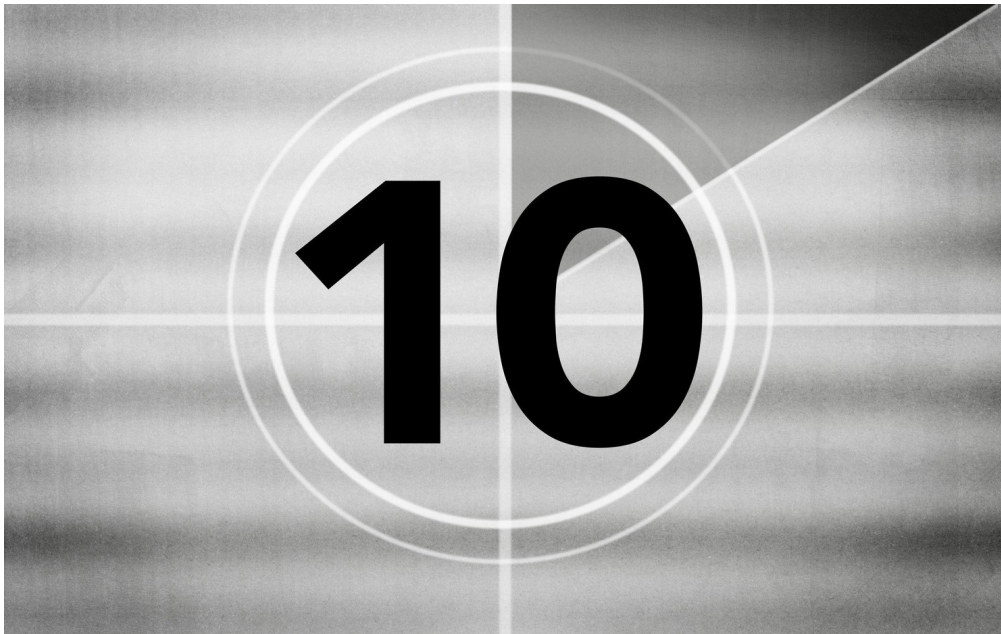


• QUIROGA • ONETTI •  
• UHART • LUPPINO •



**DECALOGUES FOR  
WRITERS**

**Translated by Alejandro de Acosta**

I found Onetti's and Quiroga's decalogues on the Great Web and translated them in December of 2020.

Uhart's decalogue was assembled posthumously by Liliana Villanueva and included in her charming and instructive book on Uhart's writing workshops, *Las clases de Hebe Uhart* (Blatt & Ríos, 2015). I translated it in October 2019. Thanks to Mo Shaughnessy for a clue about number 5.

I did those three in Olympia; and then, in Gainesville, I did a version of Luppino's Great Essay in the August of 2021; and this is a new version.

**Horacio Quiroga**  
**(Uruguay, (1878–1937))**

**Decalogue of the Perfect Short Story  
Writer**

1. Believe in a master—Poe, Maupassant, Kipling, Chekhov—as in God himself.
2. Believe that your art is an inaccessible peak. Don't dream of achieving it. When you're able, you'll do it without knowing it.
3. Resist imitation as much as possible, but if the influence is too strong, imitate. More than anything else, the development of personality is a long patience.
4. Have blind faith not in your ability to triumph, but in the ardor with which desire it. Love your art like your fiancé, giving it all your heart.

5. Don't start writing without knowing from the first word on where you are going. In a well-written story, the three first lines are almost as important as the last three.

6. If you want to express precisely this event: "From the river a cold wind blew," there are no other words than those to express it. Once you are master of your words, don't worry about whether they are consonant or assonant.

7. No useless adjectives. The color ribbons you stick on to a weak noun will be useless. If you find the right one, it alone will have an incomparable color. But you must find it.

8. Take your characters by the hand and walk them firmly towards the end, not seeing anything other than the path you have laid out for them. Don't get distracted looking at

what they can't see or don't care to. Don't abuse the reader. A story is a novel without padding. Take this for an absolute truth, though it's not.

9. Don't write under the imperious force of feeling. Let it die, and evoke it later. If you are capable of reviving it just as it was, you are halfway to your art.

10. Don't think of your friends when you write, nor in the impression that your story will produce. Tell it as if your story was only of interest to the small world of your characters, of which you could have been one. There is no other way to the life of the story.

**Juan Carlos Onetti**  
**(Uruguay, 1909-1994)**

**Decalogue**

1. Don't try to be original. Being different is inevitable when you don't worry about it.

2. Don't try to shock the bourgeoisie. It doesn't work anymore. They are only scared when you go into their pockets.

3. Don't confuse the reader, or seek or demand his help.

4. Don't ever write thinking about reviews, friends or relatives, the sweet girlfriend or wife. Not even a hypothetical reader.

5. Don't sacrifice literary sincerity for anything. Not for politics, not for success.

Always write for that other self, silent and implacable, who we bear within us and who cannot be fooled.

6. Ignore fashions, renounce the sacred master thrice before the cock crow of dawn.

7. Don't just read already popular books. Proust and Joyce were looked down upon when they appeared. Now they are geniuses.

8. Don't forget the justly famous phrase: two plus two make four, but what if they made five?

9. Don't disdain stories with weird narrations, whatever its origin. Steal them if you need to.

10. Always lie.

11. Don't forget what Hemingway wrote: "I even read aloud the part of the novel I had

rewritten, which is about as low as a writer can get.”



**Hebe Uhart**  
**(Argentina, 1936- 2018)**

**Uhart's Decalogue plus one for those who are going to write**

1. There are no writers; there are people who write.
2. Writing is a craft, a task like any other.
3. To write you must, as Chekhov said, “remain at a quick trot.”
4. Literature is made of details.
5. We ourselves are the first person.
6. The deed doesn't matter in itself; what matters is its repercussion in me, or in the character.

7. The way into the character is through their fissure.

8. Every story has a *but*. The *but* opens up the story for me.

9. You have to know how to observe and listen to how people talk.

10. Truth is built in dialogue.

11. Adjectives shut down; metaphors open up.

**Ariel Luppino**  
**(Argentina, 1985- )**

**Big Essay on the Serial Writing Machine**

*According to Laiseca, Marcelo Fox was beheaded by the Mitre line subway in the Belgrano A Station. On the basis of that fact I drew a number of conclusions.*

1. Texts are not written with ideas, but with phrases: first one, then another and so forth.
2. We write with phrases but phrases don't belong to anyone. "I would prefer not to" is not a quote.
3. There is a logic of the inside and a logic of the outside. But you can't understand the inside with the logic of the outside. The greater part of literary problems are topological problems.

4. There is a concept of writing on the order of composition. It's not a matter of conceiving writing as music, but rather understanding both of them as formal expressions.

5. The word "literature" disallows us from thinking writing.

6. "Literature" ends up in a certain ambiguous and confused concept of writing.

7. There was never anything but writing.

8. Writing is irreducible to narrating or telling.

9. You can't defend ideologically what fails in formally.

10. A text doesn't tell stories, but ways of telling.

11. The author is not dead: he must be beheaded.

12. There is only writing. There was never anything else.

13. We should stop talking about writing and begin talking about writings.

14. The word “rereading” should be forbidden: we have never “already” read a text.

15. A text cannot be translated. The translation is another text.

16. The one who explains is lost; there is nothing to explain. Understand if you can!





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