problems of modernity is the hidden afterlife of medieval and early modern European monarchies. What became of the symbolic structures of sovereignty once the monarch was no longer on hand to embody them? Building upon the political-theological tradition of “the King’s Two Bodies,” Santner argues that the structures and dynamics of sovereignty do not simply disappear from politics but migrate to a new location—the life of the People. The challenge for “moderns” is how to track these “royal remains” in their now dispersed and ostensibly secularized locations.

„The Royal Remains“ tries to “flesh out” this argument by exploring three intersecting developments and domains associated with modernity. The first area of investigation concerns the emergence of biopolitics as the new site for the administration of what had previously been concentrated and localized in the strange material presence of the king. The second domain is made up of modernist aesthetic practices in the visual and literary arts that, under the peculiar pressures generated by the royal remains, gather at the unstable boundaries between figuration and abstraction. The third large area of investigation concerns Freud’s own efforts to invent a new science, one that attempts, precisely, to track this uncanny excess as the virtual yet unnervingly visceral substance--as the *flesh*--of the fantasies that both constrain and amplify the lives of modern subjects. Santner argues that Rilke’s „Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge“ is among the richest and most “feverish” archives we possess for the exploration of the vicissitudes of this peculiar substance in modernity.

CV

Eric L. Santner, who was Chair of the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Chicago 2000–2009, was named the Philip and Ida Romberg Professor in Modern Germanic Studies in September 2003. He joined the Chicago department in autumn 1996 after twelve years of teaching at Princeton University. Santner works at the intersection of literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and religious thought.

Publications

Selected publications: *The Royal Remains: The People’s Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (forthcoming); *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin*, Chicago 2006; with Slavoj Žižek and Kenneth Reinhard, *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*, Chicago 2005; with Moishe Postone (eds.), *Catastrophe and Meaning: The Holocaust and the Twentieth Century*, Chicago 2003; *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig*, Chicago 2001 (German translation with Diaphanes Verlag, 2010); *My Own Private Germany. Daniel Paul Schreber’s Secret History of Modernity*, Princeton 1996; *Stranded Objects. Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany*, Ithaca 1990; *Friedrich Hölderlin. Narrative Vigilance and the Poetic Imagination*, New Brunswick 1986.