



THE DONALD MCQUADE
ROBERT ATWAN
SECOND EDITION
WRITER'S
PRESENCE

A POOL OF ESSAYS

The Writer's Presence

A Pool of Essays

Second Edition

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Preface

for Instructors

We have designed *The Writer's Presence* with three goals in mind: to give students examples of writing with a strong writer's presence (or voice), to allow instructors maximum flexibility in assigning the essays and stories, and to support composition teachers and students as effectively as possible. We believe that the pieces we have chosen to reprint here, the way we have chosen to organize those pieces, and the materials we have prepared for the extensive instructor's manual make this a uniquely useful collection.

DIVERSE ESSAYS WITH A STRONG WRITER'S PRESENCE

Each essay in the second edition of *The Writer's Presence* features the distinctive intellectual signature that marks all memorable prose: the presence of a lively individual mind attempting to explore one's self, shape information into meaning, or contend with issues through conversation or debate. Ranging widely across subjects, methods of development, and stylistic patterns, these essays illustrate the expectations as well as the uncertainties that surface when a writer attempts to create a memorable individual presence in prose.

We have built this second edition of *The Writer's Presence* around first-rate teaching material proven to work in the classroom and in writing. At the same time, we have increased the number of writers that instructors have reported that they especially enjoy teaching. These classroom favorites include essays by such well-known writers as Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, George Orwell, Adrienne Rich, Alice Walker,

and E. B. White. New to this edition are essays by such prominent writers as Russell Baker, Louise Erdrich, David Mamet, Toni Morrison, N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Gary Soto, Calvin Trillin, and John Edgar Wideman. In response to the suggestions of instructors who have worked with the first edition, we have added a sampling of short stories by Raymond Carver, Jamaica Kincaid, Joyce Carol Oates, and Amy Tan — to show writers working effectively within different genres.

FLEXIBLE ORGANIZATION

We have organized *The Writer's Presence* to showcase the balance of personal, expository, and argumentative writing without imposing an order or specifying an instructional context for working with individual selections. The selections are divided into the three most commonly taught essay types — personal, expository, and argumentative — but within these three sections we have simply arranged the writers in alphabetical order. The selections are numbered consecutively throughout the book, and these selection numbers appear in the running heads for easy retrieval. This organization makes the essays easy to retrieve, assign, and interpret in an unlimited number of ways and with different instructional emphases. To make it easier for you to explore different approaches, this second edition includes several alternate tables of contents at the back of the book. Embedded within the collection are a rhetorical reader, a thematic reader, a multicultural reader, an argument reader, a contemporary issues reader, and a short-essay reader.

HELPFUL AND UNOBTRUSIVE APPARATUS

We have kept the instructional apparatus to a minimum. In response to faculty and student suggestions, we have added brief biographical headnotes that also introduce students to each writer's compositional interests, practices, and goals. Following each essay are small clusters of questions that help guide students through a careful rereading of the essay. These questions draw attention to the specific ways in which a reader can be present in writing — either as an implied reader (the reader imagined by the writer) or as an actual reader.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHING THE WRITER'S PRESENCE

Carefully managing the amount of instructional apparatus in *The Writer's Presence* does not weaken our commitment to provide you with a wealth of specific instructional activities. In 240 spiral-bound pages,

Resources for Teaching The Writer's Presence is the most extensive instructor's manual available for any composition reader.

This resource-full guide to *The Writer's Presence* opens with "Suggestions for Teaching," a specially annotated table of contents that explores each selection's teaching possibilities. These suggestions (which also appear as front matter in instructors' examination copies of *The Writer's Presence*) give a quick sense of each selection and explain why we chose each piece for this collection. In addition, *Resources for Teaching The Writer's Presence* includes the following four parts in each entry:

- "Approaching the Selection" provides a thorough overview of the pedagogical prospects of working with the essay in the classroom.
- "Additional Activities" offers imaginative classroom activities, including write-before-reading exercises, connections to other essays in the book, and collaborative projects.
- "Generating Writing" includes a range of writing exercises — from suggestions for informal writing to essay assignments and ideas for research papers.
- "The Reader's Presence" addresses the questions that follow each selection in the text, pointing to illuminating passages in the selection and anticipating possible responses from students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This revision of *The Writer's Presence* grew out of correspondence and conversation — on the phone, in person, in letters, and on the internet — with the many teachers and an appreciable number of students who have worked with *The Writer's Presence* in their writing classes. We continue to learn a great deal from these discussions, and we are grateful to the colleagues and friends who graciously have allowed us into their already crowded lives to seek advice and encouragement. From its inception, *The Writer's Presence* continues to be a truly collaborative enterprise.

Much in the manner of our plan to develop *The Writer's Presence*, this revision has emerged from spirited discussions with instructors who prefer to pick and choose — at their own discretion and with their own instructional purposes — from among a wide range of eminently readable and teachable essays. We are grateful to these colleagues across the country who took the time to tell us about what did — and did not — work well when they used the first edition: Lisa Altomari, Vermont Technical College; Maurice H. Barr, Spokane Community College; Todd W. Bersley, California State University—Northridge; Gerri Black, Stockton State College; Scott Brookman, Virginia Commonwealth University; Larry Brunt, Highline Community College; Irene Burgess, SUC Cortland; Dolores M. Burton, Boston University; Diane Challis, Virginia Common-

wealth University; Jimmy Cheshire, Wright State University; Chet Childress, Virginia Commonwealth University; Alice Cleveland, College of Mareu; Michel S. Connell, University of Iowa; Chase Crossingham, University of South Carolina; Ruth Y. Davidson, Pennsylvania State University — Schuylkill Campus; Michael G. Davros, University of Illinois at Chicago; Peggy C. de Broux, Peninsula College; Jessica Deforest, Michigan State University; Mary Devaney, Rutgers University — Newark Campus; Debra DiPiazza, Bernard M. Baruch College (CUNY); Maria Rowena P. Dolorico, Bristol Community College; Alex Fagan, Virginia Commonwealth University; Grace Farrell, Butler University; Joan Gabriele, University of Colorado; Christie Anderson Garcia, Spokane Falls Community College; Jane Gatewood, Mary Washington College; Rae Greiner, Radford University; Brian Hale, University of South Carolina; Sarah Hanselman, Tufts University; Dave Hendrickson, Virginia Commonwealth University; Curtis W. Herr, Kutztown University; Professor Goldie Johnson, Winona State University; Nancy B. Johnson, Pace University; Ronald L. King, Virginia Commonwealth University; Harriet Malinowitz, Hunter College (CUNY); Barbara Mallonee, Loyola College; Denice Martone, New York University; Ilene Miele, Moorpark College; Andrew Mossin, Temple University; Cathryn A. Myers, Virginia Commonwealth University; Cheryl Pallant, Virginia Commonwealth University; Marty Patton, University of Missouri — Columbia; Gary D. Pratt, Brandeis University; Catherine S. Quick, University of Missouri — Columbia; Larry Rodgers, Kansas State University; Colleen Richmond, George Fox College; Lissa Schneider, University of Miami; Marilyn S. Scott, California State University — Hayward; Constance Fletcher Smith, Mary Washington College; Roger Sorkin, University of Massachusetts — Dartmouth; J. F. Stenerson, Pace University; Steven Strang, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Pamela Topping, Long Island University — Southampton Campus; Mary Turnbull, University of Puget Sound; Donna M. Turner, University of North Dakota; Sandra Urban, Loyola University of Chicago; Jennifer Lynne Von Ammon, Florida State University; and Ed Wiltse, Tufts University.

We would especially like to acknowledge our colleagues in the Expository Writing Program at New York University — Alfred Guy, Lisa Altomari, Karen Boiko, Darlene Forrest, Mary Helen Kolisnyk, Jim Marcall, Denice Martone, and Will McCormack — for taking the time to talk with us and for sharing their ideas.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the professional staff at Bedford Books for their encouragement and for their innumerable contributions to this project. Once again, we drew frequently on the intelligence, imagination, good judgment, and patience of our editor, Jane Betz. Her understanding, advice, and support were indispensable in producing a book aimed at improving student reading and writing. We also appreciate the generous assistance of Pam Ozaroff. Julie Sullivan guided the project through the copy-editing and proofreading stages of the publi-

cation process with a remarkable combination of thorough professionalism and unfailing common sense and good cheer. John Amburg, assistant managing editor, coordinated the production process with admirable professionalism. We are also grateful to Dick Hannus and Maureen Kehoe for the attractive and inviting look of the book's cover.

As ever, Chuck Christensen, the publisher of Bedford Books, offered us spirited encouragement, first-rate and rigorous advice, as well as numerous suggestions for improving the project. He never hesitated to urge us to venture with an idea or to explore an instructional feature of the book if it might make our purposes clearer and more useful to teachers and students. And when our conversations veered occasionally toward uncertainty, we relied on the steady editorial presence of associate publisher Joan Feinberg, who invariably helped us convert pedagogical principle into sound instructional practice.

Alfred Guy of New York University, Jack Roberts of St. Thomas Aquinas College, and Alix Schwartz of the University of California-Berkeley contributed their intelligence, accomplishments as teachers, and, most importantly, their sense of pedagogical responsibility in helping us to develop *Resources for Teaching The Writer's Presence*. Their experience as dedicated and innovative teachers is everywhere evident in the comprehensive instructional guide that accompanies this book, and we are delighted that they participated in exploring the richness of the selections we have reprinted. We thank, too, Matthew Howard of *The Boston Review* and Sook Mee Hahn for their skills as researchers and for their expert assistance with manuscript preparation. We would also like to acknowledge Greg Mullins' skills as a researcher and interviewer and his accomplishments as a writer. His artful blendings of biographical sketches and quotations on writing are models of informative succinctness and invitations to further reading.

Finally, we hope that Helene, Gregory, and Emily Atwan, along with Susanne, Christine, and Marc McQuade, will once again share our satisfaction in seeing this project in print and our pleasure in continuing our productive collaboration.

Donald McQuade
Robert Atwan

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2. Russell Baker, *Gumption* 16

"I had never met a writer, had shown no previous urge to write, and hadn't a notion how to become a writer, but I loved stories and thought that making up stories must surely be almost as much fun as reading them."

3. Raymond Carver, *My Father's Life* 23

"My dad walked, hitched rides, and rode in empty boxcars when he went from Arkansas to Washington State in 1934, looking for work. I don't know whether he was pursuing a dream when he went out to Washington. I doubt it. I don't think he dreamed much."

4. Raymond Carver, *Bicycles, Muscles, Cigarettes* (story) 30

"Hamilton loved his father and could recall many things about him. But now he recalled his father's one fistfight as if it were all there was to the man."

5. Judith Ortiz Cofer, *Silent Dancing* 38

"My father's Navy check provided us with financial security and a standard of life that the factory workers envied. The only thing his money could not buy us was a place to live away from the barrio — his greatest wish, Mother's greatest fear."

6. Bernard Cooper, *A Clack of Tiny Sparks: Remembrances of a Gay Boyhood* 46

"My longing was wrong in the eyes of my mother, whose hazel eyes were the eyes of the world, and if that longing continued unchecked, the unwieldy shape of my fate would be cast, and I'd be subjected to a lifetime of scorn."

7. Joan Didion, *On Keeping a Notebook* 54

"My first notebook was a Big Five tablet, given to me by my mother with the sensible suggestion that I stop whining and learn to amuse myself by writing down my thoughts."

8. Frederick Douglass, *Learning to Read and Write* 61

"The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men."

9. Stephen Dunn, *Locker Room Talk* 66

"As a teenager and well into my twenties I'd hear someone recount his latest real or wishful conquest, there'd be a kind of general congratulatory laughter, tacit envy, but what I remember feeling most was wonderment and then embarrassment."

10. Nora Ephron, *A Few Words about Breasts* 68

"And I knew that no one would ever want to marry me. I had no breasts. I would never have breasts."

11. Louise Erdrich, *Skunk Dreams* 76

"If I were an animal, I'd choose to be a skunk: Live fearlessly, eat anything, gestate my young in just two months, and fall into a state of dreaming torpor when the cold bit hard."

12. Henry Louis Gates Jr., *In the Kitchen* 84

"The 'kitchen' I'm speaking of now is the very kinky bit of hair at the back of the head, where the neck meets the shirt collar. If there ever was one part of our African past that resisted assimilation, it was the kitchen. No matter how hot the iron, no matter how powerful the chemical, no

matter how stringent the mashed-potatoes-and-lye formula of a man's 'process,' neither God nor woman nor Sammy Davis, Jr., could straighten the kitchen."

13. Donald Hall, *On Moving One's Lips, While Reading* 91

"When we read for joy — for beauty, for intelligence, for understanding — we must hear the words in order to read well. If we move our lips when we read silently, fine: It will slow us down and we will read better. Whether moving our lips or not, we must test literature's words in our mouths."

14. Langston Hughes, *Salvation* 96

"Suddenly the whole room broke into a sea of shouting, as they saw me rise. Waves of rejoicing swept the place. Women leaped in the air. My aunt threw her arms around me. The minister took me by the hand and led me to the platform."

15. Zora Neale Hurston, *How It Feels to Be Colored Me* 99

"Among the thousand white persons, I am a dark rock surged upon, and overswept, but through it all, I remain myself. When covered by the waters, I am; and the ebb but reveals me again."

16. Edward Iwata, *Race without Face* 103

"I didn't realize at the time that my flaws were imagined, not real. I felt compelled to measure up to a cultural ideal in a culture that had never asked me what my ideal was."

17. David Mamet, *The Rake: A Few Scenes from My Childhood* 114

"We were raking the lawn, my sister and I. I was raking, and she was stuffing the leaves into a bag. I loathed the job, and my muscles and my mind rebelled, and I was viciously angry, and my sister said something, and I turned and threw the rake at her and it hit her in the face."

18. N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain* 120

"Loneliness is an aspect of the land. All things in the plain are isolate; there is no confusion of objects in the eye, but one hill or one tree or one man. To look upon that landscape in the early morning, with the sun at your back, is to lose the sense of proportion. Your imagination comes to life, and this, you think, is where Creation was begun."

19. George Orwell, *Shooting an Elephant* 126

"When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick — one never does when a shot goes home — but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd."

20. Noel Perrin, *The Androgynous Man* 133

"For the last decade my house has functioned better than it used to because I've had the aid of a volume called 'Home Repairs Any Woman Can Do,' which is pitched just right for people at my technical level. As a youth, I'd as soon as touched such a book as I would have become a transvestite. Even though common sense says there is really nothing sexual whatsoever about fixing sinks."

21. Adrienne Rich, *Split at the Root: An Essay on Jewish Identity* 136

"Sometimes I feel I have seen too long from too many disconnected angles: White, Jewish, anti-Semite, racist, anti-racist, once-married, lesbian, middle-class, feminist, exmatriate southerner, *split at the root* — that I will never bring them whole."

22. Alberto Alvaro Ríos, *Green Cards* 148

"So you don't speak loudly, you don't ask questions, you don't make trouble. Run away when you have to. Don't sign anything. Get a job only where everybody else is getting one, where it's safe."

23. Judy Ruiz, *Oranges and Sweet Sister Boy* 152

"My brother calls. He's always envied me, my woman's body. The same body I live in and have cursed for its softness. He asks me how I feel about myself. He says, 'You know, you are really our father's first-born son.'"

24. Scott Russell Sanders, *The Men We Carry in Our Minds* 159

"The difference between me and these daughters was that they saw me, because of my sex, as destined from birth to become like their fathers, and therefore as an enemy to their desires. But I knew better . . . I was an ally."

25. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit* 164

"At Laguna, men did the basket-making and the weaving of fine textiles; men helped a great deal with the child-care too. Because the Creator is female, there is no stigma on being female; gender is not used to control behavior. No job was a 'man's job' or a 'woman's job'; the most able person did the work."

26. Gary Soto, *The Childhood Worries, or Why I Became a Writer* 172

"Mother said that Jesus had been a good man, and he wanted peace and harmony in the hearts of all men. She said this while I looked at Jesus on his cross, poor Jesus who had nails and blood all over him. If they did that to

someone who was so good I wondered what they would do to me. You see, I was turning out bad."

27. Brent Staples, *Just Walk on By: A Black Man Ponders His Power to Alter Public Space* 182

"She cast back a worried glance. To her, the youngish black man — a broad six feet two inches with a beard and billowing hair, both hands shoved into the pockets of a bulky military jacket — seemed menacingly close. After a few more quick glimpses, she picked up her pace and was soon running in earnest."

28. Shelby Steele, *On Being Black and Middle Class* 186

"Black though I may be, it is impossible for me to sit in my single-family house with two cars in the driveway and a swing set in the back yard and *not* see the role class has played in my life."

29. Amy Tan, *Mother Tongue* 196

"Lately, I've been giving more thought to the kind of English my mother speaks. Like others, I have described it to people as 'broken' or 'fractured' English. But I wince when I say that. It has always bothered me that I can think of no way to describe it other than 'broken,' as if it were damaged and needed to be fixed, as if it lacked a certain wholeness and soundness."

30. Amy Tan, *Jing-Mei Woo: Two Kinds* (story) 202

"My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America. You could open a restaurant. You could work for the government and get good retirement. You could buy a house with almost no money down. You could become rich. You could become instantly famous."

31. Lewis Thomas, *The Tucson Zoo* 212

"As I now recall it, there was only one sensation in my head: pure elation mixed with amazement at such perfection. Swept off my feet, I floated from one side to the other, swiveling my brain, staring astounded at the beavers, then at the otters."

32. Alice Walker, *Beauty: When the Other Dancer Is the Self* 215

"Where the BB pellet struck there is a glob of whitish scar tissue, a hideous cataract, on my eye. Now when I stare at people — a favorite pastime, up to now — they will stare back. Not at the 'cute' little girl, but at her scar."

33. E. B. White, *Once More to the Lake* 222

"Summertime, oh, summertime, pattern of life indelible, the fadeproof lake, the woods unshatterable, the pasture with the sweetfern and the juniper forever and ever, summer without end."

II. EXPOSITORY WRITING: Shaping Information

34. Wendell Berry, *The Pleasures of Eating* 231

"The industrial eater is, in fact, one who does not know that eating is an agricultural act, who no longer knows or imagines the connections between eating and the land, and who is therefore necessarily passive and uncritical — in short, a victim."

35. Sven Birkerts, *Paging the Self: Privacies of Reading* 237

"Our own lives may drift every which way toward the future, but the lives of the characters are aimed towards determined ends. As readers we take this in, unconsciously, and we may begin to conceive of our own actions under this same aspect of fatedness."

36. Stephen L. Carter, *The Insufficiency of Honesty* 244

"The first point to understand about the difference between honesty and integrity is that a person may be entirely honest without ever engaging in the hard work of discernment that integrity requires: She may tell us quite truthfully what she believes without ever taking the time to figure out whether what she believes is good and right and true."

37. Amy Cunningham, *Why Women Smile* 249

"Smiles are associated with joy, relief, and amusement. But smiles are by no means limited to the expression of positive emotions: People of many different cultures smile when they are frightened, embarrassed, angry, or miserable."

38. Annie Dillard, *Seeing* 256

"Seeing is of course very much a matter of verbalization."

39. Lars Eighner, *On Dumpster Diving* 269

"Students throw out many good things, including food. In particular they tend to throw everything out when they move at the end of a semester, before and after breaks, and around midterm when many of them despair of college. So I find it advantageous to keep an eye on the academic calendar."

40. Daniel Mark Epstein, *America's No. 1 Song* 280

"The tune is a test pattern not only for the voice but also for the human spirit. The soul singer, the rock star, and the crooner — all are humbled by the anthem. We have heard world-famous tenors and sopranos choke upon the low notes and cry out in pain at the high ones. We have seen the great Mahalia Jackson tremble."

41. Ian Frazier, *Street Scene: Minor Heroism in a Major Metropolitan Area* 285

"On a Saturday morning I left my Brooklyn apartment to shop for a dinner party and saw a crowd — baseball caps, legs straddling bicycles, an arm holding a lamp stand with a dangling price tag — around a person on the sidewalk."

42. Stephen Jay Gould, *Sex, Drugs, Disasters, and the Extinction of Dinosaurs* 288

"My greatest unhappiness with most popular presentations of science concerns their failure to separate fascinating claims from the methods that scientists use to establish the facts of nature."

43. Pete Hamill, *Crack and the Box* 296

"Why, for God's sake? Why do so many millions of Americans of all ages, races, and classes choose to spend all or part of their lives stupefied?"

44. Linda M. Hasselstrom, *Why One Peaceful Woman Carries a Pistol* 301

"A woman is advised, usually by men, to protect herself by avoiding bars, by approaching her car like an Indian scout, by locking doors and windows. But these precautions aren't always enough."

45. Linda Hogan, *Dwellings* 308

"My daydreams were full of places I longed to be, shelters and solitudes. I wanted a room apart from others, a hidden cabin to rest in. I wanted to be in a redwood forest with trees so tall that the owls called out in the daytime."

46. John Hollander, *Mess* 313

"For a person prone to messiness, Cyril Connolly's celebrated observation about fat people is projected onto the world itself: inside every neat arrangement is a mess struggling to break out, like some kind of statue of chaos lying implicit in the marble of apparent organization."

47. Pico Iyer, *In Praise of the Humble Comma* 318

"The gods, they say, give breath, and they take it away. But the same could be said — could it not? — of the humble comma."

48. Maxine Hong Kingston, *No Name Woman* 321

"Whenever she had to warn us about life, my mother told stories that ran like this one, a story to grow up on. She tested our strength to establish realities."

49. Marvin Minsky, *Will Robots Inherit the Earth?* 331

"Will robots inherit the earth? Yes, but they will be our children."

50. Gloria Naylor, *A Question of Language* 341

"The spoken word, like the written word, amounts to a nonsensical arrangement of sounds and letters without a consensus that assigns 'meaning.' And building from the meaning of what we hear, we order reality. Words themselves are innocuous; it is the consensus that gives them true power."

51. Joyce Carol Oates, *They All Just Went Away* 345

"As a woman and writer, I have long wondered at the wellsprings of female masochism. Or what, in despair of a more subtle, less reductive phrase, we can call the congeries of predilections toward self-hurt, self-erasure, self-repudiation in women."

52. Joyce Carol Oates, *Christmas Night 1962* (story) 354

"It started after we got home from Grandpa's. He was on the sofa watching the same TV football they'd had on at the other house then he said something making her laugh that sharp laugh like scraping your finger on a blackboard and that was the mistake. For always there was a mistake you could point to."

53. Susan Orlean, *The American Man at Age Ten* 362

"Psychologists identify ten as roughly the age at which many boys experience the gender-linked normative developmental trauma that leaves them, as adult men, at risk for specific psychological sequelae often manifest as deficits in the arenas of intimacy, empathy, and struggles with commitment in relationships. In other words, this is around the age when guys get screwed up about girls."

54. George Orwell, *Politics and the English Language* 373

"Political language — and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists — is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind."

55. Walker Percy, *The Loss of the Creature* 384

"Why is it almost impossible to gaze directly at the Grand Canyon . . . and see it for what it is — as one picks up a strange object from one's back yard and gazes directly at it? . . . because the Grand Canyon, the thing as it is, has been appropriated by the symbolic complex which has already been formed in the sightseer's mind."

56. Katha Pollitt, *Why Boys Don't Play with Dolls* 399

"Instead of looking at kids to 'prove' that differences in behavior by sex are innate, we can look at the ways we raise kids as an index to how unfinished

the feminist revolution really is, and how tentatively it is embraced even by adults who fully expect their daughters to enter previously male-dominated professions and their sons to change diapers.”

57. Richard Selzer, *The Language of Pain* 402

“The language of pain, then, is the most exclusive of tongues, spoken and understood by an elite of one. Hearing it, we shudder, out of sympathy for the sufferer, but just as much out of the premonition that each of us shall know this language in our time.”

58. Deborah Tannen, *Gender Gap in Cyberspace* 410

“On college campuses, as soon as women students log on, they are bombarded by references to sex, like going to work and finding pornographic posters adorning the walls.”

59. Sallie Tisdale, *A Weight That Women Carry* 413

“I feel myself expand and diminish day to day, sometimes from hour to hour. If I tell someone my weight, I change in their eyes: I become bigger or smaller, better or worse, depending on what that number, my weight, means to them.”

60. Calvin Trillin, *A Traditional Family* 423

“So why has the Census Bureau begun listing us with households that consist of, say, the ex-stepchild of someone’s former marriage living with someone who is under the mistaken impression that she is the aunt of somebody or other? Because the official definition of a traditional American family is two parents and one or more children under age eighteen. Our younger daughter just turned nineteen. Is that our fault?”

61. John Updike, *The Mystery of Mickey Mouse* 426

“The America that is not symbolized by that imperial Yankee Uncle Sam is symbolized by Mickey Mouse. He is America as it feels to itself — plucky, put-on, resilient, good-natured, game.”

62. Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens* 433

“Our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see; or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read.”

63. George Will, *Printed Noise* 441

“There are some things a gentleman simply will not do, and one is announce in public a desire for a ‘Nutty Buddy.’ So I usually settle for a plain vanilla cone.”