



# **John Updike's Human Comedy: Comic Morality in *The Centaur* and the *Rabbit* Novels (Modern American Literature: New Approaches)**

*Brian Keener*

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The comedy in John Updike's most important works - *The Centaur*; *Rabbit, Run*; *Rabbit Redux*; *Rabbit Is Rich*; *Rabbit at Rest*; and *Rabbit Remembered* - defines a comic world and its morality. Although critics have failed to recognize the extent and the importance of Updike's comedy, his serious fiction does contain a good deal of farce, burlesque, and irony that, far from being peripheral or mere comic relief, depicts the absurd and contradictory nature of life. Within such a world, set in the everyday Pennsylvania of the second half of the twentieth century, human beings mature, or gain Kierkegaard's ethical sphere, by fulfilling their societal and generational responsibilities. George Caldwell of *The Centaur* is Updike's paragon, while Rabbit Angstrom embodies the comic hero who, through trial and error, finally matures. Overall, through an analysis of Updike's comedy, this book reveals a dimension of his fiction that is essential to understanding his work.

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