Seminar in American Literature

Sponsors: The Department of English at the University of Illinois at Chicago and the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Chicago.

Coordinators: Walter Benn Michaels, University of Illinois at Chicago and Ken Warren, University of Chicago

“Institutional Charisma”
Günter Leypoldt, Universität Heidelberg

September 25, 2014, 5:00-7:00 pm
Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton St., Chicago, IL

This paper explores the cultural authority of literary institutions. I will explore ways in which our attraction to literary artefacts hinges less on the traditional functions of literature (delivering pleasure, knowledge, wisdom, catharsis, epiphany, moral growth, political instruction, etc.) but on a socially-embedded sense of "charismatic trust" (the sense that an artefact puts us in touch with a consecrated space of strong values).

This paper will discuss, among others, Oprah Winfrey, Toni Morrison, Jonathan Franzen, and more briefly, Ben Lerner, Theodore Dreiser, R.M. Rilke, and Joshua Reynolds.

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