The Hebraic and Hellenic Models in the Western Literary Canon: The Case of Erich Auerbach

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It is unusual to see a paper on Greece in a journal of Middle Eastern studies or a MESA conference program. The canonization of Greece as the birthplace of Western civilization has isolated the study of its history from that of its Eastern neighbors. At the same time, the strong Eastern influences on its Byzantine and modern culture have made its post-classical heritage a marginal territory which cannot be confidently placed within specific geographical or historical (or even academic) boundaries. Greece as "Hellas," as an ideological construct, belongs by definition to the West, where it was created, and epitomizes its privileged ancestry and position in the world.

I would like to suggest that an investigation of the Western uses of this construct and model would be directly relevant to a promising trend in the area of Middle Eastern studies, the genealogy of orientalism. A host of recent books and articles has explored the invention of the Orient in the European discourses of literature and scholarship. This genealogy can benefit greatly from a similar study of "Hellas" with which the Orient has often been compared. In this essay, I intend to offer an example of the study I am proposing — a microscopic reading of a canonical book of criticism whose history of literature depends on the Hellenic model for a universal (and therefore exclusive) definition of Western identity.

Readers of Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* will remember the well-prepared and touching comparison in Chapter 1, where the two basic types of literary representation in Western culture are dramatically contrasted. The scene of Odysseus' recognition by his old housekeeper Euryclea in the *Odyssey* is examined in great thematic and stylistic detail, and then interpreted against a parallel reading of the sacrifice of Isaac in *Genesis*. The wide variety of distinct features exhibited in the two texts is organized into two corresponding sets of diametrically opposed character and tone, which are then seen as concise pictures of the world view expressed in the respective works, and are used as the

basis for a broad outline of the Homeric and the Biblical systems of thought. At the end of the chapter, the two types are proposed as the starting point for the investigation of European literary representation that the rest of the book conducts through the centuries from antiquity to modern times.

All this is scrupulously explored and narrated in painstaking philological fashion. Passages are selected carefully and read thoroughly, distinctions are made with an informed eye for stylistic detail, and differences are established with discriminating attention to the particular aspects and the overall pattern of the texts. Both works are considered as epics, but their qualities are found to differ in such a fundamental way that they express (and allow for) opposing modes of understanding and of literary writing. Erich Auerbach (1892–1957) states that he chose to elaborate on this opposition because it operates at the foundations of Western literature, and therefore must be posed at the beginning of his study. But his presentation immediately raises questions. *Mimesis* (1946) does not have an introduction: there is no first, separate section to present its purpose and describe its approach. Instead, the work begins *in medias res*. "Readers of the *Odyssey* will remember the well-prepared and touching scene in book 19, when Odysseus has at last come home . . ." (Auerbach, 1953a: 3). It begins with a first chapter which, like the rest, bears a neutrally descriptive title, "Odysseus' Scar," and immediately proceeds to conduct a close reading of a classic text. Only after several pages does it become clear that it deals with two texts, rather than one, that it seeks to establish the origins of Western mimetic modes, and that it functions as an introduction to the whole volume. Thus the title is deceptive: while it seems to promise treatment of a Homeric passage, the chapter is as much about Abraham's sacrifice as it is about Odysseus' scar. It appears, then, that the book is introduced in a surreptitious manner. The suppression of the character of the piece and of its second major topic are closely linked: what at first glance looks like a first chapter and a discussion of the *Odyssey* proves to be an introduction and a comparison of Homer with the Old Testament.

The basic opposition, which the essay establishes but the title does not acknowledge, is posited and developed in a long series of dichotomies purporting to articulate the distinctive features of the Homeric and the Biblical styles: external–internal, presence–absence, unity–disconnectedness, totality–fragmentation, illuminated–obscure, clarity–ambiguity, foreground–background, simplicity–complexity, stability–fermentation, serenity–anguish, being–becoming, legend–history. In all these binary oppositions, the first member refers to the Homeric and the second to the Biblical world, while each polarity indicates the antithesis and clash of the two world views and mimetic modes. Auerbach argues that the two sets of categories indicate contrasting ways of thinking and dictate contrasting ways of understanding them: each has to be comprehended in its own terms. Consequently, he insists: "Homer can be analyzed . . . but cannot be interpreted" (1953a: 13), while "the text of the

Biblical narrative . . . is so greatly in need of interpretation on the basis of its own content" (1953a: 15). Auerbach refrains from explicitly defining his terminology; but from the basic sets of categories it may at least be inferred that analysis (which applies to the Homeric) is more of a description of simple incidents, surface meanings, and direct messages, while interpretation (which responds to the Biblical) uncovers hidden meanings, implied messages, and complex significances. This is not the place to discuss the critical validity of such a distinction.[1] It is more important to show how the approach called "interpretation" describes Auerbach's own method of reading literature.

Auerbach is faithful to his position when he reads the scene from *Genesis* in that he conducts an in-depth, penetrating interpretation which seeks to elucidate all its dimensions. As exemplified in this application, interpretation is the search for an an ultimate explanation of both meaning and purpose. It tries to uncover the hidden, obscure, silent, ineffable, multiple meaning of a text, promising and at the same time threatening, recoverable and yet always elusive, under the thick layers of language. It also tries to explain the purpose of it all, to describe the overall plan, to specify the final direction toward which everything is moving. In this part of his investigation, Auerbach is consistent. But he does not show the same consistency in his approach to Homer. For although he argues that the Greek epic allows only for analysis, his discussion exhibits all the unmistakable signs of an interpretive reading: it presents the hidden complexity of the incident with Euryclea, traverses successive layers of significance, exposes invisible assumptions, and finally builds on it a whole theory about Homeric mimesis. Interpretive understanding is again his guiding motive, since he asks persistently why everything in the text happens this way. Clearly, Auerbach violates his own epistemological principle and applies an interpretive reading to the *Odyssey*, a Biblical reading to a Homeric text. Although he argues that the two works express opposite world views and dictate different readings, he uses for both the approach derived from the second. He is not reading Homer against the Bible, as he claims, but rather reads him through the Bible: his is a Biblical treatment. Thus his conclusion that Homer cannot be interpreted is an interpretive one, which results from a successful search for deep meanings in his work. Auerbach treats both works in an interpretive fashion, seeking to uncover their artistic essence behind the literary surface.

What appears to be omitted in the title of the essay is the most important element, what is not mentioned is the dominant feature, what is missing is centrally there: the Biblical mode of mimesis and interpretation. The title promises a study on the recognition of Odysseus' scar but the essay delivers a model of literary interpretation derived from Abraham's sacrifice; and the number above the title indicates a first chapter but refers to an introduction. These deceptive signs are part of the same tactic: while the essay identifies itself as a chapter on Homer, it is in fact an introduction to the Biblical method of reading; what

seems to be an example of representation is nothing less than a model of inter-pretation. Thus the subtitle of the book, "The Representation of Reality in Western Literature," in order to reflect its approach, should read: "The Inter-pretation of the Representation of Reality in Western Literature." As the introductory chapter shows, the purpose of the whole project is not to analyze the dominant modes of this representation (i.e., present, describe, show their structure and effects), but rather interpret them (i.e., explain the secret mean-ings and purposes, unravel the significant pattern of their emergence and development). Auerbach's approach is exclusively Biblical: he comprehends literature according to rules that he finds dictated in the Bible, and consequently the Western literary tradition as a (secular) Bible.

The purpose of the book is to provide a sweeping Biblical view of our literary history. His choice of texts alone is ample evidence. All his selections are canonical (and often predictable),[2] made among the revered masterpieces of the dominant European tradition: *Satyricon*, *Chanson de Roland*, *Divina Commedia*, *Decameron*, *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, *Henry IV*, *Don Quixote*, *Manon Lescaut*, *Luise Millerin*, *To the Lighthouse*, to mention but a few. Edward Said has justifiably called the book "a massive reaffirmation of the Western cultural tradition" (1983: 8). Furthermore, selections are made and arranged with the Bible as a model. According to Auerbach, the Bible is the greatest canonical book, the Book of books, the absolute Book — the Book containing all the books that are worth reading and preserving. In it (and because of it), there are no other gods, no other books, no other world: "it insists that it is the only real world, is destined for autocracy" (1953a: 15). As the central cultural construct of a national tradition, it constitutes a colossal tautology and self-affirmation, and concomitantly the ultimate justification of ethnocentrism as well as of censor-ship: the book that tells you what to read is both the single one worth reading and the privileged domain of human experience: "it seeks to overcome our reality: we are to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history" (1953a: 15). Auerbach treats the Western literary canon in similar terms: his is a universal history of literature without references, notes or bibliography, without any room for minor characters, neglected incidents or marginal works. We are commanded to have no other books before it. As a historical survey, it is organized in autonomous, self-contained units, and deals with a tradition of glorious achievements from its origins through its continuous evolution to the present. The notion of the tradi-tion itself is not discussed, and its authority is recognized unquestionably. The unity, borders, jurisdiction, and goals of that authority are established. The driving implication is that the West has its own Bible, although a secular one, which is its literary canon.

Beyond Auerbach's veneration of the tradition, there is an impressive number and range of similarities that bring *Mimesis* and the Bible even closer — and again I am referring, of course, to *his* Bible, to the conception of

the book that emerges from *his* discussion. I shall quote some characteristics he attributes to the Old Testament:

— the intent of the stories "involves an absolute claim to historical truth" (1953a: 14);

— the narrator "was obliged to write exactly what his belief in the truth of the tradition . . . demanded of him" (1953a: 14);

— he composed "an effective version of the pious tradition" (1953a: 14);

— "its claim to truth . . . excludes all other claims" (1953a: 14);

— "we are to . . . feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history" (1953a: 15);

— "[it] presents universal history: it begins with the beginning of time . . . and will end with the Last Days. . . . Everything else that happens in the world can only be conceived as an element in this sequence" (1953a: 16);

— "interpretation in a determined direction becomes a general method of comprehending reality" (1953a: 16);

— "it is pieced together — but the various components all belong to one concept of universal history and its interpretation" (1953a: 17);

— "the reader is at every moment aware of the universal religio-historical perspective which gives the individual stories their general meaning and purpose" (1953a: 17);

— "The greater the separateness and horizontal disconnection of the stories and groups of stories in relation to one another . . . the stronger is their vertical connection, which holds them all together. . . ." (1953a: 17);

— an "element of development gives the . . . stories a historical character" (1953a: 18);

— "development of the concept of the historically becoming, and preoccupation with the problematic" (1953a: 23).

Although this list includes only characteristics attributed by Auerbach to the Bible, their applicability to his own book is so broad and striking that they may easily be taken as descriptions originally intended for *Mimesis*. They were not; but they do summarize its contents and episodic structure: brief, concise, paradigmatic, didactic, moral stories from the adventures of secular writing in the post-Biblical world, i.e., literature.[3] Auerbach did not compose a History of Literature or the history of a particular idea, figure, or theme that would have been yet another all-encompassing, encyclopedic compendium; he wrote the Story of Literature, a selective philological survey which traces the origins and evolution of that chosen art, the art of the Book.

Mimesis is directly and extensively modeled on the Bible, and aspires to work like it: it consists of episodic stories of concentrated tension and high significance; it exhibits a discontinuous and yet evolutionary unity; it is driven by an urgent sense of universal history; it makes absolute claims on historical truth; it has a concrete, stable point of reference which makes everything

involved in its sphere meaningful; it is fraught with religious, social, and political background; it employs a multilayered, multidimensional narrative; finally, it seeks canonical authority. *Mimesis* aspires to be recognized as the Old Testament of exegetical philology, the Bible of literary criticism, by presenting and defending history as tradition, reading as interpretation. In its effort to cover Western literature in a definitive way, it employs two principal arguments: there is only one literature worth reading, the very canon which is its subject; and there is only one proper way of reading it, Biblical interpretation. By adopting the world view and reenacting in an intensely dramatic fashion the method of its model, it attempts to achieve the same canonical status in the field of literary studies.[4]

When it outlines in a grand manner the order, the evolution, the laws, the purpose, and the justification of literary tradition, *Mimesis* performs a number of propaedeutic tasks that are important for an exercise of intellectual authority: it gives its readers what they need to know about the world of literature and helps them comprehend it properly; it trains their understanding and cultivates their judgement; and it explains the complex, intricate sense that great literature makes. Out of a large-scale philological explication, based on the orthodoxies of humanism and stylistic exegesis, emerges a grandiose project of interpretation and monumentalization. While Auerbach gives the modest impression that he is simply attending to the nuances and idiosyncracies of individual texts, and is not imposing a uniform explanatory method on any of them, his first chapter already testifies to his use of an ahistorical uniformity of standards and universality of principles.[5] (Naturally, this does not mean that his bias is reprehensible, only that his objectivist claims are false.)

I spoke above about the grand act of interpretation and monumentalization that *Mimesis* performs — a Biblical interpretation of literature and a monumentalization of its Western canon. It is time to return to the paradox of the chapter's title, which deceives with its unwarranted emphasis on Odysseus, and explore what dictated a discussion of Homer under a misleading heading and in an introduction veiled as a chapter.

Given the orientation and methodology of the volume, it appears surprising that Auerbach decided to start with Homer and apply to the *Odyssey* a Biblical treatment, an interpretive reading, instead of simply beginning with the Bible and proceeding from his real model. The question is not why the second term of the Homeric–Biblical distinction is so heavily privileged, but rather why this very distinction was necessary and what it says about the possible functions of the essay. To answer that any similar project should commence with the Greek epic, an originary classic, would be an inadequate (not to say Eurocentric) response, since it does not solve the problem of the devious title. The basic questions remain: why oppose the Homeric mode of representation to the Biblical one, when what was intended was an adoption, emulation, and propagation of the latter? why was a discussion of Homer essential to a work modeled on the

Bible, which itself aspired to become the Bible of literary criticism? and why did the overwhelming presence of the Bible have to be initially concealed? Auerbach's conception of the Old Testament suggests the answer.

Auerbach believes that the dramatic quality and cultural authority of the Bible is enhanced by an intrinsic dialectic between what is there and what is not, what is present and what is absent, what is said and what is implied, what is mentioned and what is omitted, what happens and what could have happened — the constant, unrelieved tension between presence and absence, voice and silence, promise and fulfillment, being and becoming. His understanding of the Bible depends on polar oppositions which remain unresolvable. The Book of books is constantly valorized as the supreme text because of what it does not state, does not fully narrate, does not reveal, does not name, thus preserving the prophecy about the "fulfilling of the Covenant" (1953a: 16) alive and binding people to its eschatology. This type of valorization through contrast needs a second, negative, so to speak, term of comparison, an abject possibility, so that an absolute positive value can be postulated. In the Old Testament, that value is "a single and hidden God" (1953a: 17), who, after the Fall of Man, "is not comprehensible in his presence, as is Zeus; it is always only 'something' of him that appears, he always extends into depths" (1953a: 12). He is the hidden or absent God of Abraham whose (condemning) silence enables the Bible to speak (about human guilt). The positive value, then, is constituted as the elementary difference, the fundamental otherness, the hidden depth of that ostensibly complete presence, that immediate experience, which defines the negative term of the dichotomy.

The need for a defense of Biblical interpretation like *Mimesis* to include (and even begin with) a discussion of Homer must be accounted for on the basis of Auerbach's theory about the dialectic inherent in the Old Testament. The Bible is fraught with background, namely the presence of God's absence: "Since so much in the story is dark and incomplete, and since the reader knows that God is a hidden God, his effort to interpret it constantly finds something new to feed upon" (1953a: 15). An effective valorization of the Bible would similarly present it as the background haunting Western literature, with its dark presence always in ambiguous retreat, its power constantly felt through its radical difference that allows only something of its depths to appear, inalienable and yet urgent. This presentation requires an absolute contrast to a world of light, immediacy, and fullness, a foreground of false essence and illusionary being. The Homeric epic is called on to play this indispensable role, portrayed in every small detail as the negative term of the opposition: in its two-dimensional clarity, it makes us understand where the Bible is *not*, what it does *not* do, how it does *not* work. Against its foreground, against its unrippling surface, the total difference of the Bible can be recognized as the dramatic, historical, religious, and aesthetic background of all literature.

Analysis too, as a mode of reading, is fraught with the background of

interpretation, of that dimension of understanding which feeds on insight rather than vision. The contrast with Homeric analysis highlights the power of interpretation to overcome the charm of appearance and pierce through the specter of presence. Without analysis, there would be no need for the promise of depth and delivery that interpretation carries. By presenting the Bible as non-Homeric and non-analytic, Auerbach is in a position not only to praise the originary monument of the canon, but also to show that the kind of reading it invites is the best way to read the whole canon.[6] The purpose of employing the Homeric term is to illustrate graphically the perils of secular representation and understanding. This strategy also explains the character of Auerbach's revisionary reading of the canon. It does not pertain to individual names, works or events but to the overall approach. The philologist is not interested in changing the entries or their order but rather the way these master/works are read. He proposes and practices Biblical interpretation as a more enlightened approach to the great tradition. In order to do this, he had to articulate his position as the positive term of a binary opposition and construct an idea of the epic as its hostile negative. The tasks of literary interpretation had to be established as a moral alternative to the pleasures of Greek physical/material understanding.

The terms of those polarities established in "Odysseus' Scar" which express and multiply the Homeric–Biblical dichotomy can be grouped in two categories, according to the type of representation they describe. Auerbach's own terms referring to the Homeric mode are: external, foreground, presence, being, unity, totality, clarity, illuminated, stability, simplicity, serenity, legend; terms applying to the Biblical mode are: internal, background, absence, becoming, disconnectedness, fragmentation, obscurity, ambiguity, ferment, complexity, anguish, history. This ordering shows that the fundamental dichotomy is absolute and determines the argument of the whole essay. The ordering also allows for another observation: the systems of thought and literary technique outlined in the description of the Biblical mode bear a very close resemblance to standards of modernist taste. Notions like background, interiority, suspense, multilayeredness, disconnectedness, absence, suggestiveness, fragmentariness, silence, individuality, and others associated with them express qualities of the modernist aesthetic which dominated the first half of the twentieth century. Critics have already noted the successful appropriation of such literary techniques: "With its high respect for randomness and discontinuity, *Mimesis* is another classic of modernism" (Robbins, 1986: 49). René Wellek went even further, suggesting that *Mimesis* "must be judged as something of a work of art". Many years before Roland Barthes or J. Hillis Miller argued for (and pursued) the literariness of criticism, Auerbach was the first to learn from the structural experiments of the post-Flaubertian novel. Thus, in his treatment of the Bible, he is not only returning to the first beginnings and tracing the origins of our tradition, but is also suggesting that, although the Homeric mode was the first to achieve wide appeal and

recognition, the Biblical one has outlasted it and today reigns over the masterful literary representations. Today we understand and represent the world in Biblical terms: our literature itself is, at its best, Biblical. Now that we have almost overcome the old Greek influence, the Bible is our true, authentic contemporary: in it, literature as we have come to know it today was unmistakably prefigured.

In terms of its historical viewpoint, *Mimesis* is a work of figural interpretation: it interprets the Western canon as a figure of the Bible and, conversely, claims that the Bible finds its fulfillment in our literary tradition. Figural or typological understanding constitutes the exegetical approach of the book. Auerbach's celebrated essay *"Figura"* (1984), written just before the book (in 1944), should be seen as its missing methodological introduction.

Figuralism or typology[7] originated in early Christian efforts to show that Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah and had fulfilled Jewish prophecies, by retrospectively explaining the Hebrew Bible as the "Old" of the "New Testament" — as the first announcement of a promise that had been kept. A figura or type is constituted by a historical event or person and can be identified only when fulfilled by a later event or person in a providentially structured history, i.e., by its antitype. The purpose of figurae is "to accommodate the events and persons of a superseded order of time to a new one" (Kermode, 1983: 90). Auerbach explains that the rhetorical *tropos* of *figura* acquired its first modern meaning with Tertullian: *"figura* is something real and historical which announces something else that is also real and historical. The relation between the two events is revealed by an accord or similarity" (Auerbach, 1984: 29). This meaning is connected by definition with the theological topos of fulfillment, which is the coming into being, the historical happening, of what the figure prophetically announced — the revelation of the future originally intimated by it. Thus the figure is also the prefiguration of things to come, and therefore it is based on an eschatological view of history. The textual reading taking *figura* as its starting point is called figural interpretation: "[It] establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first. The two poles of the figure are separate in time, but both, being real events or figures, are within time, within the stream of historical life" (1984: 53). Thus emphasis falls decisively on the typological design of developments and on fulfillment in history: "Both remain historical events; yet both, looked at in this way, have something provisional and incomplete about them; they point to one another and they both point to something in the future, something still to come, which will be the actual, real, and definitive event . . . Thus history, with all its concrete force, remains forever a figure, cloaked and needful of interpretation" (1984: 58).

Auerbach's definition of figural interpretation describes both the interpretive project he finds dictated by the Old Testament and his own approach. In opting

for a figural narrative of literature, he subscribes to an eschatological view of history under an unequivocally theological inspiration. His story presents a series of developments that draw their significance from a higher order, that of a destined completion. As he puts it, "in the figural system the interpretation is always sought from above; events are considered not in their unbroken relation to one another, but torn apart, individually, each in relation to something other that is promised and not yet present" (1984: 59). Prefigurative understanding and the language of types allow him to claim the Western tradition for the Biblical mimesis, and criticism for typological interpretation. Timothy Bahti's summary of Auerbach's view of the past can also be taken as a satisfactory account of the book's organizing typological principle: "Historical events or literary texts may have their own unique and local significance — if they have any meaning at all — but in a history's figural interpretation they are metaphorized as carrying some further significance, so that some may 'foreshadow' others in a narrative which would grant the sense of a whole to otherwise self-contained parts" (Bahti, 1981: 111).[8] Thus the appropriation of this Christian exegetical technique for literary criticism serves many purposes: it establishes a deeper unity between religious and secular writing; it argues for a narrative continuity between the ancient and the modern; it defends the transhistorical modernity of the Bible, making it the originary event in literature; it intimates the Biblical character of modernism; lastly, it emphasizes the Messianic destination of literature and the prophetic role of interpretation.[9]

Typology declined around the turn of the nineteenth century with the emergence of Higher Criticism in Germany. By the time David Friedrich Strauss published his *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined* (1835), all interest in it had disappeared. Thus its revival by Auerbach was quite a bold move, since his audience could not be expected to have any direct familiarity with it. Through the concerns of Romance philology, however, he was able to provide some informative background, as he did in his study on *Dante: Poet of the Secular World* (1929). More importantly, the distance in time allowed for a return to that method without its original Christian connotations. Philology and literary history provided a new, scholarly context. Thus Auerbach employed it while transfering its religious dimension to questions of aesthetic meaning and literary tradition. (His strategy may be fruitfully compared to the return, through literary issues, of Martin Heidegger to Pietism or of Harold Bloom to the Kabbalah.)

For him, philology (as interpretation) is above all an act of faith, and its theory is the theology of literature, of the secular Scripture. In a discussion of Auerbach's notion of the individual, Luiz Costa-Lima notes that "in Auerbach's solution, divinity is not so much removed as secularized. That is to say, continuity of history is preserved thanks to a new incarnation" (1988: 489). Auerbach understands figural interpretation and practices it in *Mimesis* as an exegesis of prophecy, as divination through explorations of

prefigurement, as an explication of promises yet to be fulfilled. Near the end of the essay, he identifies *figura* with prophecy in explicitly theological language: "In this way the individual earthly event is not regarded as a definite self-sufficient reality, nor as a link in a chain of development in which single events or combinations of events perpetually give rise to new events, but viewed primarily in immediate vertical connection with a divine order which encompasses it, which on some future day will itself be concrete reality; so that the earthly event is a prophecy or *figura* of a part of a wholly divine reality that will be enacted in the future. But this reality is not only future; it is always present in the eye of God and in the other world, which is to say that in transcendence the revealed and true reality is present at all times, or timelessly" (1984: 72). Thus the figure is both a prophecy about an *eschaton* that will occur at the End of Time, and a revelation of that ultimate reality as it is presently encoded in this world, specifically in its re-presentations by Western literature.[10] To return once more to the subtitle of *Mimesis* (which Auerbach never explains), it has become clear that the term "representation" refers to his understanding of all major literature (already prefigured in the Bible) as *figura*, while "reality" refers to the divine truth that inheres in every present and will be actualized in/as a unique future, the advent of the Messiah. Rephrased and completed according to its Messianic perspective and eschatological yearning, the sentence should now read: "The Biblical Interpretation of the Prefigurement of the Fulfillment of the Covenant in the Tradition of the Secular Scripture."

In "*Figura*", Auerbach claimed that the figural view of history was active from the early days of Christianity until the eighteenth century. In *Mimesis*, however, the historical origin was replaced with a universalist invariable, the polar distinction between the two modes of Western representation. In the original account, the pagan/archaic/allegorical was what came before the Biblical/Christian/figural. In the new account, the figural has been reduced to a variation of one of the two dominant modes, the Biblical; and the same has been done, of course, to everything Christian. The two modes are made to oppose, antagonize each other, and to compete for mastery over human understanding. The Biblical is treated as the most important one, and is used systematically throughout the book as the basic approach to Western literature. On the other hand, the Homeric mode, although almost totally forgotten after the second chapter — receiving brief mentions in Chapters 5 and 8 — returns at the end. Chapters 18 and 19 form the apogee of *Mimesis*, a celebration of the Biblical understanding of history which entered its modern maturity with the nineteenth-century realist novel. But in the last chapter gloom and doom prevail. This is an age of confusion and hopelessness caused by "the complicated process of dissolution which led to fragmentation of the exterior action, to reflection of consciousness, and to stratification of time" (1953a: 552–53) in fiction as well as in real life. The last work, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, is compared extensively to the *Odyssey*. Thus the pagan element reappears in

obvious response to a question that was tacitly left unanswered in *"Figura"*: what happened after the long domination of the figural view ended? The answer comes here implicit, yet ominous: the Homeric, the pagan element threatens to take over again.

Auerbach is not fighting against Christianity. He is content to indicate the continuity uniting it with Judaism through quiet references to the "Judeo-Christian view of history" (1953a: 73) or arguments showing that "the first effect of the Judeo-Christian manner of dealing with the events in the world of reality led to anything but rigidity and narrowness. The hiddenness of God and finally his *parousia* . . . brought about a dynamic movement in the basic conception of life . . . which went far beyond the classic-antique norm of the imitation of real life and living growth" (1953a: 119).[11] Auerbach does not see Christianity as a serious opponent: after all, he skillfully develops an idea of the Biblical that includes and appropriates it, reducing it to a variation on the Old Testament. The real enemy is the non-Biblical: the Homeric, the pagan, the Greek. He often alludes to this imminent threat by detecting unsettling parallels between the ancient world and the present order of things, as in the following passage:

> Homer . . . likes to bring in the lineage, station, and previous history of his characters . . . His Greek audiences are schooled in mythology and genealogy; Homer undertakes to give them the family-tree of the character in question as a means of placing him. Just so, in modern times, a newcomer into an exclusive aristocratic or bourgeois society can be placed by information concerning his paternal and maternal relatives. Thus, rather than an impression of historical change, Homer evokes the illusion of an unchanging, a basically stable social order, in comparison with which the succession of individuals and changes in personal fortunes appear unimportant (1953a: 28).

Auerbach portrays the Homeric as the enemy of the Judeo-Christian tradition: from the Greek stems everything septic, static, autocratic, absolutist. Geoffrey Green, in commenting on the above passage, notes: " 'Just so, in modern times,' he writes, in order to demonstrate that Homer's genealogy is not so very different from the Nazi's "Aryanization" laws, which traced back one's ancestors to three or four removed generations. Homer's mythology is not so different from the new mythology of the Thousand-Year Reich and its *Volkstaat*" (1982: 42–3). Auerbach's attack on Greek thought becomes anti-Hellenic when he blames the evils of modernity on the Homeric spirit.

Auerbach believes that he is witnessing a critical stage of the historical process, the modern Drama of Europe, and thinks, like Ezra Pound (Davie 1975: 17–31) before him in *The Spirit of Romance: An Attempt to Define Somewhat the Charm of the Pre- Renaissance Literature of Latin Europe* (1910), of "the European possibilities of Romance philology as . . . a task specific to our time" (Auerbach, 1965: 6). With great faith in the necessary mission of his discipline, "he sees philological historicism . . . not only as the means by which 'humanity' becomes aware of its own spectacle of 'humanisation,' but also, in traditional

idealistic fashion, as the highest point or culmination of that spectacle, the drama of history come to self- consciousness, as it were" (Bové, 1986: 164). He is deeply concerned about the present crisis, fearing that "European civilization is approaching the term of its existence." The philologist studying literary history through stylistics proposes, as a way out of this intellectual malaise and social crisis, interpretive and figural understanding as spiritual renewal. *Mimesis* represents the epitome of this effort toward a return to Biblical textual faith. Green summarizes the politics behind the Manichean strategy of the book when he observes that Auerbach "conceived of his survey as a unity, as a generalized interpretation of the history of Western civilization and its literature designed and arranged so that two opposing strands or evolutions appear. The one — rigid, restrictive, categorizing, pompous, elitist, hedonistic, decadent, posturing, and ultimately antihumanity — is meant to be associated with the forces of totalitarianism that were challenging the fate of the world. The other — fluid, open, populist, honest, democratic, moral, serious, and ultimately prohumanity — is meant to be associated with the best qualities of the democratic Western world" (1982: 62–3). As we have seen, the first strand represents Greek analytical thought, while the second is associated with Biblical figural interpretation. History, tradition, and writing are viewed in terms of this on-going dialectic confrontation, and the only possibility of a synthesis is the eventual assimilation of Christianity into its Biblical roots, resulting in the complete eradication of paganism.

Auerbach's main goal was to study (what he defined as) the Biblical mode of understanding, and promote it as a model for literary and historical knowledge/experience. *Mimesis* consists in an aggressive defense of (his version of) Judaism in all its timeliness and its urgent relevance for our era. A complementary goal was to show that Christianity is derivative and should faithfully return (as it has been doing for some time) to its religious and historical roots. In both respects, an outstanding feature of his argumentation is the consistent presentation of Greek thought as the negative, alien, and hostile element in this picture, which must be neutralized, and finally extinguished. In Auerbach's survey of the canon, the central dialectic evolves between the Homeric and the Biblical, the pagan and the religious, the mythical and the historical, the Hellenic and the Hebraic. The same survey inquires into the possibility of a new (Judeo-Christian) synthesis, whose model has already been prefigured in the representational style of the Old Testament. This synthesis is necessary for humanity in order to survive the modern crisis created by the resurgence of totalitarianism, as the powers of paganism have again increased their influence. Until recently, Western culture seemed to move toward that direction, as indicated, for example, by the historical awareness of realist fiction. But that progress was interrupted by the forces of order, stability, and hierarchy, causing the confusion and hopelessness that modernism reflects. Still, although the possibility of a new synthesis looks at this time very difficult, "the approaching unification

and simplification" (1953a: 553) remain the only way to a true humanism. The struggle against the tyranny of antiquity must continue. Thus Auerbach portrays the development of Western literature as the conflict between two incompatible modes of expression, and its larger context of world history as a cosmic battle between the irreconcilable forces of evil and good, or (to put it in the most appropriately banal way) Athens and Jerusalem. The pagan evil must be defeated, because it is the source of all anguish, terror, superstition, discrimination, and oppression; the power of God, so magnificently represented in the Biblical prefigural style, will again prevail. In Auerbach's prophecy, the Hellenic works as the elemental negativity, the Lucifer of Days. His construction of the Homeric as a paronomastic substitute for the Greek served to define and defend not only figural interpretation and historicist realism, but above all the Biblical mode and the Hebraic spirit.

The beginnings of Auerbach's topic and position go back at least as far as the mid-seventeenth century, when modernity started defining its origins, inner conflict, and options in terms of the Hebraic–Hellenic polarity. His Homeric–Biblical distinction repeats the dialectical tension of other modern oppositions, like Schiller's naive-sentimental, Hölderlin's Hellenic–Hesperian, and Lukács's epic-novel (not to mention Nietzsche's Apollonian–Dionysian). Auerbach too constructed the Hellenic along Biblical lines; but his Hellenic was clearly evil. His opposition was between the complex, inner, three-dimensional world of reflexive maturity and historical experience, and the simple, outer, two-dimensional world of innocent naiveté and mythical superstition. The danger inherent in the second pole, he argues, became manifest again in our time, the time of confusion and modernism, when the totalitarianism of order and hierarchy came back to claim our heritage. Auerbach stresses that this is an age comprising events of such quality and magnitude that they are necessarily the material of history, not of legend, and therefore they deserve the realistic treatment dictated by the Biblical, not the mythical mode expressed in the Greek epic. In our time, he implies, our understanding of reality must change, now that human experience has been invaded by raw history. He presents as a model of such understanding Biblical interpretation, which he both applies to and discovers in the Western literary canon. Auerbach rereads the canon in order to change our understanding of it, and ultimately, through a different grasp of the basic representational modes, our sense of reality itself. His main argument is that today our sense of reality is still heavily influenced by the Greek model of genealogical legends, based on analytical observation of static representations of being and lacking in psychological depth, historical background, and dramatic complexity. To achieve the Biblical perspective, we need to reintroduce the third dimension of the divine presence-in-absence, the God of the Hebrew Bible. The method of figural interpretation, which discovers the prefigured fulfillment, can help us recover Biblical experience by pointing to an alternative through its best representations. It is the Jewish experience of

the faith in God and of the prophetic interpretation of his Word that Auerbach presents as an alternative reality to a world he accuses of worshiping Greek idols.

In light of Auerbach's project for the religious reeducation of man, the current popularity of interpretation (in different critical schools, from hermeneutics to deconstruction) as the most important (if not the only possible) approach to a text appears as a not so recent intellectual phenomenon.[12] Auerbach had already argued for its centrality, calling it "a method rooted in Jewish tradition" (1953a: 48) and using it as the appropriate exegetic method dictated by the Bible itself. According to his survey, early Christianity employed it to revise and appropriate the Hebrew Bible. Later, the Church Fathers in the West develop it as a specific method to ground the New Testament in Jewish prophecy and connect Christian dogma with Biblical tradition. The Reformation signalled a new return to it, whereby the Bible was recognized as the paramount expression of Jewish history and law. Finally, in the nineteenth century its influence reached deep into literature and its modes of representation, and gave us realist fiction as a historical understanding of the world which itself demands an interpretative approach. Auerbach suggests that both our understanding and our representation of reality must be based on the Biblical mode if we want to know ourselves historically, rather than mythically, and order our world according to democratic and egalitarian, not hierarchic and totalitarian, principles. The contribution of philology and literary criticism to this project of emancipation is the interpretative method, the search for universals in the historicity of texts, events, and phenomena.

We saw earlier that Auerbach's survey of the literary canon serves two major ideological purposes in the realm of philology: it portrays the canon as the secular Bible of the Christian West, where a Biblical realism is announced and prefigured; and it presents *Mimesis* as the Bible of criticism, which unfolds the drama of the verbal art. A third purpose of the survey is to outline a theological theory of literature that shows the modes of Jewish religion opposing the tropes of Greek idolatry. Auerbach composes the history of Western literature as a theodicy, vindicating the justice of God in respect to the evil Greek pleasures. Our reality is Biblical, he argues, because our world is God's; we should then comprehend and represent it Biblically; our literature too, as well as its understanding, should be Biblical. To read it is to interpret either the word of God or the word of man about the works of God, and both acts of interpretation must respect the reality represented therein (or its prefigurations). Of course Auerbach does not mention the name of God: God himself is not to be named or represented (as is done in the Greek mode), only his world. This representation, however, must be the appropriate one, respecting human limitations: it must be Biblical, that is, historical, in the sense of recording and reflecting the history of the people of God in his world. Auerbach's theory of literature (and language) is theological, theocentric, and theocratic, stemming

from (his understanding of) the Biblical interpretative tradition. He writes about the Promised Land of humanism: for him, as a theologian of the secular Word, literature is the Book, criticism is interpretation, and aesthetics is theology.

The impact of Auerbach's treatise has been tremendous[13] in that it brought the historicity of Higher Criticism into the era of formalism by reclaiming successfully the theological heritage of stylistics. Thanks to a large extent to its influence, the dedication of literary criticism to the Bible,[14] since the 1940s, has taken three main directions: first, the analysis of aesthetic features and qualities in the Scripture (Alter, 1981, especially 127–30, where mourning scenes from the *Iliad* and the Davis story are compared; 1985), often with particular attention to relevant pedagogical needs (Robertson, 1977: 16–32 compares both *Exodus* 1–15, as a "comedy," and the gospel of Mark to *The Bacchae*; Gros Louis *et al.*, 1974); second, the study of a specific literary oeuvre, school, trend, or period on the basis of its Biblical inspiration and resources (Damrosch, 1985); and third, the exploration of large areas of the Western tradition according to interpretive rules derived from the Bible (Schneidau, 1976). In many of these works the Hebraic–Hellenic comparison influences the approach of the selection of texts. Its corresponding presence in the (American, at least) curriculum seems to be equally strong (as in the course "Humanities 1. The Foundations of Western Civilization: Israel and Greece," offered, according to the 1986 brochure, by the Judaic Studies Program at the University of California, San Diego).[15] Thus even before the current wave of puritanism took power and office in the West, the anti-Hellenism of literary and humanistic studies in general, from Auerbach to Derrida, was preparing the ground for (and is still contributing to) its legitimization.

Since the theology of secular writing needs to conceal its nature in order to be heard in a world suspicious of preaching after the departure of gods, it becomes Theory. To achieve this, it conjures up the spectre of a primordial otherness[16] — of an evil that is close to cultural experience, part of a familiar, and yet alien, history. That is where the Hellenic becomes indispensable. Auerbach, for example, constructs, through his reading of one passage from the *Odyssey*, a Greek model of representation (and a picture of the entire Greek civilization) on which he then proceeds to blame all human excess, from ancient hedonism to contemporary Facism. His survey remains throughout fraught with the haunting Hellenic background. The Homeric mode is the sheer negativity against which the Biblical acquires its apocalyptic power to save humanity from the sins of form and pleasure. A Biblical reading of the canon through continuous antithetical opposition establishes the Bible as the central text of our tradition, the interpretive method as the best approach to literature, and Biblical representation as the best historical understanding of reality. This is the purpose the fabrication of the Hellenic serves: without it, without its radically differential, negative existence, the defense of the Hebraic way would

not be possible. By catastrophically invoking its ominous promise of beauty and harmony, Auerbach suggests that it is time for our civilization to repent and seek atonement: paganism must be abrogated, along with its enjoyment of life. Explanation should again become interpretation, which is representation, which is repetition: we can repent by representing reality (our historical experience of God), by reinterpreting the canon, by repeating the Book: the canon is our only history, the Book our only reality. *Mimesis*, with its universal teaching which brings to mind the quietistic piety of Thomas à Kempis, is the Imitation of Yahweh in the realm of literary studies.

Notes

1. William Whallon, comparing Biblical and Homeric poetry on their assumed common oral-formulaic ground, concludes that "on the basis of style, the Hebraic mind or world view cannot be distinguished from the intelligence behind the *Odyssey* or *Iliad*" (1966: 113), and that the distinctive features "Auerbach found in Homeric epic are also to be found in Old Testament poetry" (1966: 130). Thus he takes Auerbach to task for unjustifiably comparing two different literary provinces, (Homeric) poetry and (Hebrew) prose, instead of comparing the two oral poetic traditions. This is a strong argument from the area of comparative philology.

2. Since the seminal issue of *Critical Inquiry* on "Canons" (September 1983), the subject has acquired great importance in many fields. Among the better discussions, see Butler (1988), Condren (1985), Deleuze and Guattari (1986), Fiedler and Baker (1981), Fowler (1982), Fowles (1987), Gilbert (1985), Hernadi (1978): Part II, Kermode (1985), Lauter (1985), Robinson, (1985), Rosenfeld (1982), von Hallberg (1984, 1985), and West (1987). Rasula (1987) is a post-modern novel about the authority of the text. For a parallel trend in religious studies, see Barr (1983), Beckwith (1985), Blenkinsopp (1977), Coats and Long (1977), Kermode (1987: "The Canon"), Metzer (1987), and von Campenhausen (1972).

3. Regarding the narrative modes and structure, the debt of *Mimesis* to the Aggadah tradition has not, to my knowledge, been explored. Recent investigations of the Kabbalistic current in Walter Benjamin or the uses of the Torah in Jacques Derrida may have opened the path for such an exploration. The Aggadah (or Haggadah) is usually defined as everything in Talmudic and Midrashic literature which is not *halakhah* (Jewish law), as the non-legal material of the Talmud. It is the rabbinic storytelling which amplifies the scriptural narrative, filling in its apparent gaps or inconsistencies. It includes parables, legends, anecdotes, humor, expositions, explanations, and elaborations of Biblical stories, moral exhortations, wise sayings, and the like (Barth, 1984).

4. Paul Bové has argued persuasively that Auerbach was appropriated by American academics and turned into a "master," a model of the traditional humanist leading intellectual: "Auerbach is representative for those American critics and students of literature who believe in the enduring cultural importance, not just of literature,

but of critical, humanistic scholarship in the age of need. Auerbach functions as a fantastic source for American critics and theorists; his primary function is not as a philological model but as a sign that in an anti-historical, anti-humanistic age of relativism, mass-cultural levelling, and the increasing irrelevance of writers and critics, it is not only possible for critics to perform opportune and important acts, to construct monumental synthetic texts in the face of massive specialization, to invent new techniques for dealing with changed cultural conditions, and to do all this out of the unique intellectual and existential experience of the individual scholar, but also, in so doing, to relegitimate culturally a certain image of the responsible and responsive authoritative critical voice" (1986: 80–1). Bové's investigation of the "ideological investment in Auerbach's redemptive qualities" (1986: 107), however, leads him to admit that the critic's "own claims and much of his own rhetoric nonetheless draw upon and emerge out of the discourse and values" (1986: 139–40) of the German mandarin tradition of anthropological humanism which he seems to oppose. Although Auerbach rejects the subservience of the academic elite to the *Kulturstaat* and the elite's support for the official (educational and other) policy and nationalist ideology, he never loses his faith in an intellectual elite in charge of Western tradition. Indeed, in his vision of an aristocracy of cultivation, the mission of the elite transcends national boundaries to take over (like *Mimesis*) the legacy of *Weltliteratur*. The intellectual is called upon to play a universal role. This strategy of (self-)legitimation recalls another, Auerbach's later condition that "the humanist who hopes to be effective in preserving or renewing humanity *must* experience exile and alienation as he and Dante did, in order to be able to transcend the traps of nationalism that threaten humanity's very existence" (1986: 175). This position of willful alienation is a source of ever greater authority: "By virtue of this total and loving exile, the philologist becomes a universal intellectual whose very 'marginality' to the forces or powers of modernity, as well as to the orthodox effects of a national or institutional tradition, empowers him to do work basic to the humanist enterprise" (1986: 177). Thus what Bové calls the "grand strategy of exile" (1986: 180) becomes another source of authority for the socially displaced humanist. Bové appropriately situates Auerbach's identification with Dante in the context of this effort of authorial canonization: "Throughout his work, Auerbach studies and admires Dante more than any other writer, and he tries very often to transfer Dante's authority and legitimacy as a humanist to himself and his projects" (1986: 197).

5. David Carroll, in his deconstruction of Auerbach's notion of reality, suggests that his real goal is a renunciation of the political: "The argument against 'politics' made throughout *Mimesis* is just this — the realist must surrender himself to his material, suspend all his beliefs, prejudices, and political convictions (which Auerbach *assumes* is possible) in order to achieve a total and direct presentation of reality" (1975: 8).

6. Northrop Frye (1964, 1976) appropriated this argument for Christianity, proposing that, since the Bible has provided a mythological framework for Western literature, it should be the basis for all literary training.

7. On religious and literary uses of typology, see Berkovitch (1972), Brumm (1970), Budick (1986), Charity (1966), Danielou (1960), Korshin (1977, 1982), Lampe and

Woolcombe (1957), Lewalski (1979), Madsen (1968), Miner (1971, 1977), Preus (1969), Schwartz (1988), von Rad (1963), and White (1971).

8. In a study of Auerbach's language which correlates his figural history with his figurative style, Bahti has demonstrated how the tension between prefiguration and fulfillment operates in the presentation of Dante and Flaubert as the two critical moments of self-overcoming for European realism and how, in its turn, *Mimesis* fulfills the *figura* of Dante in Flaubert (1985: 138).

9. James Barr, in an illuminating chapter on "Typology and Allegory," criticizes the work of some contemporary theologians where "typology is represented as agreeing with the historical emphasis of Hebrew thought, while allegory is represented as serving the Greek disinterest in history and interest in supra-historical timeless ideas" (1966: 104–5). The connection between typology and Hebrew thought in *Mimesis* is clear, since figural interpretation is the mode of understanding that Auerbach derives from the Bible and uses in his survey of literary tradition.

10. As the project of secular typology, *Mimesis* has its origins in the abstracted typologies of the late eighteenth century, when figuralism reached into cosmology or history. Paul Korshin argues that, in works like David Hartley's *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations* (1791), scriptural typology "becomes the basis for the existence of abstracted typology or for other, analogical, predictive structures, not only in various kinds of literature and learning but in the works of Nature herself. Hartley's sweep is so broad that he prepares the way for the predictive structures of Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron by extending typology beyond the narrow theological sphere" (Miner, 1977: 182). Significantly, Hartley, in his three-volume work, dealt extensively with the role of the Jews in the typology of secular history, which he deemed figural of humankind: "Does it not appear agreeable to the whole analogy both of the word and works of God, that the *Jews* are types both of each individual in particular, on one hand, and of the whole world in general, on the other?" (quoted by Korshin in Miner [1977: 183]) In typological pronouncements like this we ought to seek the model of the twentieth century image of the poet as antitype of the Jew. I am not aware of any studies of the Jew as *figura* in contemporary literature, criticism, or theory.

11. Herbert Schneidau takes the same care to avoid confrontation with Christianity in his exposition of the cardinal role the Bible has played in Western tradition. His project, derived from *Mimesis*, is to tell the story of the West as a conflict between the Biblical (including the belated Christian) and the Greek. He distinguishes two opposing cultural modes, the "kerygmatic" (which he appropriates from pietist hermeneutics) and the "cybernetic," and argues that "we are a kerygmatic not a cybernetic society" (1976: 295). Another corresponding opposition which dominates his book is that between fiction and myth. He discovers a "*demythologizing*" (1976: 12) thrust in Biblical thought, coupled with skepticism, which was invented by the Hebrews (1976: 24), and opposes it to Greek mythology. He repeatedly warns that "the heritage of the Western forms from the Greek ones should not be exaggerated" (1976: 260). He adds: "On the question of Greek influence, we must always remind ourselves that the preservation of Greek traditions in the West was ancillary to religious thought" (1976: 261–2). Because of this misdirected attention, the Hebrew influence has been underestimated: "By facilitating our borrowing

from other cultural streams, whose material remains so far overshadow their own, the Hebrews have hidden themselves under our noses, as it were, in our search for our ideological ancestors" (1976: 33). We can recognize the depth of their contribution by examining what is probably their greatest achievement — fiction. "The concept of fiction was resisted by the Greeks, in spite of their flourishing poetry and drama, whereas the Hebrews laid the groundwork for the idea though they had no epic, no drama, and only a restricted, if intense, poetry and prose" (1976: 278). Thus fiction, and by extension literature, is a Biblical creation. Schneidau investigates "the Yahwist roots of literature" (1976: 276), suggesting that this art uses the kerygma as a model and is indeed inherently kerygmatic (1976: 303), and therefore, as Auerbach said, in need of interpretation. Despite its debt to mythical thought, the author insists with ethnocentric confidence, the West is no Greek: "The West is an island of literature in a sea of myth" (1976: 274). Schneidau takes the position of *Mimesis* a step further by arguing that literature as a whole (and not just one of its modes) is Biblical in that it constitutes the kerygmatic expression of the Hebraic identity of Western culture.

12. In addition, the continuing popularity of mimesis as a topic among students of narrative and representation should be noted. Auerbach returned to the subject with his *Romanische Forschungen* paper (1953b). For more recent examinations see Costa-Lima (1985), Hume (1985), Mahoney (1986), Meltzer (1987), Morrison (1982), Prendergast (1986), Ricoeur (1981), Sörböm (1966), Spariosu (1964), Steele (1988), Weinsheimer (1985), and Wells (1986).

13. The methodological convenience of Auerbach's simplistic black-and-white, good-and-evil opposition can be quite irresistible. Notice how Bruce Robbins, in a chapter entitled "From Odysseus' Scar to the Brown Stocking: A Tradition," unwittingly repeats the Hebraic–Hellenic formula by drawing a biographical parallel between the author and Odysseus: "In exile in Istanbul, Auerbach begins with the homecoming of the archetypal wanderer" (1986: 26).

14. There has been a comparable influence in other fields too. Regarding anthropology, for example, Michael Fischer finds that Claude Lévi-Strauss's "work on American Indian mythologies might be understood as an act of atonement for a world destroyed, parallel to the creation of the Talmud" (Clifford and Marcus, 1986: 200). In the same collective volume, Stephen Tyler discusses the recent importance of hermeneutics for his discipline and notes: "In this respect, the model of post-modern ethnography is not the newspaper but that original ethnography — the Bible" (1986: 127).

15. In Bahti's comprehensive formulation, "the book stands as a monument to that postwar phenomenon that may be called 'NATO humanism' and that survives in the countless 'Great Books' courses of our curricula: the organization and teaching of politicocultural view of the West as a continuous and ultimately consistent body of thought and discourse, the hallmarks of which are historical progress, democratic liberalism, a faith in individual man, and a tolerance of multiple gods. In this context, Auerbach's *Mimesis* continues to do service as an immensely useful — indeed, uncontested — pedagogic tool in this popular dissemination of literary high culture" (1985: 127).

16. Isaac Taylor (1861) devotes one chapter to a comparison of "The Hebrew

Literature, and Other Literatures," but by "Other" is meant only the Greek.

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