


# The Value of Literature Now and in the Future

Jerome F. A. Bump 

Department of English, University of Texas, Austin, TX 78712, USA; bump@utexas.edu

Literature, the “best writing,” has been both enjoyable and useful for thousands of years. Reading words in print is declining, but literature can adjust just as it did when manuscript culture was replaced by print culture. The best writing will emerge no matter what the media is. Now, we can look for literature in more forms and topics of stories than we have considered before. As an online journal, we can also, if we wish, use an image or YouTube citation now and then to discuss the best writing in multimedia.

Thirty years ago, there were reports that “literature” was dying, suffocated by theory. In fact, these were laments for the decline of one very limited version of literature that fulfilled only one of the two goals usually set for great literature: beauty. Sometimes, there were nods toward the social function of literature, but the literature that was mourned was mainly that which inspired Art for Art’s Sake, Aestheticism, and New Criticism.

The literature intended to be not just beautiful, but also beneficial to society, remains very much alive and necessary as we face pandemics, climate change, and racial, gender, and class prejudices. Indeed, we could benefit from more essays benefitting society, especially essays integrating literature and cultural studies, essays relating literature to science and medicine, and essays celebrating the paradox of both unity and diversity in literature.

Moreover, because emphasis on theory in the past may have left little room for the literature of emotion favored by “minority” writers, such as Morrison, Lorde, and hooks, we can balance abstraction with detailed readings of passages from literary works, supported perhaps by emotive literary criticism.

Obviously there are many exciting possibilities for literature in the twenty-first century, especially in the integration of literature and cultural studies. We expect this journal to explore many of them while upholding the traditional standards of “the best writing.”

I feel, and hope you feel, something like what Keats felt when he remembered all the great literature he had read, and “then” realized even greater possibilities:

Much have I travell’d in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.

...

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout [Balboa] when with eagle eyes  
star’d at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look’d at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

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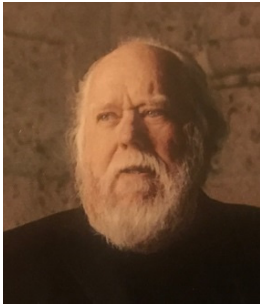
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## Short Biography of Authors



**Jerome Bump** is Professor Emeritus of the Department of English at the University of Texas at Austin. Visiting appointments: Professeur, Institut du Monde Anglophone, Sorbonne Nouvelle, Université de Paris III, and Professeur, Anglaise-Américaine, Université de Paris X. Degrees: Ph.D. in English, University of California at Berkeley; B.A. *Summa Cum Laude* in English, University of Minnesota. Honors: Co-Editor *Texas Studies in Language and Literature*; N.E.H. Research Fellowship at Oxford; N.D.E.A. Fellowship; Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. Research results: book *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, sixty articles and chapters, forty reviews, and ninety-nine conference papers. "Recent essay": "Emotion in Ethics, Rhetoric and the Creative Process: The Tragedy of Coetzee's Woman Warrior" *Critique* 60 (1): 1–13. Current research project: "The Life or Death of Our Planet: Brahmavira or Biophobia?"