
LEE A. JACOBUS



HUMANITIES

THE EVOLUTION OF VALUES

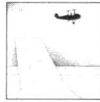
HUMANITIES

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Lee A. Jacobus

University of Connecticut



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HUMANITIES: *The Evolution of Values*

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HUMANITIES

THE EVOLUTION OF VALUES

For
Julia and Ernest Jacobus,

who planted the seed



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lee A. Jacobus began teaching interdisciplinary courses in the arts in 1962 and with Joanna Jacobus now teaches an intersession course in London called "The Arts in England." Apart from his scholarly publications in seventeenth-century literature and modern Irish literature, his interests in the arts include music, (particularly playing jazz drums) and photography (he has been a recipient of an Arts Grant for photographic work from the State of Connecticut Arts Council and the University of Connecticut Research Foundation). His undergraduate and master's degrees were from Brown University; his Ph.D., in English, was from Claremont Graduate School. He was a Lackawanna Brown Club scholarship student at Brown and a Danforth Teaching Fellow while at Claremont. Among his publications are short stories, poems, and articles on literature. Currently he is writing plays. His books include *Sudden Apprehension: Aspects of Knowledge in Paradise Lost*; *John Cleveland: A Study*; *The Humanities through the Arts* (with F. David Martin); and several edited collections, among which are *Aesthetics and the Arts*, *The Longman Anthology of American Drama*, and *A World of Ideas*. He is Professor of English at the University of Connecticut, where he has taught since 1968.

PREFACE

Humanities: The Evolution of Values is a values-based historical survey using a case-study rather than an encyclopedic approach to the arts. Each important period in art history is treated in detail to give a full understanding of its artistic styles and the values revealed by them.

The theoretical premises used in this book are thoroughly defined in F. David Martin and Lee A. Jacobus, *The Humanities through the Arts*, third edition (McGraw-Hill, 1983). The theory of revelatory aesthetics, developed by David Martin and adapted further in our book, is the basis of the critical method used in the present text, although with some modifications and without reliance on its special terminology.

The purpose of *Humanities* is to provide information “of” rather than “about” works of art. Background information, even dates and names, is treated as less important than an immediate, critical involvement with important works of painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, photography, film, music, and dance. Not all these art forms are discussed in every chapter, but each chapter does present an analysis of the major artistic achievements of a culture or historical era.

Knowledge “of” works of art depends upon perceiving the relationship between formal elements and subject matter. The basis of revelatory aesthetics is the artist’s interpretation of subject matter through form, achieving a “form-content” which is a fusion of the two. I assume that art reveals values and that one can become more sensitive to values through a scrupulous study of the arts.

PERCEPTION AND ANALYSIS

The procedure in each chapter is to provide necessary historical details, including appropriate observations on the political, religious, and philosophical background. Individual artists and their works are discussed in relationship to the movements with which they have been associated. But ultimately the focus becomes explicit, with analysis of specific elements of form: line, dynamics, rhythm, color, mass, space, bulk, depth, flatness, perspective, distortion, realistic representation, and other considerations relevant to each medium. In other words, the emphasis moves from that which

can be perceived to more theoretical concepts evolving from a thorough perception of sensual elements.

Because of the nature of the case-study approach, not every artist of importance is discussed in detail. The “brief chronologies” include the names of figures of importance whose achievements are worth examining, and some of those figures are included in the “suggested readings” for each chapter. Naturally, individual study of these artists is to be encouraged, and they can be interpreted in light of the information in the chapters themselves. The primary focus of the book is on analysis of individual works by important artists rather than on recognition of every artist’s achievements.

“Keys”—“perception keys,” “concept keys,” “comparison keys,” and “listening keys”—are placed strategically throughout the text to call attention to the kinds of questions that a careful observer will ask. The content of some keys is also treated, at least in important part, within the text itself, but others are the responsibility of the reader, who by the time they are presented should have enough experience and enough background to offer shrewd responses. The “concept keys,” as the name implies, ask conceptual rather than perceptual questions, usually focusing on ideas. This method, which is also used in *The Humanities through the Arts*, has been praised as a means of genuinely engaging the imagination and the intellect in responding to works of art.

The reader is invited to offer counteranalyses and to test interpretations developed by the present author or other critics. The most important thing is not who is right, but who looks closest, who perceives most completely, and—in a real sense—who asks the most interesting questions.

Analysis without historical understanding is limited. Certain eras have favored such analysis, but formal elements are not only better understood but also more fully perceived when the historical sources—the roots—of important works of art are understood. That is true, too, of the interrelationships among works of art. Important aesthetic effects are achieved by allusion or “borrowing,” either direct or indirect. It is impossible to perceive, much less to appreciate, such artistic efforts without historical awareness. It is easy to overpraise an artistic achievement if one is ignorant of the history of the arts. Certain startling effects would be much less startling if their indebtedness to their genuine inventors was known.

VALUES

Every age and every culture hold different values. Examination of the arts reveals not only the values which are publically and officially praised, but often those which are “underground,” or unofficial, but widely held. All eras and all cultures are vastly too complex to understand thoroughly, and any attempt to do so must be limited. But it is nonetheless worth the effort.

Values attract our attention, hold our interest, and assume great importance. They sometimes can be discussed as classes of values—for example, religious values, military values, social values, intellectual values, economic values, and values of personal freedom.

The entire study of values is complex and beyond the limits of a book such as this. Rather, this book stays with the arts themselves and examines them as a means of gaining insight into the broad range of values we call the “humanities.” The

humanities begin with the appreciation of beauty and the means by which to achieve it. That is why the arts come first, why they reveal our ancestors and forebears to us in the past, and why they reveal us to ourselves in the present.

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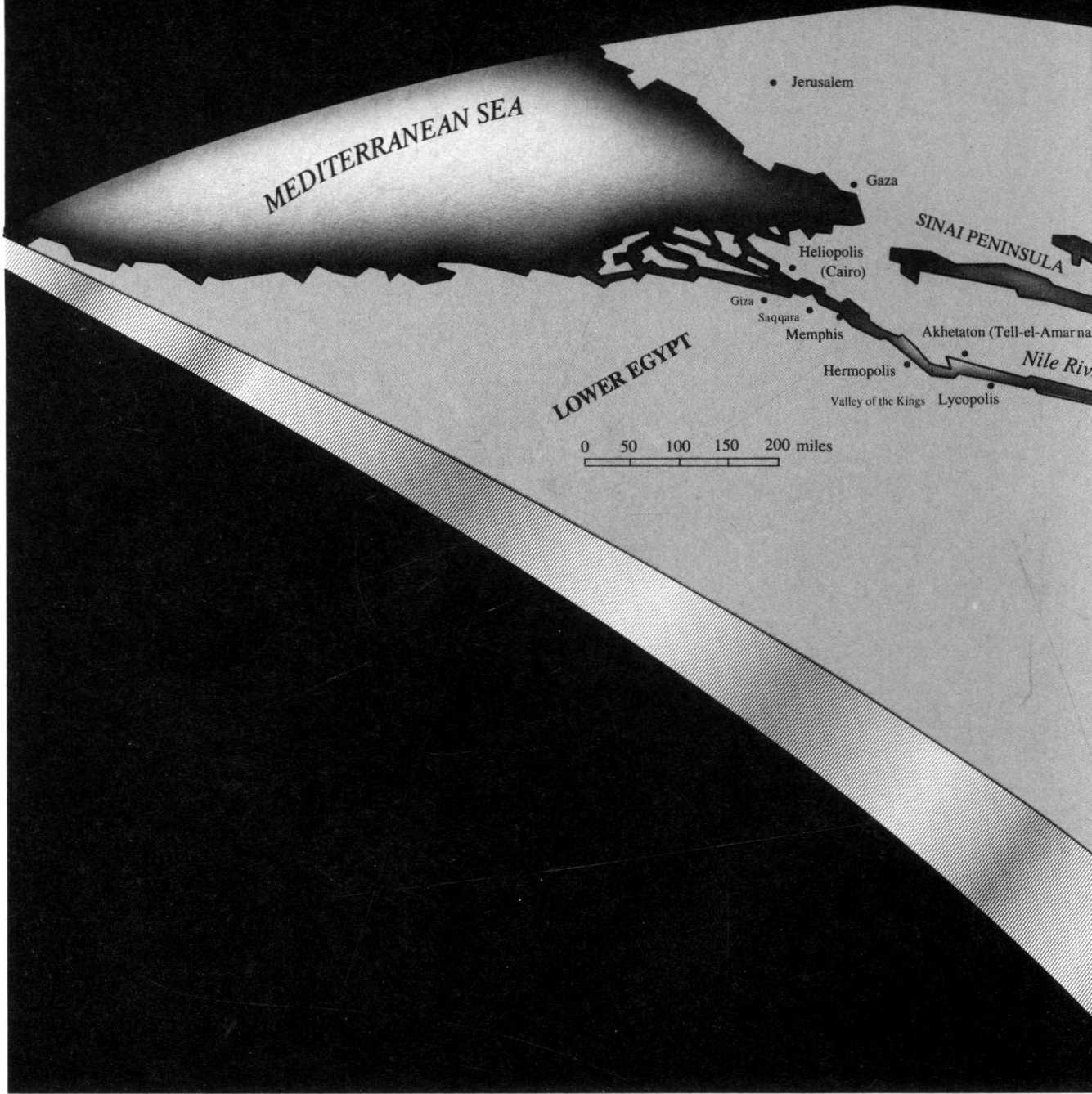
A project of this kind, which stretches over many years in writing and decades in gestation, is dependent on the learning and generosity of more people than can be acknowledged formally. Some of those whose contribution I am most aware of are former colleagues at Western Connecticut State University, whose program "The Nature of Man" first gave me a chance to work out my thinking on the interrelationship of the arts: H. Jonathan Greenwald, James Timmins, Richard Moryl, Elizabeth Dominy, Marceau Myers, and David Driscoll. More recently, those who had a hand in shaping this book are Gloria Kitto Lewis of GMI Engineering and Management Institute, John Werenko of Marist College, Louise Matthews Hewitt of Coastlines Community College, Allen Arnold of Lakeland Community College, Jon Thiem and Kenneth Rhoads of Colorado State University, Daniel P. Tompkins of Temple University, and Dion K. Brown of Polk Community College. Each contributed enthusiastically and each helped me make this a better book. Bruce Bellingham of the Department of Music, a colleague and friend, gave the sections on music a very thorough going over, helping me over sometimes rocky terrain. My colleague William E. Parker helped with photographic history. My discussions with other members of the University of Connecticut Art Department over a period of years naturally helped deepen my understanding of the arts. F. David Martin, my coauthor on an earlier book on the humanities, deserves special mention. We have shared ideas over a period of years concerning the arts and aesthetics. His theories of revelatory aesthetics form the foundation of our *Humanities through the Arts* (McGraw-Hill, 3d ed., 1983), and they are present in this book as well, although without the stricter terminology we were able to develop in that first book. Over the years David has been colleague, collaborator, and friend. A number of editors at McGraw-Hill shepherded this project at different times: Robert Rainier, Jan Yates, Kaye Pace, Anne Murphy, James Dodd, and Emily Barrosse; to them I am deeply grateful. Phillip Butcher oversaw the project at McGraw-Hill and was always a point of stability and a cordial guide. I am very grateful to Elsa Petersen, who handled the sometimes problematic illustration program. I am particularly grateful to Pamela Haskins, my copy editor, and to Jo Jones, whose excitement about the design of the book buoyed me from the first day I knew it would be a reality. I want to thank Susan Gamer, my editing supervisor, whose standards have improved the quality of the book and whose work was inspiring throughout the difficult final stages. Finally, no one is more aware than I of how much more there is to say about the works discussed here (as well as those that are not discussed). One book, however large, is never enough. This must be thought of as only the beginning of an endless examination of the humanities.

Lee A. Jacobus

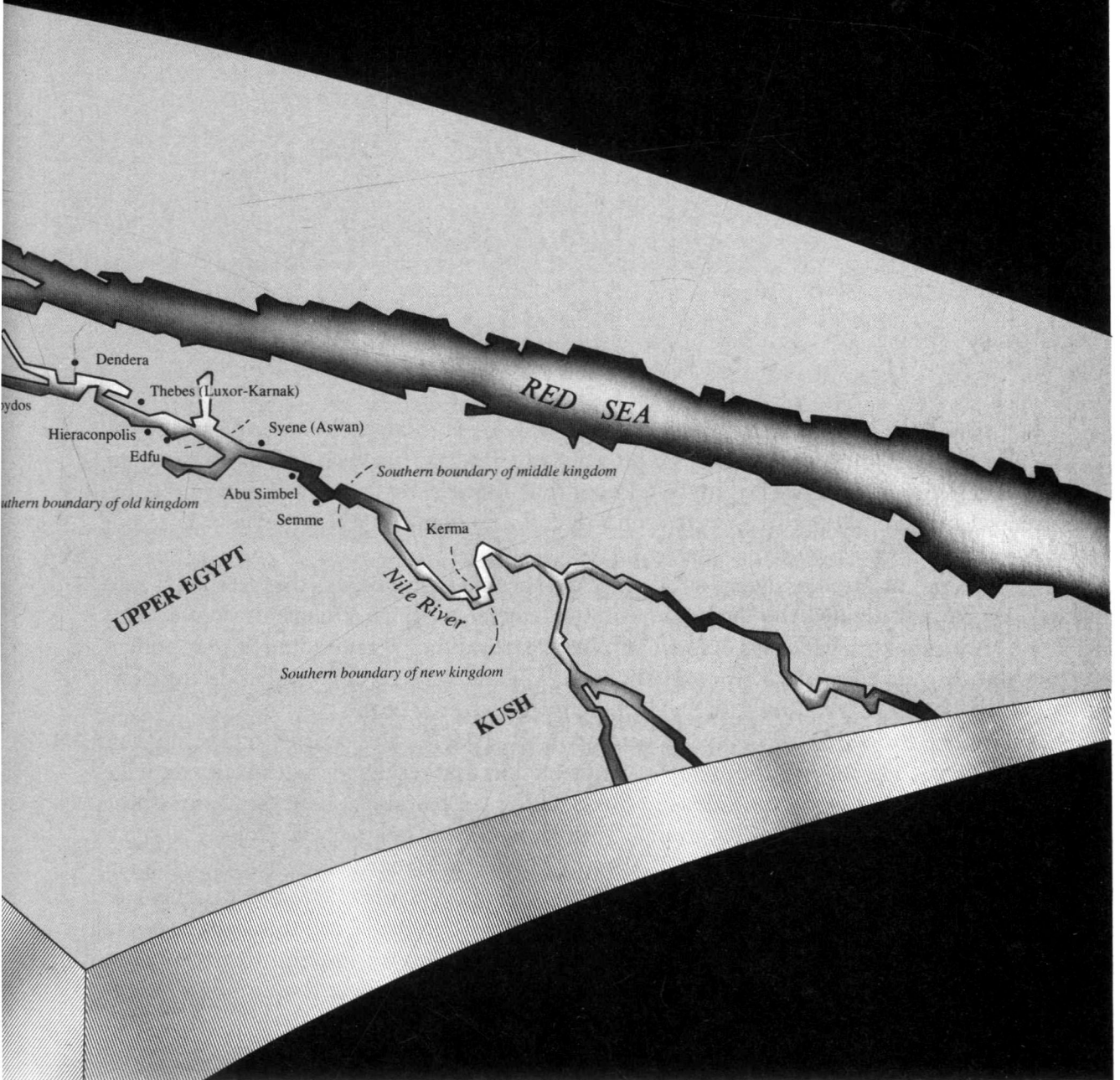
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PART ONE



HUMANITIES: THE BEGINNINGS



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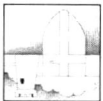


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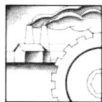
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