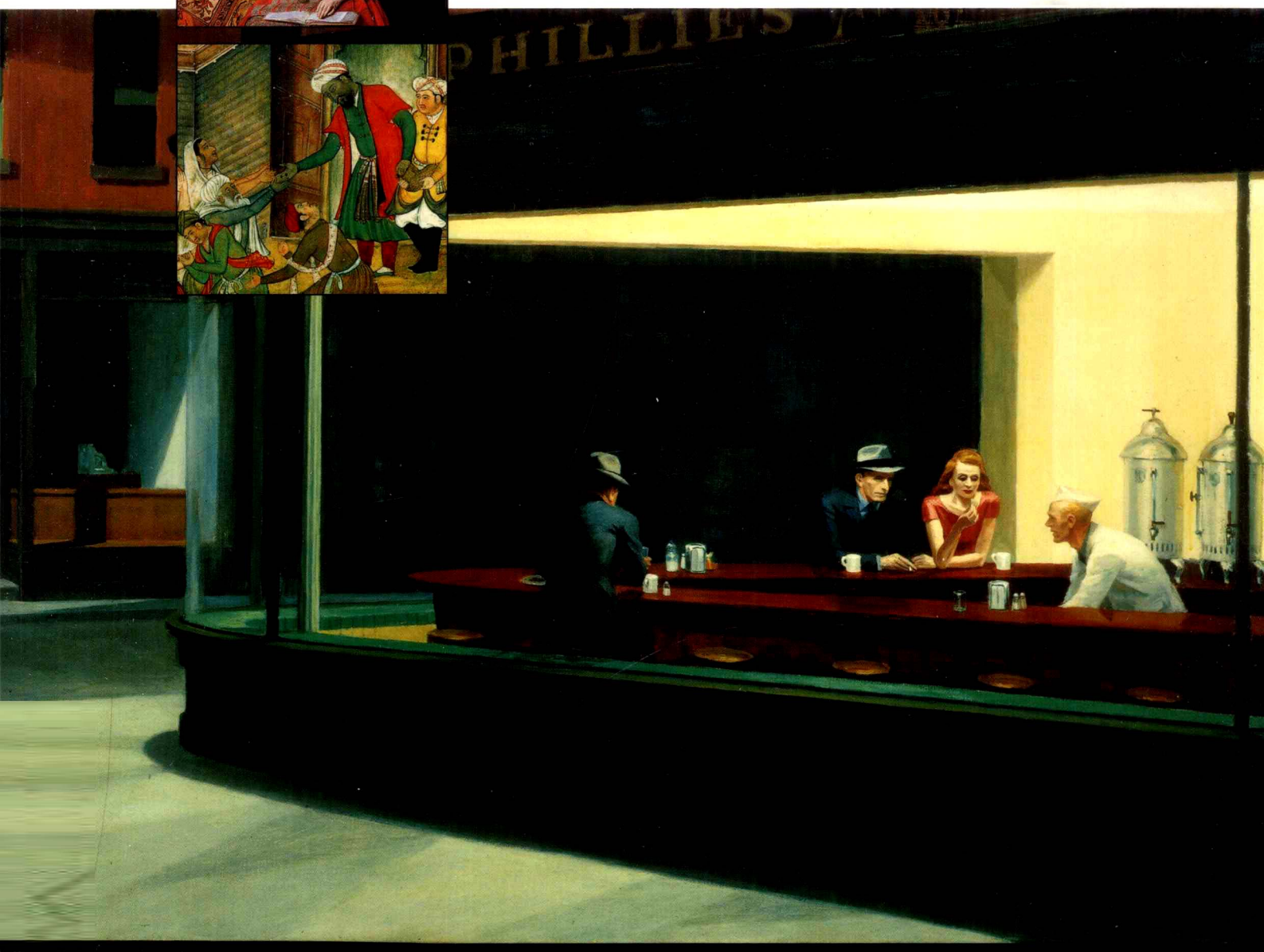
FOURTH EDITION

The Humanistic Tradition

GLORIA K. FIERO



6 MODERNISM, GLOBALISM, AND THE INFORMATION AGE

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The Humanistic Tradition

Book 6

Modernism, Globalism and the Information Age

Gloria K. Fiero

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Front cover
Main image: Edward Hopper, detail of *Nighthawks*, 1942. Oil on canvas, 33⅛ × 60⅛ in. Art Institue of Chicago. Chicago Friends of American Art Collection, 1942.51.
Inserts: (top) Francisco Goya, detail of *The Third of May, 1808: The Execution of the Defenders of Madrid*, 1814. Oil on canvas, 8 ft. 6 in. × 10 ft. 4 in. Prado, Madrid.
(center) Pieter de Hooch, detail of *Portrait of a Family Making Music*, 1663. Oil on canvas, 38⅞ × 45⅛ in. © The Cleveland Museum of Art 1998. Gift of the Hanna Fund (1951.355).
(bottom) Detail of *Rejoicing at the Birth of Prince Salim in 1569*. Manuscript illustration from the Akbar-Nama. The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

Frontispiece: Joan Miró, detail of *Person Throwing a Stone at a Bird*, 1926. Oil on canvas, 29½ x 36¼ in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
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"It's the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life!" exclaimed Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, as she watched the Cheshire Cat slowly disappear, leaving only the outline of a broad smile. "I've often seen a cat without a grin, but a grin without a cat!" A student who encounters an ancient Greek epic, a Yoruba mask, or a Mozart opera—lacking any context for these works—might be equally baffled. It may be helpful, therefore, to begin by explaining how the artifacts (the "grin") of the humanistic tradition relate to the larger and more elusive phenomenon (the "cat") of human culture.

The Humanistic Tradition and the Humanities

In its broadest sense, the term *humanistic tradition* refers to humankind's cultural legacy—the sum total of the significant ideas and achievements handed down from generation to generation. This tradition is the product of responses to conditions that have confronted all people throughout history. Since the beginnings of life on earth, human beings have tried to ensure their own survival by achieving harmony with nature. They have attempted to come to terms with the inevitable realities of disease and death. They have endeavored to establish ways of living collectively and communally. And they have persisted in the desire to understand themselves and their place in the universe. In response to these ever-present and universal challenges—*survival*, *communality*, and *self-knowledge*—human beings have created and transmitted the tools of science and technology, social and cultural institutions, religious and philosophic systems, and various forms of personal expression, the sum total of which we call culture.

Even the most ambitious survey cannot assess all manifestations of the humanistic tradition. This book therefore focuses on the creative legacy referred to collectively as *the humanities*: literature, philosophy, history (in its literary dimension), architecture, the visual arts (including photography and film), music, and dance. Selected examples from each of these disciplines constitute our *primary sources*. Primary sources (that is, works original to the age that produced them) provide first-hand evidence of human inventiveness and ingenuity. The primary sources in this text have been chosen on the basis of their authority, their beauty, and their enduring value. They are, simply stated, the great works of their time and, in some cases, of all time. Universal in their appeal, they have been transmitted from generation to generation. Such works are, as well, the landmark examples of a specific time and place: They offer insight into the ideas and values of the society in which they were produced. The drawings of Leonardo da Vinci, for example, reveal a passionate determination to understand the operations and functions of nature. And while Leonardo's talents far exceeded those of the average individual of his time, his achievements may be viewed as a mirror of the robust curiosity that characterized his time and place—the age of the Renaissance in Italy. *The Humanistic Tradition* surveys such landmark works, but joins "the grin" to "the cat" by examining them within their political, economic, and social contexts.

The Humanistic Tradition explores a living legacy. History confirms that the humanities are integral forms of a given culture's values, ambitions, and beliefs. Poetry, painting, philosophy, and music are not, generally speaking, products of unstructured leisure or indulgent individuality; rather, they are tangible expressions of the human quest for the good (one might even say the "complete") life. Throughout history, these forms of expression have served the domains of the sacred, the ceremonial, and the communal. And even in the early days of the twenty-first century, as many time-honored traditions come under assault, the arts retain their power to awaken our imagination in the quest for survival, communality, and self-knowledge.

The Scope of the Humanistic Tradition

The humanistic tradition is not the exclusive achievement of any one geographic region, race, or class of human beings. For that reason, this text assumes a global and multicultural rather than exclusively Western perspective. At the same time, Western contributions are emphasized, first, because the audience for these books is predominantly Western, but also because in recent centuries the West has exercised a dominant influence on the course and substance of global history. Clearly, the humanistic tradition belongs to all of humankind, and the best way to understand the Western contribution to that tradition is to examine it in the arena of world culture.

As a survey, *The Humanistic Tradition* cannot provide an exhaustive analysis of our creative legacy. The critical reader will discover many gaps. Some aspects of culture that receive extended examination in traditional Western humanities surveys have been pared down to make room for the too often neglected contributions of Islam, Africa, and Asia. This book is necessarily selective—it omits many major figures and treats others only briefly. Primary sources are arranged, for the most part, chronologically, but they are presented as manifestations of the informing ideas of the age in which they were produced. The intent is to examine the evidence of the humanistic tradition

thematically and topically, rather than to compile a series of mini-histories of the individual arts.

Studying the Humanistic Tradition

To study the creative record is to engage in a dialogue with the past, one that brings us face to face with the values of our ancestors, and, ultimately, with our own. This dialogue is (or should be) a source of personal revelation and delight; like Alice in Wonderland, our strange, new encounters will be enriched according to the degree of curiosity and patience we bring to them. Just as lasting friendships with special people are cultivated by extended familiarity, so our appreciation of a painting, a play, or a symphony depends on close attention and repeated contact. There are no shortcuts to the study of the humanistic tradition, but there are some techniques that may be helpful. It should be useful, for instance, to approach each primary source from the triple perspective of its text, its context, and its subtext.

The Text: The *text* of any primary source refers to its *medium* (that is, what it is made of), its *form* (its outward shape), and its *content* (the subject it describes). All literature, for example, whether intended to be spoken or read, depends on the medium of words—the American poet Robert Frost once defined literature as "performance in words." Literary form varies according to the manner in which words are arranged. So poetry, which shares with music and dance rhythmic organization, may be distinguished from prose, which normally lacks regular rhythmic pattern. The main purpose of prose is to convey information, to narrate, and to describe; poetry, by its freedom from conventional patterns of grammar, provides unique opportunities for the expression of intense emotions. Philosophy (the search for truth through reasoned analysis) and history (the record of the past) make use of prose to analyze and communicate ideas and information. In literature, as in most kinds of expression, content and form are usually interrelated. The subject matter or the form of a literary work determines its *genre*. For instance, a long narrative poem recounting the adventures of a hero constitutes an *epic*, while a formal, dignified speech in praise of a person or thing constitutes a *eulogy*.

The visual arts—painting, sculpture, architecture, and photography—employ a wide variety of media, such as wood, clay, colored pigments, marble, granite, steel, and (more recently) plastic, neon, film, and computers. The form or outward shape of a work of art depends on the manner in which the artist manipulates the formal elements of color, line, texture, and space. Unlike words, these formal elements lack denotative meaning. The artist may manipulate form to describe and interpret the visible world (as in such genres as portraiture and landscape painting); to generate fantastic and imaginative kinds of imagery; or to create imagery that is nonrepresentational—without identifiable subject matter. In general, however, the visual arts are spatial, that is, they operate and are apprehended in space.

The medium of music is sound. Like literature, music is durational: It unfolds over the period of time in which it occurs. The formal elements of music are melody, rhythm, harmony, and tone color—elements that also characterize the oral life of literature. As with the visual arts, the formal elements of music are without symbolic content, but while literature, painting, and sculpture may imitate or describe nature, music is almost always nonrepresentational—it rarely has meaning beyond the sound itself. For that reason, music is the most difficult of the arts to describe in words. It is also (in the view of some) the most affective of the arts. Dance, the artform that makes the human body itself a medium of expression, resembles music in that it is temporal and performance-oriented. Like music, dance exploits rhythm as a formal tool, but, like painting and sculpture, it unfolds in space as well as time.

In analyzing the text of a work of literature, art, or music, we ask how its formal elements contribute to its meaning and affective power. We examine the ways in which the artist manipulates medium and form to achieve a characteristic manner of execution and expression that we call *style*. And we try to determine the extent to which a style reflects the personal vision of the artist and the larger vision of his or her time and place. Comparing the styles of various artworks from a single era, we may discover that they share certain defining features and characteristics. Similarities (both formal and stylistic) between, for instance, golden age Greek temples and Greek tragedies, between Chinese lyric poems and landscape paintings, and between postmodern fiction and pop sculpture, prompt us to seek the unifying moral and aesthetic values of the cultures in which they were produced.

The Context: We use the word *context* to describe the historical and cultural environment. To determine the context, we ask: In what time and place did the artifact originate? How did it function within the society in which it was created? Was the purpose of the piece decorative, didactic, magical, propagandistic? Did it serve the religious or political needs of the community? Sometimes our answers to these questions are mere guesses. Nevertheless, understanding the function of an artifact often serves to clarify the nature of its form (and vice versa). For instance, much of the literature produced prior to the fifteenth century was spoken or sung rather than read; for that reason, such literature tends to feature repetition and rhyme, devices that facilitate memorization. We can assume that literary works embellished with frequent repetitions, such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Hebrew Bible, were products of an oral tradition. Determining the original function of an artwork also permits us to assess its significance in its own time and place: The paintings on the walls of Paleolithic caves, which are among the most compelling animal illustrations in the history of world art, are not "artworks" in the modern sense of the term but, rather, magical signs that accompanied hunting rituals, the performance of which was essential to the survival of the community. Understanding the relationship between text and context is one of the principal concerns of any inquiry into the humanistic tradition.

The Subtext: The *subtext* of the literary or artistic object refers to its secondary and implied meanings. The subtext embraces the emotional or intellectual messages embedded

in, or implied by, a work of art. The epic poems of the ancient Greeks, for instance, which glorify prowess and physical courage in battle, suggest that such virtues are exclusively male. The state portraits of the seventeenth-century French ruler Louis XIV carry the subtext of unassailable and absolute power. In our own century, Andy Warhol's serial adaptations of soup cans and Coca-Cola bottles offer wry commentary on the supermarket mentality of postmodern American culture. Identifying the implicit message of an artwork helps us to determine the values and customs of the age in which it was produced and to assess those values against others.

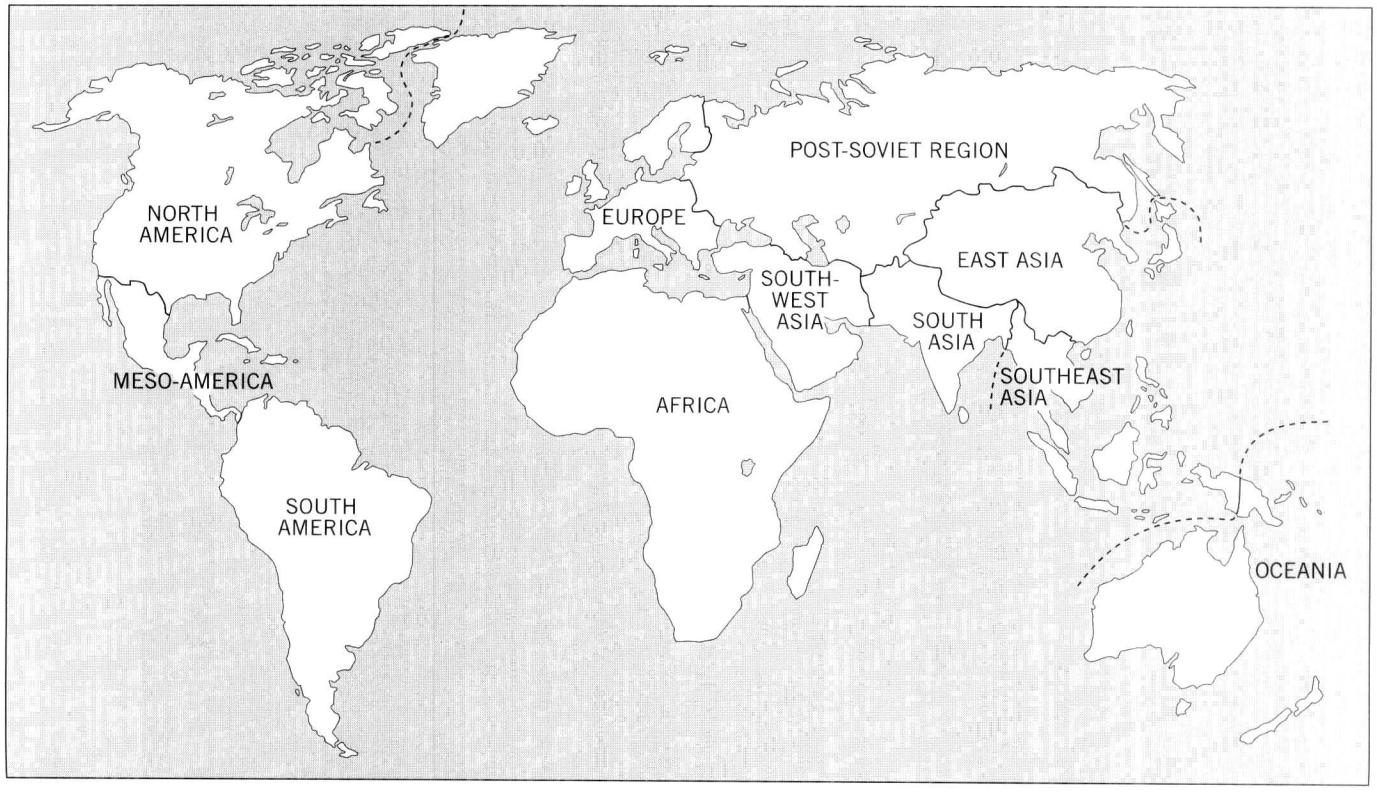
Beyond *The Humanistic Tradition*

This book offers only small, enticing samples from an enormous cultural buffet. To dine more fully, students are encouraged to go beyond the sampling presented at this table; and for the most sumptuous feasting, nothing can substitute for first-hand experience. Students, therefore, should make every effort to supplement this book with visits to art museums and galleries, concert halls, theaters, and libraries. *The Humanistic Tradition* is designed for students who may or may not be able to read music, but who surely are able to cultivate an appreciation of music in performance. The music logos that appear in the text refer to the Music Listening Selections found on two accompanying compact discs, available from the publishers. Lists of suggestions for further reading are included at the end of each chapter, while a selected general bibliography of electronic humanities resources appears in the Online Learning Center at http://www.mhhe.com/fiero.

The Fourth Edition

The fourth edition of *The Humanistic Tradition* continues to take as its main focus the topical and global themes that have informed the last three editions. Book 1, however, has been restructured: Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the East Asian civilizations now each receive separate chapters, and chapter 7, "The Bipolar Empires of Rome and China," has been divided into two separate chapters. In Book 3, chapters 18 and 19 have been reversed, and in Book 4, chapters 21 to 23 have been reordered. There are new reading selections throughout the text. These range from the poems of Catallus to the lyrics of Derek Walcott and from Saint Francis' *Canticle of Brother Sun* to Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. Excerpts from Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, two newly translated writings by Renaissance women, the *Scivias* of Hildegard of Bingen, and the narrative of Sojourner Truth give greater dimension to the role of women in the arts. The *Analects* of Confucius appear in a 1997 translation. Greek mythology, slave songs and spirituals, and the nineteenth-century symbolist movement take their places in the appropriate chapters. Excerpts from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Othello* replace the complete text of *Othello*, which is now available in the web-based resources for *The Humanistic Tradition*. Our examination of the twentieth century has been expanded to include film, and each chapter in Book 6 now brings attention to landmark developments in that medium. The contemporary chapters have been updated to include a segment on the quest for ethnic identity, focusing on the Latino voice that has made a significant mark in the arts of the past two decades.

Keymap Indicating Areas Shown as White Highlights on the Locator Maps



In the newly organized chapter 38, electronic and digital art receive expanded consideration.

This new edition includes more color illustrations than previous editions, as well as new diagrams that assist the reader in understanding the content, function, or construction techniques of various artworks. The Rosetta Stone, the so-called Mask of Agamemnon, the Hellenistic Altar of Zeus, and artwork by Angelica Kauffmann, Henry Ossawa Tanner, Lucca della Robbia, Piero della Francesco, Fernand Léger, and Anselm Kiefer are among the many new illustrations. The treatment of ancient China has been updated to include the information yielded by recent excavations of early dynastic graves in the People's Republic of China. Two new audio compact discs replace the older cassettes. These listening selections illustrate the musical works discussed in the text. Music by Hildegard of Bingen and Aaron Copland, African call-and-response chant, and the Muslim Call to Prayer have been added to the earlier materials, along with an excerpt from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*. The revised *Science and Technology Boxes*, along with *Locator Maps* and new *Timelines*, provide useful and popular study aids. The revised timelines are not exhaustive, but show selected key works. Each chapter in the fourth edition opens with a key quotation drawn from the readings and focusing on the theme of the chapter. Updated bibliographies are appended to each individual chapter.

A Note to Instructors

The key to successful classroom use of *The Humanistic Tradition* is *selectivity*. Although students may be assigned to read whole chapters that focus on a topic or theme, as well as complete works that supplement the abridged readings, the classroom should be the stage for a selective treatment of a single example or a set of examples. The organization of this textbook is designed to emphasize themes that cut across geographic boundaries—themes whose universal significance prompts students to evaluate and compare rather than simply memorize and repeat lists of names and places. To assist readers in achieving global cultural literacy, every effort has been made to resist isolating (or "ghettoizing") individual cultures and to avoid the inevitable biases we bring to our evaluation of relatively unfamiliar cultures.

Acknowledgments

Writing *The Humanistic Tradition* has been an exercise in humility. Without the assistance of learned friends and colleagues, assembling a book of this breadth would have been an impossible task. James H. Dormon read all parts of the manuscript and made extensive and substantive editorial suggestions; as his colleague, best friend, and wife, I am most deeply indebted to him.

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The burden of preparing the fourth edition has been lightened by the assistance of Christopher Freitag, Executive Editor, and by the editorial vigilance of Jon Haynes, Richard Mason, and Cleia Smith at Calmann & King.

SUPPLEMENTS FOR THE INSTRUCTOR AND THE STUDENT

A number of useful supplements are available to instructors and students using *The Humanistic Tradition*. Please contact your sales representative or call 1-800-338-5371 to obtain these resources, or to ask for further details.

Online Learning Center

A complete set of web-based resources for *The Humanistic Tradition* can be found at www.mhhe.com/fiero. Material for students includes study outlines, self-tests, interactive maps and timelines, and links to other web resources. Instructors will benefit from teaching tips, web activities and assignments, and access to material from the Instructor's Resource Manual. Instructors can also utilize PageOut, McGraw-Hill's own online course management tool. PageOut works seamlessly with the Online Learning Center resources and allows instructors to have complete control over the organization of online course content on their own course website. Instructors can register for this free service at www.pageout.net.

Compact Discs

Two audio compact discs have been designed exclusively for use with *The Humanistic Tradition*. CD One corresponds to the music listening selections discussed in books 1–3 and CD Two contains the music in books 4–6. Instructors may obtain copies of the recordings for classroom use through the local sales representative or by calling 1-800-338-5371. The recordings are also available for individual purchase by students; they can be packaged with any or all of the six texts. Consult your local sales representative for details.

Slide Sets

A set of book-specific slides is available to qualified adopters of *The Humanistic Tradition*. These slides have been especially selected to include many of the less well-known images in the books and will be a useful complement to your present slide resources. Additional slides are available for purchase directly from Universal Color Slides. For further information consult our web site at www.mhhe.com/fiero.

Instructor's Resource Manual

The Instructor's Resource Manual is designed to assist instructors as they plan and prepare for classes. Course outlines and sample syllabi for both semester and quarter systems are included. The chapter summaries emphasize key themes and topics that give focus to the primary source readings. The study questions for each chapter may be removed and copied as handouts for student discussion or written assignments. A Test Item File follows each chapter along with a correlation list that directs instructors to the appropriate supplemental resources. A list of suggested videotapes, recordings, videodiscs, and their suppliers is included.

MicroTest III

The questions in the Test Item File are available on MicroTest III, a powerful but easy-to-use test generating program. MicroTest is available for Windows, and Macintosh personal computers. With MicroTest, an instructor can easily select the questions from the Test Item File and print a test and answer key. You can customize questions, headings, and instructions and add or import questions of your own.

Student Study Guides, Volumes 1 and 2

Written by Gloria K. Fiero, two new Student Study Guides are now available to help students gain a better understanding of subjects found in *The Humanistic Tradition*. Volume 1 accompanies books 1–3 and Volume 2 accompanies books 4–6. Each chapter contains: a Chapter Objective; a Chapter Outline; Key Terms, Names (with pronunciation guides), and Dates; Vocabulary Building; Multiple Choice Questions; and Essay Questions. Many chapters also contain a Visual/Spatial Exercise and Bonus Material. At the end of each Part, Synthesis material helps students draw together ideas from a set of chapters.

Series Contents

Book 6 Contents

MAPS

MUSIC LISTENING SELECTIONS

CD Two Selections 17 to 26

The triumph of modernism

Since the birth of civilization, no age has broken with tradition more radically or more self-consciously than the twentieth century. In part, the modernist break with the past represents the willful rejection of former values, but it also registers the revolutionary effects of science and technology on all aspects of life. Among the swelling populations of modern cities, the pace of living became faster and more chaotic than ever before. At the same time, electronic technology began to transform the planet earth into what Canadian sociologist Marshall McLuhan called a "global village." In the global village of the twentieth century, communication between geographically remote parts of the world was almost instantaneous, and every new development—technological, ecological, political, and intellectual—potentially affected every villager. Social and geographic mobility, receptivity to change, and a self-conscious quest for the new, the different, and even the outrageous were the hallmarks of this largely secular and materialistic world community.

The metaphoric "shrinking" of the planet actually began at the end of the nineteenth century, with the invention of the telephone (1876), wireless telegraphy (1891), and the internal combustion engine (1897), which made possible the first automobiles. By 1903, the airplane joined the string of enterprises that ushered in an era of rapid travel and communication. Such technology was as revolutionary for the twentieth century as metallurgy was for the fourth millennium B.C.E. However, while metallurgy ushered in the birth of civilization, modern technology (machine guns, poison gas, and nuclear power) gave civilization the tools for self-destruction.

The end of the nineteenth century was a time of relative peace and optimistic faith in technological progress and human productivity. Throughout the world, however, sharp contrasts existed between rich and poor, between democratic and totalitarian ideologies, and between technologically backward and technologically advanced nations. As the powerful nations jockeyed for political and economic primacy, and as Europe and the United States continued to build their industrial and military might, few anticipated the possibility of armed conflict. In 1914, that possibility became a reality in the outbreak of the first of two world wars. The "Great War," the first total war in European history, ended forever the so-called age of innocence. And by the end of World War II, in 1945, nothing would ever seem certain again.

The modern era—roughly the first half of the twentieth century—has yielded a rich diversity of ideas and art styles. These are addressed thematically: in chapters that treat the modernist assault on tradition, Sigmund Freud's influential role in the culture of the twentieth century, the brutal impact of totalitarianism and two world wars, and finally, the arts at mid-century, as they reflect the alienation and anxiety that dominated the postwar era.

(opposite) **MARCEL DUCHAMP**, detail of *Nude Descending a Staircase, #2,* 1912. Oil on canvas, 58 × 35 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection. © Succession Marcel Duchamp. ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2000.

World Events

To 1900

- Planck: quantum theory
- Einstein: special theory of relativity
- Wright Brothers: air flight
- Ford: motorcar
- Edison: moving pictures
- Wireless radio: first sound transmission 1906
- Heisenberg: principle of uncertainty
- Nationalist Revolution in China 1911

1915

- WORLD WAR I — 8 million die
- Russian Revolution 1917

1925

- Stalin becomes Soviet dictator 1926
- Nazi revolution in Germany
- Hitler becomes chancellor 1933
- The Great Depression 1929–1940s

1935

- WORLD WAR II — 11 million die in Holocaust

1945

- Atomic bomb developed 1945
- Digital computers 1946
- Communist Revolution in China 1949–52
- Mao Zedong: Cultural Revolution 1966–76 >

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- Lenin: *The State and Revolution*
- Frost: "The Road Not Taken"
- Joyce: *Ulysses*
- Proust: *Remembrance of Things Past*
- Kafka: *Metamorphosis*
- Yeats: "The Second Coming"
- Eliot: "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

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- Marinetti: *Futurist Manifesto*
- Breton: *Surrealist Manifesto*
- Tagore: "The Man Had No Useful Work"
- Hitler: *Mein Kampf*
- Remarque: *All Quiet on the Western Front*
- Huxley: *Brave New World*
- e.e. cummings: "she being Brand"

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- Freud: *Civilization and Its Discontents*

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- Beckett: *Waiting for Godot* 1948
- Miller: *Death of a Salesman* 1950

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- Heller: *Catch-22*
- Wiesel: *Night* 1958
- Orwell: *1984*

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- Malevich: *White on White*
- Kandinsky: *Panel for Campbell*
- Mondrian: *Composition*

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- Popova: *Le Cocu magnifique*

DADA
- Duchamp: *Fountain*

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- Dalí: *Persistence of Memory*
- Miró: *Person Throwing a Stone*

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- Kirchner: *Street, Berlin*

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- Gropius: Bauhaus
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- Le Corbusier: Villa Savoye

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- Giacometti: *City Square*
- Segal: *Bus Riders* 1962 >
- Kahlo: *Broken Column*
- Hopper: *Nighthawks*
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- Mies and Johnson: Seagram Building
- Wright: Guggenheim Museum

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MODERN DANCE
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- Stravinsky: *Rite of Spring*

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- Bartók: *Bluebeard's Castle*

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- Shostakovich: *"Leningrad" Symphony*
- Berg: *Lulu*

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- Cage: *4'33"*
- Britten: *War Requiem* 1963 >
- Cunningham: *Summerspace*
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FILM

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1955

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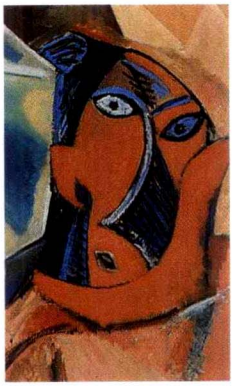
- Porter: *The Great Train Robbery*



The modernist assault

"What is real is not the external form, but the essence of things."
Constantin Brancusi

The New Physics

At the turn of the nineteenth century, atomic physicists advanced a model of the universe that altered the one that Isaac Newton had provided two centuries earlier. Newton's universe had operated according to smoothly functioning mechanical laws that generally corresponded with the world of sense perception. Modern physicists, however, discovered that at the physical extremities of nature—in the microcosmic realm of atomic particles and in the macrocosmic world of outer space—Newton's laws did not apply. The laws that, in fact, governed these systems only became clear when physicists succeeded in measuring the speed of light as it moved through space. In 1900, the German physicist Max Planck (1858–1947) discovered that light was a form of radiant energy that traveled through space in *quanta*, that is, separate and discontinuous bundles of atomic particles—the fundamental units of matter. Following this and other groundbreaking discoveries in quantum physics (as the field came to be called), another German physicist, Albert Einstein (1879–1955), explained the intrinsic relationship between matter and energy. Energy, argued Einstein, is itself matter multiplied by the speed of light squared, a relationship expressed by the formula $E = mc^2$.

In 1905, Einstein also produced his *special theory of relativity*, a radically new approach to the concepts of time, space, and motion. While Newton had held that an object preserved the same properties whether at rest or in motion, Einstein theorized that as an object approached the speed of light, its mass increased and its motion slowed. Time and space, according to Einstein, were not separate coordinates (as physicists had heretofore conceived) but, rather, indivisible and reciprocal entities. Einstein's discoveries indicated that the universe was shapeless and subject to constant change and, further, that the positions of atomic particles and their velocity might not be calculable with any certainty. In 1920 the research of the German physicist Werner Heisenberg (1901–1976) confirmed Einstein's theory: Heisenberg's *principle of uncertainty* stated that since the very act of measuring subatomic phenomena would alter those phenomena, the position and the velocity of a particle could not be measured simultaneously with any accuracy. Thus, at the onset of the twentieth century, modern physics had replaced the absolute and rationalist model of the universe with one whose operations seemed disjunctive and uncertain.

The practical and the theoretical implications of quantum physics and relativity were immense. Jet propulsion, radar technology, and computer electronics were only three of the numerous long-range consequences of atomic physics. The new science gave humankind greater insight into the operations of nature, but it also provided a gloomier view of the cosmos. In contrast with the optimistic (if mechanical) view of nature provided by Enlightenment cosmology and nineteenth-century technology, modern physics described a universe whose operations violated the inexorable sequence of cause and effect. While Newtonian physics encouraged human control of nature, modern science pictured an indifferent cosmos whose basic components—atomic particles—were inaccessible to both the human eye and the camera (and hence beyond the realm of the senses). Moreover, the operations of that cosmos seemed to lie beyond predictability or control.

The new physics, dependent mainly on mathematical theory, became increasingly remote from the average person's understanding. Atomic fission, the splitting of atomic particles (accomplished only after 1920), and the atomic bomb itself (first tested in 1945) confirmed the validity of Einstein's formula, $E = mc^2$. But it also paved the way for the atomic age, an age that carried with it the possibility of total annihilation. And even if the planet did escape atomic destruction, its demise, in the long run, was inevitable; for, according to the new physics, substance and energy were diffusing inexorably into darkness. As one writer explained, "The sun is slowly but surely burning out, the stars are dying embers, and everywhere in the cosmos heat is turning to cold, matter is dissolving into radiation,

1900 Max Planck (German) announces his quantum theory

1903 Henry Ford (American) introduces the Model A automobile

1905 Albert Einstein (German) announces his special theory of relativity

1910 Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead (British) publish their *Principia Mathematica*, a systematic effort to base mathematics in logic

1913 Niels Bohr (Danish) applies quantum theory to atomic structure

1916 Einstein announces his general theory of relativity

and energy is being dissipated into empty space."* Though the final curtain was not predicted to fall for billions of years, the portents were ominous.

As Einstein challenged the established way of viewing the external world, the Austrian physician Sigmund Freud was proposing a new and equally revolutionary way of perceiving the internal, or subconscious, world of the human being (see chapter 33). And, as if to confirm Freud's darkest insights, in 1914 Europe embarked on the first of two wars, both of which used the potentially liberating tools of the new science to annihilate human life. World War I, more devastating than any previously fought on this planet, compounded the prevailing mood of insecurity and convinced many that the death of culture was at hand.

Early Twentieth-Century Poetry

The literature of the early twentieth century mirrored the somber mood of uncertainty. Unlike the romantics of the nineteenth century, early modern poets found in nature neither a source of ecstasy nor a means of personal redemption. Their poetry did not characterize human beings as heroic or inspired; rather, it described an indifferent cosmos, whose inhabitants might be insecure, questioning, and even perverse. While early twentieth-century poetry was less optimistic than romantic poetry, it was also less effusive and self-indulgent. Indeed, its lyric strains were frequently as discordant as those of early modern music and modern art.

The Imagists

Poets of the early twentieth century cultivated a language of expression that was as conceptual and abstract as that of modern physics. Like the nineteenth-century symbolist poets (see chapter 31), early twentieth-century poets rejected self-indulgent sentiment and sought a more concentrated style that involved paring down the subject in order to capture its intrinsic or essential qualities—a process called **abstraction**. They rejected fixed meter and rhyme and wrote instead in a style of free verse that became notorious for its abrupt and discontinuous juxtaposition of lean and sparse images. Appropriately, these poets called themselves *imagists*. Led by the Americans Ezra Pound (1885–1972), Amy Lowell (1874–1925), and Hilda Doolittle (1886–1961), who signed her poems simply "H.D.," the imagists took as their goal the search for verbal compression, concentration, and economy of expression.

The American expatriate Ezra Pound was one of the most influential of the imagist poets. By the age of twenty-three, Pound had abandoned his study of language and literature at American universities for a career in writing that led him to Europe, where he wandered from England to France and Italy. A poet, critic, and translator, Pound was thoroughly familiar with the literature of his contemporaries. But he cast his net wide: He studied the prose and poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, China and Japan, medieval France and Renaissance Italy—often reading the work of literature in its original language. As a student of Oriental calligraphy, he drew inspiration from the sparseness and immediacy of Chinese characters. He was particularly fascinated by the fact that the Chinese poetic line, which presented images without grammar or syntax, operated in the same intuitive manner that nature worked upon the human mind. It was this vitality that Pound wished to bring to poetry.

In Chinese and Japanese verse—especially in the Japanese poetic genre known as ***haiku***—Pound found the key to his search for concentrated expression. Two *haiku*-like poems are to be found in the collection called *Personae*.

READING 6.1 From Pound's *Personae* (1926)

"In a Station of the Metro"

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

"The Bathtub"

As a bathtub lined with white porcelain,
When the hot water gives out or goes tepid,
So is the slow cooling of our chivalrous passion,
O my much praised but-not-altogether-satisfactory lady.

Pound imitated the *haiku*-style succession of images to evoke subtle, metaphoric relationships between things. He conceived what he called the "rhythmical arrangement of words" to produce an emotional "shape." In the *Imagist Manifesto* (1913) and in various interviews, Pound outlined the cardinal points of the imagist doctrine: Poets should use "absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation"; they should employ free verse rhythms "in sequence of the musical phrase." Ultimately, Pound summoned his contemporaries to cast aside traditional modes of Western versemaking and to "make it new"—a dictum allegedly scrawled on the bathtub of an ancient Chinese emperor. "Day by day," wrote Pound, "make it new/cut underbrush/pile the logs/keep it growing." The injunction to "make it new" became the rallying cry of modernism.

*Lincoln Barnett, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*. New York: The New American Library, 1948, 102.

The imagist search for an abstract language of expression, which, as we shall see, loosely paralleled the visual artist's quest for absolute form, stood at the beginning of the modernist revolution in poetry. It also opened the door to a more concealed and elusive style of poetry, one that drew freely on the cornucopia of world literature and history. The poems that Pound wrote after 1920, particularly the *Cantos* (the unfinished opus on which Pound labored for fifty-five years), challenge the reader with foreign language phrases, obscene jokes, and arcane literary and historical allusions. These poems contrast sharply with the terse precision and eloquent purity of Pound's early imagist efforts.

Frost and Lyric Poetry

Not all of Pound's contemporaries heeded the imagist doctrine. Robert Frost (1874–1963), the best known and one of the most popular of American poets, offered an alternative to the highly abstract style of the modernists. While Frost rejected the romantic sentimentality of much nineteenth-century verse, he embraced the older tradition of lyric poetry. He wrote in metered verse and jokingly compared the modernist use of free verse to playing tennis without a net. Frost avoided dense allusions and learned references. In plain speech he expressed deep affection for the natural landscape and an abiding sympathy with the frailties of the human condition. He described American rural life as uncertain and enigmatic—at times, notably dark. "My poems," explained Frost, "are all set to trip the reader head foremost into the boundless." Frost's "The Road Not Taken" is written in the rugged and direct language that became the hallmark of his mature style. The poem exalts a profound individualism as well as a sparseness of expression in line with the modernist injunction to "make it new."

READING 6.2 Frost's "The Road Not Taken" (1916)

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear,
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Early Twentieth-Century Art

As with modernist poetry, the art of the first decades of the twentieth century came to challenge all that preceded it. Liberated by the camera from the necessity of imitating nature, **avant-garde** painters and sculptors turned their backs on academic standards and the tyranny of representation. They pioneered an authentic, "stripped down" style that, much like imagist poetry, evoked rather than described experience. Like the imagists, visual artists tried to abstract the intrinsic qualities and essential meanings of their subject matter to arrive at a concentrated emotional experience. The language of pure form did not, however, rob art of its humanistic dimension; rather, it provided artists with a means by which to move beyond traditional ways of representing nature and to interpret the visual world in daring new ways.

Early modern artists probed the tools and techniques of formal expression more fully than any artists since the Renaissance. They challenged the role of art as illusion and broadened Western conceptions of the meaning and value of art. Exploring unconventional media, they created art that blurred the boundaries between painting and sculpture. And, like the imagists, they found inspiration in the arts of non-Western cultures; primitivism, abstraction, and experimentation were hallmarks of the modernist revolt against convention and tradition.

Picasso and the Birth of Cubism

The giant of twentieth-century art was the Spanish-born Pablo Picasso (1881–1973). During his ninety-two-year life, Picasso worked in almost every major art style of the century, some of which he himself inaugurated. He produced thousands of paintings, drawings, sculptures, and prints—a body of work that in its size, inventiveness, and influence, is nothing short of phenomenal. As a child, he showed an extraordinary gift for drawing, and by the age of twenty his precise and lyrical line style rivaled that of Raphael and Ingres. In 1903, the young painter left his native Spain to settle in Paris. There, in the bustling capital of the Western art world, he came under the influence of impressionist and postimpressionist painting, and took as his subjects café life, beggars, prostitutes, and circus folk. Much like the imagists, Picasso worked to refine form and color in the direction of concentrated expression, reducing the colors of his palette first to various shades of blue and then, after 1904, to tones of rose. By 1906, the artist began to abandon traditional Western modes of pictorial representation. Adopting the credo that art must be subversive—that it must defy all that is conventional, literal, and trite—he initiated a bold new style. That style was shaped by two major forces: Cézanne's paintings, which had been the focus of two major Paris exhibitions; and the arts of Africa, Iberia, and Oceania, examples of which were appearing regularly in Paris galleries and museums (see chapters 18 and 31). In Cézanne's canvases, with their