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## Literature as a Fine Art

S. B. Gass

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

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# THE MID-WEST QUARTERLY

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## LITERATURE AS A FINE ART

"The art of reasoning," says one of Wordsworth's eminent eulogists, "even the art of coherent speech, was to the poet a kind of art of lying." "The whole energy of his mind was spent to reunite what men had put asunder, to fuse in holy passion the differences that are invented by the near-sighted activities of the discriminating human intellect." "The unsophisticated perceptions and thoughts of children and of the peasantry, of half-witted human creatures and of the animals that are nearer to earth than we, lent him a more companionable guidance [than his own intellect and] to these spiritual directors he submitted his heart in humble reverence and gratitude."

I own I am not sure that the moment has come when such assertions seem to damn the poet. A few years since when they were uttered they took nothing from his eminence. They were orthodox romantic doctrine. But to-day they appear, to me for one, so discriminatingly true of Wordsworth, and at the same time so *naïve* in their intention to praise, that I have been emboldened to ask whether the shifting mood of the times may not have brought us again to Jeffrey's sense of the humours of the romantic attitude.

Romanticism was at bottom an assertion of the senses against the intellect—against what Wordsworth himself called

". . . the false secondary power  
That multiplies distinctions."

And it was but natural that it should have run to excess. The perception of excess is itself a distinction of the intellect. And

the romanticists repudiated the intellect. They did, perhaps, much good. They revived suppressed emotions. They gave the rein to impulses that may have been enchained by false restraints. But when they proclaimed the supremacy of the senses in matters which were in their nature essentially intellectual—in literature for example—they laid themselves open to the charge of having abandoned their wits.

Literature is intellectual, and the romantic attempt to assimilate it to the sensuous fine arts—to give it emotion without intellection, imagery without idea, style without structure—gave us a lively literature indeed, but a literature that had missed its point. It was an attempt from which literature is still suffering. But latterly, with the confusion that such a movement must inevitably bring, there has occurred a curious inversion. The fine arts have asserted an intellectual quality. We hear of the thought of a painting or a sonata. The fine arts are now popularly supposed to be the materials of culture. They are put into systems of education. Clearly here is a place to apply the power that multiplies distinctions, which Romanticism began by eschewing and has ended—with what intelligence the eschewal implies—by reasserting in an impossible place. For the fine arts can *not* convey thought, and are *not* agencies of culture. And as for literature, it is *not* a fine art.

## I

To say that a painting—to take the art of painting as typical—does not convey a thought to the mind is not to affront art. It is simply to mark a distinction that corresponds to the truth that words do not present sensations to the senses. The mental reactions in the two cases are quite different. Painting gives to the mind through the senses the thing itself to be apprehended. Language, by means of arbitrary symbols, gives to the mind not the thing itself but something about the thing—some relationship, some classification, some generalisation, some cause, some effect, some attribute—something that goes on wholly in the mind and is not sensuously present in the thing itself. This latter process is thought. And I think, I am not going beyond the bounds of common usage when I add that the only vehicle of thought is statement. I can conceive no other vehicle than statement for saying, for example, “When I am grown old and

death approaches let there be no turmoil of mourning for my departure." The wish, the circumstances, the relationship between them, have no external equivalents. And though in *Crossing the Bar* Tennyson uttered the wish in what we may term sensuous language, yet there is no sensuous equivalent for what he wished to express. It is in the nature of such a process that it is internal; and it is in the nature of the arts that they are objective and appeal wholly to the senses.

To say this, however, is not to say that no thought is involved in art. Other things being equal the painter's product may indeed be enriched in its own peculiar kind by the richness of his ideas, general and technical. And to say this is not to say that the observer may do no thinking as he stands looking at the picture. He does, it is true, receive from the canvas nothing but the visual impression of things themselves. But with a given observer this may not end the matter; it does not say what in his mind the picture may evoke. A picture may evoke ideas though it can not convey them. There is no certainty that the ideas that arise in his mind are those that were in the mind of the painter as he conceived and executed the picture. Not until every line and colour, every light and shadow, shall have come, like words, to have a definite, conventional meaning, shall he be able to tell with certainty what were those thoughts and ideas. Have we on the canvas before us mother and offspring or nurse and charge? Is it a madonna, or is it Rachel with a servant's child, mourning for her children that are not? We can tell only by the title, and that is language.

It is true that if the painter, out of a rich nature and a wide experience, has attained to a keen sense for whatever unformulated laws there may be by which emotion and experience are written on men's faces, he may hope, indeed, that an observer rich too in nature and trained in those same laws will think back from the lines and shadows on brow and cheek and mouth to the same emotion or experience from which the painter started. And in truth the painter may come so near to conveying what we may term a thought as would be conveyed by the words "she loves," or "she is in trouble,"—matters which are not visual but purely ideal—though the symbolic means are uncertain even to so broad an end. If we look, however, into the range of even such possibilities we find it very narrow, largely limited to the human face and figure and the symbolic

trappings of social life, and leading back seldom more than a single step to a very general condition behind it. A piece of literature so limited in thought would be ridiculous. The observer may, of course, think as much as he pleases, just as he may think as much as he pleases whatever he may be looking at. In the presence of a picture his mental process is the same as before a silent, motionless object: what is conveyed is an image; his thoughts are his own thoughts.

What has strengthened the belief in the intellectual accomplishment of the picture has been the characteristic romantic confusion of revery, of the vacant or the pensive mood, with the process of thought. Sensuous beauty stirs the emotions; the roused emotions are thronged with imagery and fleeting suggestions; and the mind is agog with a stimulated activity very easy, especially for the romantic mind, to mistake for a flow of ideas. Now it is significant that the modern claim for thought in a picture is coincident with the growth of impressionism in art. Art of the classical school was comparatively generalised: the painter supplemented and modified his immediate perception of the object before him by the aid of his memory of that thing as seen before, and of that kind of thing as seen at various times and under varying conditions; so that the resultant picture was less strikingly unique, was sobered, was in a sense universalised. The emotional response to it was correspondingly sobered, and though it stimulated a more thoughtful attention, it never, in fact, stimulated a claim that it conveyed thought.

It is a commonplace to say that the emotions are comparatively sluggish in the presence of a generic conception, and are quickened in the presence of the specific. Impressionistic art, discarding the memory, purging the mind of all preconceptions, and endeavouring to capture the fleeting sensation of a moment's glimpse, attacks the emotions sharply with its unique image. The emotional response is all that is asked. There is no matter in the picture for thoughtful study; it must be got at a glance or wholly lost. And this impressionistic art, which in reality is far less concerned with thought than the art of the classic school, none the less stirs the emotional revery that is so easy to mistake for it. In the event it has remained for the most thoughtless art to lay the strongest claim to thought—a paradox that is not without its own tacit criticism, not only of the impressionistic school—which is beside the present point—but of the whole

romantic misnomer of the emotional revery as a process of elevated thinking.

## II

Decadence arises out of the primary pursuit of secondary functions. But though we may assert that the expression of thought is the primary function of literature, and that its use to stimulate sensuous imagery is secondary and, as a primary pursuit, decadent; yet the presence of such poets as Wordsworth and his followers and of the taste that approved them makes it apparent that such a distribution of primary and secondary was not to the mind of the romantic age. Some analysis, therefore, of the nature of the elements of which literature is built—the word and the sentence—may help to fix the distinction.

At the basis of the matter is the fact that language is an affair of conventional symbols, fairly stable and fairly definite. The difficulty with line and colour, light and shadow, on the woman's brow is that men have not agreed that just those marks should mean, say, "fear for the future." Such an agreement for every mark in the picture would mean the destruction of the most valuable quality of painting—its plasticity. But the phrase "fear for the future" has for all English-speaking people a fairly uniform meaning just because they have agreed upon the significance of every mark and every sound presented to the senses. Language can convey thought because writer and reader and speaker and hearer have got together, in effect, and entered into a specific compact as to the meaning of every stroke. It is the fair degree of uniformity in this agreement that gives language its power to call up in the hearer the idea in the mind of the speaker.

It is at this point that the romanticists of art and the modern romanticists of philosophy—the pragmatists—join hands. It may therefore be worth while to make a brief examination of their respective positions in order to clarify the distinction between the word and the image, and so between literature and art. The romanticist values highly the object itself or the illusion of the object in art, and the direct emotion that the object or the illusion stimulates. To him that object is in itself the truth, and its literary value is its emotional value. The intellectual false secondary power, because it dims the vital reality of the mental

impression of such "truth," seems to him not to reach the mark. So inadequately does language convey this kind of truth that, as Wordsworth's eulogist says, "the art of reasoning, even the art of coherent speech, was a kind of art of lying." Reality is fluid, continuous; things merge into each other by imperceptible gradations; whereas words contract and crystallise and make sharp demarcations. To the romanticist, consequently, the best part of language is that which comes nearest to evoking the images of sensuous reality.

The pragmatists, for their part, though they approach the discrepancy from the opposite direction, arrive at the same dissatisfaction. They are concerned with reasoning, and they recognise that explicit reasoning is done in words. They see that the rational process takes place between concept and concept—that reasoning is not the concept of the thing itself, but the nexus between concepts. It is essential to reasoning, however, that the concepts should be clearly conceived and stable; and if the reasoning is to be true, it must concern reality as it is. But how, they ask, can this be done in words? Given the word *tree*, it corresponds to no particular tree. It names a class, but there is no such thing as class in nature, in reality. In nature there is nothing but individuals. Class is a human conception, a human convenience, a makeshift, associating a number of things no two of which are exactly alike. Looked at microscopically such a classification is gross. It may do very well for the coarse processes of everyday life, but for philosophy, where absolute truth is at stake, no reliable conclusions can be certainly arrived at by it. And moreover, if every individual member of every class had a special name, even then reasoning with those names would not be reliable, for aside from the fatal impossibility of generalisation, nothing remains the same for successive moments. Organic matter wastes and builds; inorganic matter disintegrates; ions speed away into space leaving the original entity less and forever different. Everything is flux, so that absolute truth, if attainable one instant, would not be true the next. Such is the logic, whether romantic or pragmatic—if indeed these are not two names for the same thing—of those whose prime concern is for *thing*.

If the universe is looked at from the point of view of *things*, it may well be true that *things* are insufficiently stable to act as the premises of reasoning—that they change even while the reasoning

process is going on, so that when the conclusion is reached the premises are no longer valid. From the point of view of humanity, however, which has invented the rational process for its own use, such reasoning—for even the pragmatists reason vigorously—is beside the point. For the human mind there stands in the midst of changing individual exemplars a class name *tree*, which indicates a conception more stable than any single exemplar—an intellectual convenience because it is more stable. When the need comes to apply a rational idea to a particular sensuous case, recognition must indeed be made of the individual variation from the class type. But the need of such adjustment is inherent in the human situation: thought and sense perception are not the same thing; each takes place, so to speak, in its own compartment forever disjoined from the other save for the connecting link of the intuition. Reality is in truth a flux, a chaos. Into the midst of it the human intelligence has been thrust. It possesses, on the one hand, the mirroring power of the sense perceptions; but they alone would give it no bearings. It has, on the other hand, the power of conceiving relationships. If this power is to be of any service in orientating the chaos it must, it is true, establish a connection with the sense perceptions. But for its own proper exercise the matter with which it deals must in itself be stable or there can be no reliability of conclusion. Reality and the sense perceptions not being stable, the intellect must in its own compartment erect those correspondent concepts by which the world of reality is stably orientated. Fundamental to this process of orientating the chaos is classification, then a symbol for the class, and so at last a stable datum for the reason. Whether or not with Plato we explicitly believe in an ideal prototype, fixed and eternal, of which the fluctuating reality is but an indifferent imitation, we must, if we reason at all, postulate such a stable prototype. Such a thing is the basis of reasoning; without it there could be no reasoning. To rebuke it for its discords with reality is to misapprehend its nature. A consciousness aware of no ideal stability, aware of nothing but the incalculable flux, could never have arrived at the conception of reason.

And so the pragmatist, viewing the process of reasoning from the point of view of the flux, casts his doubts upon it, as well he may. The Rhennish salmon might well doubt his ability to build a Cologne cathedral of Rhennish water. The romanticist and the pragmatist, swimming in the flux of things, may well doubt their

ability to build anything stable of the stuff of that fluid medium. Reason is not founded on the basis of the incalculable flux. Reality and language belong to two distinct categories. Words, the symbols of concepts, belong to the stratum of thought and reason, not to the stratum of reality and sense perceptions. Art, which simply adds an object to be perceived by the senses, belongs to the stratum of reality.

Thus pragmatism, though in its own activity somewhat futile, does us the momentary service of clarifying the distinction between the word and the image, and so the fundamental distinction between literature and art.

If we look to the mere complex elements of language we have but a more obvious confirmation of the belief that the peculiar function of literature is to convey thought. Language has universally evolved the statement—so uniformly, indeed, that we may think of the statement as we do of the word—as innate. And the statement is peculiarly limited to the process of bringing concepts into relationship and uttering truths about them—a process that in its nature is one of thought. The words in a statement, being mere symbols and not the things themselves or the illusions of them, can in themselves, unlike the painting, put nothing new into the mind of the reader. Their only power, as individual words, is to call up to the centre of his attention ideas that are already stored in his mind. But they have, in grammatical succession, this power: they can put the ideas that are already stored in his mind into new combination. The whole process, the whole point of the statement is to bring the images, the ideas, the concepts that are embodied in words and already held in solution in the reader's mind, into new and significant relationships. And this is a process of thought. This is the creative power of the statement; it is the only creative power of the statement; it is, as a consequence, the only creative power of literature. It is significant, therefore, for our conclusion, that the only creative power of literature is a matter of thought.

Naturally enough, however, an individual mind may fall far short of the collective mind through which a language has evolved, and turning back upon the intellectual path may cast aside the classification or other relationship symbolised in the single word, and substitute a single image. *Tree* may evoke a particular tree; *justice* may be simplified to a single circumstance.

The simpler the mind and the more meagre the experience, the more individual, when that experience is called upon, will be the conception that comes in response to the symbol. If I have seen but few trees, and but few instances to which I have attached the term *justice*, and if I have been far more concerned with things than with thoughts, my mental response to those terms will be correspondingly sharp, and individual, and concrete.

From some such fact arises our saying that children and savages have more vivid imaginations than civilised men. No doubt from some such conception did Wordsworth "submit his heart in humble reverence and gratitude" to the "spiritual direction" "of children and of the peasantry, of half-witted human creatures, and of the animals that are nearer to earth than we." No doubt from some such fact did he prefer, in his theory of poetic diction, words which in such mouths were most free from intellectual content. And though he was by no means able to live up to his theory in his choice of words, yet the very quality of his poetic purpose was displayed in it. He strove to go counter to the inherent function of his medium and make his words serve the simple end of evoking the simple image—the end pursued by the painter. He did pretty well. For even the cultivated mind, by virtue of its power to fill in a generic conception with the individual elements which it involves, can simplify the general into the particular; and so it is possible, even for such a mind, to use words in a way almost to eliminate thought, and do little more than create an image.

In the sentence too it is possible so to combine words as to reduce to a minimum the mind's attention to the relationship inherent in the sentence form. There are colourless verbs, verbs that declare sensuous acts, connectives that merely locate objects in visual space, so that here too it is possible to produce upon the reader's mind an impression approximating that of the painting.

" . . . I saw a crowd,  
A host of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

It is not that such mere imagery is impossible in words and sentences; it is not even that such imagery is illegitimate in literature. Such imagery is among the valuable possibilities at its command. The evil is that they should be elevated to the

first place as Wordsworth elevated them. How inadequate such an inversion is, is recognised by Wordsworth's own eulogist. "How," he asks, "except in some transcendental sense, can a moral expression be given to a sunset? No clearly rounded period can reproduce that marvel with all its vague messages to the heart. And it was this sort of power, and this sort of beauty, that was the inspiration of Wordsworth's poetry." His aim, in other words, was to use language, not for intellectual and moral ends, but for sensuous and æsthetic ends. It is for such primary use of a secondary function that Wordsworth subjects himself to the criticism of being a decadent; and it is against a taste that tolerates the confusion which such decadence entails that it seems timely to repeat, and ever to repeat the protest of Lessing—the protest of those in whose vision of life literature fills a nobler place than that of pander to the senses.

How wrong the romanticists' conception of the function of literature is, has a demonstration perhaps more convincing than that of the nature of words and sentences. The word and the sentence are not the consciously wrought elements of literature. They are linguistic, and descend to us out of the darkness. What may be held as more significant, therefore, is the *conscious* use to which they have been successfully and persistently put. The *genres* which have grown up under conscious selection should show what, historically, has been the deliberate judgment of men in the matter.

That language is the one medium suited to the conveyance of thought is sufficiently declared by the fact that it has always been the prime agent of those processes that are wholly matters of thought—criticism, science, philosophy, even pragmatic philosophy. The doubt and confusion, however, with which we are now concerned arises about those other *genres* to which other than intellectual and moral ends have been attributed—those which are more narrowly called pure literature—the epic, the prose narrative, the drama, and the lyric. These are the consciously wrought *genres* which have given rise to the fusion of literature and the fine arts.

The distinction, however, now that we are on the ground, seems even here simple enough. Though there are other ends to which painting may be used, such as matter-of-fact illustration, the fine art of painting in common with the other fine arts has had uniformly an æsthetic end. It is the fundamental character-

istic of the æsthetic that it appeals to the mind through the sense, that the senses are the medium of our perception of beauty—that beauty, except in a merely figurative sense, inheres only in sensible objects. The intellectual, on the other hand, has no direct relation to beauty. It resides, not in the sensuous things in which beauty may inhere, but in the mental nexus between them. We should expect, therefore, that just as the processes that make use of the sensuous media—painting, sculpture, music, and architecture—have an æsthetic end; those which make use of an intellectual medium should have an intellectual and moral end. This, we should say, moreover, would be still more undoubtedly the case if, as far as could be judged from history, these latter processes—the literary—had grown up through a demand for their intellectual and moral accomplishment. And in fact such is the actual case. What is the most striking verdict of the past, indeed, is the utter absence of any recognised literary *genre* wholly given over to those æsthetic purposes which characterise the fine arts. Even though it is entirely possible for language to approximate such a purpose, no such *genre* has survived.

It is not that such a possibility has been until our modern times unknown. It is not that we have discovered a new use for an old instrument. Such a use is as old as literature—sufficiently old, at least, to have provoked Plato's protest when he saw it unduly emphasised, and to have characterised Plato's practice in moderation and subordinately to an intellectual purpose. It is highly significant, therefore, that though men have been fully aware of the sensuous possibilities of language, yet no *genre* corresponding to the epic, the prose narrative, the drama, and the lyric has persisted of which the prime function is purely sensuous. The sensuous element in all the persistent types has been wholly subordinate and secondary.

It is not difficult, on the other hand, to believe that these persistent types do in fact owe their survival to their intellectual element. What is difficult is to imagine a narrative—using the term loosely to cover the epic, the novel, and the short story—in which the successive events have nothing to do with each other—in which, in other words, the intellectual and moral relationship of cause and effect is not the informing-element. We may indeed have a volume of short stories or ballads in which such a chain is constantly broken. That, however, is not a matter of literature but of the bindery. When the line of cause and effect ends, the

piece of literature as such ends. If our concern were purely æsthetic it would make no difference whether the successive events were interrelated—whether we knew of the early seduction of Tess, whether we knew that Sohrab and Rustom were son and father, we should be concerned with each successive image for itself, just as we demand no antecedent picture to the *Mona Lisa*; no subsequent picture to a landscape of Corot.

So completely is our concern in a novel or an epic bound up with the relationship of cause and effect—a purely intellectual conception—that we can not conceive such types of literature without it; and indeed without it such types could not exist. Even should we reduce the narrative to such sensuous simplicity as Daudet has done in his “pastels”—to minute particles—and reduce each particle as nearly as may be to a series of objective sensuous images, yet those pastels gain each its significance from the idea to which the sensuous images belong. “The little Dauphin is ill; the little Dauphin is dying,” begins one; and the significance of a whole series of images is thus gained—else why mention the fact? Before we are through we have sensuous images enough to warrant the conclusion, expressed in the Dauphin’s own words, that in the presence of death earthly rank is of little comfort. The very quality of narrative is this relationship—a fact that separates it sharply and forever from the purely sensuous purpose of the piece of fine art. For what is the significance of this demand for cause and effect, this concern for consequences and conclusions, but an intellectual curiosity, and ultimately a moral compunction in the presence of life? It is true that with a given reader the intellectual and moral essence may be obscured, just as with a given observer the æsthetic value of a work of art may be obscured. And in a given narrative the intellectual and moral value may be low just as may the æsthetic value of a piece of fine art. None the less the aim of each is determined, not by the obtuse reader or observer, or by the unsuccessful example, but by the touchstones which long experience has applied, and by which have been determined the surviving types. In literature that touchstone has been men’s intellectual interest and moral concern in the spectacle of human life.

That Aristotle agrees with this idea may be nothing; but that Aristotle’s judgment has been confirmed by the judgment of ages; and that those trial types that have not conformed to this

judgment have been willingly let die by men who have never heard of Aristotle or his judgment, is not without significance. We skip, not the action, but the description, not the current of cause and effect, but the part that stops to give a sensuous image. Our concern is intellectual and moral.

In the drama this is even more obviously true. Here the whole demand is for so close-wrought a chain of causal relationships that no room is left for deviation, no chance for sensuous description; and though the whole is sensuously enacted before the spectator, yet the significance is wholly in the causal relation revealed in the words. Every unmotivated action is a blemish.

The lyric at first sight seems to offer more difficulty. It is in lyric poetry that the romanticists have found their pleasantest grounds. It was the decadent lyric poets that the moralist Plato railed against more than two thousand years ago. It was the decadent lyric poets that the moralist Tolstoi railed against the other day. All literature is susceptible to the over-cultivation of its subordinate qualities, and the lyric is peculiarly susceptible. For its avowed attempt is to present an idea in all its moving power. Emotion may be stimulated by the concrete matter of the poem whether the idea is present or not; and there is the chance of the romanticist. Nothing can prevent one who has no intellectual tastes, and for whom life is a matter of beer and skittles and the titillation of his sensibilities, from ignoring the one and indulging the other.

And yet in the nature of the lyric seems to be sufficient indication that here as in other poetry the idea is primary and the emotion secondary. The persistent types are characterised by their ideas. The ode sets out with its idea; the sonnet with its idea; the elegy with its idea. The love lyric, classified by its emotion, falls back, in the event, for its materials upon thoughts about this pregnant feeling.

"Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty;  
Youth's a stuff will not endure."

The lyric, like the other *genres* that use the intellectual medium, seems to be rational in its intention.

The confusion in the case of the lyric, and to a degree in the whole case of literature, arises out of the romantic identification of all the emotions as æsthetic. Now if anything may be said of the æsthetic it is that it is one of the co-ordinate exercises of the

mind, parallel with the intellectual, the moral, the religious, and others. And of the emotions it may be said that they are not co-ordinate with the intellectual, the moral, and so on, but are concomitant with them all; that they are the running obligato to all the other preoccupations of consciousness. There are intellectual emotions, so to say, that arise at the perception of logical relationships and ideas, such as every thinking being experiences at the triumphant moment of understanding or discovery:

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken."

The love of truth is an intellectual emotion. There are moral emotions such as love, hate, terror, pity, sympathy, and the host of feelings that arise over this most extensive preoccupation of humanity. There are emotions that accompany sensation. Of these last, those that arise at the sight or sound or imagination of sensuous beauty are properly described as æsthetic. To endeavour to spread the term *æsthetic* to all emotions is to render it meaningless; yet how ready the decadent is to do so is shown in his eagerness to bring even Aristotle to his aid and claim him as an æstheticist because he has said that the service of tragedy is to rouse and purge the emotions of terror and pity in the minds of the spectator.

Why the decadent is so anxious to identify all the emotions as æsthetic is perhaps not difficult to understand. The æsthetic is felt to be an end in itself; it is an enjoyment pure and simple; it looks no farther than the moment of its experience; it has no ulterior responsibilities. It is the easiest of all ends, for its basis is in what all men inherently possess—the sensations—and its attainment is spontaneous and pleasant. The other ends claimed for literature are on the contrary more difficult. The intellect grows only under rigid discipline; its exercise is bound by exacting standards. The moral sense is weighted with the direst responsibilities. The intellectual and the moral together are fraught with the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world. The æsthetic is the escape from all this. Not but that such an escape in its proper sphere, in its own city of refuge, is a boon. The sense of beauty is one of the choicest possessions of mankind. But if all cities, even the capital city, are to be turned into cities of refuge, where are order and justice to be administered?

To think of literature as primarily æsthetic in its purpose would appear to be one of the shifts of mental lassitude, an evasion of the pains of thought, of the burden of moral obligation. It is possible to be too rigid in our conclusions—to look too wholly without bowels of sympathy upon that beauty in literature which gives it much of its charm, and by endearing it to our intenser affections makes its sterner aspects more lovely and acceptable. Literature without the grace of beauty—Ibsenism, Zolaism—is, like the life it depicts, a repulsive thing. Yet if we think of the nature of words, of the nature of language, of the nature of those demands under which the persistent types of literature have developed, it is hard to escape the conclusion that literature is primarily, not æsthetic, but intellectual and moral. Our protest is not against a thing, but against an excess; not against a proportion, but against a disproportion.

The robust intelligence, unafraid of the rigours of its own exercise, finds some censure to bestow upon a lassitude that would, for its own sensuous gratification, spread abroad the rumour that literature belongs to the realm of sensations and sensuous emotions—some censure to bestow upon a literary taste that would elevate to a high place in its regard a poetry that ministers to mental lassitude, and, like the *Daffodils*, has little point save the gratification of the sensuous emotions. For my own part, realising that in the last analysis human nature is the most important element in life, I humbly dare to propose human nature with all its complexity, its subtle fluidity, its mysterious consciousness, as the subject of literature. And recognising that literature must reflect this complexity, I believe that this reflection can be thrown by no mere sensuous surface, after the manner of the fine arts. It must be more than simply visual, and more than simply auditory.

To accomplish its purpose the spirit of literature has sought out the one medium suited to intellectual ends, has used that medium exclusively, and has developed only *genres* whose organic structure is wholly intellectual. In view of these considerations I can conclude only that literature is not a fine art ministering to the emotions, but a reflection of human nature, intellectual in its mode, critical in its spirit, and moral in its function.

S. B. GASS.

University of Nebraska.