

Portrait of the Essay as a Warm Body

by Cynthia Ozick

● Preview

After mentioning some classical essayists in English literature and the common characteristics of classical essays, the author proceeds to present her own idea of the essay. Though essays are not fiction, they are much more like female characters in a novel or a play in that they're both changeable and elusive. It is hard to give a definition of the essay as a category of literary writing, but an essay may catch our attention and lead us to the points of interest discussed by its author.

● Text

1. An essay is a thing of the imagination. If there is information in an essay it is by-the-by and if there is an opinion in it, you need not trust it for the long run. A genuine essay has no educational, polemical¹, or sociopolitical use; it is the movement of a free mind at play. Though it is written in prose, it is closer in kind to poetry than to any other form. Like a poem, a genuine essay is made out of language and character and mood and temperament and pluck² and chance.
2. And if I speak of a genuine essay, it is because fakes abound. Here the old-fashioned term poetaster³ may apply if only obliquely⁴. As the poetaster is to the poet—lesser aspirant⁵—so the article is to the essay: a look-alike knockoff⁶ guaranteed not to wear well. An article is gossip. An essay is reflection and insight. An article has the temporary advantage of social heat—what's hot out there right now. An essay's heat is interior. An article is timely topical, engaged in the issues and personalities of the moment; it is likely to be stale⁷ within the month.



¹ **polemical** *adj.* of a controversial argument

² **pluck** *n.* bravery and a strong desire to succeed

³ **poetaster** *n.* 冒牌诗人

⁴ **obliquely** *adv.* not straight to the point

⁵ **aspirant** *n.* one who aspires, as to advancement, honors, or a high position
有志者; 有野心者

⁶ **knockoff** *n.* unlicensed copy of something, like fashion clothes

⁷ **stale** *adj.* having lost freshness, effervescence, or palatability

In five years it will have acquired the quaint aura of a rotary phone. An article is Siamese-twin¹ to its date of birth. An essay defies its date of birth, and ours too.

3. Who are the classical essayists who come at once to mind? **Montaigne**, obviously. Among the nineteenth-century English masters, the long row of **Hazlitt, Lamb, De Quincey, Stevenson, Carlyle, Ruskin, Newman, Martineau, Arnold**. Of the Americans, **Emerson**. It may be argued that nowadays these are read only by specialists and literature majors, and by the latter only when they are compelled to. What characteristics are common among essays by these masters? First, that language differs from one era to the next: there are touches of archaism here, if only in punctuation and cadence. Second, that splendid minds may contradict each other (outdoors, Hazlitt never feels alone, Emerson urges the opposite). Third, that the theme of an essay can be anything under the sun, however trivial (the smell of sweat) or crushing (the thought that we must die). Fourth, that the essay is a consistently recognizable and venerable²—or call it ancient—form. In English: **Addison** and **Steele** in the eighteenth century, **Bacon** and **Browne** in the seventeenth, **Lyly** in the sixteenth, **Bede** in the seventh. And what of the biblical Koheleth—Ecclesiastes³—who may be the oldest essayist reflecting on one of the oldest subjects: world-weariness?

4. So the essay is ancient and various: but this is a commonplace. There is something else, and it is more striking yet—the essay's power. By "power" I mean precisely the capacity to do what force always does: coerce assent. Never mind that the shape and intent of any essay is against coercion or persuasion, or that the essay neither proposes nor purposes to get you to think like its author. A genuine essay is not a doctrinaire⁴ tract⁵ or a propaganda effort or a broad side⁶. **Thomas Paine's** "Common Sense" and **Emile Zola's** "J'Accuse" are heroic landmark writings; but to call them essays, though they may resemble the form, is to misunderstand. The essay is not meant for the barricades⁷; it is a stroll through someone's mazy mind. All the same, the essay turns out to be a force for agreement. It co-opts agreement; it courts agreement; it seduces agreement. For the brief hour we give to it, we are sure to fall into surrender and conviction. And this will occur even if we are intrinsically roused to resistance.

5. To illustrate: I may not be persuaded by Emersonianism as an ideology, but Emerson—his voice, his language, his music—persuades me. When we look for superlatives, not for nothing do we speak of "commanding" or "compelling" prose. If I am a skeptical rationalist or an advanced biochemist, I may regard (or discard) the idea of the soul as no better than a puff of warm vapor. But here is Emerson on the soul: "when it breathes through [man's] intellect, it is genius; when it breathes through his will, it is virtue; when it flows through his

¹ **Siamese twin** 暹罗双胞胎, 连体婴 (这里用作动词)

² **venerable** *adj.* worthy of reverence

³ **Ecclesiastes** *n.* a book of the Bible traditionally attributed to Solomon [宗] 传道书

⁴ **doctrinaire** *adj.* inflexibly attached to a practice or theory

⁵ **tract** *n.* a leaflet or pamphlet containing a declaration or an appeal

⁶ **broad side** 印刷传单

⁷ **barricade** *n.* something that serves as an obstacle; a barrier

affection, it is love.” And then—well, I am in thrall, I am possessed; I believe.

6. The novel has its own claims on surrender. It suspends our participation in the society we ordinarily live in, so that—for the time we are reading—we forget it utterly. But the essay does not allow us to forget our usual sensations and opinions; it does something even more potent¹: it makes us deny them. The authority of a masterly essayist—the authority of sublime² language and intimate observation—is absolute. When I am with Hazlitt, I know no greater companion than nature. When I am with Emerson, I know no greater solitude than nature.
7. And what is most odd about the essay’s power to lure us into its lair³ is how it goes about this work. We feel it when a political journalist comes after us with a point of view—we feel it the way the cat is wary⁴ of the dog. A polemic is a herald, complete with feathered hat and trumpet. A tract can be a trap. A magazine article generally has the scent of so-much-per-word. What is certain is that all of these are more or less in the position of a lepidopterist⁵ with his net: they mean to catch and skewer⁶. They are focused on prey—i.e., us. The genuine essay, by contrast, never thinks of us; the genuine essay may be the most self-centered (the politer word would be subjective) arena for human thought ever devised.
8. Or else, though still not having you and me in mind (unless as an exemplum of common folly), it is not self-centered at all. When I was a child, I discovered in the public library a book that enchanted me then, and the idea of which has enchanted me for life. I have no recollection either of the title or of the writer—and anyhow very young readers rarely take note of authors; stories are simply and magically there. The characters included, as I remember them, three or four children and a delightful relation who is a storyteller, and the scheme was this: each child calls out a story element—most often an object—and the storyteller gathers up whatever is supplied (blue boots, a river, a fairy, a pencil box) and makes out of these random, unlikely, and disparate⁷ offerings a tale both logical and surprising. An essay, it seems to me, may be similarly constructed—if so deliberate a term applies. The essayist, let us say, unexpectedly stumbles over a pair of old blue boots in a corner of the garage, and this reminds her of when she last wore them—twenty years ago, on a trip to Paris, where on the banks of the Seine she stopped to watch an old fellow sketching, with a box of colored pencils at his side. The pencil wiggling⁸ over his sheet is a grayish pink, which reflects the threads of sunset pulling westward in the sky, like the reins of a fairy cart... and so on. The mind meanders⁹, slipping from one impression to another, from reality to memory to dreamscape and back again.

¹ **potent** *adj.* exerting or capable of exerting strong influence

² **sublime** *adj.* characterized by nobility; majestic

³ **lair** *n.* the den or dwelling of a wild animal

⁴ **wary** *adj.* on guard; watchful

⁵ **lepidopterist** *n.* 鳞翅类学者

⁶ **skewer** *v.* to put pieces of food on a metal pin in cooking

⁷ **disparate** *adj.* different in every way

⁸ **wiggle** *v.* to move from side to side with short irregular twisting motion

⁹ **meander** *v.* to move aimlessly and idly without fixed direction

9. And it is into this frame, this work of art, that we tumble like tar babies, and are held fast. What holds us there? The authority of a voice, yes; the pleasure—sometimes the anxiety—of a new idea, an untried angle, a snatch of reminiscence, bliss displayed or shock conveyed. An essay can be the product of intellect or memory, lightheartedness or gloom, well-being or disgruntlement¹. But always there is a certain quietude², on occasion a kind of detachment. Rage and revenge, I think, belong to fiction. The essay is cooler than that. Because it so often engages in acts of memory, and despite its gladder or more antic³ incarnations, the essay is by and large a serene or melancholic form. It mimics that low electric hum, sometimes rising to resemble actual speech, that all human beings carry inside their heads—a vibration, garrulous⁴ if somewhat indistinct, that never leaves us while we wake. It is the hum of perpetual noticing: the configuration of someone's eyelid or tooth, the veins on a hand, a wisp⁵ of string caught on a twig, some words your fourth-grade teacher said, so long ago, about the rain, the look of an awning⁶, a sidewalk, a bit of cheese left on a plate. All day long this inescapable hum drums on, recalling one thing and another, and pointing out this and this and this. Legend has it that **Titus**, emperor of Rome, went mad because of the buzzing of a gnat⁷ that made its home in his ear, and presumably the gnat, flying out into the great world and then returning to her nest, whispered what she had seen and felt and learned there. But an essayist is more resourceful than an emperor, and can be relieved of this interior noise, if only for the time it takes to record its murmurings. To seize the hum and set it down for others to hear is the essayist's genius.

10. It is a genius bound to leisure, and even to luxury, if luxury is measured in hours. The essay's limits can be found in its own reflective nature. Poems have been wrested⁸ from the inferno⁹ of catastrophe or war, and battlefield letters too: these are the spontaneous bursts and burnings that danger excites. But the meditative temperateness of an essay requires a desk and a chair, a musing and a mooning, a connection to a civilized surround, even when the subject itself is a wilderness of lions and tigers, mulling¹⁰ is the way of it. An essay is a fireside thing, not a conflagration¹¹ or a safari¹².

11. This may be why, when we ask who the essayists are, it turns out—though novelists may now and then write essays—that true essayists rarely write novels. Essayists are a species of metaphysician: they are inquisitive—also analytic—about the least grain of being. Novelists go about the strenuous business of marrying and burying their people, or else they send them to sea, or to Africa, or (at the least) out of town. Essayists in their stillness ponder love and death. It is probably an illusion that men are essayists more

¹ **disgruntlement** *n.* the action of making discontented

² **quietude** *n.* tranquility

³ **antic** *n.* extravagant act or gesture

⁴ **garrulous** *adj.* having the habit of talking a lot

⁵ **wisp** *n.* a small bunch or bundle, as of straw, hair, or grass

⁶ **awning** *n.* 遮篷, 雨篷

⁷ **gnat** *n.* 小昆虫

⁸ **wrest** *v.* to obtain something with effort

⁹ **inferno** *n.* 地狱, 恐怖的景象

¹⁰ **mull** *v.* to go over extensively in the mind; ponder

¹¹ **conflagration** *n.* a large, destructive fire

¹² **safari** *n.* 探险旅行

often than women (especially since women's essays have in the past frequently assumed the form of unpublished correspondence). And here I should, I suppose, add a note about maleness and femaleness as a literary issue—what is popularly termed “gender,” as if men and women were French or German tables and sofas. I *should* add such a note; it is the fashion, or, rather, the current expectation or obligation—but there is nothing to say about any of it. Essays are written by men. Essays are written by women. That is the long and the short of it. **John Updike**, in a genially¹ confident discourse on maleness (“The disposable Rocket”), takes the view—though he admits to admixture—that the “male sense of space must differ from that of the female, who has such an interesting, active, and significant inner space. The space that interests men is outer.” Except, let it be observed, when men write essays: since it is only inner space—interesting, active, significant—that can conceive and nourish the contemplative essay. The “ideal female body,” Updike adds, “curves around the centers of repose,” and no phrase could better describe the shape of the ideal essay—yet women are no fitter as essayists than men. In promoting the felt salience² of sex, Updike nevertheless drives home an essayist's point. Essays, unlike novels, emerge from the sensations of the self. Fiction creeps into foreign bodies; the novelist can inhabit not only a sex not his own, but also beetles and noses and hunger artists and nomads and beasts; while the essay is, as we say, personal.

12. And here is an irony. Though I have been intent on distinguishing the marrow³ of the essay from the marrow of fiction, I confess I have been trying all along, in a subliminal⁴ way, to speak of the essay as if it—or she—were a character in a novel or a play: moody, fickle⁵, given on a whim⁶ to changing her clothes, or the subject; sometimes obstinate, with a mind of her own; or hazy⁷ and light; never predictable. I mean for her to be dressed—and addressed—as we would **Becky Sharp**, or **Ophelia**, or **Elizabeth Bennet**, or **Mrs. Ramsay**, or **Mrs. Wilcox**, or even **Hester Prynne**. Put it that it is pointless to say (as I have done repeatedly, disliking it every moment) “the essay,” “an essay.” The essay—an essay—is not an abstraction; she may have recognizable contours⁸, but she is highly colored and individuated; she is not a type. She is too fluid, too elusive, to be a category. She may be bold, she may be diffident⁹, she may rely on beauty, or on cleverness, on eros¹⁰ or exotica¹¹. Whatever her story, she is the protagonist¹², the secret self's personification. When we knock on her door, she opens to us, she is a presence in the doorway, she leads us from room to room; then why should we not call her “She”? She may be privately indifferent to us, but she is anything but

¹ **genially** *adj.* jovially, kindly, sociably

² **salience** *n.* strikingly prominence

³ **marrow** *n.* the inmost, choicest, or essential part

⁴ **subliminal** *adj.* below the threshold of conscious perception

⁵ **fickle** *adj.* characterized by erratic changeableness or instability

⁶ **whim** *n.* a sudden or capricious idea

⁷ **hazy** *adj.* not clear

⁸ **contour** *n.* the shape of a mass or land

⁹ **diffident** *adj.* lacking or marked by a lack of self-confidence; shy and timid

¹⁰ **eros** *n.* sexual love or desire

¹¹ **exotica** *n.* things that are curiously unusual or strange

¹² **protagonist** *n.* one of the main characters in a story

unwelcoming. Above all, she is not a hidden principle or a thesis or a construct: she is *there*, a living voice. She takes us in.

● Comprehension of Text

1. The author tries to give a definition of the essay. She starts by pointing out that an essay is a thing of the imagination and that it is different from an article. Then she summarizes the characteristics of essays written by classical essayists, arriving at the conclusion that the essay is ancient and various. The essay turns out to be a force for agreement and the authority of a voice in the essay holds the readers fast. She compares the essayist with the novelist and points out that essayists are a species of metaphysicians who are inquisitive and analytic about everything in society. The author also compares the essay to female characters in a novel or a play, who may be bold, diffident, clever, and beautiful, etc., and is to be read again and again with enjoyment.
2. An article is gossip. An essay is reflection and insight. An article has the temporary advantage of social heat—what's hot out there right now. An essay's heat is interior.
杂文是闲谈。散文是反思和顿悟。杂文具有社会热点——现在人们热烈讨论的问题——的短暂优势。散文的热是内在的。
3. The essay is not meant for the barricades; it is a stroll through someone's mazy mind. All the same, the essay turns out to be a force for agreement. It co-opts agreement; it courts agreement; it seduces agreement.
散文不是用于设置路障的，它是穿过某人迷宫般的思想的漫步。同样，散文最终是一种说服人的力量。它拉拢持相同意见者；它追求一致；它引起共鸣。
4. The pencil wiggling over his sheet is a grayish pink, which reflects the threads of sunset pulling westward in the sky, like the reins of a fairy cart... and so on.
在他的纸上蜿蜒而过的铅笔是灰红色的，它反射出天空中西斜的太阳光芒，好像驾御仙女马车的缰绳，等等。
The mind meanders, slipping from one impression to another, from reality to memory to dreamscape and back again.
思想在漫无边际中流动，从一个印象到另一个印象，从现实到记忆再到梦幻景象，又回到现实。（这两句说明散文作家在写作的时候通常是有感而发，并且浮想联篇，语言生动，使散文具有强烈的吸引力和感染力。）
5. But the meditative temperateness of an essay requires a desk and a chair, a musing and a mooning, a connection to a civilized surround, even when the subject itself is a wilderness

of lions and tigers, mulling is the way of it. An essay is a fireside thing, not a conflagration or a safari.

但是散文的思索适度需要一张桌子和一张椅子，一种沉思和遐想，一种和文明世界的连接，即使主题本身就是狮子和老虎的野生世界，还是需要再三思索。一篇散文是放在壁炉旁边的东西（即供人们在闲暇时坐下来仔细阅读的东西），不是一场大火，也不是野外旅行。

6. Essayists are a species of metaphysician: they are inquisitive—also analytic—about the least grain of being. Novelists go about the strenuous business of marrying and burying their people, or else they send them to sea, or to Africa, or (at the least) out of town.

散文作家是一种形而上学理论家：他们对最细小的存在都是好奇的和分析的。小说家则不厌其烦地忙于描写人物的结婚和生死，要么打发他们到海上，到非洲去，或者（至少是）离开城市。（注意：关于小说家的部分实际指他们写作的内容。）

7. Essays, unlike novels, emerge from the sensations of the self. Fiction creeps into foreign bodies; the novelist can inhabit not only a sex not his own, but also beetles and noses and hunger artists and nomads and beasts; while the essay is, as we say, personal.

与小说不同，散文源自个人的情感。小说可以套上异国的外壳，小说家不仅可以藏身于异性，还可以藏身于甲壳虫、鼻子、饥饿的艺术家、游牧部落或野兽。但是，正如我们说过的，散文是作者个人的。

8. Though I have been intent on distinguishing the marrow of the essay from the marrow of fiction, I confess I have been trying all along, in a subliminal way, to speak of the essay as if it—or she—were a character in a novel or a play: moody, fickle, given on a whim to changing her clothes, or the subject; sometimes obstinate, with a mind of her own; or hazy and light; never predictable.

虽然我一直执意把散文的实质和小说的实质区分开来，我承认我一直潜意识地试图把散文说成是小说或剧本中的一个人物：情绪化，变化无常，时常突发奇想地更换衣服或话题，有时十分固执，有自己的主意，有时模糊不清，但总是无法预料。（文章接下来提到的人物，都是英语文学名著中的经典人物，下面的注解中有详细的说明。）

● Cultural Notes

1. **Cynthia Ozick** (1928—) was born in New York City on April 17, 1928, the second of two children. Her parents had come to America from the northwest region of Soviet Union. More important for an insight into Ozick's temperament, they came from the Lithuanian (立陶宛) Jewish tradition of that region. She is the author of four collections of essays, three collections of short stories and five novels. She has won numerous awards, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

2. **Michel de Montaigne** (1533—1592) was a French writer, who introduced the essay as a literary form. His essays, which range over a wide variety of topics, are characterized by a discursive style, a lively conversational tone, and the use of numerous quotations from classical writers.

As a thinker Montaigne is noted for his investigation of institutions, opinions, and customs and for his opposition to all forms of dogmatism that have no rational basis. Montaigne observed life with philosophical skepticism; he emphasized the contradictions and incoherences inherent in human nature and behavior. His basic morality tended towards Epicureanism, however, revealing the attitudes of a scholar and humanist who refused to be enslaved by passions and desires. His longest essay, *Apologie de Raymond de Sebond*, is an inquiry into the rational powers and religious aspirations of the individual.

3. British and American writers and essayists mentioned in the text:

William Hazlitt (1778—1830): English essayist

Charles Lamb (1775—1834): pen name Elia, English essayist

Thomas De Quincey (1785—1859): English essayist and critic

Robert Louis Stevenson (Balfour) (1850—1894): Scottish novelist, poet and essayist

Thomas Carlyle (1795—1881): British writer, born in Scotland

John Ruskin (1819—1900): English writer, art critic and social reformer

John Henry Newman (1801—1890): also Cardinal Newman, English theologian and writer

Harriet Martineau (1802—1876): English writer

Matthew Arnold (1822—1888): English poet, essayist and critic

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803—1882): American essayist, philosopher and poet

Joseph Addison (1672—1719): English essayist, poet and statesman, whose work, particularly in the periodicals *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, strongly influenced 18th-century English taste and opinion

Sir Richard Steele (1672—1729): English essayist, playwright, and statesman, who founded and contributed frequently to the influential 18th-century journal *The Spectator*

Francis Bacon (1561—1626): English philosopher, essayist and statesman, one of the pioneers of modern scientific thought. Bacon's essays, his chief contributions to literature, were published at various times between 1597 and 1625.

Sir Thomas Browne (1605—1682): English physician and writer

John Lyly (1554?—1601): English author and dramatist

Saint Bede (673—735): English historian and theologian

4. **Thomas Paine** (1737—1809): American revolutionary patriot, writer and political theorist, born in England. He wrote *Common Sense* in 1776 to advocate independence of the U.S.
Emile Zola (1840—1902): French novelist

5. **Titus** (39?—81): Roman general and emperor (79—81), son of Vespasian
6. **John Updike** (1932—): American novelist, short story writer and poet, was born in Reading in Pennsylvania. After high school in Shillington, where his father worked as a science teacher, Updike attended Harvard. He majored in English in 1954, and contributed to and later edited the *Harvard Lampoon*. As an essayist Updike is a gentle satirist, poking fun at American life and customs, without any mean-spirited nihilism. He observes the ordinary life he sees around him, and frequently asks the reader to recognize and reconsider preconceptions. He is internationally known for his novels *Rabbit, Run* (1960), *Rabbit Redux* (1971), *Rabbit Is Rich* (1981), and *Rabbit at Rest* (1990). They follow the life of Harry “Rabbit” Angstrom, a star athlete, from his youth through the social and sexual upheavals of the 1960s, to later periods of his life, and to final decline.
7. **Becky Sharp**: The main character in Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*. Something of a gold-digger, little orphan Becky sets her cap for Joseph Sedley, the wealthy brother of her best friend Amelia. But even the dull-witted Joseph realizes that his family would not smile upon such a union and so never proposes. Frustrated, Becky leaves the Sedley household, and, using her brains, beauty and charm, claws her way into the upper class.
Ophelia: a female character in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, the daughter of Polonius and girlfriend of Hamlet
Elizabeth Bennet: a character in Jane Austen’s novel *Pride and Prejudice*. If you think Austen makes a caricature of Elizabeth, take a second look at Mrs. Bennet! Austen completely mocks the women of her day who go running after men in the character of Mrs. Bennet. The discussions between her and Mr. Bennet are full of sarcasm (on Mr. Bennet’s part). The verbal irony of every wealthy man in need of a wife in the first line sets the tone for the entire book.
Mrs. Ramsay: a character in Sir Walter Scott’s *The Fortunes of Night*
Mrs. Wilcox: a character in E.M. Foster’s book *Howards End*
Hester Prynne: a very well recognized character in *The Scarlet Letter*, by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Hester is both wild and passionate, as well as, caring, conservative, and alien.

● Exercises

I. Choose the best answer to each of the following questions.

1. Which of the following best summarizes the difference between an essay and an article?

- A. As the poetaster is to the poet, so the article is to the essay.
 - B. An article doesn't last long, while an essay defies its date of birth.
 - C. An article provides accurate information, while an essay doesn't.
 - D. An article is Siamese-twinning from the beginning, but an essay doesn't have a birthday.
2. The essay's power to influence the reader comes from _____.
 - A. its shape and intent
 - B. its proposition to get you think like its author
 - C. its propaganda effort
 - D. the persuasiveness and observation of its language
 3. How does the novelist attract its reader?
 - A. He creates a fictional world that interests them.
 - B. He marries people or sends them to sea.
 - C. He has feathered hat and trumpet.
 - D. He has the scent of so-much-per-word.
 4. How does the essayist usually proceed in writing an essay?
 - A. He includes some children as the characters.
 - B. He makes up and then tells a story.
 - C. He is reminded by some objects and his thought meanders freely.
 - D. He stumbles over a pair of old shoes.
 5. Why is it an illusion that men are essayists more often than women?
 - A. Because men and women are different just like French or German tables and sofas.
 - B. Because more essays were written by men, and women's essays weren't published in the past.
 - C. Because the male sense of space differs from that of the female.
 - D. Because women are no fitter as essayists than men.

II. Classify the following statements as applied to

A the essay;

B an article;

C the novel.

1. It is the movement of a free mind at play.
2. It deals with current issues and may be forgotten soon.
3. It is not meant for agitating people or arousing excitement.
4. It explains the facts and persuades people to agree with the author gently.

5. It takes us away from reality for a short time.
6. It sounds that the author is writing for money.
7. It is about the story of a man's revenge on his long-time enemy.
8. It is about the happy marriage of the couple.
9. Its writer can pretend to be a person totally different from his own personalities.
10. She may have recognizable shapes, but is highly characteristic of a specific being.

III. Answer the following questions using details from the text.

1. What are the qualities of an essay? Why does the author mention "genuine" essay?
2. In what ways is an article different from an essay?
3. What are some common characteristics of essays by classical essayists?
4. What is the "power" of an essay? How is it felt by the reader?
5. How does the novel differ from the essay? How do the novelist and essayist create their works in different ways?
6. What is the difference between the poetry and the essay?
7. What does John Updike think of maleness and femaleness in essay writing?
8. What is the irony in the author's attitude toward the essay?

IV. Discuss the following topics.

1. Explain how you understand Ozick's idea of an essay from her comparison to female characters in a novel or a play.
2. What's the Chinese equivalent for "essay"? What might be the differences between a Chinese and an English essay? If you have read some Chinese essays on themes similar to those of the essays in this book, discuss the differences in language, writing techniques and styles between the Chinese and English essays.

V. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate forms of the words given.

diffident	obliquely	salience	venerable	wiggle	wrest
exotica	garrulous	inferno	mazy	pluck	potent

1. The cigarette was Turkish and the scent of it was an _____ intrusion in that solitude of snow and fir.
2. It is difficult finding one's way through the _____ of rules and regulations.
3. In the conversation, he made _____ references to her lack of experience.

4. Chippendale is a small town with a river _____ through it.
5. The people found that the place was a blazing and roaring _____.
6. He liked to drink, but he becomes _____ pretty soon after drinking a few glasses of wine.
7. Don't be so _____ about your talents, you have all the abilities needed for the job.
8. The chiefs of that Indian tribe showed a lot of _____ in dealing with the intruders.
9. The chairman of the local committee gave _____ arguments on the need to construct a bridge across the river, trying to win over the favor of those attending the meeting.
10. His patterns in the design of the Olympic stadium lack definition and _____.
11. Addressing the audience this evening in the hall is a _____ scholar from a prestigious university.
12. Foreign investors are trying to _____ control of the company from the family.

VI. Choose the most appropriate word from the brackets to complete each of the following sentences.

1. He was a fond, _____ (loquacious, garrulous, voluble) old man, who loved to indulge his mind in reminiscences of the past.
2. He is usually quite _____ (garrulous, talkative, loquacious) on such occasions, but now he is dumbfounded.
3. Grandma was so _____ (glib, talkative, voluble) that she always forgot that the guest was tired from traveling.
4. To train students as speakers, while neglecting them as listeners, is to foster _____ (loquacity, glibness, volubleness) and deceitfulness.
5. He was certainly the most _____ (powerful, potent, forceful) ruler of his age.
6. But the essay does not allow us to forget our usual sensations and opinions; it does something even more _____ (powerful, forceful, potent): it makes us deny them.
7. He relied more on a _____ (powerful, potent, forceful) clarity to convince his readers than on the brilliant and exciting ambiguities of propagandist eloquence.
8. The foreign company threatened that it would take _____ (powerful, forceful, forcible) possession of the goods not paid for.



What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure.

—**Samuel Johnson** (1709—1784), British lexicographer

It has been said that good prose should resemble the conversation of a well-bred man.

—**W. Somerset Maugham** (1874—1965), British novelist and doctor

Far too many relied on the classic formula of a beginning, a middle, and an end.

—**Philip Larkin** (1922—1985), British poet

