The Gospel according to Auerbach

JANE O. NEWMAN

JANE O. NEWMAN is professor of comparative literature at the University of California, Irvine. Her teaching and research interests include comparative European Renaissance and early modern literature and political theory and dialogues between pre- and early modernity and the modern and postmodern worlds, and she has been a fellow at the National Humanities Center and the American Academy in Berlin. Her translations of a selection of Erich Auerbach's essays appeared as *Time, History, and Literature: Selected Essays of Erich Auerbach* (Princeton UP, 2014), and she is completing a book entitled "Auerbach's Worlds: Existential Realism in the Work of Erich Auerbach."

IN 1948, NOT LONG AFTER HE ARRIVED IN THE UNITED STATES FROM HIS Turkish exile during World War II, the German Jewish Romanist and comparatist Erich Auerbach (1892–1957) gave a lecture on Dante on the campus of Penn State University. Delivered in somewhat halting English—a tape of the lecture has survived (Vialon, "Die Stimme Dantes" ["Dante's Voice"])—the talk, "The Three Traits of Dante's Poetry," is marked by the venue as an academic one. This made sense; Auerbach had already written both a book and any number of essays and chapters on Dante by this time.[1] Yet, as part of the annual Simmons Series, the lecture may have also been designed, at least in part, for a more general audience. In any case, both publics might have been somewhat perturbed by Auerbach's opening claim that very few readers actually know the text of Dante's *Divine Comedy*; Dante is in fact, he maintains, "one of the great authors who survive rather by . . . the evocative power of their name." But, Auerbach continues, readers who do engage with the poem directly discover that, beyond the name, "[t]here are in this great work many passages of such emotional and poetical power that they enter the soul of the reader immediately and spontaneously" ("Three Traits" 188). These two different kinds of "power," one associated with the author's name and person, the other with his text, both guarantee Dante's fame.

Auerbach's observations in 1948 about the blended powers of Dante's name and his text are surprisingly relevant for another important case—his own. Here, however, the name of the author and the substance of his most well-known book, the 1946 *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (*Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*), are often yoked so firmly together that they "enter the soul" of both lay and professional readers simultaneously. Auerbach's personal history seems to lie

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enfolded within *Mimesis*, for example, when it is described in the pages of *The New Yorker* as a "soulful narrative" whose story parallels its author's (Krystal 84). Elsewhere, the book is invested with almost human characteristics when it is described as "enthralling" (Hacohen 615). Seth Lerer even claims that "Auerbach comes alive in it" (24). This tendency to read the man and his book as "consubstantial" (Montaigne 504) was of course initiated by Auerbach himself. After all, it was he who first suggested—somewhat misleadingly—that *Mimesis* had been written in his lonely exile "in Istanbul between May, 1942 and April, 1945."[2] Indeed, the very grammar of *Mimesis*'s last lines lends the book pathos when it locates it alongside its author on the shores of the Bosporus by cunningly having the "Untersuchung" ("study") itself seek to "erreichen" ("reach") its "Leser" ("readers"), if they "überleben" ("survive") the war (518; 557).[3] Embedded in these years and contexts and anthropomorphic tropes, *Mimesis* has thus come to function, prosopopoeia-like (Kadir 26), as a "document" of its author's "complex personal and literary history" (Lerer 23), nowhere more pointedly so than in the context of Auerbach's perilous life as a German Jew after 1933, when the Nazis came to power, and then, after 1935–36, during his prolonged exilic life.[4] It is these chronological, geographic, and political coordinates, then, and the narratives associated with them, that lie at the foundation of the "affective . . . attachment" (Wurgaft 363) to both Auerbach and his book that has in large part determined how both have been read over the past twenty-some years of their English-language reception. Critics conflate Auerbach's person and *Mimesis* both when they align them with a Eurocentric and mandarin advocacy of the Western great books in the United States (Landauer) and when they associate them with an exilic postcoloniality and cosmopolitanist consciousness and project (because of Auerbach's time in Turkey).[5] Such conflations also occur in the specifically Jewish ways of reading Auerbach in the context of Germany in the 1930s.[6] Theorists of world literature have both endorsed and critiqued Auerbach and his work in their debates along similar lines.[7] In these receptions, Auerbach's philology is read as part and parcel of his biography and times.[8]

There is much that is compelling in this approach. Literary criticism and theory do not develop in a vacuum. This essay nevertheless argues for reading Auerbach and *Mimesis* together in a different context—namely, the Christian existentialist milieu he belonged to during his years as a professor at the University of Marburg, from 1929 to 1935–36—and in conversation with the thought of his friend and colleague there, the famous Protestant existential theologian Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976). Bultmann's work on the "Problematik des Diesseits," or "problematic of immanence" (*Presence* 189), can be seen to inform both Auerbach's work in *Mimesis* overall and chapter 2 of that book in particular, when he discusses Peter's denial of Christ as it is depicted in the Gospel of Mark. In Sigmund Freud's famous description of the multilayered archaeologies of civilizations and psyches, multiple pasts jostle against both one another and the present and come "to light" (16–18) at various times and usually in complicated ways. Auerbach's reading of the Gospel of Mark provides an excellent example of such complex residues. Their presence ought not to surprise us. After all, Auerbach was already forty-three years old when he was forced to leave Germany's National Socialist academy and state. By that time, he had published numerous articles on many of the texts he discusses in *Mimesis*. While his positions on some issues did evolve over time, it is unlikely that he would have left the already mature scholarly commitments he had developed in conversation with his Marburg colleagues behind when he fled. Looking to the ideas and language of Christian existentialism during Auerbach's preexile years and

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understanding their impact on his work helps explain the "emotional . . . power" of *Mimesis* and the hold it has had on so many readers.

Auerbach's Christianity

This section heading may seem counterintuitive. In spite of both how assimilated he and his family may have been and his stated indebtedness to Christian thought, the German-Jewish Auerbach was of course not a Christian.[9] The possessive genitive thus points not to questions of personal religiosity or alignment with a particular faith. Rather, it underlines the centrality of a fine-grained understanding of the Christian tradition to Auerbach's work, as is obvious in his lifelong interest in figures such as Augustine, Dante, and Pascal. This interest is particularly clear in his reading in *Mimesis*, chapter 2, of a key text from this tradition—namely, Peter's denial of Christ in the Gospel according to Mark (14.66–72),[10] where the apostle refuses, after Jesus has been arrested, to admit that he is part of His movement (he has been recognized as a follower on the basis of his Gallilean accent). To date, Auerbach's reading of the Markan text has been noted by only a very few scholars (Cho; Rancière, "Body" and "Corps"; Von Koppenfels), who, in line with much Auerbach reception, look to it primarily in the context of Germany's failures under Nazism and Auerbach's post–World War II stance on method. I approach Auerbach's reading of Peter's miscarriage of faith differently, arguing that Auerbach's gloss of Mark 14 channels concerns central to debates conducted by theologians and philosophers of religion in the early twentieth century associated with Christian existentialism in Germany.[11] Peter E. Gordon has explained that "existential theology" took many forms during this period and crossed confessional lines (163); Edward Baring confirms that this was the case. Auerbach was aware of many of these debates, but it is his familiarity with Protestant existentialism that informs this particular New Testament gloss. Again, Auerbach would have encountered this version of existential theology during his time as a professor of Romance languages at the University of Marburg, most directly through his contact there with the German Lutheran New Testament scholar Bultmann.[12]

Understanding Auerbach's approach to Peter's story and its indebtedness to Bultmann as representative of the Marburg context is crucial to helping us to see Auerbach and his work in new ways—that is, to see *Mimesis* as a project with a longer collaborative history (rather than the melancholic reflections of a solitary exile on the shores of the Bosporus looking back at a Europe in flames) that concerns, as Auerbach himself writes in his "Epilegomena to *Mimesis*" (1954), not only literary "realism" but also the "dargestellte Wirklichkeit" ("represented reality") of the finitude of the human condition ("Epilegomena zu *Mimesis*" 468–69; "Epilegomena to *Mimesis*" 561). Acknowledging the importance of early-twentieth-century Christian existentialism in Germany for Auerbach's work also helps us address the question with which I began—namely, why so many chapters of this famous book move professional academic and lay readers alike. They do so because in them Auerbach explores our existential rootedness in the world of the desperate creaturely realities of human everydayness in the face of what he elsewhere calls the "enormous and terrible reality of history" ("Giambattista Vico" 35; trans. modified). In the "Epilegomena," Auerbach himself writes that his main concern in *Mimesis* might have more felicitously been defined as "existentielle[r] Realismus" ("'existential realism'"), an "Ausdruck" ("term") that he had nevertheless "scheute . . . zu gebrauchen" ("hesitated to use") at the time as "allzu zeitgenössisch" ("all too contemporary") "für Phänomene der entfernten Vergangenheit" ("for phenomena of the distant past" ["Epilegomena zu *Mimesis*" 468; "Epilegomena to

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Mimesis" 561]). The claim is disingenuous, since he had himself used it to describe his interests in his essay "Über die ernste Nachahmung des Alltäglichen" (448; "On the Serious Imitation of the Everyday"), which may have been the last thing he wrote before he fled Germany. Auerbach continues this line of thought in 1954 when he writes that the kind of realism in which he was interested in *Mimesis* overall "war . . . mit unverkennbarer, ja überwältigender Deutlichkeit aus der Petrusstelle und meiner Analyse derselben zu entnehmen" ("can be inferred with unmistakable, even overpowering clarity from the passage about Peter and my analysis of it" ["Epilegomena zu *Mimesis*" 468–69; "Epilegomena to *Mimesis*" 561]). It is thus to this "analysis" that I now turn.

Existential Reality: Abraham and Peter

Auerbach emphasizes the centrality of the story of Peter to *Mimesis* in the "Epilegomena" when he responds to criticisms of the way he handled the classical (and especially the Homeric) tradition in his 1946 book and suggests that he could (and perhaps should) have dropped the first chapter entirely. He writes, "[F]ür meine Zwecke hätte es genügt mit der Zeit um Christi Geburt zu beginnen" ("For my purposes it would have sufficed to begin with the time around the birth of Christ" [467; 560]). Had he done so, the book's first chapter would have been the chapter entitled "Fortunata," which readers now encounter as chapter 2. The move would have eliminated not only the discussion of Odysseus's scar to which some classical scholars had taken exception, but also the story of Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac (הָעֲקֵידָה; *akedah*), the exemplary tale from Hebrew Scripture so often taken to define the terms of the entire book (Porter, "Erich Auerbach"). That he kept chapter 1 but thought to underscore the importance of chapter 2 in the "Epilegomena" suggests that an analysis of the relation between the two chapters is long overdue. Up close, the tales of Peter and of Abraham (as told by Auerbach) in fact resemble each other; both represent a form of encounter between divinity and humankind, for example, and both are tests of faith. But in Auerbach's accounts, Abraham's steady and self-transcending obedience to God's command is very different from Peter's crippling and self-absorbed doubt. A closer attention to the context in which these two readings arose points to early-twentieth-century theological existentialism and to Bultmann's work in particular as frames of reference and suggests the dialogue the two stories create.[13] First Abraham.

One of the most famous associations of the imponderability of the Abrahamic moment of subjection to an invisible but all-powerful God at the time was with the proto-existentialist Søren Kierkegaard's discussion of the *akedah* in *Fear and Trembling* (1843), where Kierkegaard takes it as an exemplification of the radical difference between the realm of humanity and the kingdom of God. Since 1882, *Fear and Trembling* had been available in German, as *Furcht und Zittern*, in the Protestant pastor Hinrich Cornelius Ketels's translation (Schreiber 290), which was in its third edition by 1923. By that year, Kierkegaard's centrality to early-twentieth-century "crisis theology" in Germany had become highly visible in the preface to the second edition of *Der Römerbrief* (*The Epistle to the Romans*) by the dialectical theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968), published the year before (e.g., vii). Barth's interest in the Dane was but one example of the early-twentieth-century Kierkegaard "Renaissance" (De Vries 1083–86). Another particularly conspicuous moment of this revival was the "conversation" between Barth and Bultmann on matters of faith, which was in fact a tense exchange about their respective dialectical-theological and existential-theological alternatives to what both considered Germany's impoverished "liberal" "cultural Christianity" (De

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Vries 1085). By the late 1920s, when Auerbach arrived in Marburg, Bultmann's position on Kierkegaard in association with Heideggerian existentialism had become a major problem for Barth.[14] In the following years, Bultmann intensified his commitments; in a lecture apparently first given in 1941, for example, he names the *New Testament*, Luther, and Kierkegaard all in one breath as central to the "Existenzverständnis" ("existential understanding") of "moderne Philosophie" ("Neues Testament" 37; *Kerygma* 26).

It is unlikely that Auerbach would have been unfamiliar with Bultmann's position on Kierkegaard's philosophy during his time in Marburg. The decision to include a discussion of the *akedah* up front in the book that he, again, famously claims to have written in Istanbul but that, like the essay "Figura" (1938), he had already begun to conceptualize in Marburg, may profitably be read in this context.[15] During the years he and Auerbach were colleagues, Bultmann published his well-known essay "Die Bedeutung des Alten Testaments für den christlichen Glauben" ("The Significance of the Old Testament for Christian Faith"), for example, in which he observes that Hebrew Scripture was as open to existentialist interpretation as the New Testament (Gunneweg). That Auerbach was in conversation with him and other Protestant scholars in Marburg could explain not only why Auerbach appears to have read and cited Genesis 22 in Luther's translation rather than in Hebrew in the original German text of *Mimesis* (*Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit* 10), but also, and more importantly, why he turned to the most famous early-twentieth-century commentary on Hebrew Scripture, by the Lutheran Old Testament scholar Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932), *Genesis* (first published in 1901, followed by five more editions by 1922), as a source for his reading of the story.[16] It cannot be assumed that Auerbach would have found the Lutheran Gunkel's volume in the Catholic Dominican library in Istanbul where he is known to have worked after 1936 (Konuk 141–42). The details of Auerbach's reading of Genesis 22 help us understand the implication of his glosses in the earlier and specifically Protestant—if not also ultimately Lutheran—context in Marburg before he fled.

For example, Auerbach's account in *Mimesis* of Abraham's trial is located squarely within an almost Barthian endorsement of what Barth calls "the infinite qualitative difference between God and man" (qtd. in De Vries 1086). When He demands Isaac's sacrifice, Auerbach writes, God is "unbekannt" ("unknown"), "nicht dort" ("not there"), even "verborgen" ("hidden" [10–11, 17, 19; 8–9, 15, 17]). Even though He gives His "Befehl in direkter Rede" ("command in direct discourse"), "er verschweigt sein Motiv und seine Absicht" ("He leaves His motives and His purpose unexpressed" [13; 11]). For all this mystery or perhaps precisely because of it, God, inaccessible to the humanity that Abraham represents, becomes the most compelling character here; Abraham, however "schwer getroffen" ("sorely tried"), is only of interest because of his adherence to "das Pünktliche . . . im Gehorsam" ("punctual obedience" [12; 10]), Auerbach explains.[17] In a cunning theophilosophically informed moment of sensitive close reading, Auerbach stresses that God's sovereignty and His distant, but final, power over humanity are both existentially and narratively overwhelming; none of the details of the text serve any other end than the one He "[hat] befohlen" ("has commanded" [11; 9]). This is a kind of realism that "ziehlte . . . nicht auf 'Wirklichkeit'" (is "not primarily oriented toward 'reality'") as representation at all, Auerbach explains. Rather, it focuses on the reality of the "tyrannisch" ("tyrannical") "Wahrheit" ("truth" [17, 16; 14, 14]) of God's power. Both text and divine command "wollen . . . unterwerfen" ("seek [to] subjugate [17; 15; trans. modified]) readers by "rauben" ("rob[bing]") them of

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their "Gemütsfreiheit" ("emotional freedom" [13; 11]). In this argument, the style of Hebrew Scripture works in the same imperious way as the "Old Testament" God Himself.[18]

And yet (and still following an almost Barthian reading): even as Auerbach describes Abraham in all his helpless humanity as fully other than the divinity whose works and deeds are at the story's center, he describes the patriarch as ontologically secure in his subjection. Obedience is all we get in the part of Abraham's story on which Auerbach dwells. We are not asked, for example, to consider any part of the tale beyond Abraham's—and Isaac's—doing exactly what Abraham "befohlen ist" ("has been told to do"). Auerbach's version of the *akedah* in fact breaks off—"'Und gingen die beiden miteinander'" ("'So they went both of them together'" [13; 11])—before the intervention of the angel and the substitution of the ram (Genesis 22.8). In Genesis according to Auerbach, then, it is the singular spectacle of the "erhabene Wirkung Gottes" ("sublime influence of God") that takes center stage—even when it reaches "tief in das Alltägliche" ("deeply into the everyday" [*Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit* 26; *Mimesis: The Representation* 22]). The struggles of the individual existentialist "believer," who Barth had complained was always at the center of Bultmann's concerns (Harbsmeier 321), do not figure prominently in this reading.[19] When told in this way, Abraham's terrifying but ultimately uplifting trial signifies an almost Barthian ability on humanity's part to have faith, a faith that nevertheless appears to be not even properly human when it testifies only to the "Größe" ("greatness") and "Erhabenheit" ("transcendent majesty") of God (Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit* 21; Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation* 18).

What about Peter? In *Mimesis*, chapter 2, a human being is also tested on his faith—in this case, however, on his ability to believe in a divinity that, unlike Abraham's God, has become incarnate in the world as a person "niedrigsten gesellschaftlichen Ranges" ("of the humblest social station" [44; 41]). In contrast to chapter 1, chapter 2 focuses on the tortured human condition in which both Christ and the individual believer are caught; here, it is Peter's correspondingly profane inability to think his finitude together with divinity that appears to concern Auerbach the most. That this more profoundly anxious version of humanity, as it is tested in its relation to that which transcends it, is responding to the theological positions and discursive conditions of Marburg's Christian existentialist milieu and to the Lutheran Bultmann's wrestling with the question of faith in particular is obliquely manifest from the very start when Auerbach turns from his ancient Roman examples of Petronius (27–66 CE) and Tacitus (c. 58–102 CE) to the Gospel of Mark as a "Gegenbeispiel" ("counterexample" [43; 40]) and explains in a not-so-casual aside that his decision to focus on Mark's version of these events rather than Matthew's or Luke's was based on the fact that "die Unterschiede bei den Synoptikern sind . . . unbedeutend" ("the differences in the synoptists are . . . insignificant" [44; 40]). The claim is extraordinary, given what even a casual student of the synoptic Gospels would have known about their differences at the time. The remark suggests the context in which Auerbach could have considered Peter's rather than Abraham's story as the core of *Mimesis*'s message and allows us to consider the ways this context may have shaped his reading of how Peter's story moves us.[20]

First: asserting that the differences between the synoptic Gospels were minor flies in the face of long-accepted conclusions about the "Synoptic Problem," as the debates about the "mutual relationships of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke" were known (Bultmann, "New Approach" 337). Bultmann's work figured prominently in these discussions. As he explains in detail in his 1926 essay "The New Approach to the Synoptic Gospels," for example, the impor-

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tant *differences* between Matthew, Mark, and Luke emerge clearly on the basis of the widely accepted approach known as *Formgeschichte* ("form history"), the close text-critical assessment of the "history of forms"—and, tellingly for Auerbach's possible reception of *Formgeschichte* concerns, also of "style" (344)—that had been pioneered by the German Lutheran professor of theology Martin Dibelius (1883–1947) in his *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (1919; *The Form History of the New Testament* [Köhler 603]). Auerbach's preferred Gospel, Mark, played a central role in the development of this method.

At the most basic level, the form-historical approach to Scripture endowed Mark with a privileged position because analyses informed by the method—like those produced by Bultmann—distinguished between "traditional" elements of the Gospels that date back to the time of Jesus of Nazareth's "genuinely historical" preaching, available in the so-called *Logia*, or "sayings" of Jesus, on the one hand, and later "redactions," "additions or modifications," introduced by the evangelists into the sayings to create post facto narratives, on the other (Bultmann, "New Approach"). With its relative simplicity, the Gospel of Mark was held to be closest to the *Logia*; the result was the Markan "priority thesis." Moreover, Auerbach's claim that Mark could stand for all the synoptics indicates his acceptance of Markan priority—in spite of the fact that the form-historical debates on which this priority was based also demonstrably confirmed that there *were* differences between the Gospels. Moreover, Auerbach's reading of Mark is highly personal—he fails to cite the text directly as he so often does in most other *Mimesis* chapters but, rather, paraphrases it;[21] this approach also relies on the *Formgeschichte* method, which, by sequencing the various moments inscribed in a text, contests the practice of seeing the Gospels as "narratives of actual events" rooted in the specific "historical" time and context of Jesus of Nazareth's ministry (Bultmann, "New Approach" 350) and updates them by making them more urgent in the here and now of each and every reader—including Auerbach. In a later text, Bultmann used the term *historisch* to describe the earlier way of reading Scripture referentially, so to speak, and advocated as an alternative to it a way of reading that looked, rather, at how any individuals in any historical community and "Situation" in the midst of their own "geschichtliches Geschehen" ("historical events")—their own *Geschichte* ("history")—receive the message of Christ ("Neues Testament" 47; *Kerygma* 37; trans. modified). This shift to reading Scripture as testimony to *Geschichte*—to the *Logia* collector's or the evangelists' particular needs and existential "situation" in the world, in other words—rather than to some external historical context and time was the move that lay at the heart of what has become known as Bultmann's "de-mythologiz[ing]" of Scripture (Gordon 163–64).[22] That Auerbach was reading Peter's denial in this way is clear when he stresses how the apostle is caught in the exigencies of his own personal moment and situation. The approach may account for the peculiar urgency that he expresses and that readers have found in this section of chapter 2.

It is unlikely that Auerbach did not discuss the denial of Peter in Mark with Bultmann. Auerbach had himself already written about the episode in 1929 in *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt* (*Dante: Poet of the Secular World* [19–20; 12–13]), and Bultmann's evolving position on the Markan version of apostolic events was also well known. In his early, foundational 1921 book *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (*History of the Synoptic Tradition*)—in the pages devoted to Mark, for example (204–14; 338–51)—Bultmann prioritizes the impact on humankind of Christ's body natural, reading the text as depicting the barrier to understanding the words and the deeds of Jesus of Nazareth that the all-too-human apostolic collective confronted. He observes that the apostles in the Markan

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text seem almost magically constrained by an a priori inability to comprehend the truth of the Christ event linked to the human limitations of His followers: "das Nicht-verstehenkönnen liegt wie ein Zauberbann auf ihnen" ("the incapacity to understand lay like some sorcerer's ban on them all" [211; 346]). The entire story of Jesus's ministry as it is told in Mark is thus one of the struggle of His human followers to transcend their entanglement in the limitations that their finitude imposes on them by having "faith" in His divine powers—which they repeatedly have trouble doing, as when Jesus rebukes them after calming the windstorm: "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" (Mark 4.40). Tellingly, it is the "weakness" of the human "flesh" (14.38) that keeps James, John, and Peter from staying awake at Gethsemane. This same weakness is famously acute in Peter, whom Jesus singles out for focusing too much on "human" and not enough on "divine things" (8.33). Bultmann's 1921 gloss underscores that it is precisely these weaknesses that gave rise to the failures of faith visible in the original apostolic community's inability to believe that Jesus was the Son of God until after the Resurrection (*Die Geschichte* 211; *History* 346). This delay of faith was then replayed, he explains, in the context of the doubt of the early Christian communities out of which the Gospels themselves arose, when explanations had to be developed and rituals prescribed to help people wait out the time until the promised Second Coming. Central to the existential theological approach was the claim that this second delay is reproduced in each and every believer's personal struggle to continue to believe in the time of salvation in the face of the baleful mundanity of life. Bultmann writes that "die Jünger . . . vertreten . . . den Leser [und] die Gemeinde" ("the apostles represent the reader and the community" [213; my trans.]). Versions of the argument he develops in 1921 go on to appear in works beginning in 1925 with "Die Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien" ("Studies of the Synoptic Gospels") and continue into the years when he and Auerbach were in Marburg.

In the context of readings like these, Auerbach's initial decision to focus on the Gospel of Mark by claiming that it could stand for all the synoptics makes sense since he too was interested in how such texts—indeed, all texts—have an impact on their readers. In fact, beginning with Mark (instead of any of the other synoptics) has the effect of creating in its version of Peter's denial—rather than in Abraham's faith—an exemplary *Ansatzpunkt* ("point of departure") for Auerbach's study of how and why we as readers can participate in or feel "Teilnahme" ("sympathy") with our fellow human beings (*Mimesis*: *Dargestellte Wirklichkeit* 46; *Mimesis: The Representation* 42). Auerbach's expert close reading of the test of Peter's faith thus implicitly asks readers to compare its details to the details of Abraham's trial, and to choose which of the reactions to the demand to believe is more realistic. As he does in chapter 1, for example, with his tight focus on a single moment of the *akedah* story, when an obedient Abraham displays his faith, here too Auerbach zeroes in on a specific slice of the story, the moment when Peter fails to understand the paradox of Jesus's mortal form. Bultmann's interest had been in how the Markan text foregrounds the reality of a general apostolic beholdenness to the world of the flesh. Auerbach follows suit, explaining that the origins of this reality lie in Peter's mistaking of this world for all that there is: Auerbach describes the apostle's despair as the result of his disappointed realization that the expected "Wunder, durch das der Messias seine Feinde niederschmettern würde" ("miracle by which the Messiah would crush his enemies") has failed to occur (45; 42). The gloss thus catches Peter in the characteristic act of thinking too much on "human things"—such as expecting that Jesus's only possible response to his persecutors would be to physically defeat them. When he tarries over this very human

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expectation, Auerbach guarantees that this moment—and his reading of it—will indeed "[sich] an jedermann [wenden]" ("speak to everybody" [51; 48]).

Peter's entrapment in creaturely mundanity becomes even clearer when Auerbach goes on to train his gaze neither just on the nighttime identification by a serving girl of the apostle as a follower of Jesus, as described by Mark (14.66–72), nor only on Peter's scandalously repetitious denial that he belongs "zu der Gruppe Jesu" ("to Jesus' group" [*Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit* 44; *Mimesis: The Representation* 41]). Rather, what Auerbach is after is Peter's debilitating recognition that his "Glaube" ("faith") was "nicht tief genug" ("not deep enough") in the first place (45; 42). Here again we become aware of the disciple's specifically human limits within the "concrete" situation that is missing in Abraham's story (Cho 88). Although "aufgerufen" ("called") out of his quotidian existence to recognize his "Meister" ("master" [Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit* 45; *Mimesis: The Representation* 42) as the Messiah and thus to be both part of and witness to the "Entstehung einer geistigen Bewegung" ("birth of a spiritual movement") that sets "die Welt der Menschen im ganzen . . . in Bewegung" ("the whole of humanity's world astir") with its "revolutionäres Weltgeschehen" ("world revolutionary events" [46; 43]), Auerbach's Peter is in the end just a man paralyzed by his fear—he is "furchtsam" ("timid") and "ängstlich" ("full of fear" [45; 42]). At the moment of Jesus's detention, Peter can think of nothing else but the possibility of his own arrest. "[Z]weifelnde" ("doubt-ridden") and only concerned to preserve his "armes Leben" ("miserable life" [42; 45]), Peter in effect fails to continue to have faith because he is scared.[23] He is thus caught in what Bultmann, in an essay published in 1931, two years after Auerbach arrived in Marburg, describes as a "Krisis des Glaubens" ("crisis of faith"), at the moment when he has in effect been asked to see beyond the contingencies of this life by saying "yes" to Jesus as the Christ—and cannot. And when he says "no," he does so explicitly in the face of the "Unsicherheit" ("insecurity") that is for Bultmann "das Wesen der menschlichen Existenz" ("the real nature of human existence" ["Krisis" 7; "Crisis" 246]), and he bows to "die alltägliche Sorge" ("everyday care[s]" [3; 242]) when he chooses to save his own skin rather than to pursue "Freiheit" ("freedom") from "Angst" ("anxiety") by believing in God become Man (9; 247).

Auerbach zeroes in on Peter's performance of this crisis because it provides evidence of a genuinely human response to the fear and "Gefahr" ("danger") of the situation (*Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit* 44; *Mimesis: The Representation* 41). It is worth noting that Auerbach must add this creaturely fear to the original text, which does not stress it. The response nevertheless parallels Peter's need—which the Gospel text does include—to "warm" himself by the fire in the courtyard where he is identified as a follower of Jesus (Mark 14.54). (This need for warmth is not emphasized in Matthew's or Luke's versions of the scene, which may have been another element that attracted Auerbach to Mark.) Just as in his version of the *akedah* in chapter 1, moreover, here Auerbach pointedly disentangles the denial from its original embeddedness in a stylized context in the Markan text as well as from the rest of the disciple's overall story.[24] This is not to say that the earlier stages of Peter's life are not methodically ticked off; the fact that Peter's "verzweifeltes Versagen" ("desperate failure") prepared him for "die Visionen, die zur Konstituierung des Christentums entscheidend beitrugen" ("the visions which contributed decisively to the constitution of Christianity") is acknowledged (*Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit* 45; *Mimesis: The Representation* 42). But if his persistent "Schwäche" ("weakness") guarantees the future "Kraft" ("force") that Peter will derive from it as the leader of the church, the reader

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does not hear much about this future, and Peter's "Verzweifelung" ("despair") is only quite generally characterized as a preamble to his destiny. As a result, the bulk of Auerbach's reading of Mark condenses around the "Versagen" ("failure") itself, focusing on a Peter who must confront the fact that his faith had been "halbes" ("half-hearted") all along (45; 42). Auerbach pointedly notes that "[w]ie er aus ihr entrann, ist nicht erzählt" ("how he [Peter] got out of the situation is not narrated" [44; 41]). It does not occur to Auerbach to narrate it either, as he leaves the reader of *Mimesis* only with some highly speculative suggestions—again, unfounded in Scripture—about how Peter "davonkam" ("got away" [51; 48]). Even the story of Christ's "bloße Geschichte . . . auf Erden" ("naked history . . . on earth") and its "sinnlos und qualvoll" ("meaningless and tortured") end, which were so important for him in the Dante book, also in connection with Peter's "Erniedrigung" ("humiliation"), cede pride of place to the apostle's loss of faith here (*Dante als Dichter* 21, 22; *Dante: Poet* 13, 15; trans. modified).

Auerbach uses the term *beliebig*, or "random," ten times in chapter 2 of *Mimesis* (45–47; 42–44) to describe the many people who are as susceptible to being "aufgerufen" ("called" [45; 42]) to witness their human frailty as Peter is. Auerbach uses the term throughout *Mimesis* and glosses it here. It "bezeichnet" ("designates"), he writes, "Personen . . . aus allen möglichen Ständen, Berufen, und Lebenslagen" ("people from all classes, occupations, walks of life") as they have been "getroffen" ("engulfed"—or, better, "struck")—"zufällig" ("accidentally") by the "geschichtliche Bewegung" ("historical movement" [47; 44]). Instead of, or in addition to, suggesting that the humble or lower classes may be as involved in the high seriousness of matters concerning history and faith as the upper classes (this is the crux of Auerbach's signature anticlassicistic definition of the realistic mixing of styles), his definition of *beliebig* captures the permanence of the potentially tragic encounter—universally human but always personally experienced—that each of us has with contingency. The "existential" reality that Auerbach explores here thus concerns Peter as he represents all human beings (46; 43) as they face these limits in a "horrifying experience of the self."[25] His subsequent deep engagement in *Mimesis* with other *beliebig* figures, including Augustine's Alypius (chapter 3) and Gustave Flaubert's Emma Bovary (chapter 18), who undergo the same excruciating confrontation with the contingent limits of their creaturely lives, and his sidelining of those, such as Chrétien de Troye's Calogrenant and Yvain (chapter 6) and the characters of Pierre Corneille's and Jean Racine's plays (chapter 15), who do not, may be best understood as the pursuit of ideas first developed in chapter 2 in dialogue with the Lutheran Bultmann, to whose more explicit glosses on the existential trials of each and every believer in lectures and essays delivered and written while Auerbach was in Marburg I now turn.

Randomness and Faith

To understand the discursive conditions out of which Auerbach's moving treatment of Peter's doubt emerges, it is important to consider Bultmann's theology in a bit more detail. It has been described as "eine existenzphilosophisch fundierte Theologie des Worts Gottes" ("a theology of the Word of God based on existential philosophy" [Rohls 64–65]) that was part of a phenomenological hermeneutics that some scholars have argued developed after Bultmann got to Marburg and had contact with Martin Heidegger. Bultmann had glossed Mark's version of Peter early on in a short essay published in the *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (*Journal of New Testament Scholarship*), "Die Frage nach dem messianischen Bewusstsein Jesu und das Petrus-Bekenntnis" ("The Question of Jesus' Messianic Aware-

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ness and the Confession of Peter"), in 1919–20, and then again, briefly, in the section on Mark in the 1921 *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*. But the disciple's doubt is not mentioned in either text as an emblematically human event. It is only in subsequent work that the theologian, in all likelihood already in conversation with Heidegger (they had been teaching together since 1924 [Rohls, e.g., 70]), addressed the more precise theme that Peter's struggle to believe represents—namely, how human beings characteristically respond to the insecurity of the human condition on occasions such as the one on which Auerbach focuses in *Mimesis*. As it turns out, Bultmann wrote a number of such texts on this subject closer to the time when he welcomed Auerbach into Marburg's intellectual community.

In the 1925 "Welchen Sinn hat es, von Gott zu reden?" ("What Does It Mean to Speak of God?"), for example, the question of faith is described as "der archimedische Punkt" ("the Archimedean point") from which we must always already start out anew (37; my trans.); and in the 1929 "Kirche und Lehre im Neuen Testament" ("Church and Dogma in the New Testament"), "πίστις" ("faith") is likewise understood as a form of "Gehorsam" ("obedience") that is never simply "vorhanden" ("given") but that must always be achieved again ("Kirche" 176–77; my trans.). In both of these cases, the liberal Protestant approach to New Testament teachings, which endorsed public morality as a way to display one's commitments, clearly yields to a highly individualized, personalized vision of the permanent existential challenge of believing. The shift is clearest in the aptly titled essay "Die Krisis des Glaubens" ("The Crisis of Faith"), cited above, which appears to have begun as a public lecture that Bultmann held in Marburg in 1931, two years after Auerbach arrived.

The "crisis of faith" discussed in this lecture is not explicitly associated with Peter's denial. But its terms are useful in considering the moment chronicled by Mark on which Auerbach focuses, when the "überweltliche Realität" ("transcendent reality") of a God whose "Macht" ("power") lies "jenseits" ("beyond") this world becomes "zweifelhaft" ("doubtful") to someone who is still too much in the world ("Krisis" 1).[26] Bultmann writes, "[E]chter Gottesglaube wächst *je* aus dem Innewerden der Fraglichkeit des Daseins, die nicht in einem Lehrsatz gelernt und behalten wird, sondern die *je* im Augenblick des Lebens zum Bewusstsein kommt" ("Real faith in God grows *in each case* out of becoming aware of the questionability of Existence, which cannot be learned and adhered to as a point of doctrine; rather, it is something *each one of us* becomes aware of in each individual moment of life" [6–7; my emphasis]). As noted above, Bultmann emphasizes here the challenge of finitude that each and every believing human being confronts individually and personally when called to "Ja-Sagen" ("say yes") to God (5, 7). Bultmann invokes the need to "say yes" to God countless times in the text. It would have been difficult for anyone listening to the lecture not to hear that this was the only solution to the "crisis of faith" about which Bultmann was speaking. It is also precisely the opposite of Peter's choice in the Gospel of Mark, as Auerbach reads it, when the apostle "say[s] no" when he is challenged to declare what and in whom he believes.

Again, Bultmann does not mention Peter in this lecture about faith. Nor does he use the term *beliebig* here as he does elsewhere to describe the existential trial that all believers face. But his repeated use of the particle *je* ("each") suggests the Heideggerian concept of *Jeweiligkeit*, "respectiveness," which for "the early Heidegger . . . signifie[d] the radically finite and historically particular nature of the individual subject" (Coyne 376). Bultmann writes that "der Glaube ist nie Sache einer Generation oder Epoche, sondern *je* meine Sache" (faith "is never a matter of a generation or an era, but, rather, always a

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matter *each time* for me" ["Krisis" 13; my emphasis]); "die Sache *je* des Augenblicks, meines Augenblicks" ("it is a matter *each time* of the individual moment, of my moment" [14; my emphasis]). In "Die Eschatologie des Johannes-Evangelium" (1928; "The Eschatology of the Gospel of John"), Bultmann had described "[d]ies jeweilige Jetzt . . . das eschatologisches Jetzt" (every individual's "respective" "eschatological Now") in much the same way (144; my trans.). We are always only addressed by "das Wort" ("the Word"), the Logos, in a singular "Augenblick" ("moment") that is our own, and we are also "immer neu gewählt" ("always chosen over and over again") to hear the Word "im Glauben" ("in the faith") "des jeweiligen Jetzt" ("of [our] respective Now" [144, 145, 147; my trans.]). Bultmann's insistence on the *Jeweiligkeit* of these challenges as they concern each and every one of us may explain how we ought to understand the ubiquity in *Mimesis* of Auerbach's term *beliebig*, as well as its consistent linkage to words associated with the "beliebig" ("random") contingency of "Alltäglichkeit" ("everydayness" [*Mimesis*: *Dargestellte Wirklichkeit* 47; *Mimesis: The Representation* 44]), not only in chapter 2 of *Mimesis* but throughout the book. Severely undertranslated when it is rendered as "randomness," *Beliebigkeit* had been associated with the contingent, something that can happen to anyone at any time, ever since the nineteenth century, when the Grimm brothers defined it that way in the German dictionary of record ("Beliebig").[27] An alternative translation might thus be: that which is of concern to "n'importe qui" ("anyone . . . at all"), as Jacques Rancière writes, when confronted with the small finitudes of daily life (*Figures de l'histoire* 63; *Figures of History* 69). This sense of *beliebig* may also be in play when Auerbach underscores that those who read Mark's version of Peter's dilemma are "aufgefordert . . . sich . . . zu entscheiden" ("urged and indeed required . . . to decide" [51; 48]) how to read it—and will be drawn into the text by their own struggle about whether or not to believe.

As noted above, "Die Krisis des Glaubens" was originally held as a lecture in Marburg in 1931. Already in the years leading up to that lecture, Bultmann had focused on and often spoken publicly about the always already personal challenge to have faith, especially when despair and fear threaten. He continued to do so as that challenge became more urgent. It is the central topic, for example, in the introductory lectures he held in the Theological Faculty at Marburg that beginning students were apparently required to attend. Bultmann first held the so-called *Theologische Enzyklopädie* (*Theological Encyclopedia*) lectures in 1926, and he repeated them in 1928, 1930, 1933, and 1936 and thus during the very years when he and Auerbach were colleagues—and as the political situation in Marburg became more fraught (Rohls 79–81). In these lectures, Bultmann takes up the same questions he treats in "Krisis": "jeder [muss] stets für sich von vorne im Christentum anfangen" ("each individual must always begin for himself from the very beginning in Christianity" [*Theologische Enzyklopädie* 74; my trans.]). There can thus only be the permanently personal decision to believe. Bultmann instructs his young audience that this decision requires an individual enactment of faith and dismisses as "Pseudo-Theologie" (115) any attempt to stabilize human existence by embedding it in rational, ethical, or sociopolitical orders or systems of thought defined by predictable and thus comforting "Gesetzlichkeit" ("lawfulness" [108]). In the additions Bultmann made to the *Theologische Enzyklopädie* lectures in 1933, he is astonishingly direct about the most proximate of such orders when he openly challenges Nazi ideologies about "Rasse" ("race" [8]), about "Gott im Volk" ("God in the *Volk*" [65]), and about "Gesetzesgehorsam" ("obedience to the law" [92; my trans.]). The individual must choose to either "[f]esthalten an der Welt" ("hold fast onto the world") and be "ἐν

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τῷ κόσμῳ" ("in the world" [142]), beholden to and determined by concerns of the "Fleisch" ("flesh" [143]), or "σάρξ," or believe and be "ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου" ("out of the world") and live in the "Geist," or "πνεῦμα" ("spirit" [142]), albeit as an enfleshed historical human being.

As in "Die Krisis des Glaubens," so too in the *Theologische Enzyklopädie* lectures, Peter's dilemma is not addressed explicitly. But the story of his fall into the world of creaturely fear, insecurity, and doubt exemplifies the kind of crisis moment that Bultmann was addressing; faith's precarity and the struggle to believe in an absolute in the face of its material absence from the world would have been a particularly pressing issue as the curtain of National Socialism began to fall on Marburg academic life. When, in *Mimesis*, Auerbach focuses neither on Peter's role as faithful witness of the Transfiguration nor on his priority as the first to whom Christ resurrected appeared but, rather, only on his doubt, he seems drawn to and fascinated by the fate of those who, when called to believe in something greater than the threatening realities of the world in which they live and with which they are confronted, cannot. When he later points to his reading of Peter's doubt as the subtext of his interest in reality as represented in texts in *Mimesis* overall, Auerbach is making of the apostle's dilemma a more general model of the painful recognition of our entrapment in the determinations of worldly life.

Conclusion: Peter's Afterlives

Auerbach attends to the Petrine dilemma not only in chapter 2 but also in subsequent chapters of *Mimesis*. Each of these chapters deserves its own reading. A short inventory includes, for example, his account in chapter 3, "The Arrest of Peter Valvomeres," of the story of Augustine of Hippo's friend Alypius, whom Auerbach describes as "ein beliebiger Alypius" ("a random Alypius" [70; 69]), where the focus is on Alypius's disastrous visit to the gladiatorial games (as reported in Augustine's *Confessions*, book 6, chapter 8 [120–22]). Auerbach explicitly aligns Alypius with Peter when he juxtaposes the "triebhafte[s] Wesen" ("instinctive urges") and "heiße Begier" ("burning lust") he falls prey to and Peter's debilitating "Verleumdung" ("denial" [70; 69]). While in chapter 12, "L'Humaine Condition," Montaigne's "Selbsterforschung" ("examination of his self" [286; 300; trans. modified]) is described as driven by his ability to take "Freude" ("delight") in "des beliebigen eigenen Lebens" ("his own random life" [289; 303]) rather than to succumb to its determinations, the philosopher nevertheless does so, in the midst of the "Belastungen, Problemen, und Abgründen" ("burdens, problems, and pitfalls") and "grundsätzliche Ungewißheit" ("essential insecurity" [295; 309]) with which both he and Peter are confronted by their lives "mitten in der Welt" ("in the midst of the world" [280; 294]). It is, however, the *beliebig* figure of Flaubert's Emma Bovary in *Mimesis*, chapter 18, who resembles Auerbach's Peter most closely.

The parallels between Emma's and the disciple's despair are striking. Like Peter, Emma awaits a "plötzliches Ereignis" ("sudden event") that will give her life a new "Wendung" ("turn" [450; 483]). But, just as the apostle's expectation that the Messiah would defeat his adversaries by means of a concrete act is disappointed, here too no "event" of the kind that Emma expects occurs. "Es geschieht nichts" ("Nothing happens" [456; 488]), and she is left, like Peter at the moment of the denial, to face her "schicksalhafte Verstrickung" ("fateful entanglement") with her "Menschenleben" ("human life" [457; 490]). Auerbach's description of Emma as she languishes "in der tiefsten Provinz" ("in the depths of the provinces" [450; 483]) likewise reminds us of the potentially "provinzielle" ("provincial") nature of Peter's origins and life and of the confrontation with the serving girl who calls him to account (45; 42). While the

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permanently low skies of Emma's finitude are intrinsically oppressive, unlike Peter's, whose oppressiveness derives from their implicit contrast to the higher domain of Jesus's unworldly power, in which Peter cannot believe, the "ernsthafte Behandlung der alltäglichen Wirklichkeit" ("serious treatment of everyday reality") occurs in both cases in texts in which a "random" person from a "sozial tieferstehende" "Menschengruppe" ("socially inferior human group") is depicted as rising to the position of "problematisch-existentelle" "Darstellung" ("problematic-existential representation" [458; 491]). Auerbach's reference in chapter 18 to the difference of nineteenth-century French realism from "allem früheren Realismus" ("all earlier realism") notwithstanding (452–53; 486), his treatment of Flaubert's Emma recalls nothing so much as his reading of Mark's Peter earlier in the book.

I have argued that Auerbach's reading of the Gospel of Mark displays signs that, before he left for Istanbul, he was in dialogue with philosophers and theologians of existence like Bultmann in Marburg and that these conversations left their mark on the book that became *Mimesis*. In chapter 18, Auerbach helpfully points to the continuities between these earlier times and his later work when he states that the pages in *Mimesis* where he discusses Flaubert are indebted to a "Vorarbeit" ("preliminary study") that was "unter diesem Gesichtspunkt" ("in line with [his] present train of thought"); he will "wiederholen" ("repeat," or "reproduce") that study's argument in the *Mimesis* chapter with only "geringen Veränderungen und Kürzungen" ("slight changes and abridgements" [449; 482; trans. modified]). Auerbach is referring here to his 1937 essay "Über die ernste Nachahmung des Alltäglichen" ("On the Serious Imitation of the Everyday"), probably one of the last essays he wrote before he fled. In that essay, Auerbach explicitly offers the term "existentiell" ("existential") as one of several "geläufige philosophische Termini" ("common philosophical terms") that could be used to describe the "existentieller Realismus" ("existential realism") he finds in Flaubert's text (448; my trans.). While this statement is edited out of the version of these pages as they appear late in *Mimesis*, Auerbach's earlier commitments to understanding the "Tiefe[e des] Daseins" ("depths of Existence") as they appear in the "Behandlung" ("treatment") of "eines Menschenlebens im Gesamtbestand" (any given "human life" in its "totality") in texts live on ("Über die ernste Nachahmung" 448; my trans.), comfortably nestled in the vocabulary of *Mimesis* and in the substance of his readings. Poignantly, given the circumstances that he faced in Germany as he completed the essay on "ernste Nachahmung" ("serious imitation"), Auerbach refers there to Emma's dilemma as her "ganz[e] ausweglos[e] Menschenexistenz" ("entire hopeless human existence which has no issue" [455; 488]), an existence that offers her only a "dumme Ausweglosigkeit" ("stupid issuelessness," or condition of there being no way out [448; 491]). As much as such formulations speak to the immediate, precarious conditions of Auerbach's flight and exilic life at the time, however, other elements ask us to recall his years in Marburg and to consider the relation of his work to the theophilosophical debates to which he was introduced there, debates whose afterlives in *Mimesis* have long drawn readers into the book.

Notes

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1. These works include *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt* (1929; *Dante: Poet of the Secular World*), "Zur Dante-Feier" (1921; "On the Anniversary Celebration of Dante"), "Dante und Vergil" (1931; "Dante and Virgil"), and *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (1946; *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*).

2. See the note that precedes *Mimesis*, chapter 1. Many of its chapters are based on preexile work. Compare chapters 3, 7 through 10, 11, 15, 18, and 20 with the essays collected in *Time, History, and Literature*—among them, the essays on Montaigne ("Der Schriftsteller Montaigne" ["Montaigne the Writer"]), Racine ("Racine und die Leidenschaften" ["Racine and the Passions"]), and Rousseau ("Über den historischen Ort Rousseaus" ["On Rousseau's Place in History"]). Materials from his book on Dante, *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt*, likewise reappear in *Mimesis*.

3. Here, *Mimesis* the book itself becomes the subject of the verb, "erreichen," "to reach," suggesting the text itself is seeking to reach its readers. In citations of *Mimesis*, the first page number refers to the original German and the second refers to the English translation.

4. The story is well known. After the National Socialists seized power, Auerbach, a professor of Romance languages at the University of Marburg, fled first to Istanbul, where, alongside several hundred other German Jewish refugee academics, he spent eleven years living and teaching the canon of "Western" literature under difficult conditions (Konuk). After the war, he went to the United States, landing first in a temporary job at Penn State University and then, after a year at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, taking up a position at Yale University, where he taught from 1950 until his death, in 1957. As a World War I veteran, Auerbach was not dismissed from his position at the University of Marburg until 1935.

5. Said; Apter, "Comparative Exile" and "Global *Translatio*"; Mufti, "Auerbach in Istanbul"; Damrosch. Konuk sets the record straight about Auerbach's time in Istanbul.

6. Porter, "Erich Auerbach" and "Old Testament Realism"; Nichols, "Erich Auerbach: History" and "Erich Auerbach: *Figura*"; Richards; Vialon, "Erich Auerbachs Verborgenes Judentum"; Zakai.

7. Hutchinson; Kadir; Mufti, "Orientalism" and "Erich Auerbach"; Yashin.

8. For other broad overviews of *Mimesis* reception, see Boden; Lindenberger. Auerbach's name is often referred to in discussions of philology proper (Efal; Hui; Warren; Yashin), but the relation of the specifics of philology as conventionally understood to Vico's work has not yet been explored in adequate detail. Recently, Marcus and Woloch have each read *Mimesis* in a less personalist manner for the philological methods of close reading it performs; Rancière, "Corps," and Jameson (e.g., 141–42, 153, 163–64, and 167) likewise tend to consider *Mimesis*'s realism in terms of its textual strategies rather than as a reflection of Auerbach's life. I review these and other receptions of Auerbach's Vichean philology in the book I am writing, "Auerbach's Worlds," a longer study of Auerbach's work of which this essay is a part.

9. On Auerbach's background, see Barck 197–99. Matthias Bormuth kindly shared documents associated with Auerbach's application in September 1935 for support from the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars, now located at the New York Public Library, where Auerbach describes his long professional association with "christlich-theologische" ("Christian-theological") circles, "besonders katholische" ("especially Catholic") ones. On Auerbach's relations to prominent Catholic figures, see Newman, "Auerbach's Dante" and "Force."

10. All citations from the Bible refer to *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*.

11. For an early recognition that Auerbach can be read in the context of existentialism, see Wellek. Gumbrecht notes Auerbach's more or less personal "practical existentialism," however (31).

12. Auerbach wrote to Paul Binswanger on 3 March 1930 of the warm welcome extended to him by the Marburg theologians ("Briefe" [part 1] 163–64). Vialon reviews Auerbach's lifelong friendship with Bultmann ("Erich Auerbach"). Work by the maverick Catholic existential theologian Romano Guardini (1885–1968) was also important for Auerbach's thinking (Newman, "Force"). While most scholarship on Auerbach fails to acknowledge this context, a number of scholars have begun to tease out Auerbach's relation to some of the figures involved; see Bormuth; Elsky, "Church History" and "Wissenschaft"; and Vialon, "Erich Auerbach." I am indebted to their work.

13. Porter argues that Auerbach foregrounds the Abraham story in *Mimesis* because of the Nazi-era stance of the "German Christians" on the teaching of this scene in German schools (Introduction xl–xli).

14. See Schmithals on Bultmann's admission of his reliance on Kierkegaard in connection with his work with Heidegger and against Barth (71–72).

15. The first footnote in "Figura" is to conversations with the classicist Paul Friedländer (1882–1968 ["Figura" (*Gesammelte Aufsätze*) 55; "Figura" (*Time*) 65]). Friedländer taught at Marburg until 1932 and then at Halle, but he was dismissed by the Nazis in 1935 and detained in a concentration camp until 1939. Bultmann's efforts apparently contributed to his release, whereupon Friedländer left for the United States. Auerbach's footnote thus indicates an earlier, preexile date for the origins of "Figura."

16. Auerbach refers to Gunkel on page 10 of the German edition of *Mimesis*; the reference is deleted in Trask's translation. For background information on Gunkel's impact on biblical scholarship, see Nicholson; Weidner discusses Auerbach and Gunkel as exceptions to the general disregard of biblical studies by literary studies and vice versa.

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17. Gunkel's commentary in fact emphasizes that *Gehorsam* ("obedience") is at the center of the story and that it is the words of the principle figures in the text, not their actions, that best suggest both God's and Abraham's "character" (237–38). Auerbach thus follows Gunkel in focusing on the characters of God and Abraham in his reading.

18. Auerbach's attention to the way that the style of Hebrew Scripture mimics the terrors of obedience imposed on humanity by this "hidden God" recalls Goethe's observations about Abraham's "Prüfungen" ("trials") in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*Poetry and Truth*), book 4 (137), which Auerbach, like all good Germans, would have known. Porter offers a different reading of this section of chapter 1 ("Old Testament Realism" 191–99).

19. This more Barthian way of reading the human-divine relation in Hebrew Scripture could account for the way Auerbach ultimately characterizes the fate of Old Testament figures like Abraham as caught up in the "Pendelausschlag" ("pendulum swing") between "Unglück und . . . Erniedrigung" ("misfortune and humiliation"), on the one hand, and the "Erhöhung" ("elevation") that goes with being "des persönlichen Umgangs und der persönlichen Inspiration Gottes gewürdigt" ("deemed worthy of God's personal intervention and personal inspiration"), on the other (*Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit* 21; *Mimesis: The Representation* 18). The term *Pendelausschlag* was first used in connection with the denial scene by Harnack in a 1922 essay about Peter that Auerbach cites in his 1929 book *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt* (*Dante: Poet of the Secular World* [20n10; 12n10]). Hatch has analyzed the Auerbach-Harnack relation in a paper to which I am much indebted.

20. A separate argument can be made about Auerbach's claims at the end of *Mimesis*, chapter 2 (51; 48)—that it is actually the "Jewish"-Christian language and thematics of the Gospel of Mark (rather than the "diaspora-Jewish" texts of Paul) that make it so powerful. He makes this argument in greater detail in "Figura" (1938 ["Figura" (*Gesammelte Aufsätze*) 75–76; "Figura" (*Time*) 94–95]).

21. I am grateful to Michael McGillen for pointing out the way Auerbach paraphrases rather than quotes from Mark here.

22. Bultmann describes his signature demythologization thesis as a response to the times; in the "modern" era, the "blindes Akzeptieren der neutestamentlichen Mythologie" ("blind acceptance of . . . New Testament mythology" ["Neues Testament" 17; *Kerygma* 3–4]) that includes the notion of a "mythische Unterwelt" ("mythical underworld") of Hell "unterhalb des Bodens, auf dem unsere Füße stehen" ("beneath our feet" [18; 4]) and that "ein Gestorbener wieder zum physischen Leben erweckt wurde" ("a dead person" could be "resuscitat[ed]" [21; 8]) is no longer tenable. To appeal to the modern faithful, such stories must be dislodged from their historical origins in "jüdischen Apokalyptik und . . . gnostischen Erlösungsmythos" ("Jewish apocalyptic and . . . Gnostic redemption myths" [27; 15]) and "interpreted" in an "existential" way (given "an existentialist interpretation" [28; 16]), he writes, as treating of "wie sich der Mensch selbst in seiner Welt versteht" ("man's understanding of himself in the world in which he lives" [23; 10]).

23. In *Mimesis*, the terms used to describe Peter's reaction—*furchtsam*, "full of fear," and *zittert*, "trembles" (45; 42)—recall Kierkegaard and point to the apostle as the new Abraham.

24. See Mark 14.51–52 for the allegorically significant "young man . . . wearing the linen cloth" (Rancière, "Corps" 90–96 and "Body" 73–79), Mark 14.66–71 for the increasingly public nature of Peter's denial as an inversion of the stages of the believer's confession of faith, and Mark 14.72 for the symbolic third crowing of the cock. Jayne Lewis clarified for me how Auerbach drops the more formulaic moments of the Markan text and personalizes it.

25. This is my translation of *schreckliche Selbsterfahrung* (45), which Trask translates as "terrifying inner experience" (42).

26. The translations of quotations from "Krisis" here and below are my own.

27. I am grateful to Michael McGillen for perceptive commentary on the term *beliebig*.

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