A Course Plan on Editing
Conducted in March and April 2007 by RJ Merrett
For Graduate Students in
The Department of English and Film Studies in the UnIversity of Alberta

There are many kinds of 'editing.' Editors 'put forward' many kinds of texts, the systems and methods of production largely determining their roles. Editors work for publishing houses of different kinds (e.g. trade or academic publishers, small presses, private presses, government agencies, corporations, educational and other institutions, such as research libraries, etc.). They serve the needs of authors and printers as well as general and specialist readers. Editors' tasks depend on different modes of production, i.e., journals, newspapers, magazines, compilations such as anthologies, encyclopedias and other reference works, proceedings, monographs and other books, taped books, electronic texts, photographic reprints, television, radio, DVDs, etc. The roles of editors in the print media tend to be hierarchical and depend on levels of experience and responsibility. They may be denominated: sponsoring, developmental, acquisitions or commissioning, project, and copy editors.

Publishers of all kinds are constantly in search of good copy-editors. There are many employment opportunities for good copy-editors. Self-training is feasible, and building a portfolio of projects completed is often instrumental to a person's moving into other and more senior areas of editing. Most publishers either have a style guide of their own or they prefer one of the standards for documentation upheld by the *Modern Language Association (MLA)*, the *American Psychological Association (APA)*, *The Chicago Manual of Style (CMS)*, the Council of Science Editors (CSE). These style guides present distinctive ways of rendering cited sources completely and correctly. Freelance editors should set out by studying each of these authorities. Editors of technical writing, another field with many employment opportunities, may well be required to follow the style guides of particular journals or granting agencies. Copy-editors employ a range of proofreading symbols. The production of digitalized camera-ready copy along with on-line publication requires editors to employ increasingly complex printers' symbols.

One on-line site which advertises editing opportunities is the Editor's Association of Canada (EAC: www.editors.ca). Here is how the Association specifies what a competent editor should be able to do:
1) Recognize structure appropriate for the intended audience and medium. Suggest deletions, additions, or rearrangements if appropriate (e.g., where there are gaps in content, missing steps in the argument, unclear transitions).
2) Create an outline to reveal structure.
3) Reorganize material into an appropriate (e.g., logical or entertaining) structure and sequence, keeping in mind that the nature of the publication often determines organization (e.g., an academic article and a newspaper story differ in structure, as do a book and a Web site).
4) Recognize when prose material would be better presented in another form (e.g., number-laden text as a table or chart, descriptive material as a diagram or illustration, a series of points as a list).

5) Recognize language appropriate for the intended audience and medium, and make changes as necessary.

6) Establish a consistent style, reading level, point of view, and level of decorum, while maintaining a voice that is recognizably that of the author.

7) Enhance, or at least preserve, appropriate stylistic and dramatic devices (and minimize inappropriate ones).

8) Recognize and clarify ambiguous vocabulary and syntax.

9) Recognize and eliminate redundancies and verbosity.

10) Recognize and eliminate jargon that is inappropriate for the intended audience.

11) Correct or improve infelicitous connections and transitions, parallels, and paragraphing.

12) Recognize and correct inconsistencies in the form and use of headings (e.g., inappropriate level, nonparallel forms).

13) Maintain consistent style in headings and in captions for tables, figures, and illustrations.

14) Recognize statements that should be checked for accuracy, and follow up as required.

15) Identify inconsistencies in logic, facts, and details such as time, nomenclature, or setting, and correct or query as required.

16) Write coherent and diplomatic notes to authors asking for clarification or explaining changes, and negotiate such changes.

17) Identify, in language and in content, possible legal trouble spots (e.g., libel, plagiarism, missing permissions) or departures from social acceptability (e.g., gender, ethnicity, or age bias; failure to give sources).

18) Revise or cut to meet length requirements.

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Textual criticism

Textual criticism arose from the desire to preserve the works of antiquity and medieval and early modern manuscripts. Such texts, having been often transcribed, exist in hundreds of copies. Textual criticism deals with how copies relate to a real or hypothetical original and asks which copies are more authoritative and correct than others. Textual critics determine which variants in copies are original and which errors, by comparing extant copies and deriving a "critical text" from external and internal evidence. Printing gradually displaced the need for handwritten copies but the conditions under which compositors worked left as much room for errors as in the past. Given the mistakes made by scribes and printers, some textual critics recover lost original texts by taking readings from many copies in an eclectic manner whereas others try to identify the best surviving text by refusing to combine readings from several sources. A "critical edition" offers a text with an "apparatus" that presents evidence the editor considered and analyzed, and records rejected variants.

External evidence details the provenance of texts and sets up their relations with one another, calling them in the process "witnesses." Textual critics may prefer textual evidence from the oldest witnesses, a majority of witnesses, the most geographically diffuse witnesses or the best witnesses. Readings that depart from the practice of a scribe or a period may be judged more reliable, since a scribe is unlikely on his own initiative to have departed from usual practice.

Internal evidence arises from the text itself, setting aside the document's physical condition. The rules testing internal evidence of textual originality are difficult to harmonize. Here is a list: (1) the more difficult the reading the stronger because copyists are likely to simplify a text they do not understand; (2) the shorter reading the better because scribes were more likely to add than to delete; (3) the reading that smooths away difficulties is not likely to be original; (4) the quality is more important than number of witnesses in establishing readings; (5) the reading which best explains other witnesses is preferable. These rules are highly subject to interpretation. Not only do they contradict one another but they may be easily rationalized to justify any preconception. Nineteenth-century scholars tried to create more rigorous or objective methods and to limit textual eclecticism.

Karl Lachmann (1793-1851) developed a method called 'stemmatics' which aims to trace the family relationships between extant texts. Its operating principle is that "community of error implies community of origin." If two texts have in common a number of errors, they likely come from the same intermediate source. Manuscripts can be placed on a stem or branch by constructing a family tree which takes into account lost intermediate texts (recension). Although the processes of selection and emendation that subsequently examine and compare variants in similar texts are step-by-step methods limited to a restricted notion of textual provenance, the problem with stemmatics is that it supposes derivation from a single originating text. It also assumes that scribes made only new errors and did not attempt to correct prior mistakes. Yet, as Greg (1950) argues, one cannot assume that when a scribe makes a mistake this leads only to nonsense.

The textual critic, Joseph Bédier (1864-1938), attacked stemmatics on the grounds that editors tended to invent family trees with only two branches because in this way they could increase opportunities for editorial judgment. Bédier argues that stemmatics employs conjectural emendations at every stage. Another charge he made is that the view that every extant text derives from one source does not preclude the original author from having revised his text: the text could have existed at different times in more than one authentic version.

Copy-text editing requires the editor to select the base text from a manuscript or printed version taken to be reliable, namely the oldest manuscript or the copy of a manuscript that was in the printer's hand. In this method, the editor makes corrections or emendations when the base text seems to be corrupted. This may be revealed when the base text does not make sense or when other witnesses have superior readings. The bibliographer Ronald B. McKerrow invented the term "copy-text" in 1904. He thought it best to choose one reliable text and to emend it only where it was obviously corrupt. For McKerrow, the copy-text was not necessarily the oldest version if that text embodied later corrections than any other. By 1939, he had changed his mind, since a later edition–although containing authorial corrections–might deviate more than the earliest one printed from the author's original manuscript. The correct procedure, he said, was to use the earliest "good" print as copy-text and insert into it, from the first edition which contains them, "such corrections as appear to us to be derived from the author." Thus, to avoid arbitrariness, editors must accept all substantive revisions except misprints or obvious blunders.

Sir Walter W. Greg's "The Rationale of Copy-Text" dominated late twentieth-century editing with its distinction between significant or substantive textual readings which affect the author's meaning or essential expression and others such as spelling, punctuation, and word-division that mainly affect its formal presentation, the latter called "accidentals" of the text.

Greg held that compositors at printing shops tended to follow the "substantive" readings of their copy faithfully, except when they deviated unintentionally, but that with regard to accidentals they normally followed their habits or inclinations (Greg 1950: 22). Whereas the copy-text was to govern accidentals, the choice between substantive readings is not so limited. For Greg, in a critical edition the text chosen as copy may not be the one that supplies most substantive readings in cases of variation. In this view, he rejected what he called the tyranny of the copy-text (Greg 1950: 26). If the authority for "accidentals" derives from one particular authoritative source, perhaps the earliest, the authority for "substantives" may follow the editor's judgement in every individual case without necessarily following any one witness.

Fredson Bowers and G. Thomas Tanselle have been the main proponents of Greg's textual method. Bowers argued that the method was applicable to all literary periods (Bowers 1972: 86). Although he held that authors' manuscripts should be generally treated as copy-texts, he insisted that first editions proofread by authors do not necessarily represent final intentions: manuscript readings could be replaced by substantives from printed versions because such changes are often made in proof (Bowers 1964: 226). As a result, Bowers was obliged to confront the topic of uninfluenced final authorial intentions. If textual criticism aims to produce a copy of an author's work in its final state, under what printing and publication conditions is this achieved? Both Bowers and Tanselle argue that textual variants inserted into works by others than authors should be disregarded. They would seem to assume that such variants have been "influenced" or "coerced" and that they cannot represent authorial intentions (Cf. Tanselle 1986: 19). For Tanselle, even if authors make literary and stylistic changes under persuasion from publishers and announce them to be improvements, there may be no external or internal evidence to support the author's endorsement of such textual adaptations (Tanselle 1976: 194). But the possibility of intermediate situations is feasible in which cases it would not be possible to differentiate between authorial and publishers' intentions. Hans Zeller, for instance, has argued that, should an author agree to expurgate his text from a particular viewpoint, any such deletions or substitutions would lead to systemic textual changes (Zeller 1975: 247-48).

Bowers and Tanselle concede not only that texts may have more than one authoritative version but also that there are two kinds of editorial revision. One may adapt the purpose of the work so as to give it a different nature; the other may improve the work as originally conceived, altering in degree not kind (Tanselle 1976: 193). The two kinds of revision will operate by distinct editorial principles–the first responsive to the author's final version and the second creating independent principles.

Bowers argued for the relegation of the method and content of critical apparatus to appendices at the end of editions in order to produce a "clear" text, one that subordinates editorial processes. The assumption here is that the literary text is primary and should allow readers both to consume it uninterruptedly and to cite it with minimum difficulty. Keeping production costs down is also an issue (Tanselle 1972: 45-46). Relegating critical apparatus in this way does face objections. Not only is the apparatus harder to use but also the text comes across as having greater fixity than perhaps it should (Shillingsburg 1989: 56). Moreover, major literary works in the Menippean tradition exploit para-literary and editorial forms.

As the bibliography below indicates, computer technology and software are encouraging innovative theories and practices in editing and publishing. One such is 'cladistics,' a method adopted from evolutionary biology which records and classifies all differences

between numbers of manuscripts and then groups manuscripts according to certain features which they share and according to genetic assumptions. Cladistics sees the groupings as branches and does not pretend to find the root. That has to be pursued by more traditional means. One problem with cladistics is that it proceeds on the basis that branches cannot be rejoined whereas it is well known that scribes could work with two different manuscripts to produce a new copy with features drawn from both manuscripts. However, software designed for biology is being used in the Canterbury Tales Project to explore relations between the eighty-four manuscripts and four early printed editions of the *Canterbury Tales*. (N.B. The above notes have been digested from Wikipedia's entry on editing and from links which it provides to editing and publishing organizations.)

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Seminar members will give an oral presentation on ONE of the following topics:

1) Describe the editorial hierarchy in ONE media organization and the several kinds of editors along with their responsibilities. One possible on-line source: Editors' Association of Canada.

2) Devise ways of offering your editorial services to a university press and a local newspaper.

3) Contrast the house styles of two journals you admire.

4) What editing decisions can you imagine facing if you decided to turn your thesis into a book? Consult Eleanor Harman, Ian Montagnes, Siobhan McMenemy and Chris Bucci (eds.), *The Thesis and the Book: A Guide for First-Time Academic Authors* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2003).

5) To what sources would you turn in assessing the market for a book you can imagine wanting to publish?

6) Describe "The Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)" and explain its guidelines and what they are intended to serve.

7) Through exploring a single author or work on the Orlando database, explain how the technology employed can contribute to Humanities research.

8) What are the ontological differences between a "work" and a "text"?

9) Describe a work of fiction or a major poem, such as Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* or Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad*, to show how and to what effect para-literary and editing devices are made into literary strategies.

This presentation should take up a couple of printed pages and require no more than five minutes for their delivery.

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Seminar members will write an essay of 1000 words on topics raised in the following proposal to edit Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe?*

Between 1719, when *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* first appeared, and 1979, when Robert Lovett completed a survey of its publication history, twelve hundred editions of Daniel Defoe's title were printed. Written anonymously and printed without authorial supervision, the novel was a commercial success for its publisher, William Taylor, who, in order to realize his capital investment, hurried to produce subsequent editions in the face of competition from pirates and abridgers. Before he died in 1724, Taylor brought out six octavo editions plus a duodecimo edition of *Robinson Crusoe* (RC1), three octavo editions plus a duodecimo edition of *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (RC2), and a single octavo edition of *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (RC3). Despite this output, Taylor did not much enhance his property: its quality of printing did improve but never reached the highest standard; errors of various kinds are not infrequent and, if steadily corrected, were continually introduced. Despite his efforts, Taylor did not prevent Defoe's texts from reaching audiences beyond the publisher's control.

Thomas Cox produced an abridged duodecimo version of *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719 against which Taylor warned the public in the *St. James's Post* of 7 August 1719 and in the preface to RC2 which appeared on or about 20 August 1719. Pirated versions of Defoe's novel also appeared in a newspaper: the *Original London Post* published RC1 in 78 instalments between 7 October 1719 and 30 March 1720, also printing RC2 between 1 April and 19 October 1720. This constitutes the first serialization of fiction in English journalism. On Taylor's demise, more influential publishers acquired the copyrights but found it impossible to guard against pirates, one of the most persistent being Edward Midwinter who abridged all three parts in 1722 in a version of 376 pages (reissued in 1724, 1726, 1733) and brought out another in 1724 of 156 pages (reissued in 1734, 1748, 1752, 1759). Piracy induced legitimate publishers to condense editions of RC2 and RC3, especially the latter.

When Defoe wrote RC1, he was in his sixtieth year. His authorial career had been long; for thirty years he had written poems, political and economic pamphlets, and volumes of historical and social commentary, including conduct books. He had produced a newspaper, the *Review* (1704-13), and was still contributing to others as writer and editor, working sometimes as a government agent. He knew the book trade well and, when he chose, supervised his texts through the press. But with *Robinson Crusoe*, he was more intent on extending the novel (signaled in the final pages of RC1) than on supervising its production.

Robinson Crusoe is a landmark in Defoe's career because his first major fiction recapitulates the preoccupations of earlier works and demarcates thematic and moral

territories explored in his final decade–his most inventive and diverse period of composition. Indeed, *Robinson Crusoe* is a prelude to works in which Defoe was his most experimental and which draw on his earlier professional career. A full edition of the novel might show how Defoe integrates fictional and non-fictional discourses; in it, he builds on his admiration of Bunyan, on the tradition of seventeenth-century spiritual autobiography, on his training in biblical exegesis, on practices of casuistry, on travel writing of various kinds, and on his knowledge of advances in science, technology and commerce. The three parts of the novel, to the degree they explore concepts of value, money, investment, utility, and labor, elaborate insights into economic theory. Thinking as a mercantilist, he anticipated some of Adam Smith's free-trade ideas. Although Defoe wrote about finance, credit, stock-jobbing, and the circulation of trade in the context of moral rules, he promoted material culture and aspects of capitalism in ways which earned Karl Marx's notice and still draw the attention of economists and cultural critics. Despite being socially marginalized, Defoe advanced the cause of national, international, colonial and imperialist projects, helping to endow English fiction with programmatic functions. At the same time, *Robinson Crusoe* reveals an abstract and intellectual cast to his thinking. The rigorous education he received in the Stoke Newington Academy meant that, while he grew up in the intellectual traditions of Dissent, he was able to develop for himself a broader philosophical perspective that let him critique Dissent. RC1, RC2, and RC3 demonstrate his interest in the concept of the law of nature and in the extension of natural rights from the abstract realm of the constitution and jurisprudence to the life and conduct of individuals. What renders RC3 important is that it contains his fullest statement of the theory of fiction and exemplifies the philosophical terms in which he interpreted his own fiction. In this regard, RC1, RC2, and RC3 are illuminated by sections in *The Family Instructor*, *Due Preparations for the Plague*, and *Religious Courtship*, which illustrate his ongoing interest in narrative experimentation and theory. Another element in *Robinson Crusoe* relevant to the development of eighteenth-century fiction is Defoe's interest in extrasensory perception and second sight. An ambivalence towards spiritualism marks the satire and social commentary in *Robinson Crusoe* and other novels as well as in later books such as *The Political History of the Devil*, *System of Magick*, and *An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions*. The workings of Providence held major psychological import for Defoe. His concern with this theme helps to explain why his most famous novel was appropriated by a chapbook industry which thrived on popular writing about magic and prophecy.

 Robinson Crusoe opens up major aspects of literary and cultural history. The novel was a cynosure of English and European literature in the eighteenth century. For over sixty years, its popularity as a novel was dissociated from Defoe's biography, career, and literary reputation. The many piracies and abridgments, which confirmed the originality and wide appeal of the story, devalued its autobiographical, allegorical and theoretical elements. At the same time, these versions rendered it a text that inspired diverse adaptations, illustrations and translations, including a pantomime. A survey of the scores of condensations of *Robinson Crusoe* suggests why commentators, such as Sir Walter Scott, associated Defoe's narrative style with 'realism' and saw it as an archetypal adventure story for children.

 Readers interested in grasping this traditional impact of Defoe's novel might well read Catharine Parr Traill, *Canadian Crusoes: A Tale of the Rice Lake Plains* (1852), R. M Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858), and R. L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1881-82). As Blewett (1995) has shown, the reception of Defoe's novel in France was distinctive; French publishers, translators,

artists, and engravers treated it with a seriousness that inspired British editors to follow their lead after 1790. Commentators from Rousseau to Hazlitt and nineteenth-century bibliographers evidence that intellectual and popular reactions to Defoe developed in parallel. Pictorial illustrations from the turn of the nineteenth century through the twentieth century confirm that high and popular culture respected *Robinson Crusoe* as seminal. James Joyce and Virginia Woolf solidified Defoe's standing by praising his fiction from their stances as innovative practitioners. Given the dispraise of Defoe by contemporaries, Swift and Pope would likely have been surprised by the critical respect that he had received by the outbreak of the Second World War. They would have been further surprised to learn that, later in the twentieth century, writers found it worthwhile to quarrel with Defoe's novel and to adapt it in ways that reveal its richness as a fictive resource. William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (1954); Muriel Spark, *Robinson* (1958); Michel Tournier, *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* (1969); Michel Gall, *La vie sexuelle de Robinson Crusoë* (1985); J M Coetzee, *Foe* (1986), exploit literary and cultural resources in Defoe's work.

Defoe might have been delighted by the influence his text still exerts on writers inside and outside the traditions of British literature, for, while he was an earnest moralist, he was also a compulsive, protean writer and contrarian thinker. His complexity as man and writer partly explains the doubts about his bibliography. How could one person have written so much from so many viewpoints and in so many genres? Rarely does his name appear on title-pages. Moreover, he used seven pseudonyms. If most of his texts are anonymous, attributing works to him and establishing an accurate canon is problematic. His rhetorical practices and relations between his narrative style and syntax have become grounds for bibliographical analysis and speculation. One might ask if it is possible for computer-analysis to advance 'stylometrics' as a way of marking and identifying his writerly identity? Students of editing cannot ignore the work of Furbank and Owens which questions the methods of literary history, especially canon-formation, in the recovery of his works. For them, Defoe's "improvisatory sentence" patterns (1988: 131) help further the analysis of his prose style and the identity of his works.

In this respect, Defoe's attitudes to print culture are worth testing. He was a defensive and strategic writer who had been long used to writing anonymously and pseudonymously when he composed *Robinson Crusoe*. As Gildon's attack suggests, Defoe's novel would not have been more popular if published under his name. His entanglements in political and ecclesiastical controversy made him suspect in many quarters. While he couches political, economic and religious views in the novel, biographical criticism must be limited by the impersonal considerations which affect his defensiveness. He was no more single-minded about the printing press than Swift or Pope. His fictional strategies reveal that he adopted an uncertain stance to the printing press and publication processes, confirming Johns's thesis that, at the turn of the eighteenth century, print, for a host of reasons, did not signal unassailable authority to readers or writers. This stance informs his prose style, especially its variability and diffuseness. When Defoe expresses doubts about fictionality in the process of writing, he is not simply admitting the influence of Presbyterianism. The ways in which his narrators and characters address themselves and their readers about life-writing testify to Defoe's sensitivity about problematic aspects of print culture.

His first-person forms and styles of impersonation draw attention to how narrative unfolds and how mediation works. Narrators address listeners as well as readers; they survey the past and their actual writing; they generalize as much as they detail particularities. They

have plural stances towards former selves, present selves, and readers. At one moment, they are colloquial and informal, at the next, distant and formal. They recall readers to textual memories they have shared and to deductions that go well beyond mutual observation and analysis. One of Defoe's favored techniques is to have narrators refer to a past to be told in the narrative future (prolepsis). He also variously locates narrators inside and outside the speech community. In this context, they often change their tone, ranging from evasive self-sympathy to harsh self-criticism. In providing textual analysis of Defoe's repetitive, diverse and incremental verbal structures and associations, one might make an original contribution to Defoe studies.

Finally, the introduction to a scholarly edition might survey the critical, generic, comparative and theoretical issues to which *Robinson Crusoe* has given rise in the history of the novel. There are many views about *Robinson Crusoe* as a foundational text. The question shaping such a survey might be: how has *Robinson Crusoe* been used to support competing views of the development of narrative fiction? Suggested answers might relate the novel to structuralism, post-colonialism, and cultural studies.

In the light of the foregoing what might the editorial principles of a modern critical edition be? Such an edition might well be based on a complete, unabridged transcription of the first editions of RC1, RC2 and RC3, collated with editions published during Defoe's lifetime and beyond–up to the 1753 edition of RC1 (see Appendix A). Since these early editions were not produced under uniform printing conditions and according to the same printing formats, no copy-text could pretend to be an exact documentary or bibliographical transcription. Why? As regards 'accidentals,' a modern edition could not reproduce the various and original page-sizes, line-lengths, font-styles, type-spacing, number of words per page, word-breaks at end of lines, or pagination. Further, modern editions tend not to reproduce catchwords. Nor, probably, would a modern edition follow the style of headings and chapters (which appear only in RC3). However, a copy-text might imitate text-divisions in the first editions. The apparatus of a modern edition might record original page-breaks and pagination to allow readers to compare it to the first and subsequent editions. A modern scholarly edition probably would not standardize printing conventions, except in a few notable instances. If it were to employ a uniform style of syntactic punctuation marks for the period, colon, semi-colon and comma in both normal and italicized text, it would probably let readers follow all the examples of where early punctuation marks represent elocutionary and rhetorical practices. The early printers of Defoe's texts sometimes italicize punctuation marks, sometimes not. Since there are fewer examples involving the variable form of exclamation and questions marks, a modern edition might follow the first and subsequent editions in both normalizing and italicizing these marks. If the edition were to employ a standard non-italicized form for other punctuation marks, it might not note the scores of occasions where the first and subsequent editions are variable in the typography of punctuation.

The presentation of substantives, their irregular and non-standard italicization and spelling, raises more difficulties. Proper nouns, words and phrases denoting direction, place names, and loan words are regularly but not consistently italicized in the early editions. Quotations and idioms are often italicized, too. Inconsistent italics in this range of applications probably would not be regularized but would be an object for editorial commentary. Italics are sometimes used to mark the presence of dialogue and to signal boundaries between direct and reported speech. This usage would not likely be regularized because its variability sustains

textual effects that again might deserve specific analysis and notation. Pragmatically speaking, it might be as well to posit that some italicized characters in the first editions may result from compositors' shortage of regular font. Since the marking of possessives is minimal and systemically inconsistent, it might not be regularized.

The convention of modern scholarly editions is to displace the long 's' without making mention of where it is dropped. As regards other printing accidentals, a critical edition is not likely to imitate eighteenth-century ligatures. It is likely to employ computer-generated line justification. On the other hand, it probably would not eliminate or standardize verbal contractions since such contractions contribute to the imitation of speech rhythms and the shaping of sentence contours. Spelling errors and the mis-striking of letters would probably be recorded rather than silently amended as against popular editions intended for general readers. A scholarly text's essay on editorial principles would include an extended section on non-standard spelling and typographical word-forms given the ways in which such issues operate on the boundary between substantives and accidentals. Variant spellings and word-forms would be surveyed, discussed and annotated based on computer-based textual analysis. Another benefit of computer analysis would be the recording of the incidence of capitalization and hyphenation as these affect the process of reading (eye-movement) and produce a variable compounding of words. The most pervasive editorial issue would be the punctuation of sentences and paragraphs. Many editors have found the punctuation of early editions erratic. It is usual for Defoe's text to employ capitalization after a colon and lower-case letters after a semi-colon. Frequent variations from this usage might be simply noted. A scholarly edition probably would attempt to modify the punctuation as little as possible, preferring to explain its rhetorical and elocutionary aspects as these 'override' logical and syntactic aspects. Defoe's sense of the import of rhythm and pacing and of the contours of phrases and sentences is a major aspect of his fictional and dialogue forms. What constitutes the integrity of his paragraphs as sense units in his fiction and fictional commentaries probably needs to be illustrated over against texts where he writes more formally. His unconventional way of embedding clauses and phrases into long sentences and his habit of changing and transforming sentence patterns in progress would need to be detailed and analyzed in an editorial essay.

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Appendix: Collation Notes.

RC1

(1) The first edition of RC1 [Taylor; octavo] was entered in Stationer's Register 23 on April 1719 and published on April 25, 1719. One issue but variant states. Printed by Henry Parker of Goswell Street.

(2) The second edition [Taylor; octavo] was published a fortnight later, on 8 May 1719. A page-for-page reprint in a single issue with a large number of minor variants, likely none of authorial origin. Printed mostly by Parker but later portions by Hugh Meere and William Bowyer.

(3) The third edition [Taylor; octavo] appeared on June 6, 1719. Two issues of this version [Hutchins 3T & 3C]. Printed by Parker, Meere and Bowyer in different proportions in issues. Substantive variants occur in text of separate issues, but neither is more authoritative. Following Maslen, Shinagel counts these as two editions: the 'lion' and the 'phoenix' editions.

(4) The fourth edition [Taylor; octavo] appeared on 6 August 1719. Two issues [Hutchins 4A & 4B] had a map for first time. Parker printed both. Following Maslen, Shinagel counts these as two editions--the 'without' comma and 'with' comma editions. NB. In collating the first six editions from 1719, Shinagel rules out collating what Hutchins refers to as the 5th and 6th editions.

(5) The fifth edition [Taylor; octavo] probably appeared in November 1720. The text is better printed with more careful attention to spacing.

(6) The sixth edition [Taylor; octavo] came out in 1722. With six new plates. Red and black type on title-page. But in all other ways identical to fifth edition (Hutchins 85).

(7) Another sixth edition [Taylor; duodecimo] came out in June 1722. With eight plates. Textually distinct from sixth octavo edition (Hutchins 85).

(8) The seventh edition [William Mears & Thomas Woodward; duodecimo] came out in 1726.

(9) The eighth edition [Woodward; duodecimo] came out in 1736.

(10) The ninth edition [Woodward & J. Osborn; duodecimo] came out in 1747.

(11) The tenth edition [T & T Longman and J. & J Rivington; duodecimo] came out in 1753.

RC2

(1) The first edition of RC2 [Taylor; octavo] came out on August 20, 1719. Two issues, the text reset by two or three printers.

(2) The second edition [Taylor; octavo] appeared before end of 1719. [Commonly sold with 5th edition of RC1].

(3) The third edition [Taylor; octavo] appeared in 1722, based on second issue of 1st edition, not on slightly corrupted second edition. Six plates inserted. Superior press work.

(4) The fourth edition [Taylor; duodecimo] came out in 1722. Advertised as issued with 6th edition of RC1 on June 7, 1722.

(5) The fifth edition [Mears & Woodward: duodecimo; uniform with 7th ed of RC1] appeared in 1726.

(8) The sixth edition [Woodward: duodecimo; issued with 8th edition of RC1] appeared in 1736.

(9) The seventh edition [Woodward & Osborn: duodecimo; issued with 9th edition of RC1] appeared in 1747.

RC3
The first and only edition of RC3 [Taylor; octavo] appeared on August 6, 1720.

Supplementary Texts:
(1) Gildon, Charles. *Robinson Crusoe Examin'd And Criticis'd*. 1719.
(2) *Voyages and Travels, Being The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner*. [London? 1750?]. Pp 8.
(3) *The Life of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner*. Congleton: J. Dean, [1785?]. Pp 24.
(4) *A Short Account of the Situations and Incidents Exhibited in the Pantomime of Robinson rusoe, at the Theatre Royal, Drurylane. Taken from the Original Story*. London: T. Becket, 1797. Pp. 24.
(5) *A Collection of New Songs. 1. Robinson Crusoe*. Newcastle: M. Angus & Son, [1800?]. Pp 8.
Editions with illustrations:
(1) John Stockdale of Piccadilly brought out a two-volume edition of RC1 and RC2 in 1790, with George Chalmer's *Life of Defoe* and fifteen illustrations by Thomas Stothard, R. A., plus frontispieces and a portrait of Defoe (Lovett 30).
(2) T. Cadell and W. Davies of the Strand and W. Blackwood of Edinburgh brought out a two-volume edition of RC1 and RC2 in 1820 with the twenty illustrations of Stothard re-engraved by James Heath (Lovett 74). The twenty illustrations appeared as a set in other editions (e.g. Lovett 98).
(3) David Bogue of Fleet Street brought out a two-volume edition of RC1 and RC2 in 1853 with 12 engravings based on drawings by George Cruikshank (Lovett 115).
(4) A one-volume Chatto and Windus edition of RC1 and RC2 of 1883 contained 37 illustrations by Cruikshank (Lovett 165).
(5) Routledge, Warne, and Routledge of Farringdon Street, London and of Walker Street, New York brought out a single volume containing RC1 and RC2 in 1864. It contained one hundred illustrations designed by J.D. Watson and engraved by the Dalziel brothers. These illustrations have been reprinted in modern editions (Lovett 131).
(6) Aitkin's three-volume edition of RC1, RC2, and RC3 was illustrated by Jack Butler Yeats (1871-1957), brother of W.B. Yeats (Lovett 189).

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Seminar members are asked to digest the following article in writing.
Blake Morrison, "Black day for the blue pencil," *The Observer* for Saturday, 6 August 2005.

Has editing had its day? A Dutch publisher recently described to me how a British author had sent her the first draft of his new book. Though a great admirer of his work, she felt that this time he hadn't done justice to his material. So they sat down together and mapped out a different perspective and storyline and he went away and rewrote the book. It's not often you hear publishers speak of being so frankly interventionist - and I wondered if that was why the author had sent his book to a Dutch editor, because this kind of intense collaborative process between author and editor no longer exists in Britain.

A novelist friend, hearing the story, said: "When I hand in a book, I've usually been working on it for several years, so I like to think there'll be little left to do to it. But if I did need editing, I'm not sure, these days, I could get it."

A graduate student of mine at Goldsmiths College expressed similar nostalgia in an email: "I have a notion of editors in days of yore," he wrote, "being straight-backed and

terrifying, all integrity and no bullshit, responding to a vocational calling and above all driven by a love of the word, brave enough not only to champion the best but also to tell their authors whatever might be needed to improve the work. And that now such personalities are as distant a myth in publishing as yer Shanklys and yer Cloughs are to football, that sharp-dressed corporate beasts run the show, reluctant to make decisions of their own, and ill-equipped to challenge those who rule a star-led system, so that everyone from JK Rowling to David Eggers suffers from the lack of scissors that might have been to their benefit."

Just after getting that email, I read about a literary conference at which both writers and agents were complaining that, because of the pressures they're under, modern-day editors simply don't have the time to edit. A news item about an initiative by Macmillan to encourage first novelists left a similar impression - the authors will receive royalties but no advances; however, if their books needed significant editing, they will have to pay for the services of a freelance editor, since no one can do it in-house.

If editing is in decline, that's bad for literature. History suggests that while some authors work alone, more or less unaided, the majority benefit from editors - and that a few are utterly dependent on them. Take Thomas Wolfe, not the white-suited New Journalist and author of Bonfire of the Vanities, but the other Tom Wolfe, his outsize predecessor, a man of 6' 6", who used to stand up while he was writing, using the top of a fridge as his desk. Clearly standing didn't inhibit Wolfe's productivity. The typescript of his first novel, as submitted to Scribner in New York, was more than 300,000 words - what a contemporary publisher would call "fuck-off long". But a young editor at Scribner, Maxwell Perkins, agreed to publish it, if Wolfe agreed to cut 90,000 words, and between them they did the job.

Soon Wolfe was working on a second novel. By early 1933 it was four times as long as the uncut version of the first - and growing at a rate of 50,000 words a month. "I think I'll have to take the book away from him," Perkins told colleagues, and invited Wolfe to gather all he'd written and bring it into the office, since he was sure the skeleton was already there. Some skeleton. There were jokes about the typescript being delivered by truck. The bundle stood two feet high - more than 3,000 pages, unnumbered - and this was only the first part of the novel. They began working together, two hours a day, six days a week - then nights, from 8.30 onwards; then Sunday nights as well. It was like painting the Forth Bridge. Wolfe would be asked for a short linking paragraph - and return a few days later with 10,000 words. In the end, while Wolfe was out of town for a few days, Perkins had the typescript set - all 450,000 words. It was published as Of Time and the River, and though another of Perkins's authors, Hemingway, said it was "something over 60 per cent shit", it became a bestseller. Wolfe later wrote an account of its composition, "the ten thousand fittings, changings, triumphs and surrenders that went into the making of a book".

There was a sad end to the Wolfe story. First rumours circulated about all the help he'd received, then a damaging piece appeared in the Saturday Review alleging that any organizational skills and critical intelligence in his work were down to Perkins. Wolfe grew resentful and paranoid, and in a letter accused Perkins of wanting to destroy him (the letter, characteristically, ran to 28 pages). "Restrain my adjectives, by all means," he wrote, "moderate ... my incondite exuberance, but don't derail the train, don't take the Pacific Limited and switch it down the siding towards Hogwart Junction". Shortly afterwards Wolfe ditched Perkins and went round telling people: "I'm going to show them I can write my books without Max." It didn't happen. There wasn't the time for it to happen. Wolfe died of TB and pneumonia, at 37.

Wolfe's dependency on Perkins was extreme. It's not so life-and-death with most of us. But all writers need editors.

A truism. All writers need editors. So why isn't the matter more discussed?

There are several reasons, I think. The editorial tradition, first of all, is for self-effacement. As human beings, editors may be far from self-effacing, but as workers their contribution goes largely unacknowledged - a nod in the preface or a thank-you from the author at the launch party and that's it. They're the ghosts in the machine, the secret sharers, the anonymous power behind the throne.

And when they do come out from the shadows to write their own memoirs, they tend to be bland and uninformative. This isn't true of Diana Athill's Stet or Jennie Erdal's Ghosting, both excellent and at times very funny books about working with authors. But Tom Maschler's recent autobiography is more typical in its unrevealingness. Maschler is an outstanding publisher, whose list at Cape includes Gabriel García Márquez, Salman Rushdie, John Fowles, Kurt Vonnegut, Philip Roth - but none of the many anecdotes he recounts about drinks, lunches, dinners, parties and prize ceremonies sheds light on the process of editing. "I have often been asked to define what makes one decide on a particular book," he writes in the closing pages. Ah-ha, we think, here it comes. "The choice is so personal, so subjective ... To publish well the publisher must be passionate about the book for its own sake ... and for me to care I must admire it for its quality." Well, thanks, Tom, that's really cleared things up.

Writers have done little to clarify the role of editors, either. Where the experience of being edited goes well, they're grateful, but the more publicized cases are when the experience is bad. Henry James called editing "the butcher's trade". Byron associated it with emasculation and, he said, would "have no gelding". DH Lawrence compared it to trying "to clip my own nose into shape with scissors". And John Updike says: "It's a little like going to ... the barber", adding, "I have never liked haircuts." Or listen to the condescension of Nabokov: "By editor I suppose you mean proofreader." There are, of course, many different kinds of editor - from fact-checkers and OKers (as they're known at the New Yorker), to line-editors and copy editors, to editors who grasp the big picture but skip the detail. But in popular mythology they're lumped together as bullyboys, bouncers or, to quote Nabokov again, "pompous avuncular brutes".

Those who can, write; those who can't, edit - that seems to be the line. I prefer TS Eliot. Asked if editors were no more than failed writers, he replied: "Perhaps - but so are most writers." Behind hostile images of the editor lies the pressure of Romantic ideology, according to which the writer is seen as a solitary creative genius or Übermensch -and the editor as a meddling middlebrow. "Invisible behind his arras," one Victorian critic wrote, "the author's unsuspected enemy works to the sure discomfiture of all original ability - this fool in the dark who knows not what he mars." What the editor is accused of marring isn't just originality but that other cherished notion of Romantic ideology, "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". By this measure, any sort of interference with a text is a violation. Even authors are castigated for tidying up their younger selves, as Wordsworth did with the 1850 Prelude and Auden did by revising or disowning poems he had written in the 1930s. But the real enemies are held to be a writer's friends, family and publishers, whose suggestions can only dilute or contaminate the pure spring of inspiration. The accusation that Ted Hughes was "suppressing" Sylvia Plath when he rearranged the original edition of Ariel and left out certain passages from her Letters and Journals, was connected to a suspicion that he had driven her to suicide - silencing her twice over. Something similar has been alleged against Percy Bysshe Shelley, for

the changes he made to his wife Mary's novel Frankenstein, changes which one commentator has described as "a kind of rape", a "collaboration forced by a more dominant writer on a less powerful and perhaps unwilling 'partner'". In fact, Mary seems to have been a fully consenting adult, who approached editing as she did parenting - "the good parent, like the good author, neither abandons its offspring nor seeks wholly to control or shape them" - but the accusation that she was violated remains.

Perhaps I've been unusually lucky, but in my experience, editors, far from coercing and squashing writers, do exactly the opposite, elucidating them and drawing them out, or, when they're exhausted and on the point of giving up (like marathon runners hitting the wall), coaxing them to go the extra mile. And yet this myth of the destructive editor - the dolt with the blue pencil - is pervasive, not least in academe. Perhaps the antipathy stems from the perceived difference between the publisher and the scholar: for whereas a scholarly editor, appearing late in the day and with the wisdom of hindsight, seeks to restore a classic, the publisher's editor is the idiot who ruined it in the first place.

A good illustration of this antipathy is the Cambridge edition of DH Lawrence. "Here at last is Sons and Lovers in full: uncut and uncensored," the editors of the 1992 Cambridge edition crow triumphantly. Their introduction goes on to allege that in being reduced by 10%, the text was "mangled"; that the editor Edward Garnett's censorship was "coy and intrusive"; that Lawrence "reacted to Garnett's decision to cut the novel with 'sadness and grief', but was powerless to resist"; and that when Garnett told him further cuts were to be made, Lawrence "exploded" with rage.

Read Lawrence's letters and you get a rather different impression. "All right," he tells Garnett, "take out what you think necessary," and gives him licence to do as he sees fit: "I don't mind what you squash out ... I feel always so deep in your debt." Lawrence was short of money, it's true, and had his mind on other things, having recently eloped with Frieda. Even so, when he writes that "the thought of you pedgilling away at the novel frets me" (pedgilling, a nice coinage, a cross between pencilling and abridging), the fret isn't what Garnett will do to the text, it's that the task is an unfair imposition: "Why can't I do those things?" And when Lawrence is finally sent proofs, he's not unhappy. "You did the pruning jolly well," he tells Garnett, and dedicates the book to him: "I wish I weren't so profuse - or prolix, or whatever it is."

It's true that, just as some writers write too much, some editors edit too much. As the New Yorker writer Renata Adler acerbically puts it, there are those who "cannot leave a text intact, eating through it leaf and branch, like tent caterpillars, leaving everywhere their mark". When he edited the magazine Granta, Bill Buford was sometimes accused of being overbearingly interventionist - in his spare time he hung out with football hooligans, and it was said he brought the same thuggishness to editing, though personally I never found him brutal in the least. At the other extreme are the quiet, nurturing sorts, the editors who ease you through so gently that when they do tamper with the text you barely notice and can kid yourself they did no work at all. Frank O'Connor compared his editor William Maxwell to "a good teacher who does not say 'Imitate me' but 'This is what I think you are trying to say'."

When people speak of writer's block, they think of the writer stalled over a blank page, or of throwing scrunched-up bits of paper - false starts - into a wastebin. But there's another kind of block, which is structural, when you've written tens of thousands of words, but can't figure out which are superfluous and what goes where. Something's wrong, but you don't know

what it is, and that can make you pretty desperate, so that if some new acquaintance rashly expresses an interest in what you've written, as happens to the Californian wine buff and would-be published author Miles in Alexander Payne's recent film Sideways, you foist your typescript on them, which in Miles's case means retrieving from the back seat of his car not one whacking heap of pages but two, and even though you know this will a) place the recipient in an awkward situation b) sprain his or her back and/or c) ruin a beautiful friendship, still, you do it anyway, because you're desperate.

And that's why editors matter, not as butchers and barbers, but because what's wrong with a book can be something the author has repressed all knowledge of, something glaringly obvious which, the moment an editor or other reader identifies it, you think yes, of course, Eureka, and then you go back and fix it. Editing might be a bloody trade. But knives aren't the exclusive property of butchers. Surgeons use them too. Three major works of early 20th-century literature - Sons and Lovers, The Waste Land and The Great Gatsby - were transformed by the interventions of others. The uncut version of Sons and Lovers is the one in general use now, so we can see exactly what Garnett took out. Mostly, he pared back passages about Paul Morel's brother, William, at the risk of betraying the title of the novel, which declares this to be a book about "sons", plural, but mostly with a gain in focus and narrative pace. The censorship, too, is largely innocuous. "She had the most beautiful hips he had ever imagined," Lawrence writes, when Paul sees Miriam naked for the first time. Garnett changed "hips" to "body", which seems to me an improvement, "hips" being an odd thing for Paul to focus on and, I suspect, a euphemism, and at any rate not a major breakthrough in sexual candour.

The one serious misjudgment Garnett made concerns the scene where Paul and Clara go back to her mother's house, after a night in town at the opera. Paul is invited to stay over and use Clara's bed while she sleeps with her mother. He hopes to have sex with Clara, nonetheless, and it's only when her mother refuses to leave them alone together that he reluctantly makes his way upstairs to Clara's bedroom and undresses. Garnett cut the following:

Then he realized that there was a pair of [Clara's] stockings on a chair. He got up stealthily, and put them on himself. Then he sat still, and knew he would have to have her. After that he sat erect on the bed . . .

A braver editor might have allowed Lawrence both his double entendre - "erect" - and the authentic resoluteness of a man on heat ("he would have to have her"). But the real censorship concerns those stockings. Too kinky, Garnett must have reasoned. The sensible Clara might have thought the same, had she known what Paul was getting up to in her bedroom, and not responded to him as warmly as she does when he creeps back downstairs and finds her naked in front of the fire. (Garnett trimmed a paragraph from this scene too, including a reference to Paul holding a large breast in each hand, "like big fruits in their cups".) Still, for us it's an insight into Paul - a clue to his feminine side, perhaps, or closet transvestism, or masturbatory male heterosexuality, or, on a deeper level, his need to know what it feels like to be Clara. The modern reader wants the stockings, and will wonder why Garnett didn't dispense with the Mills & Boon stuff instead ("She gave herself. He held her fast. It was a moment intense almost to agony"). But this is now, and that was then, and by making Sons and Lovers a novel which, unlike The Rainbow, escaped moral denunciation and legal writs, Garnett did Lawrence a service - as also did Frieda, Jessie Chambers and Louie Burrows, all of whom read the book in draft and made suggestions.

Thanks to the discovery of the original typescript of The Waste Land, in the New York Public Library in 1968, Ezra Pound's part in the poem's composition is well-known. Most of his comments are plain and workmanlike - a fellow maker offering sound advice. "Verse not interesting enough," he scrawls in the margin; "Too easy", "Inversions not warranted", "rhyme drags it out to diffuseness". He's particularly severe whenever the poem teeters into Prufrockian tentativeness - "make up yr mind", "Perhaps be damned" and "dam per'apsez", he complains. Other cuts are motivated by ear, not logic - Eliot at this point was using quatrains, and Pound chastised him for such old-style regularity. But taste comes into it, too, as when Eliot describes the young man carbuncular, leaving the typist he has just seduced, "delay[ing] only to urinate and spit": as "probably over the mark", Pound says, and takes it out, as he also does a chilly, misogynistic account of a woman having a bath.

It's good, practical stuff. But not infallible. And Eliot was far from slavish in following Pound's advice. If he had listened to Pound, we would not have the lines about the young man being someone "on whom assurance sits / as a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire". Nor would we have those tense snatches of conversation from a couple in bed in Part 2 of the poem: "My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me. / Speak to me." Pound objected that this was mere "photography", but Eliot stuck to his guns, preferring to rely on the opinion of his wife Vivienne, who thought the passage "wonderful".

Pound wasn't a Redeemer, any more than Garnett was a Mangler. Both had good advice to offer but the integrity of the work - someone else's work - remains. Maxwell Perkins's editing of The Great Gatsby is exemplary in this way, too. He had edited Fitzgerald's previous two novels, but Fitzgerald wanted this one to be a more "consciously artistic achievement", and Perkins helped in numerous ways. For instance:

1) The title. Fitzgerald's running title was Among the Ash-Heaps and Millionaires. His second choice was Trimalchio in West Egg. Perkins didn't like either. Nor plain Trimalchio. Nor plain Gatsby. A month before publication day, Fitzgerald cabled in a panic from Italy to suggest Gold-Hatted Gatsby. Perkins held firm. The Great Gatsby was best.

2) Ideas: At an early stage, to spur Fitzgerald along, Perkins showed him a possible dust jacket for the book - two gigantic eyes, brooding over New York. The jacket inspired Fitzgerald to develop a key image and motif in the novel - the billboard of optician Dr TJ Eckleburg.

3) Length: One week before he thought he'd finish, Fitzgerald estimated Gatsby at 50,000 words, more a novella than a novel. Perkins encouraged him to fill the story out, and Fitzgerald spliced in about 20 passages, adding up to 10,000 words. I've never heard anyone complain the book is too long.

4) Character: Perkins thought Gatsby himself too vague: "The reader's eyes can never quite focus on him, his outlines are dim ... Couldn't you add one or two characteristics, like the use of that phrase 'old sport'." He also thought readers would want to know how Gatsby got his wealth. Fitzgerald agreed: "I myself didn't know what Gatsby looked like or was engaged in ... I'm going to tell more." And he did.

Fitzgerald had written three drafts of Gatsby before Perkins intervened, but then, he said, "sat down and wrote something I was proud of". Perhaps there's no better example of the proper balance between author and editor. One little mystery concerns the last page - the blue lawn, the green light at the end of Daisy's dock, and "the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us". "Orgastic" isn't quite a neologism but it's extremely rare; whereas "orgasmic" and "orgiastic" are common enough. Was it a typo? Neither Perkins nor Fitzgerald

was good at spelling: after This Side of Paradise was published, spotting the typos - there were more than 100 - became a parlour game in New York book circles (without his secretary, who saved him time and again, Perkins might have become infamous as The Editor Who Couldn't Spell). But "orgastic" does work. Perhaps it was conscious artistry.

The years 1912 to 1925 seem to have been the golden age of editing. Most of the publishers I've talked to, both young and old, say it's impossible to do such editing today. However diligent you are, the sheer speed at which books have to be pushed through prevents it. These days you have to be an all-rounder, involved with promotion, publicity and sales - all of which are crucial but mean that when a writer is trapped in a wrong book you don't have the time to sit down together and find a way out. One editor spoke of a colleague who had managed to do brilliant work purely because, having small children, she was allowed to do most of her work at home; were she in the office all day, having to attend meetings and fend off phone-calls, she'd never manage it.

Meanwhile, most people say the real editing of books is now done by agents, since agents offer authors stability, whereas publishers' editors are nomadic, moving from house to house.

Does it matter? Books still come out, and if writers these days moan about being edited too little, where once they moaned about being edited too much, well, writers will always moan. By common consent, two of the outstanding debut novels of recent years, Zadie Smith's White Teeth and Monica Ali's Brick Lane, were insufficiently edited -but that hasn't stopped them achieving commercial and critical success. And who wants to see the return of what Lawrence called the "censor-moron", cutting whatever he deems improper for us to read?

But think for a moment of another kind of culture, where nothing is edited. A culture where we're all so logorrheaic we haven't time for each other's words or books or blogs, where everything goes into the ether - and there's no sign that anyone reads it all. A culture that doesn't care about editing is a culture that doesn't care about writing. And that has to be bad. It seems no coincidence to me that there should have been a massive growth in creative writing programmes in Britain in recent years. That the reason so many aspirant writers are signing up for MAs and PhDs is to get the kind of editorial help they no longer hope to get from publishing houses. If Perkins were alive today, would he be editing texts for Scribner? Or teaching fiction to creative writing students at Columbia University?

"But can you really teach creative writing?" people ask. I like to think so - that certain skills can be passed on. But maybe it's the wrong question. Better to ask: "Can you teach would-be writers to edit?" Yes, absolutely, yes. Walk in on a creative writing class and you'll hear the kind of babble you might have heard from Garnett with Lawrence, or Pound with Eliot, or Perkins with Fitzgerald: why not think of losing that, or moving that there? Give the reader more signposts. Stop bombarding us with so many characters. Don't parade your research, integrate it. Show, don't tell. Get in and out of the scene more quickly. Is that simile really working? And so on.

Perkins warned editors against delusions of grandeur. "Don't ever get to feeling important about yourself ... an editor can get only as much out of an author as the author has in him." He's right. When a book appears, the author must take the credit. But if editing disappears, as it seems to be doing, there'll be no books worth taking the credit for.