

Paper Two (Short): Something Else

Contend with Auerbach or muse on one of his points.

For example, Auerbach claims that the literature of Roman and Greek antiquity cannot “represent everyday life seriously” (33). By “everyday life,” he means the common life of sailors, carpenters, merchants, and so forth. He cites Tacitus as an example. On one hand, the pastoral mode elevates shepherds to a level of high seriousness. On the other hand, the pastoral is so affected as a genre that it hardly represents common life at all. Its players are mere caricatures. Can the same be said of all literary characters—aren’t they merely well-developed caricatures?

Can you think of a working-class tragic hero before Willy Loman?

Or, Auerbach claims that Homer’s poems represent human beings simply, and “delight in physical existence” (13). But the complexities of human life seem to be externalized in Homer, rather than ignored. What Sigmund Freud might have portrayed as a private, interior battle is in Homer a very public battle of allegiances and desires. Is an emotion no less complex if it is expressed aloud?

Do still waters really run deeper?

500 words. Worth 6%, due **21 October**.