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## **The Critical Responses to John Irving's Works:**

### **An Annotated Bibliography**

#### **Introduction**

This annotated bibliography consists of all the available critical reviews and analyses of John Irving's three bestsellers in the 1970s and 1980s: *The World According to Garp* (1978), *The Hotel New Hampshire* (1981), and *The Cider House Rules* (1985). The scope of this project ranges from 1978, the year *Garp* was published, to the present. The entries have been collected from *MLAIB*, *DAI*, *Humanities Abstracts*, *ProQuest*, *WorldCat*, *Amazon.com*, *Questia*, and bibliographies by Carol C. Harter & James R. Thompson, Edward C. Reilly, Josie P. Campbell, Harold Bloom, and Todd F. Davis & Kenneth Womack. The length of annotations for each item is uneven because academic articles which seem important for the critical history of Irving are basically given longer annotations than brief reviews. Although numerous reviews on Irving's works have been written, those that were written only for commercial purposes and contain no critical value are omitted. Articles and books that are written in languages other than English are included, but annotations are provided only for those that are written in English. Also, annotations are not provided for items that were personally unobtainable in 2007. Items are listed chronologically, and the indices of works and critics are included in the appendix.

Irving's status as one of America's most acclaimed contemporary novelists has been assured since the dizzying success of *Garp*, which sold 120,000 hardcover copies prior to the sale of over three million paperback copies. His two other successes have been *Hotel*, which sold 175,000 hardbound copies, and *Cider* which sold 250,000 first printing. *Garp* was so successful that Irving became a kind of cultural icon; in the early '80s, "Garpomania," as R. Z. Sheppard called it, hit the country.<sup>1</sup> In 1982, *Ms.* magazine voted Irving as one of its twenty-five "heroes" for integrating feminism as a major philosophical theme, writing about rape with its true terror and brutality, creating male characters who care about kids, and understanding that feminist excesses are funny.<sup>2</sup> However, as he focused on contemporary and controversial issues that include war, rape, racism, incest, suicide, abortion, feminism, religion, terrorism, and homosexuality, the responses to his works are also polemic.

This bibliography contains objective academic articles and reviews that both praise and excoriate his works in order to help its users to consider a comprehensive, panoramic view of the critical responses to Irving's three major works in the last three decades. Despite his widespread popularity in the States and abroad, which was followed by a number of studies from various aspects, this is the first accessible bibliography of criticisms on Irving's works that contains sufficient annotations. On that account, this annotated bibliography will beneficially serve those who plan to study John Irving and his works.

## NOTE

<sup>1</sup> R. Z. Sheppard. *Time* 31 August 1981: 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Ms.* Jul.-Aug. 1982: 102-4.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

*DAI: Dissertation Abstracts International*

*MAI: Masters Abstracts International*

*Cider: The Cider House Rules*

*Garp: The World According to Garp*

*Hotel: The Hotel New Hampshire*

1978

1. **Drabble, Margaret. "Muck, Memory, and Imagination." *Harper's* July 1978: 82-84.**

Drabble suggests that *Garp* contains muck, memory, and imagination; when Garp loses one of his sons, that terrible memory makes muck and imagination for the writer, because the more the writer suffers, the more he has to write about. Drabble also remarks that *Garp* is in a sense a review of itself and of Irving's own literary pilgrimage.

2. **Lehmann-Haupt, Christopher. Rev. of *The World According to Garp*, by John Irving. *New York Times* 13 Apr. 1978: 53.**

Lehmann-Haupt favorably reviews *Garp* and states that it is highly realistic and it makes people laugh even at its most horrible scene. It is a novel about a writer writing novels or about the way a sensitive human being communicates his response to reality through the stories he makes up. According to Lehmann-Haupt, what is ultimately funny about *The World According to Garp* is not the events themselves, but the imagination that is inventing them.

3. **Marcus, Greil. "Garp: Death in the Family" *Rolling Stone* 24 Aug. 1978: 60-63; 21 Sep. 1978: 76-79.**

Marcus notes that *Garp* focuses on violence and death, which are necessary to the book's power. *Garp* describes various rapes and maimings, and the body count in the novel comes to over fifty. However, Marcus insists that,

for Irving's characters, all these things are opportunities for humor, dread, and good will, and the characters make the most of them.

**4. Moynahan, Julian. "Truths by Exaggeration." *New York Times Book Review* 23 Apr. 1978: 1, 27-29.**

Moynahan discusses *Garp's* connection with the real world; the work is autobiographical, and the world portrayed in the novel is plausible when compared to the actual history of the United States in the time that John Irving covers in the novel. According to Moynahan, *Garp* shows that Irving is haunted by the high level of quotidian American violence and the vulnerability of American lives.

**5. Wood, Michael. "Nothing Sacred." *New York Review of Books* 20 Apr. 1978: 9-10.**

Wood states that *Garp* is consistently intelligent and amusing and has an appealing equanimity in the middle of apparent awfulness. Wood also comments that the antagonism between the real world and the writer's world, which is the romantic conception of the creative imagination, ensures the insulation of literature.

**1980**

**6. Gilbert, Susan. "Children of the Seventies: The American Family in Recent Fiction." *Soundings* 63 (1980): 199-213.**

Gilbert analyzes the family in recent American fiction by Irving, John

Cheever, Wallace Stegner, etc, and asserts that *Garp* shows a family barricaded from the vague menace of nature and the world while suggesting a link more than coincidental between parental morals and the maiming of their children.

## 1981

**7. Atlas, James. "John Irving's World." *New York Times Book Review* 13 Sept. 1981: 36.**

Atlas states that *Hotel* captures one's attention the way a circus does: through sheer exertion. However, there are also a number of serious messages in the novel. Atlas indicates that, symbolically, *Hotel* has an occasional bellicose patriotism; for example, in a climactic scene involving the Viennese terrorists, the instrument of liberation is a Louisville Slugger baseball bat.

**8. Beatty, Jack. "A Family Fable." *New Republic* Sept. 1981: 37-38.**

Beatty indicates that in *Hotel*, the Berry family comes together in a moving tableau of solidarity, although crisis follows crisis in a spiral of woe. As for the writing style, Beatty claims that Irving writes without rhetoric as in the most primitive narrative forms, the fable and fairy tale, so that the reader will not start asking questions that would undermine their pleasure in the novel. Beatty also makes mention of Irving's double view of the imagination; it is a defense, a way of coping with troubles, but the attempt to realize everything one imagines can be dangerous, as seen when Father

Berry's lavish efforts to live out his dreams result in several deaths and his blindness.

**9. DeMott, Benjamin. "Domesticated Madness" *Atlantic Monthly* Oct. 1981: 101-6.**

DeMott investigates the violence in *Hotel* and reveals that this novel is structured as a succession of explosions of violence, each of which blends the hideous and the comic. DeMott also states that *Hotel* is rich in incongruous juxtapositions, i.e., the quotidian and the melodramatic, the normative and the eccentric, the healthy and the sadistic, and offers readers genuine pleasures.

**10. Dickstein, Morris. "The World in a Mirror: Problems of Distance in Recent American Fiction." *Sewanee Review* 89 (1981): 386-400.**

**11. Griffith, George V. "Jarrell According to Garp." *Notes on Modern American Literature* 5 (1981): Item 20.**

Griffith indicates that the first chapter of *Garp* introduces an allusion to Randall Jarrell's "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner."; the gunner in Jarrell's poem and Garp's father, who was also a ball turret gunner, have much in common, and Garp himself is sometimes likened to a gunner in this story. Griffith claims that the ball turret gunner allusion is rich in paradox and thus an appropriate analogue in a novel about an artist, because although gunner and artist each see the world from a unique vantage point, both are ironically in great danger because of their unique position.

**12. Haller, Scot. "John Irving's Bizarre World." *Saturday Review* Sep. 1981: 30-32, 34.**

Haller briefly reviews *Hotel* and comments on Irving's life and his other works, especially *Garp*. Haller explains that the reason *Garp* strikes a nerve with the public is because it not only has a bounty of complications and comedy, but Irving grafts 20th century subjects such as feminism, pop celebrity, sexual confusion, and commonplace violence onto a 19th-century framework, making the story simultaneously riotous and reassuring, nihilistic and ennobling.

**13. James, Wayne Leslie. "The Novels of John Irving." Diss. U of Florida, 1981.**

James considers Irving to be a satirist because his works often attack the worst in modern society: the persistence of prejudice, the predilection for violence, and the overemphasis on materialism. James states that although Irving's novels often deal with the dangers, both emotional and physical, which abound in a world characterized by social and political chaos, they also focus on those human values and institutions which can provide purpose and stability within that dangerous world. [DAI 43 (1982): 169A]

**14. Kellerman, Steven G. "T. S. Garp Meets Franny and Zooey." *Commonweal* 6 Nov. 1981: 630-631.**

Kellerman indicates that the Berry family of *Hotel* resembles the Glass family of *Franny and Zooey* by J. D. Salinger and insists this similarity reinforces the truism that people are reliving the 1950s both culturally and



politically though *Hotel* is spun out of currently fashionable themes.

**15. Korn, Eric. "Trying to Grow the Freudian Way." *Times Literary Supplement* 6 Nov. 1981: 1302.**

Korn savages *Hotel*, insisting that its plot sounds ludicrous and its style of diction is ungracious, sometimes ungrammatical, slangy, and redundant. Korn indicates that Irving's jokes depend on the literal realization of metaphors. For example, Irving gives the name Sorrow to a farting old Labrador as a jest, and Sorrow the dog and sorrow the emotion recur doggedly in this story. After Sorrow is dead and stuffed, he pops out of the closet and astonishes Iowa Bob literally to death. The narrator's first sexual prospect finds grotesquely half-burnt, dead but buoyant Sorrow in the bath and faints while she is diaphragming herself. Sorrow the dog reappears floating on the ocean in the debris of the plane crash, which kills two members of the Berry family, and Irving repeatedly jokes with a double meaning and says, "Sorrow floats."

**16. Nicol, Charles. "Happy Endings." *National Review* 27 Nov. 1981: 1428-29.**

Nicol reviews *Hotel* and reveals Irving's great faith in happy endings. Nicol suggests that this is also evidenced in *Garp* through the long wind-down of the last chapter, which is Irving's struggle to transform Garp's death into transcendence and assign everybody else a long and happy life, though it is the weakest part of the book.

**17. Priestly, Michael. "Structure in the Worlds of John Irving" *Critique* 23 (1981): 82-96.**

Priestly searches the structure that *Setting Free the Bears*, *The Water-Method Man*, *The 158-Pound Marriage*, and *Garp* have in common. Priestly claims those novels suggest that structure is nearly everything for Irving. All his novels are structurally complex, and they all incorporate remarkably similar settings and experiences, somewhat like those in Irving's own life. Writers, former wrestlers, New England colleges, Vienna, Iowa are found in all the books. Similar characters appear in all four works, and the same characters also appear. Irving resembles both the Victorian novelist and the "new novelist" who writes fiction about fiction. Like *Garp*, Irving has been struggling to find a personal vision, a way to tell his stories with his imagination and not his memory.

**18. Runyon, Randolph. "The World According to T. S." *Fowles / Irving / Barthes*. Columbus: Miami UP, 1981: 37-65.**

Runyon insists that *Garp* and *The Water-Method Man* by Irving, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Daniel Martin* by John Fowles, and *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* by Roland Barthes can all be read as variations on the same story—one ultimately traceable to a text in the Old Testament Apocrypha, the Book of Tobit.

**19. Towers, Robert. "Reservations" *New York Review of Books* 5 Nov. 1981: 13-15.**

Towers excoriates *Hotel*, commenting that it is disappointing because of the

perfunctoriness of its situations and their handling, and that its rapid shorthand treatment of character and situation works in certain types of comic writing but not in a novel of such length and pretensions. Towers claims that nowhere in *Hotel* does the language have the confidence, the aphoristic precision, and the vivacity that are among the pleasures of *Garp*, and quotation from the poems of Donald Justice and from the famous conclusion of *The Great Gatsby* serve only to emphasize the inadequacy of Irving's own prose. Towers also describes the metamorphosis of bears through Irving's fiction; beginning with the "liberation" of those truculent, shambling, unpredictable bears from the zoo in *Setting Free the Bears*, they come to ride unicycles and motorcycles in *Garp* and *Hotel*, and in the latter novel, one of them undergoes a non-Ovidian metamorphosis into a lovably growling human female, Susie the Bear.

**20. Wymard, Eleanor B. "A New Version of the Midas Touch: Daniel Martin and *The World According to Garp*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 27 (1981): 284-86.**

Wymard investigates the similarities between *Garp* and *Daniel Martin* by John Fowles. They share a fundamental thematic similarity; both accept life as it is, agreeing that human beings must make their own way and find their own freedom. According to Wymard, both Irving and Fowles return to the wellspring of the novel tradition. However, they differ from the secure world of the Victorian narrator by portraying both the planet of *Garp* and *Dan Martin* as indeed fragile and threatened.

1982

**21. Epstein, Joseph. "Why Is John Irving So Popular?" *Commentary* June 1982: 59-63.**

Epstein explains why Irving's novels are so popular: 1) they have jubilant contemporary themes; 2) they are an extraordinary jumble, of the sentimental and the violent, of the cute and the loathsome, of the emancipated and the traditional, and reading them one sometimes even feels that one is reading a weird collaboration between J. D. Salinger and John Hawkes; 3) they have demonstrated real disdain for people whose lives are strongly controlled by their politics like Ellen Jamesians in *Garp* or the group of Austrian radicals in *Hotel*; 4) Irving's heroes are traditionally masculine and, at the same time, extremely sensitive and permanently puerile. Epstein also indicates that Irving's works of fiction especially exert their greatest pull on yuppies, those who are young, undecided about growing up, college-educated, getting on in the world, but with a bit of the counterculture still clinging to them.

**22. French, Marilyn. "The *Garp* Phenomenon." *Ms.* Sep. 1982: 14-16.**

French insists that Irving seems to believe that feminism is a violent response to male sexuality as evidenced in *Garp*. French cites the following examples: 1) when a soldier touches Jenny, who later becomes the feminist "hero", she retaliates by using a scalpel to slice his arm open to the bone from shoulder to wrist; 2) scores of women honor Ellen James, who was raped when she was eleven, by cutting out their own tongues and banding

together in hatred of men; and 3) Garp writes a story of a woman who is raped and kills her attacker in a frenzy of obscene violence. French also berates *Garp* because the villains of this book are feminists. Additionally, French asserts that it demonstrates a phenomenon suggesting that when men embody “feminine” qualities—such as being affectionate, nutritive, spontaneous, non-dominating, and fun—they push women into opposite qualities.

**23. Kearns, Katherine Sue. "Some Versions of Violence in Three Contemporary American Novels: John Irving's 'The World According to Garp,' Tim O'Brien's 'Going after Cacciato,' and Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple'" Diss. U of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1982.**

Kearns focuses on specific types of violence faced by contemporary Americans such as the rape, murder, and assassination. Kearns compares *Garp* to novels by Tim O'Brien and Alice Walker, and insists these three novels see reality as fundamentally violent, and that each main character suffers the effects of violence. [DAI 44 (1983): A490]

**24. Lounsberry, Barbara. "The Terrible Under Toad: Violence as Excessive Imagination in *The World According to Garp*." *Thalia* 5 (1982-1983): 30-35.**

Lounsberry points out that *Garp* satirizes excesses and extremism of all kinds and it is a primer illustrating Aristotle's dictum that virtue is a mean state between two vices, the one of excess and the other of deficiency. The novel illustrates how extremes of the imagination—whether in respect to sex,

sexual politics, childrearing, or literature—generate further extremism, and thus frequently have violent repercussions. Jenny and Garp both share the same guilt of excessiveness; Jenny reacts overly to the potential violence inherent in sexual desire by scorning sex altogether, while Garp seeks protection from the violence ever potentially present in life itself through excessive safety precaution. Their extremisms turn out to be ineffectual, because Jenny's avoidance of sex fails to shield her from its influence and Garp's obsessive protectiveness of his children fails to protect them from death and mutilation. Running in tandem with their exceedance is a strong streak of violent behavior. Finally, it is the sex war which causes both Jenny's and Garp's deaths, and Irving is quick to both register and satirize the excessive workings of the human imagination which fuel this war.

**25. Miller, Gabriel. "Life and Art." *John Irving*. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1982. 1-24.**

Miller introduces Irving's writing tendencies from *Setting Free the Bears* to *Hotel* with his own biographic data and literary taste. Miller states that Irving not only tends to concentrate on the extremes of violence and language but also advocates humanity and sentimentality as Charles Dickens did. Miller claims that Irving shifts fictional gears from *Hotel*: writing his novel as a fairy tale, subordinating characterization to symbolic structure. As for Irving's characters, they learn to recognize the Under Toad (the symbol of the universe which is largely governed by mishap, violence, and the irrational) and to live with it, not through passive acceptance but with vigorous defiance.

**26. Miller, Gabriel. "My Father's Illusions." *John Irving*. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1982. 127-174.**

Miller studies *Hotel* as a fairy tale referring to Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976), Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), and some publications by Sigmund Freud. According to Bettelheim, the fairy tale answers the eternal questions of "What is the world really like? How am I to live my life in it? How can I truly be myself?" Irving deals with these three central questions in all of his novels, but in *Hotel* he addresses them most directly. *Hotel's* plot outlines are simple and can be divided into three parts corresponding to the family's successive hotels in New Hampshire, Vienna, and Maine. These three stages parallel Campbell's basic structural model of both the myth and the fairy tale: separation, initiation, and return; when the Berrys leave the first hotel in New Hampshire they get on two separate planes and one crashes, killing two members of the family; at the second hotel in Vienna, the family thwarts the plan of revolutionaries who try to blow up the Opera after a severe skirmish; then the family returns to the United States as wealthy heroes. Miller claims that the marriage of John and Susie the Bear at the end of the story is a reversal of the Beauty and the Beast tale, for the woman is disguised as an animal and released from her spell by the love of a man.

**27. Miller, Gabriel. "Portrait of the Artist as a Nervous Wreck." *John Irving*. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1982. 88-126.**

Miller analyzes *Garp* in detail, paralleling Garp's philosophy with that of Marcus Aurelius, who wrote *Meditations*. Although much of *Meditations*

consists of instructions in the right way to live, what distinguishes it is Aurelius's struggle to reconcile himself with death and with the recurrent notion that the universe might rest on ungoverned chaos, which conjures up Garp's Under Toad. Being in tune with one's own nature and living according to it in one's own world, which is a major theme in *Garp*, is also a prominent concept in *Meditations*. Miller also compares *Garp* with *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne; both novels are full of violent incidents and fatalities, and yet both writers place primary emphasis on the constructive feelings of their characters and the spirit of affirmation inherent in their behavior, and, most importantly, dedicate their art to overcoming the chaos and horror that their stories reflect by laughing at and playing with it. Also, according to Miller, the concept of metamorphosis is central to the novel, for not only its protagonist but various characters and groups who are prominent in the story are engaged in various kinds and stages of transformation. Ellen Jamesians are likened as Philomela who is recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; raped by Tereus, her sister's husband, Philomela has her tongue cut out to forestall her revenging herself by revealing the deed, and weaves her story into a tapestry and sends it to her sister as Ellen Jamesians communicate through the medium of written notes.

**28. Nelson, William. "The Comic Grotesque in Recent Fiction." *Thalia* 5 (1982-1983): 36-40.**

Nelson studies the comic grotesque in *Garp*, *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy Toole, and *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* by Tom Robbins. Nelson says that Garp is an unlikely hero whose details of birth and death



make a grotesque comparison with those of Jesus. Garp's best friend, Roberta Muldoon, is not only a transsexual, but a transsexual who was formerly a tight-end for the Philadelphia Eagles. There is an automobile accident in which one of Garp's children is killed, another loses an eye, and Garp's face is shattered, but more comically grotesquely, in the other car involved in the accident Garp's wife is performing oral sex on one of her students and the impact causes him to lose two-thirds of his penis. Nelson insists that this novel uses the grotesque comic mode to suggest both affirmation of the primacy of the individual and the acceptance of multiple modes of being, the corollary of individualism; and the terror of this world and the hypocrisy or falsification of conventional views of it require the comic grotesque mode to accommodate and to humanize chaos.

**29. Pritchard, William H. "Novel Discomforts and Delights." *Hudson Review* 35 (1982): 159-76.**

**30. Sweet, Ellen. "Men Who've Taken Chances and Made a Difference." *Ms.* Jul.-Aug. 1982: 102-4.**

*Ms.* magazine selects Irving as one of feminism's heroes, referring to *Garp* and *Hotel*, for integrating feminism as a major philosophical theme; for writing about rape with its true terror and brutality; for creating male characters who care about kids; and for understanding that feminist excesses are funny.

**31. Thompson, Christine E. "Pentheus in *The World According to Garp*." *Classical and Modern Literature* 3 (1982): 33-37.**

Thompson asserts that Irving uses the classical myth of Pentheus to show his consciousness of the violent side of human emotion. The fate of Garp is almost identical to that of Pentheus, and the Ellen Jamesians' devotion to Jenny is similar to the devotion of the Maenads to Dionysus. When Pentheus dresses up as a woman in order to spy on the female worshipers of Dionysus who are performing the ritual to become one with the god, the women discover him and tear him apart, limb from limb. In a similar manner, Garp, wearing a wig and a turquoise jumpsuit with falsies, enters an auditorium packed with women mourning the death of Jenny and wishing to identify themselves with her by wearing nurses' uniforms as she did, and Garp is discovered. Unlike Pentheus, Garp initially escapes from the auditorium but is later shot by an Ellen Jamesian.

**1983**

**32. Hill, Jane Bowers. "John Irving's Aesthetics of Accessibility: Setting Free the Novel." *South Carolina Review* 16 (1983): 38-44.**

Hill suggests that Irving embraces older, nineteenth-century ideas of the novel and responsibly exploits the popularity of soap opera. As Irving discusses in his 1979 essay, "Kurt Vonnegut and His Critics: The Aesthetics of Accessibility," art and entertainment are natural allies rather than enemies, and what Vonnegut writes might appropriately be labeled "responsible soap opera," a label that is, for Irving, high praise. Hill claims

that Irving's aesthetic theory, his technique, and his purpose for writing are life-affirming. He further asserts that they are less concerned with ethics or aesthetics than with ecstasies; that is, Irving wants to write novels which transcend all rhetorical rules in order to dissolve the normal limits of flesh and spirit.

**33. Kolich, Augustus M. "Does Fiction Have to Be Made Better than Life?"**  
*Modern Fiction Studies* 29 (1983): 159-174.

Kolich shows that in *Garp*, Irving unequivocally proves that fiction will always be made better than life, so much better in fact that we may not even notice the difference. Kolich also points out that Irving mocks readers who struggle to peer into a writer's biography with the words by Garp's publisher, "one of the first things most readers *want* to know is everything about a writer's *life*."

**34. McShane, Zita M. "Functions of the Grotesque in Twentieth-Century American Fiction." Diss. Case Western Reserve U, 1983.**

McShane traces the evolution of the literary mode, isolates modern adaptations, and applies techniques of the grotesque to an analysis of works by six modern writers, including Irving, who use the grotesque not in an adjectival sense but as a literary category offering structure to an entire work.

[DAI 44 (1984): 2474A]

- 35. Nelson, William. "Unlikely Heroes: The Central Figures in *The World According to Garp*, *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, and *A Confederacy of Dunces*." *The Hero in Transition*. Ed. Ray B. Brown. Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1983. 163-70.**

Nelson indicates that *Garp* extols individualism and excoriates the ways in which ordinary people spend their time—by being well-behaved members of institutions and by conforming to social mores. This attitude, which was prevalent during the 1960s, is also seen in *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* by Tom Robbins and *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy Toole. These novels use the grotesque comic mode to suggest both affirmation of the primacy of the individual and the acceptance of multiple modes of being, the corollary of individualism. They depict bizarre and unlikely heroes so as to reject traditional ways of being in the world and to preserve the individual's right to be in a chaotic and irrational universe.

- 36. O'Sullivan, Maurice J., Jr. "Garp Unparadised: Biblical Echoes in John Irving's *The World According to Garp*." *Notes on Modern American Literature* 7 (1983): Item 11.**

O'Sullivan studies biblical allusions in *Garp*. For instance, Garp's mother, Jenny, was teased by other nurses as "Old Virgin Mary Jenny," and, when she copulates with dying Garp Senior, he stated only one clear word, "Good," and rested after his work was done. Additionally, Garp's wife, Helen, is tempted by Michael Milton, and the Garps undergo a terrible accident. Garp dies when he is thirty-three as Christ did. Originally, Garp dies at thirty-six, but Irving changed the age of his death to thirty-three.

**37. Reilly, Edward C. "John Irving's *The Hotel New Hampshire* and the Allegory of Sorrow." *Publications of the Arkansas Philological Association* 6 (1983): 78-83.**

Reilly insists that Sorrow, the dog in *Hotel*, symbolizes violence and death; when he is put to sleep on Halloween night, the town policeman dies in front of the Berrys' house and Franny is gang-raped by her schoolmates; stuffed Sorrow, which glides out of the closet, startles Iowa Bob and makes him die of a heart attack; and Mother and Egg, with stuffed Sorrow hugged to his chest, are killed in a plane crash. Reilly represents that Sorrow reappears in different shapes after the plane crash such as Susie the Bear, Lilly's Weltschmerz, and the sympathy bomb made by the radicals.

**38. Reilly, Edward C. "Life into Art: Some Notes on Irving's Fiction." *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 13 (1983): 8-9.**

Reilly studies scenes that are translated from Irving's own experiences in *Garp*, and *Hotel*. Reilly focuses on the true story of Irving's Viennese landlady; she had not remodeled her bedroom wall against which her husband had been shot, and the machine-gun holes were still in the walls. Irving uses this anecdote of machine-gun holes to symbolize the fury of WWII which he sees as destroying old-world Vienna and spawning modern Vienna, a decaying, dying city. Garp feels the holes from machine-gun fire in the stone walls of his apartment lobby in *Garp*, and the Berrys see decorative stone cupids with their bellies pockmarked by machine-gun fire in *Hotel*.

- 39. Reilly, Edward C. "The Anschluss and the World According to Irving." *Research Studies* 51 (1983): 98-110.**

Reilly argues that Irving's European experiences provided the catalyst for his artistic sensibilities and the Austrian *Anschluss* offered a framework for his literary and moral vision. Irving links the modern violence with the Nazis and the *Anschluss*, and his protagonist in *Garp* and *Hotel* must learn from Vienna's violent history so that they will not be victimized by life's forces. In *Garp*, the brutal violence which destroyed Vienna during and after the *Anschluss* is indeed similar to the irrational violence which Garp associates with the dreaded Under Toad—the violence he must accept and defy so that his life can be meaningful and fulfilling. Jenny's and Garp's assassinations are subtly linked with Irving's concept of the contemporary fascist spirit. In *Hotel*, the Berry family moves to Vienna to help manage a disreputable hotel, the Gasthaus Freud. According to Reilly, Irving depicts Vienna's inner decay which resulted from the *Anschluss* and the war, in the motley prostitutes and in the German radicals who worked out of the hotel.

- 40. Runyon, Randolph. "Of Fishie Fumes and Other Critical Strategies in the Hotel of the Text." *Cream City Review* 8 (1983): 18-28.**

1984

- 41. Morris, Ann R. "The Importance of Names in Garp's and Irving's World." *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 14 (1984): 3-4.**

Morris studies names in *Garp* and concludes that they help reinforce the

ironic tone and the theme of absurdity in the novel. For example, the name Garp is derived from the dying utterance of his mortally wounded father, who was capable of making only the sound “garp,” and this sub-human sound then ironically becomes the only given name of a man who will spend his life as a writer in the thrall of language. Jenny is a woman to whom sexual desire is so foreign, but ironically again, her name is derived from “Guenevere,” a victim of tragic sexual passion in English literature. In the novel, the death metaphor, “the Under Toad” is appropriately named not only because toads are cold and clammy underground creatures like dead things but because the German word for death is “tod.”

**42. Reilly, Edward C. "A Note about Two Toads." *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 14 (1984): 7-8.**

**43. Sobal, Nancy Lee. "Curing and Caring: A Literary View of Professional Medical Woman (Nurse, Physician, Medicine)." Diss. U of Cincinnati, 1984.**

Sobal examines the depiction of professional women as physicians and nurses in American literature, including *Garp*, and insists that although not direct participants in the debate, novelists then and now address the changing status of women as professional workers and measure them against a cultural ideal of femininity. [DAI 45 (1984): 1754A]

1985

**44. Burgess, Anthony. "A Novel of Obstetrics." *Atlantic Monthly* July 1985: 98.**

Burgess reviews *Cider*, and scathingly criticizes it for lacking the following desirable qualities in fiction: wit, irony, and humor. Burgess savages its characters, with the exception of Dr. Larch, and calls them “animated pasteboards” that do not generate enough drama to sustain the substance of a long book. Burgess is from Britain where *Garp* and *Hotel* did not sell well. His explanation for the reason why Irving’s works become best-sellers in the United States is that Americans purchase longer novels simply because they read short novels too quickly and feel as though they had thrown money away.

**45. DeMott, Benjamin. "Guilt and Compassion." *New York Times Book Review* 26 May 1985: 1, 25.**

DeMott claims that *Cider* is Irving’s first truly valuable book because it has a public dimension and can play a significantly assuasive role in an American social conflict that is dangerously exacerbated. DeMott analyzes that Dr. Larch is socially victimized because he is obsessed with performing abortions for helpless women who need him only because no one else would practice the illegal abortions. DeMott also claims that Dr. Larch’s altruism is caused by his incapacity to express feeling for others.



**46. Fein, Esther B. "Costly Pleasures." *New York Times Book Review* 26 May 1985: 25.**

Fein notes that Irving did not intend *Cider* to be a polemic; he had hoped to write a lustrous, 19th-century Victorian novel with the emotional and atmospheric underpinnings of *Jane Eyre* or *David Copperfield*. Fein also points out that because Irving was eager to abide by his original concept of a novel that was Victorian in texture, he carefully structured the medical and farming details.

**47. Ferguson, Theresa Pokrivnak. "Sustained Game Metaphors in Contemporary Novel: *The Game Is Life* (Irving, United States, Cortazar, Argentina, Simenon, France, Cabrera Infante, Cuba)." Diss. U of Arkansas, 1985.**

Ferguson studies games as sustained metaphors for life in five contemporary novels including *Garp*. According to Ferguson, Garp learns a stoic balance by wrestling life. He can energetically fight some things, but inevitably life means pain and death, with only a temporary alleviation through wry humor.  
[DAI 47 (1987): 3027A]

**48. Gray, Paul. "An Orphan or an Abortion." *Time* 3 June 1985: 81.**

Gray reviews *Cider* and comments that Irving's characters are either children or childlike, dependent on forces beyond their control, and passive victims of life. Gray states that although Irving admires and emulates the expansive methods of Victorian fiction he cannot be like Dickens because he is, after all, a product of this century and all of its horrors.

**49. Hawley, John C. "The Cider House Rules." *America* 12 Oct. 1985: 226-227.**

Hawley claims that, more than many polemical novels, *Cider*, because the situations are highly visual and the book seldom becomes didactic in an oppressive way, is well realized as fiction in its own right. However, Hawley claims that its intent clearly controls the plot and seriously tests the reader's credulity. As for Irving's style, Hawley explains that it veers sometimes toward Kurt Vonnegut and other times toward Confucius with the emotionally compelling language of the Victorians.

**50. Lehmann-Haupt, Christopher. Rev. of *The Cider House Rules*, by John Irving. *New York Times Book Review* 20 May 1985: C20.**

Lehmann-Haupt reviews *Cider* and defines it as different from *Garp* and *Hotel* because its tone and focus is streamlined. Additionally, Irving's excesses are less disproportionate in this novel; the story contains no bears, bodybuilding obsessions, visits to Vienna, and or a single rape.

**51. Lernout, Geert. "Twenty-Five Years of Solitude." *Canadian Literature* 104 (1985): 52-64.**

**52. Lewis, Roger. "Larger Than Life." *New Statesman* 28 (1985): 29.**

**53. Petry, Alice Hall. "Irving's *Garp* and Christian Science." *Notes on Contemporary Literature* 15 (1985): 9-11.**

Petry reveals the similarity between Jenny in *Garp* and Mary Baker Eddy, the discoverer and founder of Christian Science. Petry states that Irving was

aware of the Christian Science movement and drew upon Eddy for the creation and development of Jenny. Irving's access to information regarding Eddy and the Christian Science movement is due to the fact that he was born and raised in Exeter, New Hampshire, which is merely 30 minutes from the site of Eddy's Pleasant View estate. The similarities between the two women are as follows: 1) their backgrounds and personalities are alike; 2) both women attracted a nation-wide audience as a result of their first books, which inaugurated spontaneous movements; and 3) they are labeled as "feminists" and surrounded by adoration, the hatred, and misunderstanding.

**54. Shostak, Debra. "Survivors: Perspectives on Transformative Violence in Contemporary American Narrative (1970's, Fiction, Autobiography)." Diss. U of Wisconsin-Madison, 1985.**

Shostak assesses the psychological and historical causes of transformative violence in several contemporary American literary works including *Garp*. Shostak studies the work in connection with anthropological notions of *Communitas* derived from a ritual victim's violent initiation, and interprets Irving's narrative form using Freud's theory of the repetition compulsion. [DAI 46 (1986): 3036A]

**55. Story, Richard David. "Wild Novels, Extravagant Success." *USA Today* 23 May 1985: 1-2D.**

## 1986

**56. Carton, Evan. "The Politics of Selfhood: Bob Slocum, T. S. Garp and Auto-American-Biography." *Novel* 20 (1986): 41-61.**

**57. Dharker, Rani. "John Irving's Unsafe World." *Journal of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda* 35-36 (1986-1987): 143-147.**

Dharker scrutinizes the violence, madness, and revenge in *Garp* and *Hotel*. According to Dharker, both works make the reader re-experience known horror at a more sensitive level by employing the technique of defamiliarization and confrontation with Irving's "unsafe world."

**58. Doane, Janice, and Devon Hodges. "Women and the Word According to *Garp*." *New Directions in Feminist Critics*. Ed. Judith Spector. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State U Popular P, 1986. 60-69.**

Doane and Hodges claim that *Garp* advocates a familiar dichotomy between an active male principle and a passive female principle. Although *Garp* seems to depict strong and capable women characters and defend women's right to claim traditionally male prerogatives, women in this book are not imaginative and creative and destined to consume rather than produce art. For example, Jenny is an influential writer but she has no gift for literature. Alice can write beautifully but she is unable to finish a single book. Men, on the other hand, are productive writers; Garp's novels are imaginative rather than literal, beautifully written, complete and complex. Garp seduces women including Helen, Alice and babysitter Cindy, and Mrs. Ralph with his books.

Also Garp's works function in a procreative way to increase his family; *The World According to Bensenhaver* attracts Ellen James and Garp eventually adopts her.

**59. Harter, Carol C., and James R. Thompson. "Life as a Doomed Effort at Reclassification." *John Irving*. Boston: Twayne, 1986. 74-102.**

Harter summarizes the plot of *Garp* and analyses its narrative, narrator, structure, etc. According to Harter, *Garp* describes "an entire cosmos" of a man in Dickensian sense and style, and its implications and scope stretch in all directions far beyond the brief life of the protagonist. As for the narrator of this novel, Donald Whitcomb, a character who appears at the last chapter of this novel, can be the unnamed, ostensibly omniscient narrator of this novel. A reason for that is because he knows everything about Garp and writes his biography, *Lunacy and Sorrow: The Life and Art of T. S. Garp*, and Irving's *The World According to Garp* is originally named *Lunacy and Sorrow*, too. Harter divides the novel into two parts according to their infrastructure and tone. In the first part of the novel (chapters 1-11), there is considerably more lunacy than sorrow, whereas in the second half (chapter 12-19) sorrow predominates. A phrase in the novel, the "ludicrous and doomed effort at reclassification," is a metaphor in Garp's novels, in his life, and in his aesthetic, which ultimately reflect those of Irvings. While the characters in Garp's fiction will forever be engaged in the optimistic pursuit of transcendent value and meaning, their "efforts at reclassification" will inevitably be doomed.

**60. Harter, Carol C., and James R. Thompson. "Novel as Polemic" *John Irving*. Boston: Twayne, 1986. 126-143.**

**61. Harter, Carol C., and James R. Thompson. "So We Dream On." *John Irving*. Boston: Twayne, 1986. 103-125.**

**62. Morris, Ann R. "The Dialectic of Sex and Death in Fantasy." *Erotic Universe: Sexuality and Fantastic Literature*. Ed. Donald Palumbo. New York: Greenwood, 1986. 77-85.**

Morris states that sex and death are always inextricably interwoven in *Garp*. Garp is conceived when Jenny copulates with a dying air force gunner. In Vienna, Garp has sex with dying prostitute. When Garp's car hits the car in which his wife is having oral sex with her student, his youngest son is killed. Garp is killed by an assassin in the womblike wrestling room where he had always felt so safe and where he had first had intercourse with Helen.

### **1987**

**63. Chanen, Audrey Wolff. "American Holocaust Novels." Diss. The U of Iowa, 1987.**

Chanen presents a critique of a selection of novels by American novelists, including Irving, who have attempted to set forth the story of the Holocaust, and the situation of the survivor in post-war America, and post-Holocaust American society. Chanen considers the content and style of these novels and explores the literary and ethical problems which arise when writers,

whose knowledge of the Holocaust comes from secondary sources, fictionalize historical events. Chanen also examines the tendencies of American novelists to either popularize or universalize the Holocaust. [DAI 48 (1988) 1768A]

**64. Coe, Barbara Wall. "The Power of Vision: Parody as Theological Perspective in the Fiction of John Irving." Diss. Drew U, 1987.**

Coe indicates that, in creating characters, Irving applies the strategy of parody. Irving's characters sometimes echo such figures from myth and culture as Io, Freud, Rapunzel, Siegfried, Brunhilde, Philomela, the Virgin Mary, and Hermaphroditus, and that both his male and female characters exist in comic opposition with each other, giving his world a balance which encompasses the tensions of paradox. Coe claims that Irving's parodic perspective empowers him to assert the centrality of the artistic imagination in envisioning a moral realm in which we may live our lives meaningfully. [DAI 48 (1988): 2873A]

**65. Cosgrove, William. "The World According to Garp as Fabulation." *South Carolina Review* 19 (1987): 52-58.**

Cosgrove classifies *Garp* as a "fabulation," the term introduced by Robert Scholes in his *The Fabulators*. According to Scholes, fabulations have a storytelling tradition in the novel stretching from Cervantes to Celine, and what all fabulations have in common is a movement away from the realistic novel, and a new emphasis on the fable or story itself and away from the detailed documentation of the external world or the psychological

examination of a character's internal world. Cosgrove associates *Garp* with earlier fabulations in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century novels like Fielding, Sterne, Dickens, and Thackeray because of following reasons: 1) it has an omniscient narrator of whose presence readers are consistently reminded; 2) action and plot are primary and are generally developed in series of dramatic episodes; 3) implausibilities and coincidences commonly occur with an eye toward appropriateness to the effect of the story rather than verisimilitude; 4) it has social satire of readily recognizable social issues however absurdly unrealistic it may be otherwise.

### 1988

**66. Thomas, Jim. "A Changing American Family: Cheever, Gardner, Irving, Updike." Diss. U of Missouri-Columbia, 1988.**

**67. Wages, Jack D. "Disappearing Letters and Breaking Rules: John Irving as Namer." *Literary Onomastics Studies* 15 (1988): 63-65.**

Wages studies the names utilized in *Garp*, *Hotel*, and *Cider*, and states that Irving uses names and naming as a major creative tool—not merely as a relatively superficial way to identify people and places. For example, Wages indicates that in *Cider*, Irving uses the word “name” or some form of it almost two dozen times in the first page and a half, which assures that the names are important to the novel.



## 1989

**68. Gittings, Christopher. "John Irving and Metafiction: Preserving of Story."****MA thesis. U of Guelph, 1989.**

Gittings investigates Irving's importance as a contemporary writer of American fiction who incorporates the techniques of metafictional narrative. Gittings argues that the fictional world of Irving is a multivalent one which operates on intellectual, moral, and emotional planes, and that it contains contemporary as well as traditional fictional modes. This thesis studies every Irving work until 1989, which includes *Garp*, *Hotel*, and *Cider*. [MAI 30 (1992): 481]

**69. Wicht, Wolfgang. "John Irving: Garp und wie er die Welt sah." *Weimarer***

*Beitrage: Zeitschrift fur Literaturwissen- schaft, Asthetik und Kulturwissenschaften* 35 (1989): 646-659.

(An essay on *Garp* in German.)

## 1990

**70. Blaustein, Arthur I. "Novels with a Moral Conscience." *Tikkun* 5 (1990):****66-69.**

Blaustein selects twenty-four socially conscious books, including *Cider*, that speak out against social, economic, and political injustice, that expose the many faces of racism, sexism, militarism, and elitism, and that extend people's capacity for compassion. Blaustein's conviction is that literature

has functioned historically as people's most dependable source of human awareness and self-consciousness, and good literature can function as a conscience, a moral brake; it unmask what ideology conceals. Blaustein states that *Cider* depicts a generational conflict of values between an old country doctor who performs abortions and his adopted son, who becomes a doctor but refuses to do the same.

**71. McKay, Kim. "Narrative Voices in the 'Bildungsroman.'" Diss. Lehigh U, 1990.**

McKay distinguishes female Bildungsroman from male ones, which includes *Garp*, and studies their narrative voices. McKay says that elements of the psychological and phraseological stances of the narrator in *Garp* express the narrator's admiration and emulation of the fiction writer whose life he portrays. [DAI 51 (1991): 3733A]

**1991**

**72. Fegley, Jonathan Patrick. "Diverging Paths: Reviving and Redefining Traditional Narrative Form and Function in the Contemporary American Novel." Diss. U of Georgia, 1991.**

Fegley examines several contemporary American novels, whose narrative form is traced back through the works of the Victorian age, and studies *Garp* as a traditional biographical novel using the distinction between novel and epic/myth made by Mikhail Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination* and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. [DAI 52 (1992): 3281A]

**73. Reilly, Edward C. "The Best of the Four" *Understanding John Irving*.  
Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1991. 61-80.**

Reilly introduces the plot of *Garp* and its themes and symbols in detail. He claims that when compared with the preceding three novels by Irving, *Garp* is stylistically and artistically superior, and while reintroducing “Irvingesque” settings, characters, themes, and techniques, these elements are more richly and fully integrated into the novel’s plot and depth. Reilly also points out that *Garp* is a necessary bridge to *Hotel*, which Irving claims is even better.

**74. Reilly, Edward C. "The Most Complete Unto Itself" *Understanding John Irving*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1991. 81-99.**

Reilly introduces *Hotel*’s plot, and explains its symbols and metaphors, such as Sorrow the dog, bears, and three hotels in the novel. Reilly claims that it contains fairy-tale characters: a wizard (Freud); a talisman (the man in the white dinner jacket); animals (Sorrow, State O’Maine, Susie the Bear); evil forces (Chipper Dove and the German radicals); a quest (to live “purposefully” and “well”); and heroes (the Berry family). Also, the fairy-tale framework coincides with John Berry’s first-person narration in that his wistfully nostalgic language will recall the “famous summer of the bear, and the magic of my mother and father’s courtship.” Yet, the novel is also about rape, incest, homosexuality, lesbianism, violence, and theath. While the Berrys hope for a fairy-tale existence, these forces shatter their dreams. Nevertheless, as John Berry wistfully emphasizes in the conclusion, they dream on and on.

- 75. Reilly, Edward C. "You Don't Compare Your Children" *Understanding John Irving*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1991. 101-119.**

Reilly explains the plot, themes, refrains, and characters of *Cider*. Reilly notes that *Cider* indicates some major technical and stylistic changes for Irving. For example, bears, Vienna, sport metaphors, narratives within the main narrative, and lurking symbols of evil like the Under Toad in *Garp* and Sorrow in *Hotel*, are noticeably absent. Irving's expansive plots, meaningful chapter titles, style, characters, and epilogues evoke the Victorian novels, particularly those of Charles Dickens, whose *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* comprise the nightly readings in the boy's dormitory in *Cider*.

## 1992

- 76. Brown, Sheila Goodman, "A Carnival of Fears: Affirmation in the Postmodern American Grotesque." Diss. The Florida State U, 1992.**

Brown examines grotesque forms in postmodern American literature including those of Irving. Brown claims that there is a strain of affirmation not uncharacteristic of the general postmodern jubilation and celebration of the same openness and irrationality which drove the moderns to despair in a variety of contemporary American works. [DAI 53 (1992): 809A]

- 77. Bruce, Gregory C. "Bakhtin on Self and Other: A Postmodern Norm Within and Without." Diss. Emory U, 1992.**

Bruce explores the relevance of the wide-ranging theories, both early and late, of Mikhail Bakhtin to postmodernism, using works of Irving, Milan

Kundera, and Kathy Acker to illustrate those theories. Bruce's topics include psychoanalysis, formalism, idealism, the possibility of theory, the golden rule, and religious language, all of which are set in a postmodern context. [DAI 53 (1992): 1178A]

**78. Jones, Michelle Lynne. "Laughing Hags: The Comic Vision as Feminist."**

**Diss. U of Alberta, 1992.**

Jones investigates the novels by Irving, Margaret Atwood, Barbara Pym, and Muriel Spark as texts which mock societal norms through comic inversion and Virginia Woolf's principle of "derision." By examining the author's mockery of three major ideological structures—the academy, the church, and the self—Jones attempts to demonstrate the author's comic concern with the price paid by the individual and society in adhering to conservative behavior and roles. Jones insists that laughter is the best medicine for the ills of society, and is especially effective in breaking the chains of socialization. [DAI 53 (1993): 4310A]

**79. McCarthy, Desmond F. "Reconstructing the Family: Alternatives to the Nuclear Family in Contemporary American Fiction." Diss. Brandeis U, 1992.**

McCarthy examines alternative families in *Garp*, and notes that *Garp* depicts a series of struggles between traditional and nontraditional families. These oppositions collapse, in part, because of Garp's overbearing paternalism, and he restructures his family, creating an extended household that blends the best elements of the familial options. McCarthy also studies

the novels of John Updike, Alice Walker, and E. L. Doctorow. [DAI 53 (1992): 1518A]

**80. McKay, Kim. "Double Discourses in John Irving's *The World According to Garp*." *Twentieth-Century Literature* 38 (1992): 457-75.**

**81. Quiring, Bradley J. "Transcendence in the World of John Irving." MA thesis. U of New Brunswick, 1992.**

Quiring insists that *A Prayer for Owen Meany* reinforces the religious significance of *Garp* and *Cider* in its demonstration of the structure of Irving's fictional universe. Quiring explains that the impetus behind Garp's need to write fiction is a longing to transcend the disorder of his personal history, and that Homer and Dr. Larch assume the role of novelist as they write fictional accounts of random happenings of history. [MAI 31 (1993): 1022]

**82. Strandberg, Susan McLaurin. "A Gentle Treatment of 'The World According to Garp.'" MA thesis. Lamer U-Beaumont, 1992.**

Strandberg analyzes themes of misunderstanding in *Garp*. Strandberg indicates that the difference between Garp and Irving lies in the consequences each experiences in their careers as writers, and that both Garp and Irving are misunderstood in terms of personal vision and style of writing. [MAI 30 (1992): 1030]

**83. Wilson, Raymond J., III. "The Postmodern Novel: The Example of John Irving's *The World According to Garp*." *Critique* 34 (1992): 49-62.**

Wilson states that *Garp* illustrates a key aspect of postmodernism as a novel that recapitulates within itself a history of twentieth-century fiction: the earlier parts of the novel exhibit strong elements of modernism whereas in the later part it is a postmodern novel of bizarre violence, black humor, and metafiction. Wilson defines postmodernism as: 1) a propensity to contain and reuse all previous forms in a literature of exhaustion and replenishment; 2) a zone of the bizarre, where fantasy best expresses our sense of reality; 3) a turning away from penetration into the psychological depth of character as the primary goal of fiction; and 4) a propensity for metafiction, in which writing draws attention to the techniques and processes of its own creation.

**1993**

**84. Arnot, Elizabeth. "Responding to Fate's Disguises: Affirmation in the Novels of John Irving." MA thesis. Concordia U, 1993.**

Arnot remarks that Irving's characters have strong feelings of affirmation that life is worthwhile, although his novels are characterized by a sense of danger, underlying tragedy and inevitable unhappy endings. They seek such affirmation by attempting to find structure in the world around them, either by classifying their experiences and perceptions into coherent personal philosophies and visions, or by indulging in creative acts, most often the creation of family units or works of art. Arnot's study concentrates on Irving's treatment of the themes of fate, death, and affirmation in *The World*

*According to Garp, The Hotel New Hampshire, The Cider House Rules, and A Prayer for Owen Meany.* [MAI 32 (1994): 1524]

- 85. González de la Aleja Barberán, Manuel.** "El síndrome de Garp." *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses* 6 Nov. 1993: 79-91.

(An essay on *Garp* in Spanish.)

#### 1994

- 86. Shostak, Debra.** "The Family Romances of John Irving." *Essays in Literature* 21 (1994): 129-45.

Shostak suggest that there exists an important link between Irving's focus on fathers and the inclination toward self-conscious form or "family romance." One of Irving's major preoccupations emerges from a question about origing—both familial origins and narrative origins. The Absence of fathers and ambivalence toward fathers' power feature Irving's novels. There is a conflict between Irving's stated abhorrence of metafictional techniques and his metafictional novels like *Garp*. According to Shostak, Irving attempts to reject his "sonship," in Harold Bloom's terms, to the arbiters of late twentieth-century aesthetic values in order to return to the older representatives of traditional Victorian realism; it is an oedipal attempt to search to supplant the stepfather with the absent father.



## 1995

- 87. Nester, Nancy L. "Signs of Family: Images of Family Life in Contemporary American Literature." Diss. University of Rhode Island, 1995.**

Nester uses literary images to modify public and private opinion of what should be acknowledged as family and implicates a wider radius of institutions with the responsibility of propagating and sustaining supportive relationships. Nester's critical approach is interdisciplinary but greatly influenced by materialist feminist theorists who contend that literary texts and critiques do have the power to preserve or transform social structure.

[DAI 56 (1996): 3584A]

- 88. Shostak, Debra. "Plot as Repetition: John Irving's Narrative Experiments" *Critique* 37 (1995): 51-70.**

## 1996

- 89. Besner, Neil. "A World Divided, A World Divined: Two North American Fictions." *New Perspectives on Margaret Laurence: Poetic Narrative, Multiculturalism, and Feminism*. Ed. Greta M. K. McCormick Coger. Westport: Greenwood, 1996. 41-47.**

- 90. Brown, Susan Elena. "Narrative Ethics in Medicine." MA thesis. Michigan State U, 1996.**

Brown describes the various approaches characterized as narrative ethics in medicine and evaluates their relationship with traditional principle-based methodologies. Brown uses two abortion narratives, *Cider* and Gwendolyn Brooks' "The Mother," to illustrate the features of narrative-based moral reflection. [*MAI* 35 (1997): 662]

- 91. Rockwood, Bruce L. "Abortion Stories: Uncivil Discourse and 'Cider House Rules'" *Law and Literature Perspectives*. Ed. Bruce L. Rockwood and Roberta Kevelson. New York: Peter Lang, 1996. 289-340.**

### 1997

- 92. Loudermilk, Kim A. "Fictional Feminism: Representing Feminism in American Bestsellers." Diss. Emory U, 1997.**

Loudermilk states that while actual feminist politics are diverse and encompass many viewpoints, the mythologized version is uniformly antimale, antisex, and politically ineffective. Loudermilk calls the latter "fictional feminism" for two reasons: because it is made-up, and it grows out of fictional narratives such as *Garp*. [*DAI* 58 (1998): 4469A]

- 93. Morrow, Don. "Wrestling John Irving." *Aethlon* 14 (1997): 41-51.**

- 94. Rickard, John. "Wrestling with the Text: The World According to John Irving." *Meanjin* 56 (1997): 714-722.**

Richard studies the relationship between the twin passions of Irving's life—writing and wrestling. According to Richard, wrestling is described as being sexual in *Garp* and *The 158-Pound Marriage*. In Jenny's eye, wrestling is as deliberate and desperate as rape in *Garp*.

**1998**

- 95. Campbell, Josie P. "The Cider House Rules" *John Irving: A Critical Companion*. Westport: Greenwood P, 1998.107-124.**

Campbell suggests that in *Cider* dialogism helps readers to see the many layers of difficult questions that attend the making of rules for and the confrontation over abortion; the dialogue in *Cider* is comprised of the voices from many different discourses, as well as the participation of the reader's own life-voice. The thematic issues in *Cider* are family, as in *Garp* and *Hotel*, and rules which are both personal and societal; Dr. Larch and the nurses in the orphanage are unofficial family of Homer, but the rules of the orphanage work against even the most beloved orphan who hates the idea of abortion. The extraordinary but loving family formed by Homer, Candy, and Wally, with a child, Angel, is based on the rules about Angel established by his parents, Homer and Candy. Campbell indicates that the complexities of their triangular relationship are resonant of the complexities of the abortion debate because in neither case is there necessarily a right answer.

**96. Campbell, Josie P. "The Hotel New Hampshire" John Irving: A Critical Companion. Westport: Greenwood P, 1998. 87-106.**

Campbell introduces *Hotel* and its structuralist analysis of the incestuous relationship between John and his sister, Franny, as follows: 1) John is Franny's alter ego; 2) the incest between John and Franny is not only the Narcissus/Echo myth but also an Oedipal relationship because Franny is the replacement of the dead Mother; 3) to save his brother from himself, and to save them both, Franny ritualizes their intercourse as an *enactment* of a social drama; 4) then, it is there that transformation occurs to both of them, most radically in the ritual pupation of liminal seclusion, and out of their seclusion and out of their human depth comes the magic of a fairy tale and they are freed from their incestuous obsessions; 5) soon after that, John leaves Franny and they lead separate lives. Also, Campbell claims the Berry children's revenge against Chipper Dove is not a silly, trivializing rape as other critics say; it is also a transformative ritual for the Berrys children including Susie the Bear. Readers of *Garp* were prepared for *Hotel*, since Garp, near the end of his life, projects several forthcoming novels, the first of which would be *My Father's Illusions*, whose plot is similar to *Hotel* and John often refers to "my father's illusions." Campbell points out that Father is generally oblivious to his children in order to chase his illusional dreams, but it is not that he does not love his children but it is that Father himself never really grows up. Compared with Father, Frank is the most realistic character; whereas Father is a capitalist dreamer, Frank is a capitalist entrepreneur and later he becomes Lilly and Franny's successful agent.

**97. Campbell, Josie P. "The World According to Garp" *John Irving: A Critical Companion*. Westport: Greenwood P, 1998. 71-86.**

Campbell introduces *Garp*'s plot, setting, characters, theme, and an inter/intra-textual reading of the novel. According to Campbell, the wrestling room is the important space in the story because it is not only where Garp learns how to wrestle and where he feels at home, but also where he proposes to Helen Holm, and where he is killed by Pooh Percy in a nurse's uniform. The wrestling room is a warm and comforting womb-space, and also a tomb-space. Other important settings in *Garp* are Vienna as the setting for lust, sex, venereal disease, death, and most importantly, writing, and Dog's Head Harbor which is not only a haven for abused women, but also regenerative space for the Garp family. Campbell shows *Garp*'s intertextuality as Gabriel Miller has suggested, but also its intra-textuality; one of Garp's novels, *The World According to Bensenhaver*, follows a sequence of central traumatic events in his own life and his adopted child, Ellen James, and this work is his artistic response to these events. As for the last line in the novel, "But in the world according to Garp, we are all terminal cases," Campbell indicates that Garp himself was born out of a union between Jenny Fields and the terminal "Goner," Technical Sergeant Garp.

**98. Coltman, Caroline. "The Redemptive Imagination: The Fiction of John Irving." MA thesis. U of Ottawa, 1998.**

Coltman argues that Irving recognizes the contingency of language systems which shape the personal and public networks of beliefs, desires, and

experiences and that he presents the imagination, which enters into, selects, and shapes various public and private texts, as a moral and unifying force. Coltman also insists that Irving employs post-modernist means to present what is, in effect, a Romantic-humanist view of the world. This thesis covers *Garp*, *Hotel*, and *Cider*, as well as *The Water-Method Man*, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, and *A Son of the Circus*. [MAI 36 (1998): 1463]

**99. Davis, Todd F., and Kenneth Womack. "Saints, Sinners and the Dickensian Novel: The Ethics of Storytelling in John Irving's *The Cider House Rules*" *Style* 32 (1998): 298-317.**

**100. McCarthy, Desmond F. "The Family According to Garp" *Reconstructing the Family in Contemporary American Fiction*. New York: Peter Lang, 1998. 57-80.**

McCarthy synthesizes *Garp* in detail and analyzes its families. Garp rejects the uncertainty of his unorthodox upbringing by depicting the traditional family in his short fiction and by founding his own family. For Garp, writing is, in fact, a mode of parenting because he defines the writer's goal as "trying to keep everyone alive, forever," though in vain. Garp and his family celebrate life even though they always suspect that the death will visit ruin upon each of them sooner or later.

- 101. Steiff, Julie Ann. "In Pursuit of Authority in an Uncongenial Age: Mentors and Proteges in the Fiction of Robertson Davies and John Irving." Diss. U of Michigan, 1998.**

Steiff examines the fiction of Irving and Robertson Davies through the lens of mentoring theory. By analyzing the power dynamics of fictional mentoring relationships, Steiff indicates that the theory demonstrates how both authors use mentoring as they attempt to claim an artistic authority they perceive as threatened by contemporary culture. Steiff also considers the author/reader relationship as a metaphorical extension of the mentoring relationship, arguing that both authors attempt to position their implied readers as submissive protégés in order to ensure the transmission of their intended messages. [DAI 59 (1999):3814A]

**2000**

- 102. Ito, Tamotsu. "Naichingeru no ryojoku: Gapu no sekai no sekai." *Eigo Seinen* 146 (2000): 370-73.**

(An essay on *Garp* in Japanese.)

- 103. Lowry, William K. "Sexual Promiscuity and Detachment from Cultural Traditions in the Works of John Irving." MA thesis. American U, 2000.**

Lowry studies sexual promiscuity, which is a recurring theme in many of the works of Irving, such as *Garp*, *Cider*, and *A Widow for One Year*. Lowry remarks that the use of sexual promiscuity stems from T. S. Eliot's theme of sexual indiscretion resulting from and leading to a further detachment from

societal and cultural traditions; Irving takes this influence and develops it to show how this detachment leads to punishment, which must be endured and learned from before cultural continuity can be achieved. [MAI 38 (2000): 1451]

**104. Robinson, Sally. "Rapists, Feminists, and The World According to Garp: Inauthentic Versus Authentic Traumas." *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis*. New York: Columbia UP, 2000. 101-113.**

**105. Thunecke, Jrörg. "Schlagobers and Blood: Vienna in John Irving's Novel *The Hotel New Hampshire*." *Austria in Literature*. Ed. Donald G. Daviau. Riverside: Ariadne, 2000. 274-94.**

## 2001

**106. Bloom, Harold, ed. *John Irving*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001.**

Bloom compiles eleven essays on Irving's works. In the introduction, Bloom indicates that *Garp* starts out as a Joycean portrait of the artist as a young man but turns into a Pynchonian postmodernist parody, and that it is a mixture of the following many literary genres: farce, fantasy, the Gothic, the saga of personal development, and metafiction. Bloom suggests that *Garp*, *Hotel*, and *Cider* are Irving's biggest successes and that his books after these three works exhibits some diminishment in Irving's formidable energies, and that Irving recently seems more interested in moviemaking than in fresh



attempts at narrative fiction.

**2002**

**107. Booth, Alison. "Neo-Victorian Self-Help, or Cider House Rules." *American Literary History* 14 (2002): 284-310.**

**108. Cooper, Brenda. *Weary Sons of Conrad: White Fiction against the Grain of Africa's Dark Heart*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002.**

Cooper studies white males, including Irving, Paul Theroux, and T. C. Boyle, who write in the aftermath of European colonialism and oppose imperialism. These writers struggle with patriarchy and gender stereotypes in the views of postcolonial literary theory, gender, and cultural and African studies. According to Livingston, they battle against the stranglehold of myths about Africa, its lands, and its people, which are deeply embedded in the language itself. They struggle for new tongues and original ways of telling their stories but cannot be totally free of history, family, language, and tradition.

**109. Weiss, Elke. *John Irving Und die Kunst Des Fabulierens*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002.**

(A book on Irving's works in German.)

## 2003

- 110. Randall, Greg. "John Irving's *Cider House Rules* and the Ethics of Business." *Organization Development Journal* 21 (2003): 97-101.**

Randall investigates the flexibility of ethics and the validity of breaking certain rules in *Cider*, which is also true in the today's business world. Greg studies the relationship between employer and employees in the apple orchard, the imposed impractical rules for the workers, Dr. Larch's practice of abortion and of counterfeiting Homer's medical records which are illegal, the duty of children in the orphanage, and so on.

## 2004

- 111. Braun, Hartmut. *Literatur als Zerrspiegel: Metafiktion in den Romanen von John Irving*. Osnabrück: Der Andere Verlag, 2004.**

(A book on Irving's works in German.)

- 112. Davis, Todd F., and Kenneth Womack. *The Critical Response to John Irving*. Westport: Praeger, 2004.**

Davis and Kenneth compile essays and reviews on each of Irving's works, from *Setting Free the Bears* to *The Fourth Hand*, until 2004. In its introduction, Davis and Womack explain the following: 1) *Garp* is a complex meditation regarding what Irving perceives as the overarching interrelationship in contemporary culture between sex and violence; 2) *Hotel* is at times the stuff of fairy tales yet a narrative of genuine sorrow and

disdain at others; 3) *Cider* is the most Dickensian of his novels in terms of its rich textual scope, wide range of characters, and expansive ideological vision.

**113. Fujimori, Kayoko. "Kyojin ni kiseifuku o kiseru koto: The Cider House Rules no baai." *Eigo Seinen* 150 (2004): 17-19.**

(An essay on *Cider* in Japanese.)

**2006**

**114. Belgaid, Bouchra. *John Irving and Cultural Mourning: Images of Mourning and nostalgia in Contemporary American Literature*. Lanham, MD: UP of America, 2006.**

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