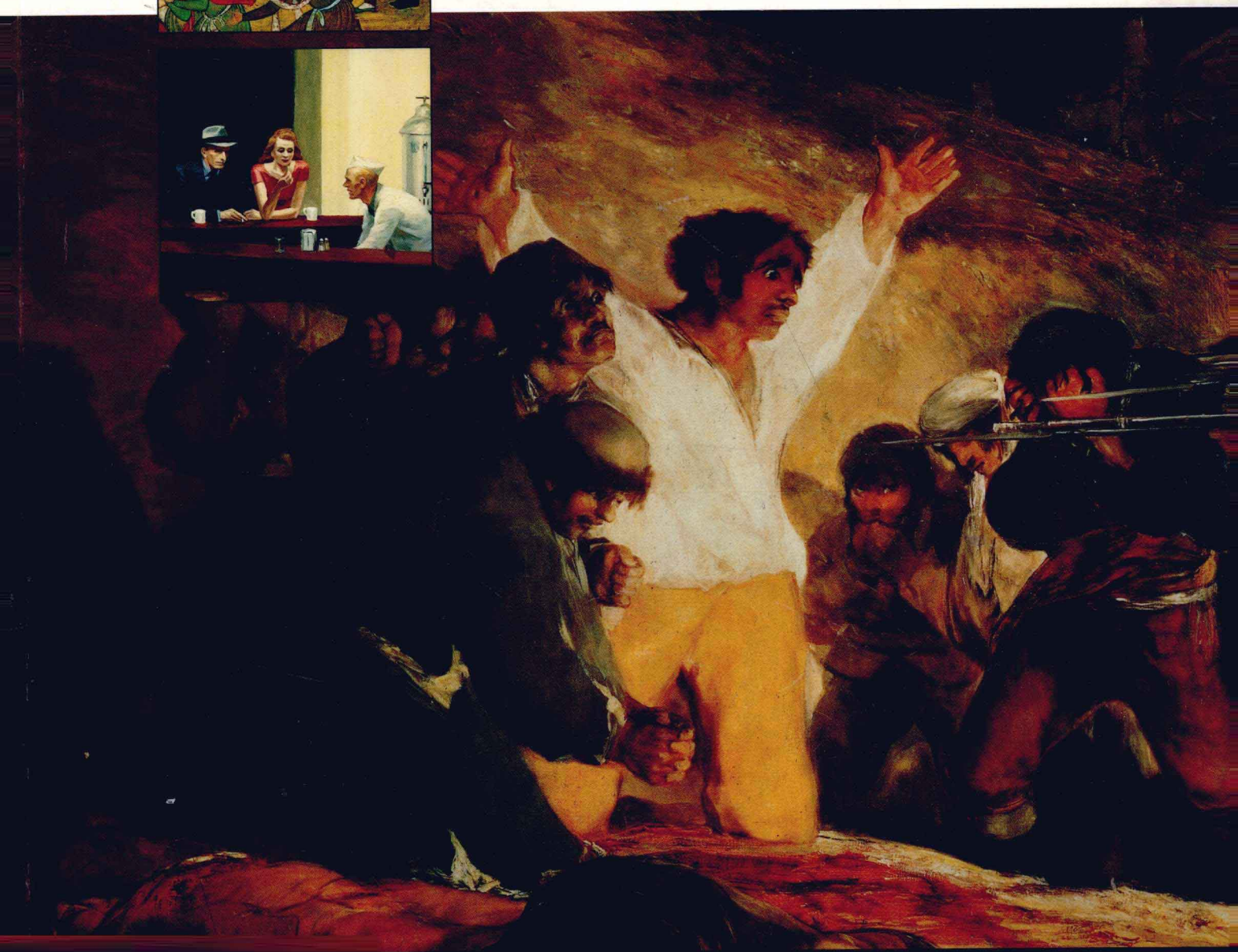
FOURTH EDITION

The Humanistic Tradition

GLORIA K. FIERO



5 ROMANTICISM, REALISM, AND THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY WORLD

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The Humanistic Tradition

Book 5

Romanticism, Realism, and the Nineteenth-Century World

Gloria K. Fiero

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Front cover
Main image: 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.
Insets: (top) Pieter de Hooch, detail of *Portrait of a Family Making Music*, 1663. Oil on canvas, 38⅝ × 45⅛ in. © The Cleveland Museum of Art 1998. Gift of the Hanna Fund (1951.355)
(center) Detail of *Rejoicing at the Birth of Prince Salim in 1569*. Manuscript illustration from the Akbar-Nama. The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.
(bottom) Edward Hopper, detail of *Nighthawks*, 1942. Oil on canvas, 33 ⅛ × 60 ⅛ in. Art Institute of Chicago. Chicago Friends of American Art Collection, 1942.51.

Frontispiece: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, detail of *Le Moulin de la Galette*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 4 ft. 3 ½ in. × 5 ft. 9 in. *Musee d'Orsay, Paris. Photo:* © R.M.N., Paris.

"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.

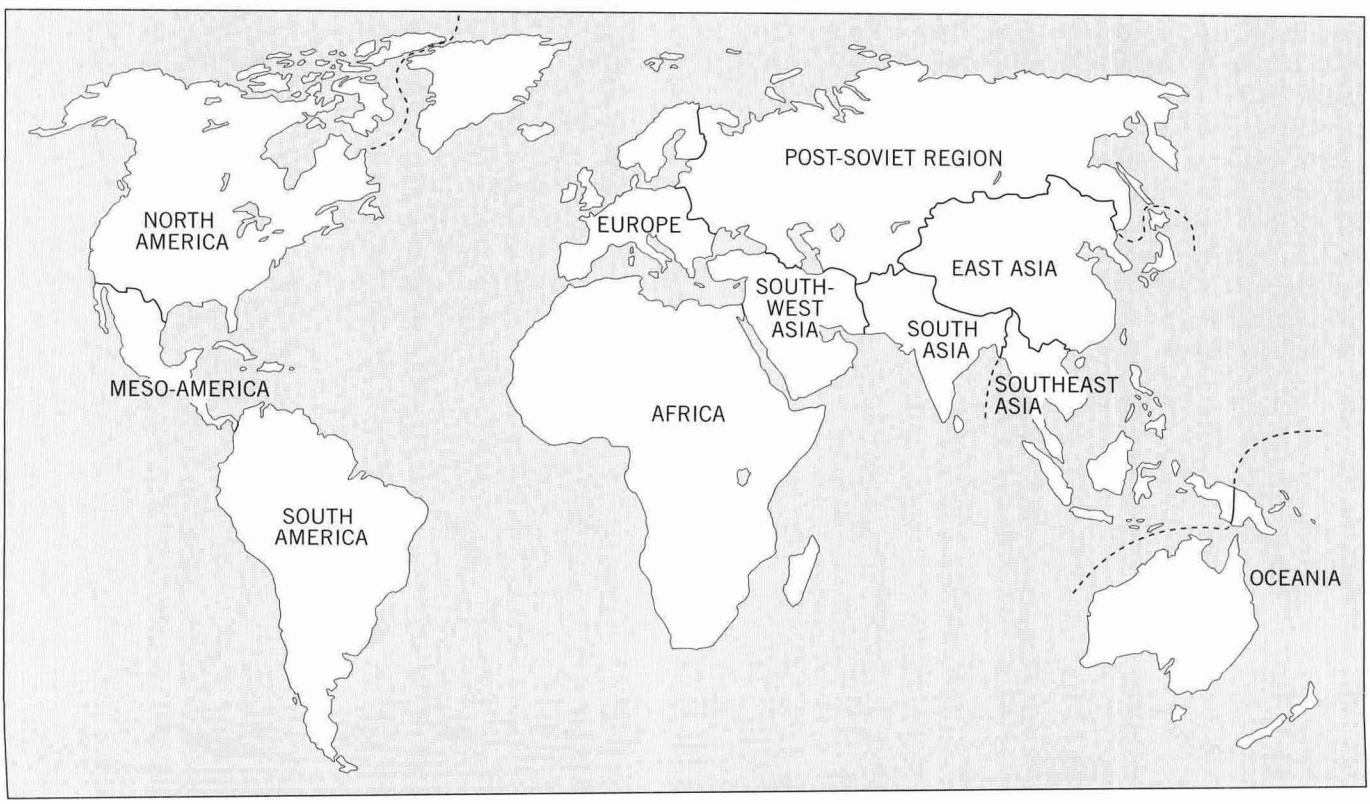
Beyond *The Humanistic Tradition*

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 5 Contents

MAPS

MUSIC LISTENING SELECTIONS

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The romantic era

Two fundamental developments influenced the cultural vitality of the nineteenth century. The first was the transformation of the West from an agricultural to an industrially based society. The second was the extension of European dominion over much of the rest of the world. This controlling presence of Europeans in Asia and Africa contributed to an eclipsing of native cultural expression in those areas. With the exception of Japan, the regions beyond the West generated few new forms of artistic expression in the nineteenth century and certainly none comparable to those produced in previous centuries. This circumstance also explains why our examination of the nineteenth century assumes a Western focus.

During the nineteenth century, the population of Europe doubled in size, and material culture changed more radically than it had in the previous one thousand years. The application of science to practical invention had already sparked the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution—the mass production of material goods by machines. The first phase of this revolution occurred in mid-eighteenth-century England, with the development of the steam engine and the machinery for spinning and weaving textiles. As the increased production of coal, iron, and steel encouraged the further expansion of industry and commerce, the revolution gained momentum. Industrialization involved a shift from the production of goods in homes and workshops to manufacture in factories, mills, and mines. It demanded enormous investments of capital and the efforts of a large labor force; it stimulated growth in Europe's urban centers. And clearly, industrialism provided the basis for the West's controlling influence over the rest of the world.

If industrialism was the primary force that shaped nineteenth-century Western culture, the second was nationalism. Nationalism—the exaltation of the state—involved the patriotic identification of individuals with a territory that embraced a common language and history. As people began to identify political sovereignty with the nation rather than with the person of the ruler, they sought greater freedom from the autocratic political and economic restraints of the old ruling orders. They also rejected the efforts of other nations to control their destiny. Such sentiments underlay the revolutionary outbursts that were chronic and continuous throughout the nineteenth century. European nationalism spurred the drive toward unification of the Germanies and among the Italian provinces and gave rise to a pervasive militarism in the individual states of the West. In the course of the century, England, France, Germany, Belgium, and the United States increased in political, economic, and military strength; and Germany and Italy finally reached the status of unified nation-states.

The nineteenth century is often called "the romantic era." *Romanticism* may be defined as a movement in the history of culture, as an aesthetic style, and as an attitude or spirit. As a movement, romanticism involved a revolt against convention and authority and a search for freedom in personal, political, and artistic life. The romantics reacted against the the rationalism of Enlightenment culture and the impersonality of growing industrialism. Estranged from traditional religious beliefs, the romantics looked upon nature as the dwelling place of God. They worked to revive their nations' history and to liberate the oppressed peoples of the earth.

As an artistic style, romanticism was a reaction against the neoclassical quest for order and intellectual control. Romantics favored the free expression of the imagination and the liberation of the emotions. In preference to aesthetic objectivity and formalism, romantics chose subjectivity and the spontaneous outpouring of feeling. They cultivated a taste for the exotic, the ecstatic, and the fantastic. Finally, as an attitude, romanticism may be seen as an effort to glorify the self by way of intuition and the senses. Romantics did not reject the value of reason; they regarded the emotions as equally important to human experience. Sentimentality, nostalgia, melancholy, and longing were all characteristic of the romantic cast of mind.

The romantics saw themselves as the heroes and visionaries of their time. They freed themselves from exclusive dependence on the patronage of Church and state and tended to pursue fiercely individualistic paths to creativity—paths that often alienated them from society. The lives and works of the romantics were marked by deep subjectivity—one might even say by self-indulgence. If the perceptions and passions of the romantics were intense, their desire to devise a language adequate to that intensity of feeling often drove them to frustration, despair, and, in the case of an unusual number of them, to an early death—the painters Gros and Géricault, the composers Chopin and Schubert, and the poets Byron, Shelley, and Keats all died before the age of forty.

(opposite) **ALBERT BIERSTADT**, detail of *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 6 ft. 1 in. × 10 ft. ⅜ in. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Rogers Fund, 1907 (07.123).

To 1790 | 1800 | 1810 | 1820 | 1830 | 1840 | 1850 | 1860

World Events

- French Revolution 1789
- Napoleon (crowned emperor 1804)
- *Code Napoléon*
- Battle of Waterloo; Napoleon banished
- July Revolution 1830
- Rise of Abolitionists
- Invasion of Russia 1812
- U.S.–British War of 1812
- Greece achieves independence from Turkey 1829
- Jefferson inaugurated U.S. President

- INDUSTRIALISM
- Fulton: steamboat
- First use of gaslight in London 1814
- Stethoscope invented 1815
- Electromagnetism discovered 1819
- Darwin: *Origin of Species*
- Japan: TOKUGAWA REGIME
- China: QING DYNASTY

Literature & Philosophy

- Hegel: *Philosophy of History*
- ROMANTICISM
- Shelley: "Ode to the West Wind"
- Rousseau: *Confessions*
- Keats: "Ode on a Grecian Urn"
- Byron: "Prometheus"
- Mary Shelley: *Frankenstein*
- Wordsworth: "Tintern Abbey"
- Coleridge: *Lyrical Ballads*
- Goethe: *Faust*

- Emerson: *On Nature*
- Sand: *Lélia*
- Pushkin: "Napoleon"
- Shen Fu: *Chapters from a Floating Life*
- Sojourner Truth: *Narrative*
- Melville: *Moby Dick*
- Thoreau: *Walden*
- Douglass: *My Bondage*
- Whitman: *Leaves of Grass*
- Brontë: *Wuthering Heights*

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- NEOCLASSICISM
- ROMANTICISM
- Gros: *Plague Victims at Jaffa*
- David: *Oath of the Horatii*
- Goya: *Third of May, 1808*
- Delacroix: *Liberty Leading the People*
- Rude: *The Volunteers of 1792*
- Turner: *Slave Ship*
- Hudson River School
- Cole: *Oxbow*
- Catlin: *Head Chief*
- Bierstadt: *Rocky Mountains* 1863 >
- Constable: *Wivenhoe Park*
- Géricault: *Raft of "Medusa"*
- Friedrich: *Two Men Looking at the Moon*

- First cast-iron suspension bridge
- Barry/Pugin: Houses of Parliament
- Cordier: *African in Algerian Costume*
- Garnier: Paris Opéra >

Music & Dance

- Beethoven: "Eroica" (Third Symphony)
- Invention of iron-frame piano
- Schubert: *Erlking*
- Waltz conquers European ballrooms
- Chopin: *Étude in G-flat Major*
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- Berlioz: *Symphonie fantastique*

- Wagner: *Ring* 1848–74 >
- Verdi: *Aida* 1871 >
- Tchaikovsky: *Romeo and Juliet* 1869 >
- Bizet: *Carmen* 1875 >
- African-American Spirituals ~>

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

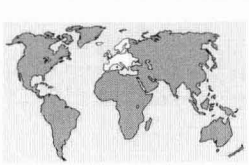
The romantic view of nature

"Beauty in art is truth bathed in an impression received from nature."
Corot

One of the central features of nineteenth-century romanticism was its love affair with nature and the natural. The romantics generally reacted against the artificiality of Enlightenment culture and the dismal effects of growing industrialism. In rural nature, they found a practical refuge from urban blight, smoke-belching factories, and poverty-ridden slums. Aesthetically, they perceived in nature, with all its shifting moods and rhythms, a metaphor for the romantic imagination. They looked to nature as the source of solace, inspiration, and self-discovery. In a broader sense, the romantic view of nature was nothing short of religious. With Rousseau, the romantics held that humans were by nature good but were corrupted by society (see chapter 25). "Natural man" was one who was close to nature and unspoiled by social institutions. To such Enlightenment figures as Locke, Pope, and Jefferson, nature had meant universal order, but to nineteenth-century romantics, nature was the source of divine ecstasy and the medium of the mystical bond that united God with the human soul. Romantics perceived unspoiled nature as the wellspring of all truth; many even viewed God and the natural universe as one. Such **pantheism**—more typical of Asian than of Western religious philosophy—characterized the writings of many European and American romantics, but it is most clearly exemplified in the poetry of William Wordsworth.

Nature and the Natural in European Literature

Wordsworth and the Poetry of Nature



Born in the Lake District of England, William Wordsworth (1770–1850) was the leading nature poet of the nineteenth century. Wordsworth dated the beginning of his career as a poet from the time—at age fourteen—he was struck by the image of tree boughs silhouetted against a bright evening sky. Thereafter, "the infinite variety of natural appearances" became the principal source of his inspiration and the primary subject of his poetry. Wordsworth's exaltation of nature sustained his belief that, through the senses, the individual could commune with elemental and divine universal forces. Nature, in Wordsworth's view, might restore to human beings their untainted, childhood sense of wonder.

In 1798, Wordsworth and his British contemporary Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) produced the *Lyrical Ballads*, the literary work that marked the birth of the romantic movement in England. When the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared in a second edition in 1800, Wordsworth added a preface that formally explained the aims of romantic poetry. In this manifesto, Wordsworth defined poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," which takes its origin "from emotion recollected in tranquillity." According to Wordsworth, the object of the poet was "to choose incidents and situations from common life [and] to throw over them a certain colouring of the imagination . . . and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature." Wordsworth championed a poetic language that resembled "the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation." Although he did not always abide by his own precepts, his rejection of the artificial diction of neoclassical verse in favor of "the real language of men" anticipated a new, more natural voice in poetry—one informed by childhood memories and deeply felt experiences recollected in tranquillity. Wordsworth's verse reflects the romantic poet's fondness for **lyric poetry**, which—like art song—describes deep personal feeling.

One of the most inspired poems in the *Lyrical Ballads* is "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," the product of Wordsworth's visit to the ruins of a medieval monastery situated on the banks of the Wye River in Southwest England (Figure **27.1**). The 159-line poem constitutes a paean to nature. Wordsworth begins by describing the sensations evoked by the countryside itself;

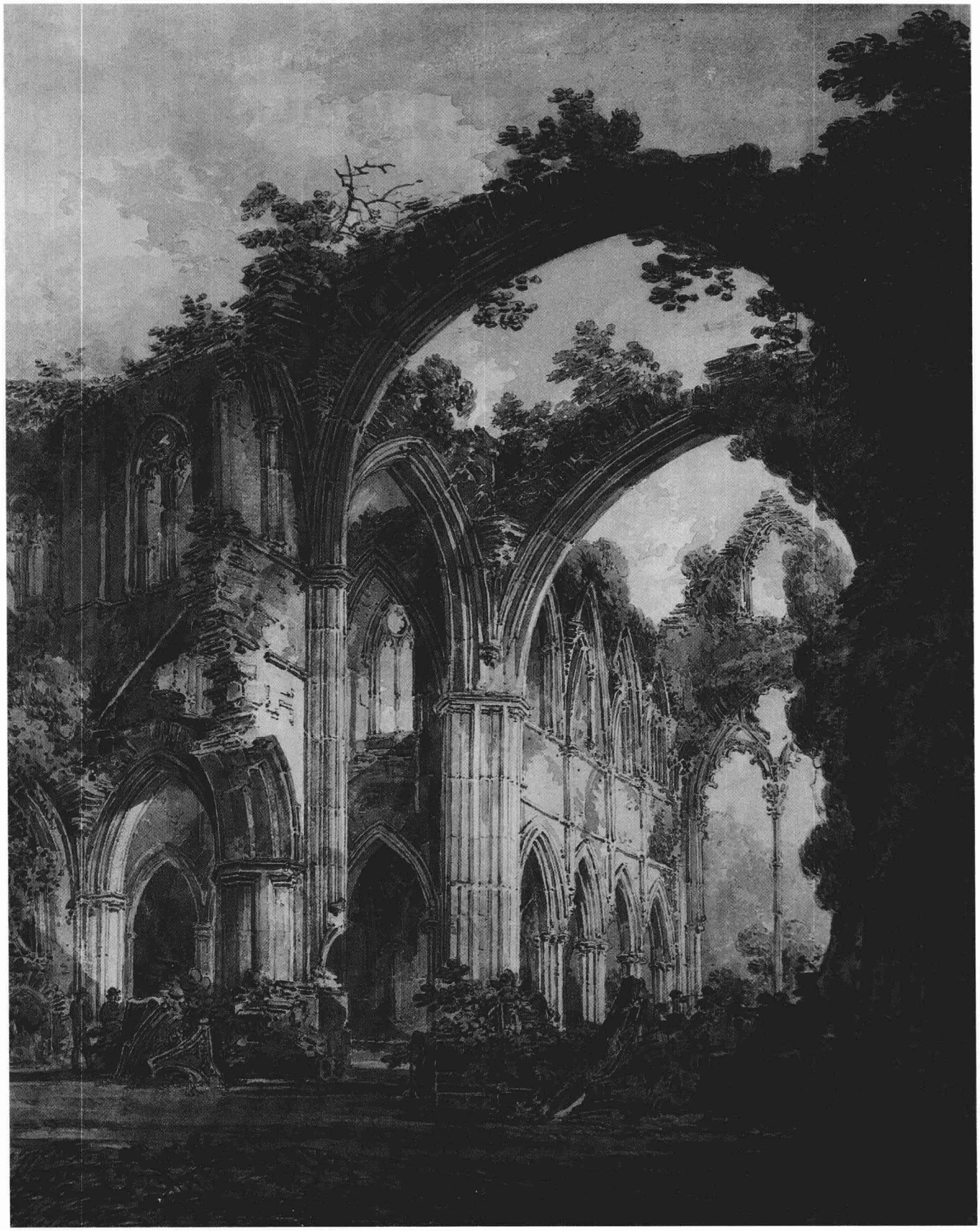


Figure 27.1 J. M. W. TURNER, *Interior of Tintern Abbey*, 1794. Watercolor, 12⅝ × 9⅞ in.© The Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.