



Dante: Poet of the Secular World (New York Review Books)

Erich Auerbach

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Erich Auerbach's *Dante: Poet of the Secular World* is an inspiring introduction to one of world's greatest poets as well as a brilliantly argued and still provocative essay in the history of ideas. Here Auerbach, thought by many to be the greatest of twentieth-century scholar-critics, makes the seemingly paradoxical claim that it is in the poetry of Dante, supreme among religious poets, and above all in the stanzas of his *Divine Comedy*, that the secular world of the modern novel first took imaginative form. Auerbach's study of Dante, a precursor and necessary complement to *Mimesis*, his magisterial overview of realism in Western literature, illuminates both the overall structure and the individual detail of Dante's work, showing it to be an extraordinary synthesis of the sensuous and the conceptual, the particular and the universal, that redefined notions of human character and fate and opened the way into modernity.

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