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John Updike's Of the Farm: Novel of Mother-Son Relationship

By Dr. S.M.R. Azam & Istuak Ahmad

J.P. University

Abstract- Since John Updike (1932-2009) is an interpreter of the spiritual hollowness of contemporary America and gives a structure to the great American chaos through his novels especially Of the Farm, one hopes that his books are the source of inspiration for generations to come. Like all the great writers of the world, Updike meditates on common place but elemental themes, and magnifies, transmutes and patterns them into a paradigm of life, and turn into enduring works of art. Updike, like Melville and Norman Mailer, began writing fiction in his mid-twenties. Melville was led to withdraw into silence because of the hostile criticism meted out to his books. The same thing happened to Updike as a novelist and his works. It is not that Updike's novels have not been disparagingly dismissed and out rightly rejected. But at the same time they have also received high critical commendation that has given him impulse and encouragement to produce book after book, almost over sixty in number in fifty years. In his novel, Of the Farm (1965), Updike brings to the foreground a mother-son relationship through which the theme of freedom, not only personal freedom but also the recognition of privilege of others, is subtly explored.

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John Updike's Of the Farm: Novel of Mother-Son Relationship

Dr. S.M.R. Azam [α] & Istuak Ahmad [σ]

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I. Introduction

The novel *Of the Farm* recounts a weekend visit by Joey Robinson, the hero of the novel, along with his new wife, Peggy and her eleven years old son, Richard, to the fallow farm of his recently widowed mother, Mrs. Robinson, who alone looks after it. The purpose of Joey's visit is to get his new wife acquainted with his mother and to cut the weeds that have grown over the farm lest a heavy fine has to be paid by him. The first day passes off peacefully. They eat dinner and go to bed. The next day Joey mows the field as his mother is too old and ill to do it herself. The following day Joey and his mother go to Church where the young minister delivers a sermon about Adam and Eve. On the way home, Joey's mother suffers a heart-seizure. She refuses hospitalization because she is not ready to leave her Farm. On his mother's insistence, though he wants to stay, Joey leaves with his new family.

The weekend is difficult for Joey. Tempers flare. Robinson and Peggy jostle with each other to gain control over Joey who feels torn apart the same way as he found his boyish loyalties fluttering "bewildered between my mother and my wife [Joan, ex-wife], between whom unaccountably there was disharmony" (19). The rift between Robinson and Joan led to the end of his first marriage. The intense rivalry between Robinson and Peggy seems to threaten his second marriage. In such a difficult situation Joey is forced to take stock of his self, of his past and present, and of his need to be free in the present.

Like Peter, Joey is an artist with a colorful sensuous imagination but not a successful one. Joey's mother had wanted him to be a poet like Wordsworth and had sent him to Harvard because of its impressive record in producing great poets. But he has failed to fulfill his mother's ambition. He even married Joan in the hope of becoming a poet because in her he perceived the space to be a poet:

> I think I married Joan because, when I first saw her wheeling her bicycle through the autumnal dusk of the Yard, She suggested, remote and lithe and inward, the girl of *The Solitary Reaper* and, close-up, seemed a cool Lucy whose death might give me cause to sing. (98)

But Joey's hope remained unrealized because his first marriage ended in divorce. The hope further dwindled with his marriage to Peggy who is just the opposite of Joan: earthly and outward. In leaving Joan, he feels that he has put his life out of joints although Joann never made him happy. However, Joey's failure as a poet may be compared to that of his deceased father: "My father had cared about knives and tools and might have been a good craftsman had he not been expected, like me, to work with intangibles" (97). Joey is now a failed poet and works as an advertising executive in New York. In Robinson's view, Joey's is a prostitute's job.

Thus, whereas Peter revealed the possibility of art as affirmation and possible salvation, Joey does not extend this assertion. In contrast to *The Centaur,* the prime focus of *Of the Farm* is not on art, though Joey, like Peter, travels among images which recur to him as refracted. In other words, *Of the Farm* is concerned with man's relationship to his family. However, since Joey is the narrator of the novel as Peter is that of *The Centaur*, the motif of art is not altogether insignificant. G.W. Hunt notes the vital significance of the art-motif in the novel:

> Admittedly, Art is not quite so apparent a motif as in Updike's other fiction. However, it is important to be

Author α: Professor Department of English J.P. University, Chapra, Bihar, India.
Author σ: Research Scholar Department of English J.P. University, Chapra, Bihar, India. e-mail: ishtiyaqefl@gmail.com

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> aware that this story is told by Joey, the failed poet, and only from his perspective. It is only Joey who shapes the story: his mythic view-point overreaches and encloses the other competing myths offered throughout the novel. Joey reveals that he faces with the three-fold challenge as to the full meaning of the word "husband." Now divorced from his boyhood farm and his first wife, he must face all the many things that the farm represents and also be the "helpmate" to his second wife if he is to define his manhood. The completed story will represent another husbandry—"the husbandry of language," that duty the minister will mention, so the very act of composing his story will be an event of self-discovery, that more subtle act of husbandry. (Hunt 86)

In fact, the narration allows Joey to know himself who he is and what his real self is, and at the same time it enables him to move towards an insight into the depths of truth, as he asserts: "All misconceptions are themselves data which have the minimal truth of existing in at least one mind. Truth, my work had taught me, is not something static, a mountain-top that statements approximate like successive assaults of frostbitten climbers. Rather, the truth is constantly being formed by the solidification of illusions. In New York, I work among men whose fallacies are next year worn everywhere, like the new style of shoes" (120). The movement towards this ability is a movement towards maturity, towards a better and fuller understanding of human existence. The arrival at truth indeed serves the purpose of art. As the novel progresses, the mist clears, and Joey can see clearly.

When Joey enters his mother's home, he feels himself in an alien environment. He notices that the house is too full of him and he has been memorialized by his past feelings. The feeling of lifelessness tells upon him:

> Each time I returned I more strongly resented how much of myself was already here. Pictures of me . . . were propped up and hung throughout the living room . . . I was so abundantly memorialized it seemed I must be dead. (17)

Time and again Joey experiences this kind of feeling whenever he looks at objects belonging to him safely preserved by his mother. Robinson's house is a shrine, but the votive implements of the shrine are devoid of vigor and substance. The smell Joey gets there is not of youth but dust. He wants the freedom to get away from the feeling of fossilization when he is already full of vivacity in his early middle age.

Joey's mother dominates him, and wants to possess him, yet keeps him at some distance. That Robinson is a dominating lady by nature becomes evident from her physical appearance. She dresses in a man's sweater and, by implication, assumes the role traditionally assigned to the male. Years before, she moved her father, her husband and her son, all unwilling, to the farm where she still lives. Joey resents Robinson's ego-centric independence of man, but he does not get liberation from his mother's influence. He further resents being the center of a fabulous counter system that his mother swept forward in contrast to his father who indulged in self-denial. When his mother is skeptical of his wisdom in choosing Peggy as his second wife because, in Robinson's opinion, Peggy has turned Joey into a "grey-haired namby-pamby," he asks his mother to let him see for himself and not to ruin his second marriage as she did the first. Joey's desire for self-independence appears more vehemently when he blurts out: "I'm thirty-five, and I don't see that old lady has to have such a hold on me. It's ridiculous. It's degrading" (43)

Thus Joey, a sensitive man, runs the danger of being emasculated at the hands of his mother as it happened with his father. "She had undervalued and destroyed his father, had been inadequately a woman to him, had brought him to the farm which was, in fact, her giant lover, and had thus warped the sense of masculine within her, her son" (120). Though Joey realizes the gravity of the situation, he does not have enough guts to break the familial bonds. He says that he wanted to flee, but some thread—the courtesy of estrangement, a child's habit of waiting for permission—held him fast. He feels captive within his mother's sense of truth, in which father, his grandfather and his ex-wife are among the ghosts allowed to walk.

For Robinson, it is not the love of the son which is most important but the love of the farm which means everything to her. She wants a guarantee from his son that he will keep the farm, even after she dies if he sells it; she feels that it would be a betrayal. For Robinson, the farm is a people's sanctuary where people can come and let their corners rub off, and try to be round again. But Joey dislikes his mother for devoting her innermost thoughts not to him but her farm. For this reason, he scorns her death. Further, Robinson is all for Nature. In opposition to his mother, Joey has no love for Nature as he calls it stupid, and for his mother's saga of the farm. The farm has always depressed him, giving him hay-fever. Early on, he procured a driver's license and made his escape to New York, his city of the future.

However, Joey wants to get rid of the past because it torments him. When he notices the pictures of his first wife and their children on the house walls, his heart fills with guilt. He wants to smash the pictures, but his mother does not allow him to do so. Robinson worsens the situation for Joey by often leading the conversation toward the rejected wife and her children. She even speaks sympathetically of Joan and reminisces about her grandchildren. The memories of Joan and his children haunt him so much that they repeatedly come to him in his dreams. And he dreads

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dreaming of them. He holds his mother partly responsible for the break-up of the marriage. Robinson disliked Joan. Joey accuses his mother of having made him dislike Joan.

If Robinson was unsympathetic to Joey's first wife, she is none too affectionate to his wife, Peggy. She bluntly criticized Peggy and calls her stupid and vulgar. Robinson is scornful of Peggy's expensive taste because Peggy will financially drain Joey and consequently he will not be able to send his mother a small cheque. Robinson fears that after her death Peggy will force Joey to sell the farm to support her costly habits. His mother evokes the feeling of resentment in Joey against Peggy. He finds truth in his mother's observation that he made a mistake in divorcing Joan and marrying Peggy. He admits to his mother that Peggy is stupid and vulgar. Such is the smothering influence of Robinson over her son. But Joey does not leave Peggy. He clings to her because she is willing to let him be the man. He is well aware that his mother will not let him be the man. Therefore, he does not want to muff the chance of fulfillment of his role as a man, which can only be realized through the world of Peggy, that is, the world of sex. As Peter learned the life-giving potential from Penny in *The Centaur*, so does Joey from Peggy, and as Peter experienced his artistry through Penny, Joey experiences his freedom through Peggy:

> My wife is wide, wide-hipped and long-waisted, and, surveyed from above, gives an impression of terrain, of a wealthy whose ownership imposes upon my own body a sweet strain of extension; entered, she yields a variety of landscapes, seeming now a snowy rolling perspective of bursting cotton bolls seen through the Negro arabesques of a fancywork wrought-iron balcony… over all, like sky withdrawn and cool, hangs – hover, stands, is –is the sense of her consciousness, of her composure, of a not-committal witnessing that preserves me from claustrophobia through and descent however deep. In never felt this in Joan, this sky. I felt in danger of smothering in her. She seemed, like me, an adventurer helpless in dark realms upon which light, congested, could burst only with a convulsion. The tortuous trip could be undertaken only after much preparation, and then there was a mystic crawling by no means certain of issues. Whereas with Peggy I skim, I glide, I am free, and this freedom, once tasted, lightly illicitly, became as indispensable as oxygen to me, the fuel of a pull more serious than that of gravity. (44)

Significantly, Joey perceives Peggy, not his mother's farm, as his "field" (55). He finds a savior in Peggy. Moreover, Joey discerns in Peggy the instinct of criticism which is more suited to his temperament though he is sensitive at the same time. His first wife, though beautiful and graceful, was meek, shy and apprehensive. But Peggy is tough and never defensive. She fights her way through. She bitterly criticizes Joey for not standing up to anything and for always defending his mother. Robinson's accusation daunts her that she has turned Joey into a grotesque man. She hits back Robinson by reappraising Robinson's marriage. Robinson used to get furious at Joan's suggestion of washing the dishes the other way, but she is docile before Peggy and carries dishes to her like an invalid when Peggy takes the position at the sink. Robinson is attracted to Peggy's son, Richard, and wants him to drive the tractor. But Peggy does not care for Robinson's wish. Richard is not permitted because Peggy does not want to expose him to Robinson's neurotic world. In other words, Peggy does not want Richard to become another Joey—effeminate and spineless. When the altercation between Peggy and Robinson reaches its height, and Peggy declares her intention of quitting the farm immediately, Joey appreciates her stand and comments: "If Joan had ever offered to pack I might still be married to her" (106). It is Peggy's strength and assertiveness that Joey likes most, for, the realization of his manhood is possible only through her.

The difference between Robinson and Peggy is obvious. Robinson wants to posses Joey whereas Peggy wants to be possessed by Joey. Peggy's desire to be possessed also brings out the difference between the two men: between her former husband Dean Macabe and her present husband Joey. Macabe never made her feel like a woman. He was timid and only read books. He took Peggy as a burden. But Joey makes her feel different by behaving so unlike Macabe. Joey acts as though he owns her. This thing he does not do deliberately but naturally and effortlessly. To Peggy, this very ability of Joey is wonderful and overwhelming. When Joey tells her that he happens to be next to her in her bed, she rejects his notion of love and states the following which beautifully sums up Joey: "No, she said, that makes me a whore and it's really you, only you that lets me be a loving woman, it's wonderful" (84).

Peggy is a prized possession to Joey who is keen to display his wealth to the world, and particularly to his mother who is quite oblivious to his accomplishment. For this reason, he does not want to leave Peggy. When he is away in the market, he has a premonition that some cruel hand might take her away from him, and he will have nothing but "this present, this grim echo of my mother… this acreage of brightly shoddy goods, this sordid plenty" (77). He burns to return to Peggy immediately to protect his wealth. Thus Peggy promises to fulfill his need to be free in the present from "this sordid plenty." Joey also discerns another role of Peggy in becoming his wife, and that role is that "she had undertaken, with me, the burden of mothering my mother, of accommodating herself to the warps of that enclosing spirit" (121).

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Joey walks between the worlds of two mythologies – one of his mother and the other of his wife. He describes his mother's mythology as follows:

> My mother within the mythology she had made of her life was like a mathematician who, having decreed certain severely limited assumption, perform feats of warping and circumvention and paradoxical linkage that an outside observer, unrestricted to the plane of their logic, would find irksomely arbitrary. And, with the death of my father and my divorce of Joan, there was no inside observer left but myself, and the adoring dogs. (31)

When Peggy accuses Robinson of neglecting her husband, and Robinson refutes by calling it liberation, Joey perceives Peggy's mythology as follows:

> I saw that my mother's describing as a gift her failure to pose my father… had touched the sore point within [Peggy] around which revolved her own mythology, of women giving themselves to men, of men in returning women a reason to live. (31)

It is difficult for a sensitive man like Joey to fit in both the world simultaneously without disrupting either. Charles Samuels is of the view that "Joey can only stand of his own if he frees himself from the figure he cuts in both their myth is" (Samuels 24).

However, Joey does not become free by his effort. It is his mother who gives him freedom. At the end of the novel, she realizes that she never had Joey. When she returns from the Church, she has a heart attack. Sick, with death looming largely over her, she insists that her son should go back to New York. Though he is reluctant on account of her illness, he, however, leaves, accepting his mother's offer. Thus she releases her son from her bondage.

In reply to Peggy's question whether one can give freedom to others, Robinson ascribes it to the act of God and then asserts that one can surely give by not denying it which comes to the same thing – the act of God. She does exactly what she pronounces. She resigns herself to her condition and accepts the inevitable fact of her oncoming death. In allowing her son to leave her and her farm and live in happy unison with his wife, she recognizes the need of the freedom of others to which the epigraph of the novel, taken from Sartre, alludes:

> Consequently, when, in all honesty, I've recognized that man is a being in whom existence precedes essence, that he is a free being who, in various circumstances, can want only his freedom, I have at the same time recognized that I can want the freedom of others.

Robinson also frees Peggy from her disapproval and misconception about her. She finally accepts Peggy as she tells Joey that Peggy suits his style. Both Robinson and Peggy agree that Joey is a good boy. And, before going away Joey relieves his mother's worry about his accusation regarding her devaluation of his father. Joey also makes it clear to his mother that she and the farm are not a burden to him and makes the promise not to sell the farm even after her death. He assuages his mother's aggrieved feelings by accepting the farm as "ours," thus taking responsibility for it.

However, Joey's withdrawal from his mother's world is reminiscent of Caldwell's from his wife's in *The Centaur*: a withdrawal from the feminine, delicate and neurotic world. This withdrawal for Joey might not be a flight towards a spiritual condition, as it was with Caldwell, but surely towards a more masculine and potent world where Peggy is ready to allow him to enter his manhood.

The young minister points out in his sermon that in reaching out to Eve, Adam committed an act of faith. So does Joey in reaching out to Peggy. Thus in this novel also, as in Updike's other fictions, sex, apart from being the measure of human behavior and social interaction, is an integral part of religion. From this point of view, the minister's sermon becomes quite significant. For, it unifies Updike's major preoccupations—Sex, Religion, and Art—in the same manner in which the tree metaphor in *The Centaur* united those three elements together. G.H Hunt also favors this view:

> The minister's sermon embraces the novel's major themes and is central in understanding its unity of tone and texture. Its text from Genesis and the subsequent commentary also fuse those three secret Things: Religion by way of the right order of Nature and Creation, Sex in its description of the creation of Eve and the resultant import for the mystery of male-female relations; and Art in that the creation reveals God's handiwork whereas man's handiwork is found in his toiling together with others and in the husbandry of languages. (Hunt 86)

However, the minister's sermon touches upon the two most important aspects of religion: righteo-usness and kindness, and both are infinite. Righteousness comes from a belief in God, and no belief is needed for kindness as it is implicit throughout God's creation, and it is a manifestation of man's role in the scheme of things. This novel is deeply concerned with the concept of kindness as all the characters show togetherness to the earth of which "the farm" is an appropriate symbol. In giving freedom to others, they do display kindness. In Updike's words, "a quarter of scattered survivors [left from the world of *The Centaur*] group within their voices toward cohesion and seek to give each other the stern blessing of freedom mentioned in the epigraph from Sartre" (*Picked-up Pieces* 85). In fact, *Of the Farm* is not so much concerned with men's deepest need for the immortality of the soul, as the previous three novels are, because the fulfillment of

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such a need demands the shedding of the mundane which is not possible on account of the character's rootedness in the earth. Hence, Updike points out, in *Of the Farm* "the mythical has fled the ethical" (ibid 85).

In the novel, however, it is only Robinson who makes a forthright confession of God. But belief has nothing to do with the concept of righteousness. As she believes in what she sees and touches, she tries to visualize God in the same manner in which Eccles, the Clergyman, tried to do in *Rabbit, Run*: regarding concrete images. That is to say, for Robinson, only the tangible is real. In reply to Richard's query whether she believes in God, She asserts that she sees and touches God on this very farm. She did not know whether she would have believed in God if she had lived in New York, away from her farm which represents her past and her source of spiritual strength. But, in reality, "her religiosity," as Joey perceives, "is unaccompanied by belief" (126). She waves away God and worships her farm. Thus her deep devotion is not directed towards God but her giant lover—farm. She uses Biblical language but without sincerity. Joey has no taste for such a kind of religion which depends on the visual. Updike's protagonists believe in the invisible, asserting the primacy of the instinctive faith over reason.

Since Joey is at the center of the novel, one presumes that he will disclose his faith openly, like his predecessors—Hook, Rabbit and Caldwell. But Joey is not so outspoken on the subject of faith and religion as he is pained to find the Bible neglected in a dust-laden leathery case in the junk on his mother's book-shelf. He is also pained to discover the non-Christianity of the children and feels guilty of not having taught Richard a good night prayer as he taught his children. He goes to the Church to regather himself and to renew his faith. Though he has not attended the Sunday service for quite a long time, the responses to the minister's sermon come to his lips inevitably. He is highly impressed by the minister's brilliant sermon, and "excellent" is the compliment he gives him. Joey's mother is skeptical of the minister's sincerity and interprets the sermon as an excuse for some woman's pain. As this forms part of his mother's mythology for which he has no real liking, he changes the subject.

Nevertheless, in metaphorically capturing Peggy as the "field," Joey performs the husbandry of language, "the fencing in of field." In *Rabbit, Run,* Rabbit, paradoxically, faced the responsibility by running from it. Likewise, Joey, in typing himself to Peggy, that is, to sex or earth, faces responsibility and achieves his freedom. In turning to Peggy, Joey comes close to what the minister refers to in his sermon:

> Man is the rougher and more ambitious artifact; woman the finer and more efficient. She was fashioned, observe, soon after God had 'formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air' and his hand, still turning to those same rhythms, imparted to Woman a creaturely shapeliness. A rib is rounded. Man, with Woman's creation, became confused as to where to turn. With one half of his being be turns towards her, his rib, as if into himself, into the visceral and nostalgic warmth wherein his tensions find resolution in dissolution. With his other half he gazes outwards, towards God, along the straight line of infinity. He seeks to solve the riddle of his death. Eve does not. In a sense she does not know death. Her very name, Hava means 'living'. Her motherhood answers concretely what men would answer abstractly? But as Christians we know there is no abstract answer, there is no answer whatsoever apart from the concrete reality of Christ. (135-36)

In acknowledging Peggy, Joey acknowledges the life-instinct, that is, Eros. In doing so, he attains maturity which, according to Freud consists in substituting a reality principle for the comfort and discomfort of all illusion, and a pleasure principle, taking sexual fulfillment as its paradigm, as the goal of life. But Joey's participation in religion, psychologically speaking, is one means of avoiding maturity. According to Freud, religion is the projection of the father with his prohibitions and commands cosmic dimensions. Through religion, man can insure for himself the security of childhood in adult life and to prolong its infancy throughout his life. In the novel, the house is alive with the presence of Joey's dead father. Joey listens for his father's footsteps to scuff on the porch. He puts on his father's old dungarees to mow and uses his father's razor, revealing his nostalgia for the father. Joey's willingness in going to the Church comes close to the psychological view of religion, as he states the following: "Like, I suppose, my father, the deacon, I needed to test my own existence against the fact of their faces . . . and to regather myself in a vacant hour" (132).

As it appears from above, the novel has a yes-no quality which is totally in consonance with Updike's theory of dialectics—a process in which the problems are just stated as they are but left unresolved. However, it also becomes clear that Joey is an uneasy contemporary unable to harmonize his circumstance as there is no frontier for him, in an interview; Updike faces the following question:

> In *of the Farm* you speak of reality as nothing more than jelling of illusion, one of the illusions that troubles your hero in that book concerns the past, the way of life, of which the emblem is the farm in the title. He is an uneasy contemporary, who hasn't made peace with the kind of life he finds himself living in, isn't he? (Gado 104)

Updike's answer to this question throws ample light on the malaise that Joey faces within the present:

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> It's another case, I suppose, of a man discovering that all the alternatives are unattractive.
>
> It may be heresy to say that his frontier is gone, but really it is. Frontiers of all kinds have closed. And this makes for a difficult situation for America because we have seen, and are a frontier—oriented country. Part of the agony of the United States is that it was founded to be better than anywhere else on earth. It was a kind of heaven. This concept is still very much on the nation's mind. At the same time, Americans are placed in an invidious position by the European countries feeling superior and smug. This country makes very severe demands upon itself in attempting to measure up to the mission which it conceives itself as having. (ibid 104)

In the light of Updike's above-quoted remarks, Joey appears to be a new addition to Updike stock of characters a complex and complicated being with a variety of responses, reactions, nuances which make him utterly difficult to be properly understood. However, Joey is also a reincarnation of Rabbit and Peter: hypersensitive, unstable, given to sex and nostalgia, suffering from the feelings of guilt.

However, various critics have described *Of the Farm* as a sequel to *The Centaur*. Updike's statement also reinforces this view: "Threads connect it to *The Centaur* the farm is the same, and the father, even to his name, George seems much the same in both books . . . in a sense this novella is *The Centaur* after the centaur has died; . . . " (*Picked-up Pieces* 83) Nevertheless, *Of the Farm* also approximates to Updike's statement that his every novel is a departure from the other. For the first time, it presents a wholly religious interpretation of sex through the story of Eve's creation and provides a sound justification for the use of sex not only in this novel but also in Updike's other fiction. From sex, *Of the Farm* is Updike's thesis statement.

However, Updike has also said that he is not certain of his notice of a novel's form. In this connection, Robert Detweiler's description of the shape of the novel as "X" seems most appropriate. "X" defines the undefinable quality of the novel as it is an integer and unknown quantity in mathematics. Simultaneously, it is also a fitting symbol of sex – the two legs crossing over each other, and from the point of intersection it becomes oval-shaped, suggestive of "living" as one is aware of Peggy's period which is symbolic of the cyclic movement of life. Detweiler calls the book the best integrated of Updike's first four novels. Updike's observations about *Of the Farm* reveal that this novel is a brilliant specimen of his craftsmanship:

> Like a short story, it has a continuous action, a narrow setting, a small cast. I thought of it as a chamber music, containing only four voices—the various ghosts in it do not speak, and the minister's sermon, you will notices; is delivered in close paraphrase, without the benefit of question marks. The voices like instruments echo each other's phrases and themes, take turns dominating, embark on brief narrative solos, and recombine in argument or harmony. The underlying thematic transaction, as I conceived it, was the mutual forgiveness of mother and son, the acceptance of each other's guilt in taking what they had wanted, to the discomfort, respectively, of the dead father and the divorced wife. (ibid 83)

However, in his fiction, Updike has not so far used sex as a temptation leading Man to his consequent Fall of which Adam is an archetypal symbol. It is only in *Of the Farm* that one has just a momentary glimpse of that Fall, as Robinson enrolls in her mythology. Joey's fall is resulting from his temptation of Peggy. Updike's comment on the novel's title seems to strengthen the above point. His comment indicates that he intended to mean that the book was about the farm and that the people in it belonged to the farm, were of the earth, earthy, mortal, fallen.

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