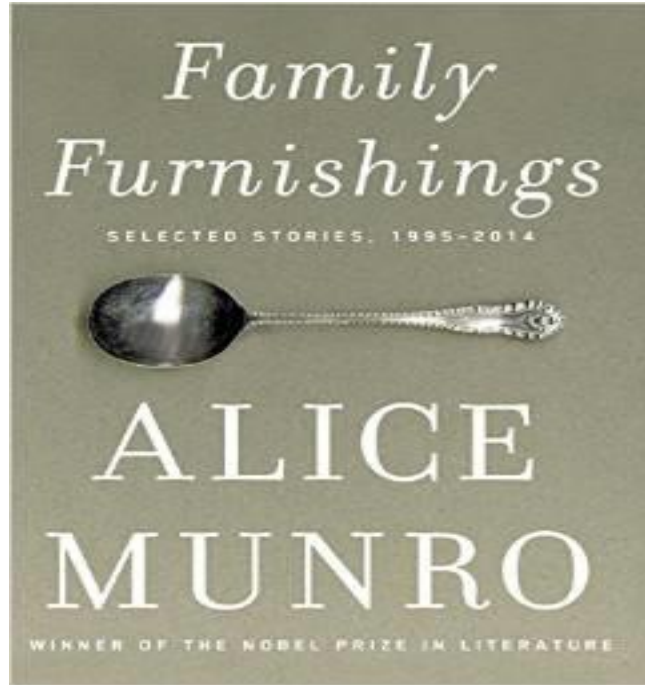


Short Story Fiction

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2016

Antopol, Molly. *The UnAmericans: Stories* FIC ANT

2014 This complex debut collection of short stories traces the experiences of deeply flawed and painfully human characters from a range of backgrounds, including a Czechoslovakian dissident, a McCarthy-era communist/actor, and an Israeli journalist. Exploring themes of estrangement, family, and politics, these stories span much of the 20th century and take place in locations as varied as Maine and Kiev. In her debut story collection, Antopol looks deeply into the lives of people whose geographies are not easy to define, while exploring the difficult ties that bind families and communities.

Atwood, Margaret. *Stone Mattress: Nine Tales* FIC ATW

2014 Aging and death reverberate throughout this excellent collection. The first few stories give different perspectives on a shared past. In "Alphinland," newly widowed Constance reminisces about ex-lover Gavin, whose poetry she supported with her successful fantasy novels. "Revenant" picks up Gavin's life as an elderly poet, famous for the poems of his youth but now soured on life and love. While the other stories move on to different characters and story lines, end-of-life indignities and the desire for revenge connect them. Poignant, funny, distressing, and surreal, Atwood's stories bring the extraordinary to the ordinary.

Beattie, Ann. *The State We're In: Maine Stories* FIC BEA

2015 Ann Beattie's first collection of new stories in a decade is about how we live in the places we have chosen—or have been chosen by. It is about the stories we tell our families, our friends, and ourselves; the truths we may or may not see; how our affinities unite or repel us; and where we look for love. Told through the voices of vivid and engaging women of all ages, *The State We're In* explores their doubts and desires and reveals the unexpected moments and glancing epiphanies of daily life. Some of Beattie's idiosyncratic and compelling characters have arrived in the coastal state by accident, while others are trying to escape.

Clouther, Kevin. *We were flying to Chicago: Stories* FIC CLO

2014 Clouther's first collection of stories shows an "old" talent—meaning, his sophistication in treatment and technique and his wise observations of the human condition have the feel of an author who has the experience of several story collections behind him. These 10 stories reveal a perfectly attuned ear for the clichés, rhythms, and timid vocabulary of ordinary folk; he has great empathy for what these people may not be able to articulate but know in their hearts.

Diaz, Junot. *This is how You Lose Her* FIC DIA

2012 Diaz brings life to the short story with a voice that demands attention. Often caught between hopeless romanticism and flippant machismo, Diaz's characters are as vulnerable and maddening as they are endearing and sexy. His latest book, the first since he won the Pulitzer in 2007, and his second collection of stories after 1996's *Drown*, depicts stories hinging on Yunió de las Casas: a Dominican-born, Jersey-raised writer and—as is especially on display here—chronic womanizer. Diaz tells of love won and lost with his signature verve; the book pulses with Spanish.

Ellis, Helen. *American Housewife: Stories* FIC ELL

2015 A sharp, funny, delightfully unhinged collection of stories set in the dark world of domesticity, these stories feature murderous ladies who lunch, celebrity treasure hunters, and the best bra fitter south of the Mason Dixon

line. These twelve irresistible stories take us from a haunted prewar Manhattan apartment building to the set of a rigged reality television show, from the unique initiation ritual of a book club to the getaway car of a pageant princess on the lam, from the gallery opening of a tinfoil artist to the fitting room of a legendary lingerie shop.

Klay, Phil. *Redeployment*

FIC KLA

2014 These stories are sensational, with vivid characters, biting dialogue, and life within and beyond the Afghan and Iraq wars conveyed with an addictive combination of the mundane and the horrifying. A soldier reenters civilian life after the surreal wartime task of shooting dogs that eat corpses. A rookie takes part in a raid on insurgents and then eats cobbler. Two soldiers agree to swap responsibility for a killing. *Redeployment* is most remarkable, though, for the questions it asks about the aims and effects of war stories themselves. That perspective holds these diverse tales together, as his narrators ask why and how war stories are told. What details does a soldier share with civilians? Does one tell it funny or tell it serious? Is the storytelling a further return to war, a redeployment in itself?

Mantel, Hilary. *The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher: Stories*

FIC MAN

2014 A collection of contemporary short stories about England includes monster tales, near-memoir pieces, and mini-sagas of family and social fracture as triggered by sex, marriage, and class.

McCracken, Elizabeth. *Thunderstruck and Other Stories*

FIC MCC

2014 This collection of nine are marvelously quirky, ironic, but, most of all, poignant stories. McCracken paints these characters with such rich detail that it feels as if we must know them, after all—so immersed in their lives do we become in just a few pages.

Moore, Lorrie. *Bark*

FIC MOO

2014 Here are eight stories in Moore's latest collection; these stories are laugh-out-loud funny, as well as full of pithy commentary on contemporary life and politics. Here, they are divorcées. They have teenagers. They've variously tried and failed at dating, holding down jobs, being kind, or being sane. Perhaps that accounts for the ever-present sting of sadness in the book: relationships don't fare well (with one slightly desperate exception), and the sly wisdom of Moore's meditations on time will get under your skin like a splinter.

Munro, Alice. *Family Furnishings: Selected Stories*

1995-2014

FIC MUN

In reading these stories what is refreshingly obvious is that Munro has retained all the distinctive characteristics and qualities that set her fiction apart from the outset, including her apparently effortless but actually word-perfect style, her use of family history to inform the contemporary domestic situations she so vividly employs in her stories and the purposeful elimination of nonessential detail to permit a novel's worth of substance to comfortably fit into a short story's confined space. What is new in recent stories is her more in-depth, autobiographical presentation, which adds further personal enrichment to her domestic dramas.

Oates, Joyce Carol. *Lovely, Dark, Deep: Stories*

FIC OAT

2014 What lurks in the woods is creepy and scary, but Oates ventures in deep and reports back in this collection of stories dealing with themes of mortality. The prolific Oates returns to short stories with this collection of 13 tales examining the reactions of humans confronting the final baby boomer frontier: death.

Russell, Karen. *Vampires in the Lemon Grove*

FIC RUS

2013 Award-winning author's latest short story collection blends whimsy and horror in equal measure. Her daringly inventive characters range from centuries-old vampires with surprisingly touching human desires, to a former U.S. president now reincarnated as a horse. Russell's dry humor and keen eye for relatable emotional experiences will lure readers deeply into these surreal vignettes.

Saunders, George. *Tenth of December: Stories*

FIC SAU

2013 Literature that takes the sort of chances that Saunders does is rarely as much fun as his is. Even when he is subverting convention, letting the reader know throughout that there is an authorial presence pulling the strings, that these characters and their lives don't exist beyond words, he seduces the reader with his warmth, humor and storytelling command. And these are very much stories of these times, filled with economic struggles and class envy, with war and its effects, with drugs that serve as a substitute for deeper emotions (like love).

Theroux, Paul. *Mr. Bones: Twenty stories*

FIC THE

2014 The 20 stories in the 30th work of fiction from Theroux grapple with the all-too-human desire for ownership—of art, of people, of places, even of stories themselves. Through his worldly male narrators, Theroux explores matters of taste and the compulsion to ruin a possession to mark it as your own. Even when the characters are not wealthy collectors or Andrew Wyeth protégés, they're often interested in art in some way.