

*A Writer's Recommendations for a Course in Writing*

## THE BEGINNING WRITER IN THE UNIVERSITY\*

BY MALCOLM COWLEY

HOW CAN I become a professional writer?" is a question I have been asked in various fashions by persons of all ages from under eighteen to—in a recent case—over eighty, and I never know how to answer those of any age. Of course I might say to some, if I knew them better, "You'd be wise to give up the idea. It's too late now to make up for the years when you should have been reading everything and writing for practice." To others I might say, also knowing them better, "You don't really want to write, which is the worst sort of drudgery. You have a romantic dream of being a writer. You want to have inspirations, then put them on paper in a sort of prolonged and painless trance, like having a baby under anesthetic, then stand around at cocktail parties answering questions about your last book, so wittily but modestly too, between deep puffs at your pipe. Why not dream of being a movie actor instead?"

To still others I might say, "You seem to have talent, but I suspect you of having a beautiful soul. Let me warn you that the competition is brutal and that you may be too delicate to survive in a field where the more one tries to be sensitive in one's work,

the more one has to be tough with oneself." And again I might say, for example to college students who were not only talented but also appeared to have a more dogged ambition, "Write a great deal and get it published." That is always sound advice, but if they asked another question, "How can I learn to make my writing good enough to be published?" once again I should be doubtful how to answer them. Today there is no generally available form of apprenticeship, no clearly marked path for qualified beginners that will lead them into the writing profession.

That wasn't always the case in American writing. We can see in retrospect that during the nineteenth century there were two such paths, each of them followed by many young men with literary ambitions. I have mentioned these paths before, in a book called *The Literary Situation*, but I make no apology for repeating myself, because the facts are necessary as a background for what I want to say. One of the paths led through a divinity school, usually Harvard, and later through the pastorate of a small church, most often Unitarian. The young minister would write for church magazines, then for general magazines or book publishers, and finally he would resign his pastorate. Writers trained as clergymen had the great advantage of a flowing style, acquired in the pulpit; for most of them the words came easily. They had the disadvantage that the style was intended to impress a congregation, instead of being directed to the hearts and minds of individuals.

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The other path appears to have held more promise for writers as writers, not as moral teachers. It was the one that started in a printing shop, usually in the composing room of a weekly newspaper. After leaving school at fourteen or fifteen, the apprentice man of letters was employed there as a copy boy or printer's devil; then he would be taught how to read proof and how to set type by hand. It was the most practical sort of training, for at worst or least the apprentice would learn the rules of grammar, punctuation, and spelling—which are becoming an esoteric form of knowledge—and at best he would learn another lesson as well. By handling a type-metal alphabet, he would learn that words have body and weight as well as sound; he would acquire an almost tactile sense of language; and he would also learn that big words and oratorical turns of phrase wasted his time, like that of readers.

The first truly effective American writer, Benjamin Franklin, was a printer, just as the second, Jonathan Edwards, was a clergyman. In the nineteenth century the writers who followed Ben Franklin's path were, among others, Whitman, Howells, Bret Harte, Mark Twain, and Lafcadio Hearn, all of whom set type at some stage in their early careers and each of whom learned to write fluent and accurate English. After setting type for a newspaper, they each wrote stories for it. The best of their stories were reprinted so widely that magazine editors began asking for their work, then book publishers, and they were launched on their literary careers—sometimes without quite knowing how it had happened.

After 1890 most of the newspaper composing rooms were unionized and no longer offered casual employment to schoolboys serving their literary apprenticeships. The new path to recognition led through the city room of a big-town newspaper, where the miserably underpaid staff kept changing and there were always jobs for ambi-

tious young men. If they survived the first few years—as not all of them did in those hard-drinking days—young writers learned to get their facts in proper sequence and learned a great deal about the tough underbelly of American life. On the other hand, most of them never acquired the devout feeling for words that was shown by earlier writers who had worked in printing shops. Dreiser, Mencken, Huneker, Harold Frederic, Stephen Crane, Jack Reed, and David Graham Phillips—in fact most of the new writers who appeared between 1890 and 1915—got their start as cub reporters.

**T**ODAY the situation has changed again. Newspaper work has ceased to be a poorly paid apprenticeship for other professions, including authorship, and has become a rewarding career in itself. On-the-job training for writers is something that still exists in a few places, but the places are hard to find. Most of the beginners go to college, and many of them continue into graduate schools, where they are exposed to the best education this country has ever offered. Unfortunately, if they still want to be writers, not critics or teachers, it isn't always or often the best education for the special careers they have in mind.

This general tendency in the field of writing—I mean the decline of apprenticeship, with our educational system coming forward to supply the professional training on all levels no longer provided by masters and employers—is one that extends into all fields of American life. Many of our high schools are being transformed into trade schools, offering a maximum of shop practice with only a seasoning dash of book learning. The demand for professional training has forced our universities to expand far beyond the original four faculties of theology, law, medicine, and the liberal arts. Engineering first, then agriculture, forestry, schoolteaching, nursing, advertising, selling, management of all types,

horticulture, household economics, getting married, having babies: almost every human activity has become a subject for university instruction, often at the postgraduate level. For the artistic and literary professions, there are many famous schools or departments of architecture, journalism, music, design in all its branches, and the drama. A similar development is taking place in the field of writing, but here the professional training has neither been carried so far nor organized in such a systematic manner as in other fields. Indeed, the popularity of courses in advanced writing is a fairly recent development.

So far as I have been able to learn, the first writing course for students who seriously planned to become men of letters was given at Harvard in the 1890's by Lewis E. Gates. To judge by his students, who included a number of brilliant poets and novelists, he must have been a gifted teacher. Frank Norris' first novel, *Vandover and the Brute*, was one of those written in Gates's course. A few years later the same sort of instruction was being given at Michigan by Fred Newton Scott, who was Avery Hopwood's admired professor and thus was indirectly the cause of these awards and this lecture.

When Gates died in 1903, his place at Harvard was taken by two other famous

teachers: the scholarly Dean Briggs, whose deeply wrinkled face bore a look of sympathy and saintliness, and C. T. Copeland—"Copey," as everybody called him—who was more of an actor than a saint or scholar, but who had a keen eye for details and

an ear that quickly distinguished good from awkward prose. At conferences he used to sit back in his armchair like a pale-bronze Buddha and listen while we read our themes aloud; then he would dictate a comment for us to write. I remember two of these. Once when I had described the swirling dust in a Pittsburgh street he asked, "Don't you remember the smell of dried horse dung? Why didn't you put that in?" And once when I read him a sententious editorial written for the *Harvard Advocate*, in which one wondered how the country knew who . . . , he

shook his bald head, with a shifting highlight on it from the afternoon sun, and groaned, "Malcolm, when are you going to stop using those knew-whoings and one-wonderings?" I stopped that afternoon.

**I**N THE first two decades of this century, Harvard was a seedbed and plant nursery of American authorship. Almost all the writers who were there in any of the years from 1905 to 1920 took either Copey's course or Dean Briggs's course, or both of



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them. The only exceptions were the thirteen dramatic writers—Baker's Dozen—admitted each year to George Pierce Baker's English 47 Workshop. In that period when all Americans worshiped success, and especially early success, an event of the year 1907 gave a special prestige to the 47 Workshop, as if it had been sprinkled with gold dust, some of which rubbed off on the other advanced writing courses. The event was the long Broadway run of Edward Sheldon's play, *Salvation Nell*, which had been written in English 47 while Sheldon was still an undergraduate. Later Eugene O'Neill was a still more famous product of the course.

In 1925 Baker moved his 47 Workshop to Yale, where a school of the drama was built around it. In 1931 the University of Michigan, which had retained a lively interest in writing courses, was enabled to broaden its program and offer these prizes as a result of the Hopwood bequest. Soon other universities were trying to attract young writers. Courses in advanced or, as it is usually miscalled, creative writing are now being offered by institutions all over the country, and there are good ones at some of the smaller colleges, like Kenyon, for example. At Stanford the writing program has been given its own endowment. At Iowa there is a postgraduate school of writing that confers a master's degree, with the student submitting a novel or a book of poems as his magisterial thesis.

Most of the present courses everywhere are conducted by able and devoted teachers. Most of the students—of course not all of them—are willing to work seriously and aren't taking the courses just for credit. Many of the former students have made names for themselves, as one can see by reading a list of the former Hopwood Awards. If the courses accomplish less than the teachers hope for them, perhaps that results from a misconception of what they might properly accomplish.

Sometimes the misconception is em-

bodied in the name of the course: Creative Writing, Creating the Novel, Creating the Short Story, or even Creating the Fifteen-Minute Script. I doubt that any instructor, however earnest or inspired, can teach any group of students, however talented, to create anything whatever. He cannot give them experience of the world, or a desire to communicate the experience, or do more for their power of invention than merely to encourage it, if the power already exists. What he can properly teach the students, or expose them to the opportunity of learning, are the rules and practices to be deduced from other people's writing, the standards of the writing profession, and the resources of language as a medium. He cannot teach the *art* of writing, but that in itself is a complicated study and most writers never learn enough of it.

Partly because of a false emphasis on the art rather than the craft, some writing programs become suffused with an atmosphere of artiness, of waiting for inspirations that don't always come—and when they do come, the student has not enough of the craft to embody them in the necessary words. Other teachers, trying to be more realistic, avoid this emphasis and like to say that they could never teach their students how to write—"But at least," they add, "we can teach them how to read." So the so-called workshop in creative writing is transformed into an exercise in critical analysis, very useful to most students, but not necessarily serving as a prologue or apprenticeship to their own work. Sometimes it has the opposite effect of developing their critical sense to the point where they can't write at all, or can write nothing but explications for the literary quarterlies.

I think there is another kind of writing program that might be offered. In a completely dogmatic and rather impractical fashion, with no attention to administrative problems and chiefly as a basis for discussion, I should like to suggest what such a program might be.

ITS PURPOSE would be to teach the skills that are needed by every professional writer. It would be concerned with working habits, with problems of structure and style, and with methods that writers in the past have found for solving them—not forgetting that new writers might try to find new methods, better suited to their personalities. In other words, the program would not be creational or expressional or inspirational or analytical or therapeutic, but, I hope in the best sense of the word, professional—like the best of the programs now being offered in architecture, the drama, and musical composition.

It would be open to juniors and seniors, with an optional third year for graduate students. For juniors and seniors it would require at least as many hours of credit as the present honors program in English literature. In the postgraduate year it would be designed to occupy the whole, or almost the whole, of the student's time. There would be no second postgraduate year, because the student should then be ready for practical experience in writing. There is one thing he should never be encouraged to do, that is, to travel from university to university, taking more and more writing courses, supporting himself with fellowships, and never getting his work published—until at last, like a student I used to know, he gets married and accepts a post at some teachers' college in the alkali belt as an instructor in creative writing.

The instructors in the program I have in mind would be men with a passion for teaching younger men and women how to write, and with the hope that they will some day find and help to train a writer of genius to justify their teaching. Whether they should be professional writers themselves is a question that won't ever be settled. Many or most of the famous instructors today are writers who manage to combine their professional careers with college instruction. I might mention among others Archibald MacLeish and Albert Guérard, Jr., at Har-

vard; Robert Penn Warren, until recently at Yale; R. P. Blackmur at Princeton, John Crowe Ransom at Kenyon, Allen Tate at Minnesota, Karl Shapiro at Nebraska, Hudson Strode at Alabama, Mark Schorer and George R. Stewart at California, Wallace Stegner at Stanford, and Allan Seager and John Frederick Muehl at this university. All these men have published several books, and whatever they tell their students has the weight of practical experience behind it.

On the other hand, most of the famous instructors of the past were not professional writers, and here I am thinking of men like Gates, Copeland, Briggs, Baker, Fred Newton Scott, and R. W. Cowden. The greatest writing teacher of our age was not a writer, or connected with any university, but he had a passion for good writing and the passion was communicated to others. He was a publisher's editor, the late Maxwell E. Perkins, who was the friend of Hemingway and Fitzgerald, the spiritual father of Thomas Wolfe, and the adviser of many capable if less distinguished authors. It should be noted, and not incidentally, that Perkins and the older instructors I have mentioned could write very well when they were called upon to write or forced themselves to do so. That ability should be required of every instructor in a writing program. There are many English professors, highly respected in the academic world, who should be disqualified as teachers of writing by the first paragraph, even the first sentence, of any critical study they have contributed to the *PMLA Quarterly*.

A requirement for students in the program is that they should have distinguished themselves in whatever writing courses they may have taken during their first two years of college work. They need not have distinguished themselves in other courses, because the sad fact is that future novelists and dramatists, unlike future critics and some poets, aren't always the brightest students in courses outside their own field. Every student in the program should prove

himself capable of writing clear sentences and well-constructed paragraphs. One reason for such a requirement is that instructors shouldn't have to bother with these fundamentals, but there is the additional reason that future men of letters are more likely to reveal themselves by their passion for getting the words right than by their wealth of material. Eventually they will be judged by what they say, but their early promise depends more on how they say it.

I should hope that the program would be difficult enough to frighten away the mere yearners and tender spirits and seekers for help in unfolding their precious personalities. It is the difficult programs that attract the best students—and if the program I have in mind proved difficult enough and fruitful enough, it might attract good students from all parts of the country.

**I**T WOULD include three or four subjects that are not usually taught in universities, even the largest. For example, it might begin with what might be called—even if we don't like the word—an indoctrination course on the history of the writing profession. Entirely too much attention is being paid to the faults and delinquencies of famous writers, with the result that people have formed a false picture of the profession as a refuge for the weak, the abnormal, the self-indulgent, and the self-destructive. Not only the public but young writers too are being encouraged to forget that writing is a profession with its own difficult standards of conduct, with its high virtues and with sins like dishonesty and self-deception that are regarded as sins against the Holy Ghost. Writing has its saints and heroes—like Keats and Flaubert, who is sometimes a dangerous model; like Trollope as antidote to Flaubert; like Tolstoy, James, Conrad, and Thomas Mann—and their lives might be studied as models of courage for the new generation.

There would also be a course in the creative process, or simply in the mechanics of

finding a subject, developing it in words, and putting the words on paper. The course would include such topics as how to observe a scene, how to remember it, how to visualize, how to meditate on a subject, in the manner of Hawthorne and Henry James, how to write first drafts, and finally how to revise what one has written. But there would be other topics too: how to take notes or not to take them, how to make outlines and scenarios, when to write and where, and how long every day. Most of these questions have a different practical answer for each writer, and the answers have to be found by experiment. Accordingly there might be such practical exercises as writing at different times of the day (including midnight and six o'clock in the morning), writing alone, writing in the company of friends, and writing in a room full of strangers. Every student should practice different methods of putting words on paper—with pen or pencil, with a typewriter, and by dictation—so as to learn the essential lesson that writing goes on in the head and that putting down the words is merely a process of transcription.

Again there might be a course in translation from a foreign language, simply because translation is a most effective means of learning the spirit and resources of one's own language. There is no better way of acquiring a prose style, except possibly the writing of verse. Such a course should be given in the English Department, or better in the writing program, by an instructor familiar with three or more foreign languages, though each of the students would have to know only one of them. The emphasis of the course would not be on an accurate rendering of the original, though a reasonable degree of fidelity would be expected, but rather on the value of the translation as English prose.

**T**HE CORE of the writing program would consist of four courses, each lasting a semester, and all required of undergradu-

ates who specialize in the field. They would be courses in writing stories, in writing short plays, in writing nonfiction, and in writing verse. I say "verse" because it would be unreasonable to expect students with a primary talent for fictional or nonfictional prose to produce anything that might properly be called poetry. But there is no reason why they shouldn't learn to write verse, according to the traditional rules of English prosody, or why they shouldn't be called upon to produce, for example, Elizabethan blank verse, Spenserian stanzas, rhymed quatrains in iambic pentameter, eighteenth-century heroic couplets, and Petrarchan sonnets. Scott Fitzgerald said in a letter to his daughter, who wanted to write, "The only thing that will help you is poetry, which is the most concentrated form of style." And in another letter he said, "I don't think anyone can write succinct prose unless they have at least tried and failed to write a good iambic pentameter sonnet."

I think the course in writing verse would come first among the four writing courses, because, in the history of literature, verse comes before prose. Then would come writing plays, to get an ear for dialogue and a sense of construction; writing stories, a practice that includes the other skills; and writing nonfiction, which comes last because good nonfiction involves the use of fictional techniques. In all the courses there would be a similar emphasis, not on self-expression, but on the methods and conventions of the given medium. The student would learn the rules before breaking them, so as not to break them through awkwardness or inadvertence. Most of the exercises would be on assigned topics or problems. Only in the postgraduate year would the student go to work on a longer project of his own choosing: a novel, a collection of stories, a full-length play, or a book of essays or poems.

I am not thinking here of the future critics, who would require a different sort of preparation, more in the conventional

field of English and foreign literature. Still, they might be required to take at least two of the writing courses, and perhaps all four of them, so as to gain some first-hand knowledge of the problems faced by other writers. A good deal of our present-day criticism has gone up in the air, as if in an untethered balloon. It is impressive and ingenious, but it doesn't always make sense to those who have undergone the drudgery of writing a novel or a play in verse. Taking courses like those I suggest might give our critics a sharper sense of reality.

As for courses outside the writing field that students in the writing program might take as undergraduates, there would be more than a little individual choice and diversity. Writers are primarily men of words, and it is not a bad idea for the apprentice writer to learn as many words or signs in as many languages as possible—not only French, German, or Spanish and Latin, but the special language of the sciences, or philosophy, or mathematics—if he has any talent in that direction—and perhaps even the barbarous language of sociology. Writers have to deal with human beings in social groups, and it is a good idea for the apprentice writer to learn something about history, psychology, anthropology, mythology, and human relations. There should be a close coöperation, with exchange of courses, between the writing program and the departments of speech and journalism. Perhaps it is better for the writing student to know a little about many fields outside his own than to learn a great deal about one field. In particular I think it is dangerous for him to specialize—as many young writers now do—in contemporary literature and in the close analysis of texts. He should read a great deal of contemporary literature, in college and afterward, but he should read it for himself, to find what he really thinks about it and not what he is supposed to think.

Remember that I am speaking at this point about students who want to become

professional writers, not about those who want to become teachers or merely wish to acquire a general education. Every professional writer is at least a double personality: he is at the same time a compulsive speaker, at least under his voice, and a severe listener to his own speech; a creature of instinct or emotion and a cold reasoner; a creator—to use the proud word—and a critic. In great writers these two sides of the literary personality are both developed to the utmost possible degree. In little writers and failed writers they are out of balance—usually because the critical side is too weak, but sometimes for the opposite reason, because it has developed too far and too fast. The sort of training that is best for a future critic or teacher—the sort now given in our best universities—is often dangerous for an apprentice writer. If he spends too much time on the close analysis of texts, especially modern texts, the critical side of him ceases to be a listener, making its critical comments in an undertone; the voice of the critic becomes louder, firmer, more admonitory, and perhaps the other voice, that of instinct or emotion, may be frightened back into the depths of the mind.

**T**HERE is a traditional way of teaching advanced writing courses, one that goes back to Gates's course at Harvard in the 1890's. The class is small, usually consisting of from ten to fifteen students. It meets once a week for a two-hour session, and sometimes there is a second meeting as well. At each meeting one of the students reads his latest story—or a short play, or a chapter from the novel he may be working on—then the other students make their comments and perhaps offer suggestions for improving his work. In addition the instructor has a conference with each of the students, usually once every two weeks.

I have met writing instructors, including two or three very good ones, who prefer not to meet their students as a group and who work with them only in the private

conferences. These instructors say that class meetings lead to an unhealthy sort of rivalry. They say that a student who reads his work in class is likely to become painfully self-conscious. They also say that the other students are sometimes too harsh in their comments, having adopted this means of asserting their own superiority, and at other times are entirely too gentle, because they will have to read in their turns and because they hope to be treated with equal kindness.

In spite of these valid observations and the difficulties they reveal, I believe that the traditional method of teaching advanced writing courses is still the best—though always with the proviso that each writing instructor must find his own most effective way. It would seem to me, however, that the class meetings are almost as necessary as the private conferences, and that a combination of the two is best for the instructor because it ends by saving his time. Most of the advice he has to offer can be utilized by all his students and might as well be addressed to them as a group. Then, in the private conferences, he can deal with finer points of structure and style. But class meetings are desirable for the students too, because they can learn at least as much from one another as from the instructor, and sometimes they learn much more. Reading their work aloud teaches them to judge its effect on an audience. They learn whether the points they tried to make are being understood, and whether their own words are awkward to pronounce. The test of good prose is reading it aloud.

As for the competitive spirit that develops when each of the students waits for his work to be jeered at or praised, it can lead to a morbid sort of jealousy, but it can also lead to harder work and better craftsmanship. There is no reason to make a secret of the fact that writing is a highly competitive profession, and that every writer is jealous in some degree of every other writer whom he suspects of being

more facile or inventive or held in higher esteem than himself. But the literary mind has another aspect too, and writers as a group are more willing to help one another and quicker to recognize talent than members of most other professions, feeling as they do that sacrifices are owed to their art. Beginners in the profession might as well be exposed to this mixture of jealousy and generosity at a very early stage in their careers, so as to inure themselves to praise and blame, like Indian boys learning to undergo cold and hunger. Then the young writers may be better prepared for the ordeal of having their first books treated as masterpieces, or dismissed in a few contemptuous words, or simply overlooked.

**T**HE SPIRIT of competition will always appear in a writing class, but the spirit of coöperation might well be encouraged. One way to encourage it is to have the class, or members of the class, embark on some common undertaking. The project method has been applied with great success in schools of architecture, where teams of students are formed in the graduating class and each team is given some big architectural problem to solve. It has been applied with success in schools or departments of journalism, where students collaborate in producing a sort of laboratory newspaper. Since the days when George Pierce Baker was teaching at Harvard, it has also been applied in schools of the drama, where many students work together on the production of a play that one of them wrote and all of them criticized. There is no reason why a similar method might not be utilized in writing programs.

Any one of a number of common projects might be undertaken by an advanced writing class, or by chosen members of the class. For example, the project might be the preparation of a book-length manuscript containing the best stories produced in the class, or the best plays or poems. If there were funds available for the purpose

and if the manuscript was good enough, it might be published. At Stanford the best stories from the top writing class are chosen each year by vote of the class itself and are issued as a book by the Stanford University Press. That gives the class pride in itself as a group and a definite goal toward which to work.

A project for writing students who want to become teachers or critics is to prepare a collection of critical essays on a given subject. I tried that experiment at the University of Washington some years ago, in a graduate seminar. The task assigned to the class was to write a book on contemporary American literature, in which each student would deal with a particular author. There happened to be some gifted students in the class of sixteen, and nine or ten of the long essays deserved and were ready to be published. The university press was willing to undertake the book if it could be put into shape. Unfortunately not all the students were on the same level of achievement, and two or three of the least capable were dealing with authors who couldn't be omitted. Even so we could have brought the whole book up to publication level if we had had a few more weeks to work on it instead of a single academic quarter.

A less ambitious project for a writing class—and less expensive for the university than publishing a bound book with a problematical sale—is for the class to issue, during the year, two or three numbers of a magazine containing the best work of its members in all fields. The class would not only write the magazine but would act as a board of editors to select material and suggest desirable revisions; and members of the class would be assigned to act as copyreaders and proofreaders. If funds were not available to print the magazine from type, the manuscripts could be copied on an electric typewriter and mimeographed or multigraphed or printed by the offset method; by now there are many inexpensive methods of reproducing written

words. The magazine wouldn't be sold, so as not to compete with independent periodicals, including those issued by undergraduates, but it might be distributed free to bigger magazines and publishing houses. Not only would it offer practical experience to students in a writing program, but it would serve as a showcase for their work and perhaps as a first step toward wider publication.

**A**ND WHAT would be the end result of such a program, for students who took part in it?

The directors of the program could not promise to make them great writers or popular writers. For that they would need inborn or inbred qualities that no course of professional training could supply. They would have to possess what Thomas Wolfe called "the foremost quality of the artist, without which he is lost: the ability to get out of his own life the power to live and work by, to derive from his own experience—as a fruit of all his seeing, feeling, living, joy and bitter anguish—the palpable and living substance of his art." Beyond that they would have to possess obstinate patience and energy, combined with more than the usual degree of critical judgment. But if they did possess this rare combination of talents—a combination that is

unlikely to reveal itself at an early age—the talents would not be wasted, as they often are today, for want of practice and for ignorance of the fundamental writing skills.

For others in the program who proved to have critical judgment but lacked the sort of obstinate energy that good writers require, another prospect might be opened. As crowded as the writing profession seems to be at certain levels, there are hundreds and thousands of modest but necessary and sometimes remunerative places in the profession that are not being properly filled for want of younger men and women with the necessary training. I am thinking of places like those of copy editors, story editors, scenario and script writers, feature writers, business and technical writers, translators, revisers of manuscripts, collaborators (sometimes known as ghosts), play doctors, and book reviewers—a whole collection of honest literary trades that are now being practiced either cynically, for shudders and laughs, or else, in many cases, with a painful degree of ignorance and ineptitude. They should be practiced with competence and integrity, not only for the sake of the literary profession and the public, but also for the sake of literature as an art—because high standards in all the literary crafts are the foundation from which great works can rise, like towers against the sky.