

**THE NEW LAOKOON; AN
ESSAY ON THE
CONFUSION OF THE ARTS**

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The new Laokoon; an essay on the confusion of the arts by Irving Babbitt

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IRVING BABBITT

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CONFUSION OF THE ARTS**

By Irving Babbitt

DEMOCRACY AND LEADERSHIP.
ROUSSEAU AND ROMANTICISM.
THE MASTERS OF MODERN FRENCH CRITICISM.
THE NEW LAOCOON.
An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts.
LITERATURE AND THE AMERICAN COLLEGE.
Essays in Defense of the Humanities.

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THE NEW LAOKOON

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AN ESSAY ON THE CONFUSION
OF THE ARTS

BY

IRVING BABBITT



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PREFACE

THE title I have taken for this book expresses my sense of what needs doing rather than what I myself would claim to have done. I have suffered, both in selecting a title and in treating my subject itself, from a certain poverty in our English critical vocabulary. The word *genre* seems to be gaining some currency in English. The same can scarcely be said of the *mélange des genres*; and yet it is around the *mélange des genres* and allied topics that my main argument revolves. Napoleon is reported to have said to Goethe in the course of a conversation on a problem very similar to the one I have attempted, "Je m'étonne qu'un aussi grand esprit que vous n'aime pas les genres tranchés." I have often been forced to borrow Napoleon's term and speak of the *genre tranché*, for lack of a suitable English equivalent.

Lessing published his "Laokoon" in 1766, toward the very end of the neo-classical movement. The period of nearly a century and a half that has since elapsed has seen the rise of the great romantic