

## The Cambridge Companion to John Updike

John Updike is one of the most prolific and important American authors of the contemporary period, with an acclaimed body of work that spans half a century and is inspired by everything from American exceptionalism to American popular culture. This Companion joins together a distinguished international team of contributors to address both the major themes in Updike's writing as well as the sources of controversy that Updike's writing has often provoked. It traces the ways in which historical and cultural changes in the second half of the twentieth century have shaped not just Updike's reassessment of America's heritage, but his reassessment of the literary devices by which that legacy is best portrayed. With a chronology and bibliography of Updike's published writings, this is the only guide students and scholars of Updike will need to understand this extraordinary writer.

STACEY OLSTER is Professor of English at the State University of New York, Stony Brook.

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Edited by Stacey Olster  
Frontmatter  
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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Marshall Boswell** is the T. K. Young Professor of English at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. He is the author of *John Updike's Rabbit Tetralogy: Mastered Irony in Motion* (2001) and *Understanding David Foster Wallace* (2003). In addition, he has authored two works of original fiction, the story collection *Trouble With Girls* (2003) and a novel titled *Alternative Atlanta* (2005). He is currently working on a new novel.

**John N. Duvall** is Professor of English and editor of *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana. He is the author of *Faulkner's Marginal Couple* (1990) and *The Identifying Fictions of Toni Morrison* (2000), the editor of *Productive Postmodernism: Consuming Histories and Cultural Studies* (2002), and co-editor of *Faulkner and Postmodernism* (2002).

**Donald J. Greiner** holds the chair of Carolina Distinguished Professor of English at the University of South Carolina, where he also serves as Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Affairs. In addition, he is co-executive editor of the journal *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*. He is the author of three books and dozens of articles on John Updike, and he has amassed one of the largest private collections of Updike material in the United States.

**D. Quentin Miller** is Associate Professor of English at Suffolk University, Boston. He is the author of *John Updike and the Cold War: Drawing the Iron Curtain* (2001). He is also the editor of *Prose and Cons: New Essays on Contemporary U.S. Prison Literature* (2005) and of *Re-Viewing James Baldwin: Things Not Seen* (2000). He has published a composition textbook entitled *The Generation of Ideas* (2005) and is one of the editors of the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*. His essays have appeared in journals such as *American Literature*, *American Literary Realism*, and *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers*.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Stacey Olster** is Professor of English at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. She is the author of *Reminiscence and Re-Creation in Contemporary American Fiction* (1989) and *The Trash Phenomenon: Contemporary Literature, Popular Culture, and the Making of the American Century* (2003). Her articles have appeared in *Critical Inquiry*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Studies in the Novel*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, and *Critique*.

**Sanford Pinsker** is an Emeritus Professor at Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He now lives in south Florida where he continues to write about American literature and culture on cloudy days.

**James Plath** is Professor of English at Illinois Wesleyan University and the editor of *Conversations with John Updike* (1994). His first work on Updike examined *The Painterly Aspects of John Updike's Fiction*. Essays of his also appear in *Rabbit Tales: Poetry and Politics in John Updike's Rabbit Novels* (1998) and *John Updike and Religion: The Sense of the Sacred and the Motions of Grace* (1999).

**Jay Prosser** is lecturer in American Literature and Culture at the University of Leeds, England. His essays on American literature have appeared in *PMLA*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *A/B: Auto/Biography Studies*, and *Yearbook of English Studies*, among other places. His most recent book is *Light in the Dark Room: Photography and Loss* (2005).

**James A. Schiff**, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Cincinnati, has written two books on John Updike: *John Updike Revisited* (1998) and *Updike's Version: Rewriting The Scarlet Letter* (1992). He is also the author of *Understanding Reynolds Price* (1996) and the editor of *Critical Essays on Reynolds Price* (1998).

**Edward Vargo** has been a professor of English and dean at Divine Word College in Iowa; Fu Jen University in Taipei, Taiwan; and Assumption University in Bangkok, Thailand. He is the author of one of the first full-length studies of Updike's writings, *Rainstorms and Fire: Ritual in the Novels of John Updike* (1973). In addition to his work on Updike, he has also published essays on cross-cultural readings of American literature and on higher education in the New World Order in international journals and collections. He currently lives and writes in Bangkok.

**Kathleen Verduin** is Professor of English at Hope College, Holland, Michigan. She is the author of articles on American literature and modern fiction. From 1983 to 1998 she served as co-editor of the series *Studies in Medievalism* and co-organizer of the annual International Conference on

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Medievalism. She is at work on a study of Dante's influence on American writers from Emerson to Wharton.

**Kristiaan Versluys** teaches American literature at Ghent University in Belgium. He was president of the Belgian Luxembourg American Studies Association and secretary of the European Association for American Studies. He is the editor of *Neo-Realism in Contemporary American Literature* (1992) and publishes widely on Jewish-American literature and the literature of New York. He is the director of the Ghent Urban Studies Team (GUST), an interdisciplinary research group that deals with the city as both a physical and cultural phenomenon. He regularly teaches summer school at Columbia University. During the academic year 2004–05 he was a Fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, working on the discursive responses to 9/11.



## CHRONOLOGY

- 1932 John Hoyer Updike is born on 18 March in Reading, Pennsylvania, the only child of Wesley Russell Updike, who later would teach mathematics at Shillington High School, and Linda Grace (Hoyer) Updike, an employee at Pomeroy's Department Store and aspiring writer. Until the age of thirteen, lives in Shillington (later fictionalized as Olinger), a suburb of Reading (later fictionalized as Brewer). For most of this period, lives with both his parents and maternal grandparents in the same house.
- 1936 Begins Shillington public schools.
- 1938 Experiences first attack of psoriasis.
- 1945 First publication, "A Handshake with the Congressman," appears in the Shillington High School *Chatterbox*. Moves with parents and grandparents to a farmhouse, originally owned by the Hoyers, in Plowville on 31 October.
- 1950 Graduates Shillington High School as senior class president and co-valedictorian. Enters Harvard University on a tuition scholarship, where he eventually majors in English. Begins writing and drawing sketches and cartoons for the *Harvard Lampoon*.
- 1953 Elected president of the *Harvard Lampoon*. Marries Mary Pennington, a Radcliffe fine arts student and daughter of a Unitarian minister, on 26 June.
- 1954 Graduates from Harvard *summa cum laude*. Spends 1954–55 academic year at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art in Oxford, England, on a Knox Fellowship. First poem published in the *New Yorker*, "Duet, with Muffled Brake Drums," appears in 14 August issue, followed by first short story, "Friends from Philadelphia," in 30 October issue. Offered a staff position at the magazine by fiction editor Katharine White.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1955 Daughter Elizabeth born on 1 April. Returns to US and sets up house on West 85th Street and Riverside Drive in New York City. Becomes a “Talk of the Town” writer for the *New Yorker*.
- 1957 Son David born on 19 January. Leaves the *New Yorker* and moves to Ipswich, Massachusetts (later fictionalized as Tarbox), to concentrate on his fiction and poetry.
- 1958 First poetry collection, *The Carpentered Hen and Other Tame Creatures*, published.
- 1959 First novel, *The Poorhouse Fair*, and first short story collection, *The Same Door*, published. Awarded Guggenheim Fellowship to support work on *Rabbit, Run*. Immerses himself in writings of Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth. Son Michael born on 14 May.
- 1960 *Rabbit, Run*, with alterations to avoid potential obscenity lawsuits, published. *The Poorhouse Fair* wins the Rosenthal Foundation Award of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Daughter Miranda born on 15 December.
- 1962 Teaches creative writing at Harvard in July and August, the first of two unsatisfying stints as a college instructor.
- 1963 *The Centaur* published and receives the National Book Award for Fiction the following year.
- 1964 Elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Travels to Russia and Eastern Europe as part of the US-USSR Cultural Exchange Program.
- 1965 Awarded Le prix du meilleur livre étranger for *The Centaur*. Elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Starts depositing his papers in the Houghton Library at Harvard.
- 1966 “The Bulgarian Poetess” wins First Prize in the O. Henry Prize Stories competition.
- 1967 Expresses support of Vietnam War among responses collected in *Authors Take Sides on Vietnam*. Along with other writers signs letter urging Soviet writers to help safeguard Jewish cultural institutions.
- 1968 *Couples* published and remains on the bestseller lists for a year. Updike featured on 26 April cover of *Time*. Moves to London for a year with his family and begins research into the life of James Buchanan, Pennsylvania’s only US President.
- 1969 *Midpoint and Other Poems* published.
- 1970 Film version of *Rabbit, Run* released.
- 1971 *Rabbit Redux* published and receives the Signet Society Medal for Achievement in the Arts.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1972 Appointed Honorary Consultant in American Letters to the Library of Congress for a three-year term. Wesley Updike dies on 16 April.
- 1973 Travels to Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, and Ethiopia as a Fulbright Lincoln Lecturer.
- 1974 Separates from his wife Mary and moves into an apartment in Boston. Teaches at Boston University in the fall, his last stint as a college instructor.
- 1975 *A Month of Sundays*, first of three rewritings of *The Scarlet Letter*, published.
- 1976 Elected to the fifty-member Academy of Arts and Letters. Awarded no-fault divorce in March.
- 1977 Marries Martha Ruggles Bernhard on 30 September. Lives with her and her three sons in Georgetown, Massachusetts.
- 1978 Testifies against government support of the arts before House of Representatives Subcommittee on Select Education.
- 1979 *Too Far to Go: The Maples Stories* published and made into a two-hour television movie.
- 1981 *Rabbit Is Rich* published and wins the National Book Critics Circle Award, to be followed the next year by the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the American National Book Award. Updike receives the Edward MacDowell Medal for literature and is made the subject of a BBC documentary, “What Makes Rabbit Run?”
- 1982 Appears on 18 October cover of *Time*. Moves to Beverly Farms, Massachusetts, in May.
- 1984 Receives the National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism for *Hugging the Shore*.
- 1987 Receives the Elmer Holmes Bobst Award for Fiction. Movie adaptation of *The Witches of Eastwick* released.
- 1989 *Self-Consciousness* (memoirs) published. Linda (Hoyer) Updike dies on 10 October. Updike presented with the National Medal of Arts at the White House.
- 1990 *Rabbit at Rest* published, completing the Rabbit tetralogy, and wins the National Book Critics Circle Award, to be followed the next year by the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.
- 1991 Receives First Prize in the O. Henry Prize Stories competition for “A Sandstone Farmhouse” and Italy’s Premio Scanno Prize for *Trust Me*.
- 1992 Travels to Brazil. Awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Harvard University.
- 1993 *Collected Poems 1953–1993* published.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1995 Awarded the Howells Medal from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, given every five years to the best work of fiction published during that period, for *Rabbit at Rest*. Receives the French honorary rank of Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. *Rabbit Angstrom: A Tetralogy* published.
- 1996 *In the Beauty of the Lilies* published and receives the Ambassador Book Award.
- 1998 Receives the Harvard Arts First Medal and the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.
- 2000 *Gertrude and Claudius* and *Licks of Love* published.
- 2003 Presented with the National Medal for the Humanities at the White House. *The Early Stories, 1953–1975* published.
- 2004 Receives the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction for *The Early Stories, 1953–1975*.

## ABBREVIATIONS

All page citations to Updike's works refer to the first editions listed in the Select Bibliography. When, for purposes of clarification, additional information was required, shortened titles appear. Those abbreviations refer to the following texts:

<i>Afterlife</i>	<i>The Afterlife and Other Stories</i>
<i>Americana</i>	<i>Americana and Other Poems</i>
<i>Assorted</i>	<i>Assorted Prose</i>
<i>Back</i>	<i>Bech Is Back</i>
<i>Bay</i>	<i>Bech at Bay: A Quasi-Novel</i>
<i>Bech</i>	<i>Bech: A Book</i>
<i>Brazil</i>	<i>Brazil</i>
<i>Buchanan</i>	<i>Buchanan Dying: A Play</i>
<i>Carpentered</i>	<i>The Carpentered Hen and Other Tame Creatures</i>
<i>Centaur</i>	<i>The Centaur</i>
<i>Coup</i>	<i>The Coup</i>
<i>Couples</i>	<i>Couples</i>
<i>Early</i>	<i>The Early Stories, 1953–1975</i>
<i>Farm</i>	<i>Of the Farm</i>
<i>Gertrude</i>	<i>Gertrude and Claudius</i>
<i>Hugging</i>	<i>Hugging the Shore: Essays and Criticism</i>
<i>Licks</i>	<i>Licks of Love: Short Stories and a Sequel</i>
<i>Lilies</i>	<i>In the Beauty of the Lilies</i>
<i>Looking</i>	<i>Just Looking: Essays on Art</i>
<i>Marry</i>	<i>Marry Me: A Romance</i>
<i>Memories</i>	<i>Memories of the Ford Administration: A Novel</i>
<i>Midpoint</i>	<i>Midpoint and Other Poems</i>
<i>Month</i>	<i>A Month of Sundays</i>
<i>More</i>	<i>More Matter: Essays and Criticism</i>
<i>Museums</i>	<i>Museums and Women and Other Stories</i>

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Music</i>	<i>The Music School: Short Stories</i>
<i>Odd</i>	<i>Odd Jobs: Essays and Criticism</i>
<i>Picked-Up</i>	<i>Picked-Up Pieces</i>
<i>Pigeon</i>	<i>Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories</i>
<i>Poorhouse</i>	<i>The Poorhouse Fair</i>
<i>Problems</i>	<i>Problems and Other Stories</i>
<i>Redux</i>	<i>Rabbit Redux</i>
<i>Rest</i>	<i>Rabbit at Rest</i>
<i>Rich</i>	<i>Rabbit Is Rich</i>
<i>Roger's</i>	<i>Roger's Version</i>
<i>Run</i>	<i>Rabbit, Run</i>
<i>S.</i>	<i>S.</i>
<i>Same</i>	<i>The Same Door: Short Stories</i>
<i>Seek</i>	<i>Seek My Face</i>
<i>Self-Consciousness</i>	<i>Self-Consciousness: Memoirs</i>
<i>Tetralogy</i>	<i>Rabbit Angstom: A Tetralogy</i>
<i>Tossing</i>	<i>Tossing and Turning: Poems</i>
<i>Toward</i>	<i>Toward the End of Time</i>
<i>Witches</i>	<i>The Witches of Eastwick</i>