



Hugging the Shore: Essays and Criticism

John Updike

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WINNER OF THE NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD

“Writing criticism is to writing fiction and poetry as hugging the shore is to sailing in the open sea,” writes John Updike in his Foreword to this collection of literary considerations. But the sailor doth protest too much: This collection begins somewhere near deep water, with a flotilla of short fiction, humor pieces, and personal essays, and even the least of the reviews here—those that “come about and draw even closer to the land with another nine-point quotation”—are distinguished by a novelist’s style, insight, and accuracy, not just surface sparkle. Indeed, as James Atlas commented, the most substantial critical articles, on Melville, Hawthorne, and Whitman, go out as far as Updike’s fiction: They are “the sort of ambitious scholarly reappraisal not seen in this country since the death of Edmund Wilson.” With *Hugging the Shore*, Michiko Kakutani wrote, Updike established himself “as a major and enduring critical voice; indeed, as the pre-eminent critic of his generation.”

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