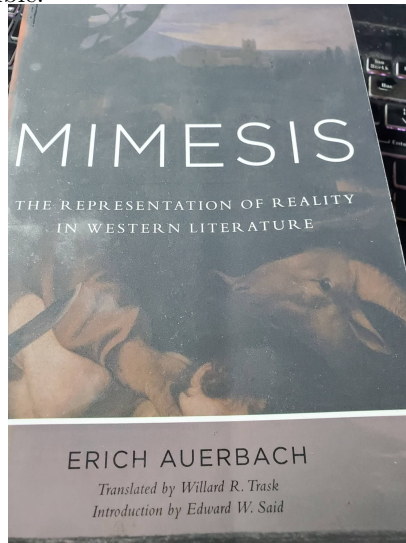


ZULF'S GUIDE TO HUMANISTIC TRAINING

ZULFIKAR MOINUDDIN AHMED

It's been some years since I was directly engaged with Humanistic matters. But I can give you a quick tour of the issues. I am not a professional and so my training is eclectic. I was fond of Fyodor Dostoevsky and Franz Kafka before Princeton, and then at Princeton I took the core course on English literature, which is a survey. I wrote about Milton's *Paradise Lost* for that course. I was interested in English Romantics from earlier than high school as well, and during high school I was drawn greatly to William Blake. I took courses by Caryl Emerson on Bakhtin, and with Stanley Corngold on Aestheticists.

So the first thing is you should read Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* and have at least some familiarity with Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as for the Western Civilisation they are truly foundational. Then there is Biblical mythologies too. I never found it particularly interesting to study Biblical mythologies independently of literary works personally. It's interesting when a particular literary work brings out something from the Bible.

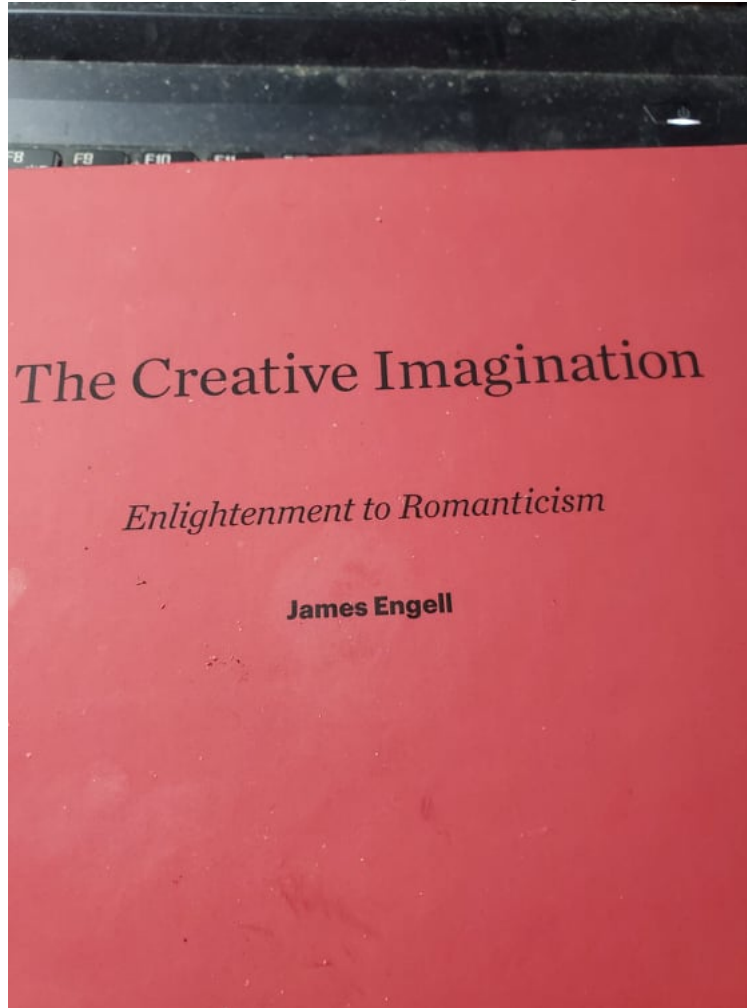


Humanities study requires generally broad understanding of periods of artistic movements in Europe. I love the Romantic period 1780-1840 and the Modernist period 1900-1930 most. In fact the issues of the latter, Modernist period are still always central to my understanding of the world. The most important and influential works on my personal life and soul are T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies* and Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*. These are

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artistic works of profound and sublime genius, but they are also embedded in a historical context of European Civilisation. Two are Modernist and one Romantic.

Now this book is new to me but quite interesting to me.



There are literally hundreds of books that I read to make sense of things. For me literature gives me sense of the world, inner and outer as well, the old self and the world division. I would not understand either without benefit of literature. So literature is necessary for me to have any sense of meaning in my existence at all. And that is *why* I take literature and humanities seriously. I am constantly evolving who I am and what is the world and existence and literature gives me the context to be able to produce understanding. I am 49 and it's not easy. It takes effort to have some deeper understanding.