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Notes & Comments

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Deprogramming the MFA

On the real consequences of "The Program Era."

Much of what was wrong with the twentieth century, Kingsley Amis famously observed, could be summed up in the word "workshop." It is amusing to contemplate what Sir Kingsley would have to say about *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*, a paean to the workshop and all it has wrought by Mark McGurl, an associate professor of English at UCLA. "The rise of the creative writing program," Professor McGurl argues in his opening pages, "stands as the most important event in postwar American literary history."

Alert readers will point out that an outbreak of avian flu, a detonation of a truckload of TNT in a schoolyard, or the contamination of the water supply by terrorists would also count as important events. But that's not the sort of thing Professor McGurl means. No, he actually *endorses* creative writing p ...

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