



Odd Jobs: Essays and Criticism

John Updike

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Odd Jobs: Essays and Criticism John Updike

To complement his work as a fiction writer, John Updike accepted any number of odd jobs—book reviews and introductions, speeches and tributes, a “few paragraphs” on baseball or beauty or Borges—and saw each as “an opportunity to learn something, or to extract from within some unsuspected wisdom.” In this, his largest collection of assorted prose, he brings generosity and insight to the works and lives of William Dean Howells, George Bernard Shaw, Philip Roth, Muriel Spark, and dozens more. Novels from outposts of postmodernism like Turkey, Albania, Israel, and Nigeria are reviewed, as are biographies of Cleopatra and Dorothy Parker. The more than a hundred considerations of books are flanked, on one side, by short stories, a playlet, and personal essays, and, on the other, by essays on his own oeuvre. Updike’s odd jobs would be any other writer’s chief work.

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