

## Quest For Pastoralism In Anti –Pastoral Society

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**Abstract:** The modern age is marked by anxiety, disgust, frustration, disillusionment, competition and cold war. It has been regarded as an age of interrogation and questioning which has proved the way for many inquisitive minds. Sweeping changes in every field, affected the mode of thinking itself as a result of which new ideas came in to being. The impressions of the age were given vent to in many fields, literature being one of them. The age deprived of values gave no room to serious thinking. According Yeats, it is a world in which, “the best lack conviction while the worst are full of passionate intensity” Updike is considered to be orthodox in his beliefs. He is adapted to the suburban world of man’s relationship to man and man relationship to God. Updike has himself said that the central theme of his work is meant to be a moral dilemma. Taken as a whole, the themes in his stories extend over a wide variety of subjects. It explores human experiences and the various allurements of the world. In this study the author draws about changes: changes in individual and families and society; it is a book which reveals changes in author’s course.

**Keywords:** *Disillusionment, Conviction, Kinship, Primitive Man, Values*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Land plays a vital role in most of the American Novels. Land brings forth human passion, love and reality which lives everlasting. The eastern land which is the place of action in *Of the Farm* is not the open country of Nebraska or New Mexico. It is the same compact Pennsylvania country side, which is the settling for the Olinger stories. It is not a land from which man must wrest his existence, but a hallow land of no particular use, in danger of being encroached by housing developments for suburban living. Like the Indian country of the south west this Pennsylvania Dutch country is permeated with presence. It emanates a sense of Transcendence and wholeness, out of its integration with the Pennsylvania sky, which an older generation could substitute for belief in god, but with which a younger generation can hardly communicate.

*Of The Farm* is Updike’s subtlest piece of autobiographical fiction. In some ways it relates to the first three of Updike’s novels and earliest short stories. It is a book about changes: changes in individual and families and society; it is a book which reveals changes in author’s course. It is one of those works, which to the critic written adequate perspective suggests a lapse of talents or even a total absence of creative purpose of the author.

*Of The Farm* presents an action that occurs over a week end in the life of thirty five year old Joey Robison. Since no date is specified, one assumes that the events take place in and near 1965. The protagonist is Joey Robison, advertising consultant who has smothered poetic aspiration and visit his widowed mother over a weekend on her eastern Pennsylvania farm. In his company are his recently acquired second wife Peggy and her eleven year old son Richard.

The Robison’s moved from Olinger to the farm in the country because of the strong willed mother. Father George who was a high school science teacher was against this idea. Joey is hypersensitive, unstable and dominated by his mother. He suffers the resultant sex security complication with his women. Joey, a Harvard graduate is from a respectable middle class. The main purpose of the visit is to give joey’s ailing mother and his new wife peggy a chance to know each other better. But the weekend is not very successful. The women are alternatively hostile and over friendly at times. They are defensive in their attitudes towards Joey and suspicious of his loyalties. Joey himself has to tangle not only with the females but also with the ghost of his dead father and his first wife Joan and their three children. The old familiar surroundings and photographs in the farm released Joey’s suppressed feelings of remorse guilt.

Joey mows the overgrown field. Since his mother has become too old to mow and the mother could understand her daughter in law. It happened with certain tense moments and joey is usually a fish with his wife and mother. On Sunday afternoon, the climax takes place when they went to attend Lutheran church service. Mrs. Robinson has a mild heart seizure on the way home but she recovers immediately. Ultimately Joey, Peggy and Richard leave for New York as plan in spite of her illness.

*Of The Farm*, taken out of the context of the novels which precede it and one, which at present flows it may leave one asking, and now what in the world is all about. In literary transition, it is essentially to bridge the gap between the old and new. The author wants to listen to the philosophy and to look again life before

subdivision to know once more the fierce love of the land, which was a hallmark of our forebears. He wants us to listen, one more time to a person who believed that living close to the soil meant living close to the god. It is also a novel about an American mother and about a generation rapidly disappearing.

Change is not only a theme in *Of the Farm*. It also introduces a change in the makeup of Updike's character. Joey Robinson reflects the social chaos in which he lives but he neither seeks nor is aware that he needs a way-out. He is a new kind of leading character in Updike's fiction. Updike's belief that ordinary relationship contains manifold complications, his mimetic emphasis makes his fiction peculiarly resistant to summary. His fiction offers a complex consideration of nostalgia and of man's relationship to his family. Of the farm is the most irreducible of his work.

Of the farm is a novel about people, very real people, who disregarding the needs of those to whom they have the closest ties, do whatever they please and vaguely wonder why they have bad dreams. The fact that the author scrutinizes the lives of his characters recognize them what they are and exhibits them as he finds them is the only indication that the search in Updike's fiction continues. Of the farm, the novel deals with the concept of pastoralism and antipastoralism in a new dimension, which reflect Updike's perspective about the old and new generation in America.

Joey is young American or atleast part of it. He represents the self-indulgence of new generation. In him one can see the habit of abundant lack of responsibility, preoccupation with sex can be identified. It is through joey and Updike illustrates the young modern who lacks pastoral feeling in free society and interprets all his selfish wishes as a need for freedom.

Joey Robinson by accepting the values of the modern world has effectively divorced himself from the world in which his mother Mrs. Robinson lives. According to Mrs. Robinson the farm has a living quality. She considers the farm as her sacrament, her means of communication with god, her handle on human wholeness; she reflects her own mythology about the kinship with land in the following lines:

If I couldn't see and touch him here on the farm, if I lived in New York City, I don't know if I'd believe or not. You see, that's why it's so important that the farm be kept. People will forget that there could be anything except stones and glass and subways.(55) But Joey's thoughts irritable turn to New York, against his mother's innate passion for the farm. He considers the farm as a trap. Despite his dislike for the farm, joey responds to his participation in nature with the breathlessness of primitive man as seen as the following lines:

I drank from the tin measuring cup that my mother had carelessly left on the bench one day and that under the consecration of time had become a fixture there. It's calibrated sides became at my lips the walls of a cave where my breathe rustled and cold well water swayed against my shut lids the blue sky pressed as red; I would gladly have drowned.(52)Joey responds to beauty as long as it makes no demands on him. He is not as emancipated like his mother's mythology towards the sacristy of land. Updike creates Mrs. Robinson complete with eccentricities and virtues. Mrs. Robinson great affinity and sacred love for the land helps her to resist the pressures of creeping sub urbanism and protect her farm. Mrs. Robinson further explains that all she ever wanted in life were a horse when she was a child, and when she becomes an adult, her son and her farm as expressed in the following lines:

I've really wanted only two-no, three things in my life. The first thing I wanted was a horse, and my father got it for me, and then I couldn't keep it when we moved away. The next two things I really wanted were my son and my farm, and George let me have both.(27) According to Mrs. Robinson, she considers the farm and her son equally. She showers equal love in farm as well as in her son. In her opinion, living close to the soil and at a distance from other people, being able to touch god in nature is essential to man's wholeness. She does not believe but she reveals the kind of faith which needs only nature's proximity to sustain it. Hence, she considers life at farm as superior that at country side.

Living in the air conditioned city where the season are all the same. Here on my farm every week is different, every day is a surprise, new faces in the fields the birds say different things, and nothing repeats. Nature never repeats; this august evening has never been before and it will never be again.(82) According to Mrs. Robinson man soil are closely related. Showing no evidence of belief in man's life after death, she nevertheless associates man's life with the earth's eternity. She refuses to leave the farm because of her wish to become one with earth which never dies.

Mrs. Robinson emphatically expresses her disregard to leave the farm because of her kinship with land. Nature plays a significant role in influencing Mrs. Robinson's life. The farm becomes an indispensable part of Mrs. Robinson's life. Hence, she imposes her view on her son Joey and his wife Peggy against their interest towards the farm. Her love towards the farm makes her to relate to Richard it as a people sanctuary; she strongly condemns Peggy to Joey, who has keen interest in selling the land. Money can be had from the land, but Joey seems to be in no hurry to sell the farm. As he like possessing women, he likes possessing the land and considers the lands natural beauty or its real potential. According to Joey owing land is related to possessing sex, to him love of wife and children meant little and also an occasional thing. Joey did not have any kinship with land like his mother Mrs. Robinson; even he was not ready to change his intensions of going back to New

York in spite of his mother's illness The most significant and powerful reminder of his past life in the house is the type of conversation that occur in a weekend. Talk in our house was a continuum sensitive at all points of past and present and tirelessly harking back and readjusting itself, as if seeking some state of equilibrium finally free of irritation. In that atmosphere Joey feels himself being pulled into the mythology of his mother about the meaning of her life and for the kind of life that she wants joey himself to remember and continue. He understands the complexities of her thinking.

As primitive worshippers invest the indifferent universe with pointed intensions, so my mother superstitiously read in to the animate world, including infants and dogs, a richness of motive that could hardly be there though like believers everywhere, she had a way a making her environment supply corroboration. (90) Joey's mother reminisces about the experience that he and his first wife shared on the farm. Updike creates Mrs. Robinson complete with eccentricities and virtues of the farm seem to complete a trilogy by painting portraits of novelist mother. Typical of her inconsistencies and of advanced age, she has been vicious to Joey's infant son, reading motives into his innocent behavior, but visits intelligently and gently with joey's stepson. She is cruel to her daughter in law Peggy, but anxious not to burden her son with her illness and death. Thus, she is vigorously unique, witty and subtle.

She can manipulate a conversation to reveal the weakness of other but can turn off the switch before exposing herself. Her's is a portrait revealing new shades of meaning each time when it is examined. She has deep insight and a sense of truth about others conduct, but she has convenient blindness regarding her complexities of life. The Robison's selfish concepts of personal freedom are symptom of errors of the past and cause of mistakes of the present. Mrs. Robinson can see freedom for other only through her own definition of freedom. Joey is not what his mother wished him to be. Similarly his mother too has not lived in the example of her parents. Mrs. Robinson has had the freedom to do what she wanted to do with her life. She is what she has willed herself to be. Freedom to her had not meant freedom from her husband or from responsibility to her son. It had meant freedom to live in her own farm independent of dogmas and social encumbrances.

Mrs. Robinson would leave to her children her faith and her devotion to nature. She would leave them the wisdom that crowns her age, but she knows that they will not accept it; the fulfillment that the land has given her and her contemporaries will not be understood by her son's generation. Thus, the tangible gift of god, the land will be ignored. Thus, Mrs. Robinson emphasizes her affinity towards farm and her ambition about Joey's life in her own view alone. Without any regard he discards his responsibilities to mother, wife and children. He wants to possess his wishes irrespective of his duties to the family and society. Thus, he discards the shackles of the past with which his mother tries to blind him.

Joey's communion with nature is transformed into communion with his wife. He considers the farm as a trap and a menace to his marriage. He also appreciates the farm as a symbol of his other's freedom, of the freedom that she has given him and of their common heritage. Joey reflects his passion towards his wife in terms of possession of earth. According to him, Peggy brings joy to his existence on the farm.

Surveyed from above, gives an impression of terrain, of a wealth whose ownership imposes upon my own body a sweet strain of extension; entered she yields a variety of land scapers overall like a sky, with drawn and cool, hangshovers, stands is is the sense of her consciousness, of her composure, of a non-committal witness in that preserves me from claustrophobia through any decent however deep.(39) To Joey, everything in Peggy's presence has great influence likes dream and reflection redemption and wholeness. Joey's communion with nature which transforms into communion with Peggy is well said in the following lines,

Black eyed susans, daisy fleabane. Toad flax...Each flower of which was like a tiny dancer, leaping. Legs together scudded past the tractor wheels stretched scatterings of flowers moved in a piece, like the heavens, constellated by my wheels revolution, on my right; and lay as drying fodder on my left, midges existed in stationary clouds that agitated my interruption... the tractor body was flecked with foam and I, rocked back and forth on the iron seat shaped like a woman's hips, alone in nature as hidden under the glaring sky as at midnight... discovered in myself a swelling which I idly permitted to stand thinking of Peggy. My wife is a field.(47)

In identifying Peggy with a field joey has staked out his property, he has tied himself to earth. In reality he is unable to harmonize his newly found love for the farm with his love for Peggy. Joey expresses his instability in the following words. I think of myself as a weak man; one forms my weakness takes is to want other people to know what they can and cannot have. I can tolerate only to a limited degree the pressure of the unspoken.(49)

The selfish love that exists between Joey and Peggy reflects the tends of new generation. Her selfish possession to act on her own wish continues even with her son Richard is life. When, Mr. Robinson expresses her innate love and affection towards Richard, she disregards her advice to train him to help her in the farm. She dislikes her idea and finally complaints that she didn't want Richard to become another Joey. He spends no time on introspection. Neither had he looked out at the world or he would see his mother, his children perhaps even his children's mother. Thus, the story can be recognized as Updike story not as Joey Robinson. Joey considers

the farm as numinous. When Peggy disrupts this vision with the practical suggestion that his mother need a trained nurse, he realizes that in reality he will be unable to harmonize his new love for farm with his love for Peggy.

Joey's thoughts irresistibly turn to New York, the city of his escape. Noncommittal about what he will do with the farm after her death; Joey pretends the weekend has changed nothing of the past. But Mrs. Robinson in her progress towards freedom didn't fail to perform her responsibilities. She proves to be a good mother in nurturing his son Joey Robinson. Similarly her kinship with land, love towards her son's welfare cannot be seen in Joey's definition of freedom. The allusion in the story signifies another concept of Updike about men's significant minuteness. According to him. Man "so small inside", so frog like, in a vast, dark dungeon on incomprehensibility should learn to balance all things in the cavern of space and time. Joey Robinson never questions his significance and concern for things outside himself. Thus, Joey exists as a man to satisfy his own lust without any responsibility.

Thus Updike represents the old generation of America through Mrs. Robinson. According to her, living close to soil means living close to God, through which one can see the pastoral feeling. This idea gets vanished in the new generation like Joey who represents younger generation without any pastoral feeling. They were ready to sell the farm without any bound ness to land to real estate developers for the sake of material possession. Updike reflects the prototype of American generation who wishes to do whatever they please in the name of freedom, by discarding their responsibilities and by exploiting even intimate human relationships. Each character like the common run of American masses develops passion for personal fulfillments in the name of freedom and those who does not have any binding with soil or nature. Thus Updike indicts the pursuit of material values under the façade of freedom without any pastoral feeling.

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