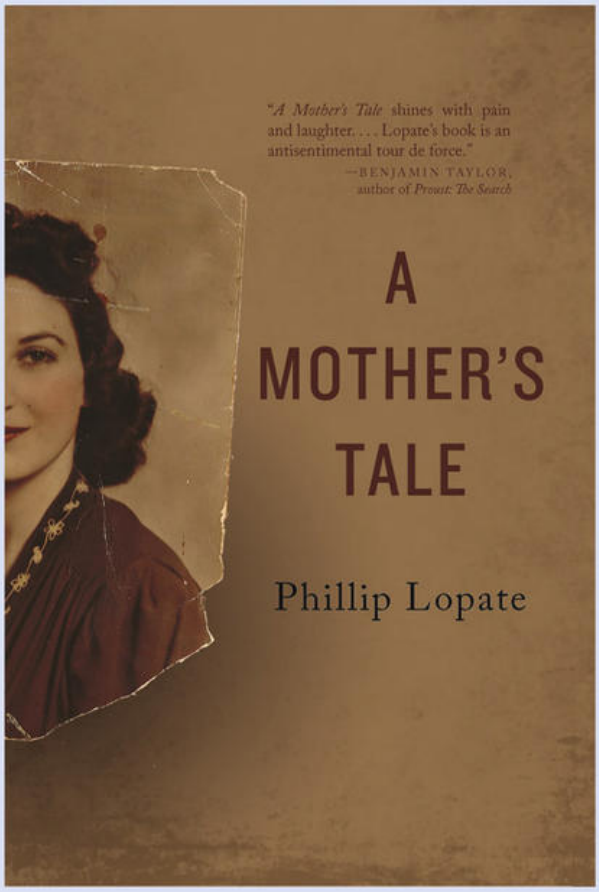
Books

Book Excerpt "A Mother's Tale”

Phillip Lopate '64CC, essayist and Director of Columbia’s nonfiction writing program, reflects on his mother, based on interviews he did with her thirty years ago.

Spring 2017



Was she a good mother? Yes, I think so: “good enough,” to use the practical terminology of English psychologist D. W. Winnicott, who counseled that a mother didn’t have to be perfect, she could be depressed or angry, but if she somehow was able to shepherd her children into a reasonably intact adulthood without their

turning into serial killers or going insane, that was sufficient. Neuroses are a given: as Freud maintained, we're all neurotic. But that doesn't mean that you should keep blaming your parents for fucking you up (*pace* Philip Larkin). I've never been happy for long, but I've managed to stay engrossed, even creative, and to the degree I've lived a productive life, I owe an enormous debt to my mother and her love for us as children, which was never in dispute.



Guide to school abbreviations

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