Chapter 5

TOWARDS THE END OF TIME
In an interview with Charles Thomas Samuels for Paris Review during the summer of 1967, Updike said about his art:

Domestic fierceness within the middle class, sex and death as riddles for the thinking animals, social existence as sacrifice, unexpected pleasures and rewards, corruption as a kind of evolution, these are some of the themes. My work is meditation, not pontification. . .I think of my books not as sermons or directives in a war of ideas but objects with different shapes and textures and the mysteriousness of anything that exists. My first thought about art. . .the artist brings something into the world that did not exist before, and that he does it without destroying something else. A kind of refutation of the conservation of the matter. That still seems to me its central magic, its core of joy. 

(\textit{The Art of Fiction}, 43)

Ian Hamilton says that Updike, as it has often been proclaimed, knows what it is like to be a day-to-day, commonplace American and knows it with good humour. Updike gets to parts of his country’s psyche that most high brow novelists can’t, or can’t be bothered to tune into. On the whole, and unashamedly, Updike quite likes being an American, and likes it not because America, the global power is something to be proud of but because America’s vast census of small, pitiable greed and woes is what he happens to wake up to every morning.

(\textit{Redeemable Bad Guy}, Vol. 20)

As stated in Champion Literary about Updike’s waking up to a land drifting away into swamp of sin, adultery, selfishness, obsession, capitalism, consumerism, vain competition with other nations, boastful superiority of being world’s first and greatest nuclear power, wavering faith and ultimate atheism, disrespect regarding all
relations, etc. Updike had dominated post-war realist fiction and it seems that the
prospect of his own death appeared backlit by the approaching millennium and on-
line predictions of the death of the novel. When a solipsist dies, after all, everything
goes with him. And no U.S. novelist has mapped the solipsist terrain better than
Updike. Updike’s big pre-occupation had always been with ‘sex and death’.

(Champion Literary, 1997)

Age is nevertheless the burden, this time, of his song. The title ‘End of Time’
may be that of the U.S.A. – the book is set in the third decade of the 21st century, 
after a devastating war with China has disassembled the great Republic, which
nobody seems to miss much. The al-mighty dollar has been replaced by a local script,
economic refugees are now sneaking into Mexico instead of out of it, sci-fi creatures
called metallobioforms roam loose in the shrubbery, devouring life like army-ants and
the independent country of Texas is busily taking over adjacent states or the ‘End of
the Time’ may be the end of earth’s time, as there are rumours of possible drastic
cosmic events. Or it may be the end of notion of linear time itself, as the protagonist’s
consciousness takes startling sideways leaps into the ancient past and the possible
future, into the land of what might have happened instead of what did. Or it may be
the personal time on earth of the protagonist himself, who becomes, in the course of
the narrative, by no means a well person.

In her review for the novel, Atwood counts that all the important things are
still in place – automobiles have roads to run upon, the electric lights work, FedEx is
operating and the mail and newspapers continue to be delivered, at least in semi-rural
Massachusetts, where the protagonist, Ben Turnbull, a 66 year old retired investment
advisor, can still thankfully play golf. His gradual disintegration is the novel’s
Set in New England, like many of Updike’s novels, *Towards the End of Time* portrays a world in which the Chinese and the Americans have attacked one another with nuclear weapons. The aftermath is shown through retired investment advisor, Ben Turnbull’s journal. Though the dollar and the central government are gone, life in Boston and the surrounding areas goes on, thanks to FedEx and other reputed entrepreneurs.

The book is divided into five parts, each beginning with letter ‘D’. After reading the novel, it turns out, in the light of this letter, that the major themes are none other than ‘Death’ and ‘Decay’. Other sub-themes which appear alongside are – the cycles of nature, the passage of time, reality and perception.

Updike had for years constructed protagonists who were basically all the same persons – Rabbit Angstrom, Dick Maple, Piet Hannema, Henry Bech, Rev. Tom Marshfield, Roger’s Version ‘Uncle Nunc’, Owen Mackenzie – who were clearly stand-in for the author himself. They always live either in Pennsylvania or New England, are unhappily married/divorced, but roughly Updike’s age. Always either the narrator or the point-of-view character, they all have the author’s astounding perceptual gifts; they all think and speak in the same effortlessly lush, synthetic way as Updike did. These characters are also always incorrigibly narcissistic, philandering, self-contemptuous, self-pitying and deeply alone, alone the way only a solipsist can be alone. They never belong to any sort of larger unit or community or cause. Though usually family men, they never really love anybody; and, though always heterosexual to the point of satyriasis, they especially don’t love women. The very world around them, as beautifully as they see and describe it, seems to exist for them only in so far as it evokes impressions and associations and emotions inside the self.
For the young educated adults of the 60s and 70s, the ultimate horror was the hypocritical conformity and repression of their own parents’ generation. But the young educated adults of the 90s, who were the children of the same impassioned infidelities and divorcees, got to watch all this brave new individualism; self-expression and sexual freedom deteriorate into the joyless and anomic self-indulgence of the ‘Me’ Generation. Today’s adults have different horrors, prominent among which is a peculiarly American loneliness: ‘the prospect of dying without once having loved something more than yourself’. Ben Turnbull is 66 years old here and is heading for just such a death, and he is terribly scared of it. Like so many of the Updike’s protagonists, Turnbull seems to be scared of all the wrong things.

Towards the End of Time is an ambitious departure into the futuristic-dystopian tradition of Aldous Huxley and the soft sci-fi. The year is A.D 2020, and the time has not been kind. A Sino-American missile war has killed millions and ended centralised governments as Americans know it. The dollar’s gone; Massachusetts now uses script named for Bill Weld. No taxes – local toughs now get protection money to protect the up-scale from other local toughs. AIDS has been cured, the mid-West is depopulated, and parts of Boston are bombed out and irradiated. An abandoned space-station hangs in the night sky like a junior moon. On the American earth, tiny but rapacious ‘metalllobioforms’ that have mutated from toxic waste and go around eating electricity and occasional human. Mexico has re-appropriated the U.S southwest and is threatening wholesale invasion even as thousands of young Americans are sneaking across the Rio Grenade in search of a better life. America, in short, is getting ready to die.

(Champion Literary, 1997)
In this way Updike carefully sketches an America which as a subordinate power, is under threat of other revengeful nations. As people are engrossed in establishing themselves once again and in other places than their native towns, retired people like Ben Turnbull, lead a seemingly relaxed life but domination of a second wife has reduced him to a command receiver, only with a few mean desires still ruling his heart. Most of the time, Turnbull describes flora and his brittle castrating second wife Gloria, the mention of whom is largely accompanied by the wild life trying to feed itself contentedly and devotedly, asking its share from nature’s gift. For Turnbull, the harmony of nature and its elements is getting disturbed due to Gloria’s aggression but he can do nothing about it.

Late November’s snow compels a bit carefree and bent-with-age Ben Turnbull to look for a ‘trace of childhood’ in himself. The search for innocence could not be completed as it was cutshort by ‘an awareness of being behind in ones chores and an unfocussed dread of time itself, and the speedily approaching death’.

*(End of Time, 03)*

The natural scenic beauty of snow resembling innocence and peace is just like a blessing which Ben knows he does not deserve or does not have time for. Even then, the appetite for more life and longer age does never cease. Ben, observing the things around him, gets the notion that the world does not only get worse with the ongoing time. If a being becomes worse with age, technological inventions become better. Younger generations come up with novel ideas to make cumbersome gadgets handy by a little change in their material and size. Ben, like Owen, in *Villages*, feels a bit inferior and weak before his second wife, Gloria, who is younger than him. Her dominating nature is reflected in every part of the house. She is the sole ruler of his garden, house and himself. To her, wild life is a nuisance which should not be
allowed to come near human beings. Her spirit of possession has caused her to forget ‘about the life which comes from heaven and has to go there’. She has smeared herself with the ‘blackness’ of her desires and has completely abandoned the notion that the transparency of the rain and whiteness of snow serve to remind us that our lives are always open to visitations’.

(Alice and Kenneth Hamilton, 1970)

Animals from nearby forests come to take their share from natural herbs and climbers but everytime they are shooed away. They are stoned, fired and abused and they end up disappearing into deep and dense nature feeling humiliated. Updike takes this instance from his conscience as had D. H. Lawrence taken it in his poem, *Snake*. Ben also mentions a number of large and small creatures with special emphasis on their primitive right to live on this earth and feed on its natural provisions and also in a justified manner. The way man has trespassed wild life property, no doubt, has disturbed the ecological balance, hurt animals’ dignity and humiliated the primitive rulers on this earth. Their pathos is sometimes reflected in their insolence that Ben sees in the eyes of a doe whose staring look exhibited anger and loss instead of ‘an alert wariness’:

Deer haunt our property here. Walking on our driveway, I sometimes see an especially bold doe in the woods – a big haunch animal the dull dun colour of a rabbit, holding motionless as if to blend into the shadows of the trees. The doe stares at me with a directness I might think was insolence instead of alertness. Her heart must be racing. . .the. . . white tail she shows is startling. . .also the white edges of her large round ears. . .above the black, globular, wet eyes. . .

*(End of the Time, 5-6)*
Soon after that, she is sternly rebuked by Ben and she retreats into her dense, dark, left-over space which will be soon in the hands of the capitalists, shortly in future.

Ben is somewhat enchanted by animals visiting his garden every now and then but ‘Gloria does not share his enchantment’. According to Ben:

Who would imagine that deer would eat roses? My wife wants the deer killed. She gets on the telephone, searching for men with rifles or bows and arrows and an atavistic hunger for venison and the patience to stand for hours on a platform they will build in the trees. . .my wife is a killer. . .she dreams at night of my death. . .

(End of the Time, 06)

In this way, Gloria represents the rude killers of the society who snatch away animals’ share. The way she spends hours on the telephone digging out poachers from nowhere and the adequate patience to stand on the platform to keep an eye on their prey projects her killer spirit. Gloria is a killer of animals as well as human beings. She finds Ben as a target to outpour her indignation. Ben almost felt that her subconscious mind hated him no less than a deer. With Gloria, Ben experienced his heart racing, once with sexual appetite and now with fear that she wants him to kill innocent primitive rulers and also his approaching death makes his heart race with fear. He feels something for the injustice done to these animals; but his guilty self is unable to overcome Gloria’s heartlessness.

Ben and Gloria seldom enjoy the compatibility of agreeing on one point. What to her seems trespassing on her sole property is to Ben, a natural and basic need of a living organism:

. . .one could see how the hungry animal, its innocence burdened only by the need of its own sizable body, had gone from the yew bush by the rose bed to
the box bush on the other side, from the box to the privet ball by the bird bath, and from the birdbath to the euonymus over by the driveway. . .

*(End of the Time, 07)*

Ben can feel the self-contentment experienced by the animal kingdom when they have eaten to their full appetite. Unlike human beings they don’t ravish or invade the natural wealth; they just satisfy their needs and then leave the nature to flourish on its own. It is like worshipping the earth in their own manner; ‘sensing in the new life around them the mysterious presence of God as well as the ever recurring pattern that make them feel comfortable’ even while enjoying their animal instincts. In this sense they truly exhibit their belongingness with divine gifts and their gratefulness to nature.

*(Vargo, 1973)*

But such sweet and contented nature of animals is not appreciated by Gloria. She counts the damage caused by the deer in terms of money which will be spent in mending or replacing the nibbled bushes. Being aware of Ben’s leniency towards wild life, Gloria very often ‘pulls out the whip of money, knowing that Ben have been a poor boy’ and even ‘after retirement still tender with financial anxiety’. Ben is hurt to see how his wife regards money as life-force and at the same time he accepts that some of the life sustaining elements, such as rapacity and competition, depend on money and he also recounts that some other forces that make the world go around are desperation and death, and these are somehow related and unrelated to money factor.

Along with this competition for survival and attainment of supremacy, competition of gender persists. For Ben addressing the animal as ‘doe’ and Gloria addressing it as ‘he’ indicates the human nature as putting blame on the opposite gender and at the same time their attraction towards each other. Updike also emphasises on the element of morality which creeps into the mind as when ‘time on
Earth gets too short for lies. If any prickle of conscience activates itself in old age, there are other things or elements which stop it from flourishing such as man-made law which finds its way into the constitution; more attention is paid to money and property owned by the citizen wherein any animal can be shot with court law if it trespasses into one’s property. If any purchased land is owner’s property, then where should the primitive rulers go? These animals are ruthlessly killed by the land owners and no court of law questions the killers because American citizens are seemingly authorised to keep arms in their houses. Updike laments this ‘old peasant mentality which loves the American right to bear arms’:

Charlie...owns several shotguns, for ducks mostly, and my wife, having hurled herself and her teal-blue Japanese station wagon into the dark, brought one of Charlie’s guns back with her, with a cardboard box half full of ammunition.

(End of the Time, 11)

Even now people like to keep arms with proper ammunition without any restriction. Updike in a hidden rebuke wants to lay bare the reality that apart from killing animals with full right and authority, people can kill their suspected enemies by themselves thereby taking the law in their own hands. They don’t take law and order worth consulting. As a matter of fact, America is one of those nations where adolescents commit maximum crimes regarding shooting innocent school children, only because they always see arms and weapons in their houses with utmost and reckless freedom. Gloria is a typical part of such generation which has treated weapons as toys in its hands and consider killing and scaring off the animals as their right. Gloria is fairly younger in age than her husband Ben but signs of age and physical deterioration are approaching them at same pace.
Even in her late years Gloria’s moral conscience still has not activated itself. Her conclusion is that the bushes or plants ‘can’t run or hide’; they have such a connection with the wild life that they have to be eaten by it. Updike is rejoicing over the helplessness of Gloria and appreciates the divine relations between nature and wild life. He helplessly wants to awaken America to the fact that preservation of nature should be given priority to capitalism, materialism and technological inventions. Technology and advances can never be eco-friendly. Human beings should tend to nature as a tribute to the fulfilment of needs rendered by it since ages unknown. Leaving human aside, the rest of the nature is united with its elements. Human beings are the only species who have turned against nature – against a blessed gift which has ever provided them with immeasurable elements which satisfy their appetite, quench their thirst, and provide them with shelter, fire and medicines. As reckless use of natural resources result in their exhaustion, and obsession for animal hunting or hating it to death results in their extinction, in the same way, Updike acknowledges a ‘ferocious female nagging’ as a result or a ‘price’ a man has to pay for his much lamented prerogatives, power, mobility and the penis. As studies mention that primitive men were highly spiritual and had the ability to take orders directly from the Gods and discharge spiritual duties thereafter; but now such transcending love has become obsolete and forgotten, nobody wants to busy himself in sublime love; everyone is obsessed with base desires which can be attained in this very world and in shorter time as compared to spiritual love.

Nature is also a part of spiritual love with greenery, wild life and ecological balance, as its components. Basically, *Towards the End of Time* is a critique on wild life preservation and an attempt to develop interest in animals as if they were members of opposite sex with Ben and Gloria’s frequently addressing of the animals
with opposite gender pronouns. Nature has some elements which never betray it. Though nature provides survival to all human beings but its compatibility with the animals is the best while being busy in eating plants; the stubbornness and devotion of a feeding deer is defined as the relaxed mood of someone’s wife with her accustomed personal routine. While nibbling some leaves, the deer goes in a trance and Ben has to come very close to it to shoo it away. Updike defines this trance as a unique discipline through which an organism is repaying the favour that nature has done for it. Very precisely and openly, Updike laments the ingratitude that Nature meets on the part of the human beings.

*Villages* and *Towards the End of Time* has traces of Owen and Ben belittling the value of parents and grand-parents. As Owen after the death of his parents, considered their things no less than a burden, here Ben has given the portraits of his grand-parents to Historical society and never turned to see if they were taken good care of or not. It implies that Updike wakes up to different elements of disrespect in the American motherland. There is also a sense of fear about how it will look in future when a post-war divided America will struggle with economical ups and downs while the parts snapped out of it, will enjoy better economy. Today, America is a land of insecurities, fear and impotency but even then sex obsession is related to something of male pride. Ben dreams of a world when due to his medical fitness he would not feel inferior to his healthy and young step-son. Then Gloria would be left ‘with one less weapon’ to wield against him. It would be like a world where Ben would be self-satisfied with his active sexual and semi-automatic bodily functions.

At the same time, Ben can’t believe that someday all conscious and semi-conscious functions of the body will dissolve back to the compacted silt; he will be as
forgotten as the Neanderthal men. Ben accepts the stupidity of his non-believing the divine law which will never change.

Even after inheriting the natural process of birth and ultimate death, Ben is aroused at the mere sight of opposite gender including secretaries at his old office where he seldom goes now. Sometimes after looking at his own image in the window glass of a train he observes his own gazing eye which reminded him of a deer’s fearful and alert eye. He wondered if this look of the animal expressed its hostility for Homo sapiens species or it just behaved neutrally and kept itself detached from human civilization at the level of generosity and benevolence if any of it existed. The imagination of such eyes left Ben think more about the feelings of the animal; we cannot make our access to the organism concerned to know its feelings or thoughts for us but God has given every creature eyes through which communication takes place provided the other side is able to perceive such soft imprints. Here, Updike comments on the ‘should-be’ extra sensitive perception of human beings which is nowhere to be found. Updike lays emphasis on the abstract must-idea that human beings should count themselves as elements of nature and try to feel the pain and loss of others by merely observing them.

But human nature is not too conscious or sensitive as to extend its sympathy to the wild life at mere projection of feelings on the part of animals. Human nature is so arbitrary that is does not want to stick to a single hypothesis. Divine rules are discussed with respect to religious principles which have undergone many changes with time. These principles are contaminated as new movements and trends crop up. In this way, pure and chaste divine rules are reduced to wavering faith with the changing time and the increasingly acceptable freedom by man thus subjecting the hypothesis to a ‘quantum fluctuation’.
This indifference of mankind has its negative effects on many aspects of nature as well as human society. Ben Turnbull contemplates a deer nibbling at shrubs at his place and the way it takes its share, first warily and then voraciously, emphasizes at the urgency of its need. The beauty of the deer and its way of feeding itself reminds Ben of a prostitute who visits him at home while Gloria is away at work. Deirdre visits him silently but attends to his sexual needs devotedly first and then gradually her aggression increases to the extent that she thinks it her right to move around in the house and hang around with Ben, shopping for him and herself. But no matter how much Ben is concerned about being careful for not leaving clues for Gloria to discover his betrayal, his guilt never leaves him. He feels his sin crying out loud in the form of stains left behind on sheets in the upper-storey rooms, after Deirdre has gone. His guilty feeling is projected as a frightened self, safeguarding his prestige and domestic peace when afraid for his reputation; Ben escapes from reality telling himself that ‘Deirdre is a fantasy’.

‘Whores’, this nomadic section of the society has cropped out as one of the consequences of the collapse of civilisation. The young productive generation who could hold the responsibility of a nation by becoming successive beauticians, editorial assistants, nurses or paralegals are forced to bring efficiency and comeliness to the flesh-trade. This high breed quality of girls turned whores is an advantage on part of men. In this way, animate flesh is sold at large under sensational advertisements and other public banners. These whores, being dissatisfied with their profession which fetches them only meagre income, get into the habit of stealing antique pieces from rich men’s houses as a bonus prize for favours done to these men. During lovemaking, Deirdre discloses to the readers that the reason for AIDS is none other than sex-
obsession. If rules of copulation are not followed as framed by Divinity, the victims of adultery and obsession have to pay for it by succumbing to this disease.

With Gloria gone to a work trip, Ben imagines that he has killed her and got rid of her forever. Both of them compete with each other and Gloria’s domination leaves Ben weak and full of hatred. Gloria never cherishes his position as a husband and prefers his absence from her life. This, she proves, by maintaining her contacts with the people who discharge their duties for her interests such as deer hunting, maintaining her garden and so on. She knows how to extract things of her own interest from nature as well as relationships. Through Ben she has status, house and money while from the nature she has decorative plants and climbers for her own amusement; deducting wild-life from gifts of nature.

In 2020, the world has gone as far as sending people to live in space and ignoring the fact that cosmic rules limit human power beyond a certain height. God has made this world fit for his creation; in turn He wants His creation to be grateful to Him, respect His principles and prepare itself for death and go back to Him with enough evidence that they cared for His world and dealt with it as responsible beings. His unlimited power has confined the human race to one planet and His self despises over-ambition. He has created this planet with just the right kind of provisions for His creation, ranging from unicellular organisms to the largest beasts. At the same time, He assigned Man the most prestigious position of all living beings. And the one enjoying the highest rank should acknowledge its duties willingly because rights and duties are the two sides of the same coin. This is all in contrast with what is going on in 2020, America. A space station has been set in orbit like another world where colonists have been surviving for a time amid their tons of provisions and the solar power green houses:
. . .a space station, three-thousand miles above the Earth, one-hundredth of the first moon’s distance, by men before the Sino-American Conflict dissolved the governments able to maintain the shuttle ships. . .the colonists marooned there survived for a time amid their tons of provisions and their solar-powered greenhouses . . .the world watched in horror. . .the space dwellers one by one died. . .the colony, in its giant honeycomb of hollow struts and exquisitely stretched sheets of insulating foil, still holds a few live crewpersons, surviving on protein tablets and hydroponic lettuce.

(End of Time, 36-37)

As the Sino-American conflict crippled the national economy, divided the American subcontinent and technology received a severe blow, therefore it is impossible to ‘send a rescue mission aloft, even if there is a will’. A handful of dwellers are still alive but a cloud of nearing end hovers over them. Dreams extending beyond human power result in ‘embarrassment, a bad conscience’. Here Updike, once again provokes his reader to think about the exhaustible natural resources which can become extinct without any hope of their revival or recycling. Large amounts of material and energy used up in sending space shuttle and its maintenance in the space, comes from earth’s reservoir which is not for any specific country or continent but for all naturally living organisms on earth. Huge volts of energy used up in running shuttle’s machinery and getting its feedback every now and then through television broadcast can drag the non-renewable resources towards their fatal end. So, Updike is giving different points to be noted down to save various natural resources and the dangerous consequences if they are used recklessly.

As nature’s reservoir is to be used honestly and at controlled rate, so that it may result in equal distribution of all elements of nature, in the same way, Updike
hates the Egypt royalty who were buried along with mind blowing amounts of precious metals like gold, silver, diamonds and so on. In contrast to this royal class he takes his character Ben to an imaginary journey on dead Pharaoh Kings’ valley and leaves him appreciating the efforts of tomb robbers. These villagers follow robbery as an occupation but their robbery does no longer seem a crime; once taken out, these buried royal ornaments are again brought to circulation in the living world and contributes to the material progress of the society.

As the old English saying ‘Healthy mind in a healthy body’, in the same way, an uplifted economy full of future promises belongs to a healthy society which in turn depends on healthy, robust and well-bonded relationships. A society which is torn and shattered with selfishness, lust, unstable behaviour, obsession, temporary commitments and detachments can never flourish. In such cases, Updike advises flexibility of acceptability irrespective of colour, caste, creed, nationality or gender.

Since Ben Turnbull’s family was emotionally split by his divorce, he did not know how to be a family until they had an African son-in-law, Adrien, among them. One of his daughters married an African from Togo and the thing changed the temper of the family, for better. Here the American writer, Updike, surprisingly wakes up to an American misunderstanding for Africans who had been addressed for ages as ‘children of Devil’, ‘the uncivilised’, ‘Black’ or ‘Nigger’ by the white world. This inhuman response holds in itself all the brutality and uncivilised nature for those, who, in spite of having dark complexion, hold a storehouse of human values and regard. An account of Adrien’s behaviour, his capacity to understand, to withhold himself, tolerate and deal smoothly with all issues ranging from child-birth ceremonies to welcoming his father-in-law and making him an important part of these occasions ensure Adrien’s healthy upbringing in spite of having a number of half
siblings in many countries from his father’s informal wives. The fact that all his brothers and sisters are leading successful lives with good academic status implies that the Blacks have successfully outstood racialism and are enjoying reputation all over the world. They have managed to create an identity in this world of whites and browns. They also have managed to impress immorality with their values and ethics. For instance, Adrien’s deep voice and slow utterance adds charm to his eloquence. He presides over his family to assert his presence even when he is absent. He helped improve Ben’s deteriorated status resulting from his betrayal with Perdita. Ben’s shadowy status and his shame-faced appearances at different occasions took on sudden refulgence with Adrien’s arrival in the family. Now Ben was given a respected status of grandfather to Adrien’s children and the special place ‘in the outdooring ceremonies’. Being a grandfather to half-African children was more prestigious than being a pure American father’. This Adrien’s African magic brought back the lost family-love to Turnbull. Respect for one’s own culture is the second thing – Adrien has never forgotten symbols from Togo – knots, braids, beads, and masks are found everywhere in the house. Elders of the family including Ben Turnbull’s portrait occupy a place of honour in the ‘living room’ – the place which is a symbol of connection between house members and the society. Moreover, the innocent discipline of Adrien’s children and their tame nature in an age of VCRs, PCs and CD players, is amazing. His children like folktales and children’s stories rather than gadgets and video-games. In addition to their discipline, they also possess an air of their grandmother, Perdita. It implies for Turnbull that if a commitment fails then the chain of ancestors and descendants offers to solace the coming generations or the loved ones who are still alive. In other words, signs of heredity are symbols or marks left deliberately by nature to emphasise our connection with the past. At no cost the
forefathers to be forgotten. But the problem with human beings is that they want to assert their individual self and get it acknowledged. Their sense of ego does not give them a chance to be generous enough to identify themselves as part of some ancestral chain. Nature, in the form of DNA transmission, offers as cold a comfort as the transmigration of souls. In this way, Updike makes Turnbull feel guiltier than ever. Ben Turnbull, even after separating from Perdita will not be able to wipe her out from his life, as his children and grand children will carry her imprints here and there in their bodies down the biological ladder. Turnbull finds more traces of Perdita in his daughters and grandsons which add to his guilt, shame and inferiority. Also, there are, on the other hand, sensitive people who think they are left alone in this world after their elders die and in the Eastern part of the world such loss is considered as never drying tears. Updike uses the word ‘solace’ especially for such people who miss their dead ones and wants to add to their comfort that those gone are still present through their living ones. Updike also questions himself with the fact that if human beings are not able to detach themselves from the memories of this world, from their descendants, then why should they actually die? So, not wanting to die is the result of remaining attached to earthly attractions. Here, Updike laments the loss of the sense of sublime level experienced by the hermits who used to retire into the natural activities of forests or into the peaceful silence of mountains in search of God’s grace and spend their uncountable hours contemplating his gifts and singing his praises.

In contrast with the time of hermits when nature was adored, now in 2020 America, the situation is such that pastures and such pieces of fertile and productive land are gifted by the president of America, as bribes, to people willing to go to Mexico and Haiti where economy is stronger and conditions are more promising. The land is being divided into bits and pieces to be cultivated first and then an era of
construction, industrialisation, capitalism and consumerism. This implies the immeasurable difference between how land was felicitated with prayers, contemplation and adoration and how it is now chopped out for selfish human interests. Such interests lead towards the production of commodities which range from simple household items to mass destructive chemicals.

Guilty self of Ben Turnbull has various future visions. One of these is his chaotic image in the eyes of his grandchildren. Inspite of an improved reputation among his own children due to introduction of African family values, yet he fears his upcoming valuelessness after his death. When he will die, his absence may not create a killing void in their life. All they might feel, would be ‘a faint apprehensive pang, tinged with the comic’ which clearly indicates the minute degree to which he would be missed and how lightly his death would be taken by present generation. A person is always hungry for love. Though he lives his life joyfully and takes all material care for his young ones but he longs for the opportunity to live through their emotions, to respond to their call of love and live his own childhood through them. At the end of his life, a person always looks back to such times to which he turned deaf ears due to his distractions. He understands at the end of his life that life can be cherished only by living it through others, by being generous to them, by giving away one’s time to gift others with happiness. Good deeds outlive those who have performed and practiced them during their lives and only such people are cherished as long as they are alive, missed and remembered after their death.

Whether Ben has any good deeds in store to repay him after his death, is quite doubtful even to him because his guilty self has more images to shock him with. Apart from loss of love in his family and among the vague reputation after his betrayal and divorce from Perdita, having Gloria in his subconscious mind and
Deirdre in his bed, is another sign of losing himself. Ben, here, is very similar to Owen of *Villages*, who had his punishment to be continued for the rest of life with pastor’s wife. Perdita, through her visible genetic tendencies and Gloria with her haunts in his house while Deirdre is with him, preside over the house and make Ben’s conscience full of doubts and fear about the presence of a third being watching him in his betrayal. At times, Ben recalls a narrow place of high traffic ‘Mystic River Bridge’ where Gloria was leading him in his dream. It was a long winding way through downward tunnels, bridges over rivers, concrete pavements and so on. Gloria moved on impatiently and absent-mindedly ignoring the ‘screaming depths’ but as the image of Mystic River appeared, somehow she was able to double back and traverse the gulf and lead Ben safely to the northern side. Though Perdita been his first woman and Gloria been his second and more strict yet she acts as his saviour. Mystic Bridge is famous for its tragic events – for accidents and husbands killing even their pregnant wives themselves and blaming Negroes for the crime, instead. Later on, the suicide notes revealing the truth that the killer husband had done the deed, long premeditated in a brain overheated by an infatuation with a younger woman. The incident made people wonder if ‘inside every husband, there a wife-killer.’ This reflects the frequency of wife-killings in America and the mindset of a husband who is never satisfied even with his pregnant wife. Updike reveals an ever lusting nature of male individual who may kill his wife in any way – physically, emotionally or spiritually. As Ben betrayed his wife Perdita and killed her emotionally and at present is trying to bestow her acquired status in a mockingly temporary way to a prostitute.

On the other hand, glimpses of female nature can be seen even in birds and animals. In response to Ben’s presence:
Two visited the pond down by the mailbox. the geese, with their haughty black faces and pearly gray bodies, are intruding upon a pair of mallards who have been in the pond. my watching alarmed them. the little brown female tried to paddle away and ran into slush. The drake with his sumptuous green head followed, and so she found herself performing as an ice-breaker. beating her wings to give herself extra thrust as the ice thickened. the handsome drake serenely floating in her wake. the female of the species takes on the serious business, while the male wears the plumage.

(*End of Time*, 104)

In this way, both of them seemed to agree perfectly that the task was hers. Thus, carving into the world, bringing up a civilization and trying to give the world its perfect shape is a responsibility enshouldered by females willingly while males savour the flavour. Besides taking responsibility, the female has tendency to safeguard the life. This is the reason why females are more sensitive to relations, life matters, more scared of accidents and more confident while holding guarantee of future life in their arms – their babies.

With these everyday incidents Updike breaks through the patriarchal analogy of male carrying family genes forward. Women are unitary beings, sustainers of life and store-house for future family genetic set-up, as Ben’s daughter and grand-daughter, Roberta and Jennifer seem to be.

As disturbing the harmony and peace of an easily going and naturally convincing commitment of marital bonds produce toxins of life-long guilt and haunts, in the same way, disturbing the ages-old nature with seemingly constructive and beneficial human activities leads to hellish and hazardous results. At such a time, even the natural sounds lose their beauty. Ben no longer hears the soothing thrumming
sound of a ‘wood-pecker’s bill attacking rotten wood’. Destructive activities of human beings have wiped out the trees and grasslands to replace them with houses and concrete roads with petty gardens. Birds have retreated into handful dense forests. Challenging nature, crippled with poisons of industrial revolution, steam-engine, petrochemical plants, thermal power stations and nuclear reactors has gifted human beings with heinous inorganic creatures:

The microscopic first forms...arose in city dumps...attached to the perimeter of army base or nuclear fuel plants wherein a soup of spilled chemicals and petroleum by-products was energised by low-level leaks of radio-activity. Metal particles smaller than iron filings fused, propelled into a self-sustaining reaction perhaps by chemical activity of oxidation accidentally placed adjacent to a fortuitous mix of chemical influences. These tiny resultant creatures, with an anatomy much simpler than their organic equivalents, still possessed complexity enough for reproduction, in the industrial soup.

(End of Time, 110)

Their already refined and processed constituents enabled them to experiment with varieties of anatomy. Since twentieth century, within two centuries these metallobioforms have gained the size and weight of tree shrewd and field mice. But the phyla of these metallobioforms have their specific qualities of sleeplessness, affinity to oil or electricity, penetration, sexual reproduction and feeding on organic wild life when ever usual diet is not available. Radio-broadcast and television telecast present programmes warning over the threat of these ‘pseudozoans’ as ‘science has predicted the evolution of ever larger and voracious forms in future’ which will live on earth’s surface and in fields quite openly and without fear. People of 2020 are left to hear mechanical thrumming of these pseudozoans. They no longer hear the
woodpecker’s melody of nature. In this way Updike has given the most horrified image of our near realistic future. Countries boasting of being super nuclear power will have the same future that Updike, as an ideal citizen, patriot and an eco-friendly human being, foresees. Updike has taken back-breaking responsibility of enlightening the entire world. His rebuke to these atomic powers indicates the victory of the so called backward African and some Asian countries whose developing economy can only afford to feed its citizens over the leviathans who feel proud of their unshakable faith in atomic production.

Lamenting the earth’s future, Updike once again turns towards both genders and finds that it is the female who favours the nature by weeping ‘for the world itself, in its beauty and waste, its mingled cruelties and kindness’. Women in Ben Turnbull’s life showed him the both phases: ‘Perdita wept out of compassion at the magnificent beauty of a church and Gloria, at the death of some character of a novel or loss inflicted to her garden when the deer ate all her tulips’. Updike also finds woman’s tears in mothers and wives. Through him Ben Turnbull recollects his mother’s tears expressing grief, poverty, domestic frustration or bodily decay. He remembers his childhood with a pained mother and defeated drunk father, especially when both quarrelled about there not being enough for good and promising life.

Updike professes this quality of women to stay, suffer and weep in contrast with men who ‘always rush onto the next thing’. Ben’s father rushed to the liquor, Ben to the corners of the house ‘to burrow away from the family sorrows’. Men are escapists. Even in the Resurrection story, John 20, Simon Peter rushed to the emptied sepulchre while Mary stayed and wept for crucified Jesus’. Jesus loved Mary for her tears but at the same time avoided her touch. Bible emphasises on frankness among same gender, for the opposite gender ‘spoken language should be as good as a touch,
each word should be worth living in ears’. As the gospel says, ‘Set your affection on
things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with
Christ in God’. (Colossian, 112-113)

So, as long as you fuse yourself spiritually, with Christ, you are as near to God
as Christ is. Your life is God’s gift; ask him to protect it for you. With this wittily
implied religious connection, Updike mocks the so-called local agencies which
comprise of the native, tough rascals whom the Americans of 2020 seek for personal
security. These groups compete with each other for their material interests. Instead of
serving nation and mankind, they just devour public and government properties, thus
surviving by looting offices. Besides robbery, thefts, murder and ransom money, these
mixed blood teenagers impose protection money on residents as a price for protecting
them against other local toughs. 2020 America has no federal government and the
citizens have to rely on either of these warring gangs of teenagers for their protection.
America has no structure. Again, Deirdre, Updike’s mouthpiece is ready to chalk-out
the image of 2020America:

. . .but when there was a government, there were things like the FBI and the
Federal Reserve Board to keep things stable. There was structure. . .is worth
paying quite a lot for. Without it, you get just survival of the brutes. . .the
Roman Empire, before it broke up, made the spread of Christianity possible. .
.those soldiers and roads. . Christianity would never have gotten out of
Jerusalem without those roads. . .would have been squelched by the Jewish
establishment. . .

(End of Time, 121)

Updike sketches for us an ideal structure of a country’s administration through
Deirdre. A country’s structure should have roads, pathways, and faithful soldiers to
enable it the flow of betterment and outflow of its power for outsiders’ enlightenment. In this way, the nation will experience an intermingling of ideas and strategies and flexibility in nature to cope up with adverse conditions. Deirdre gives the example of Roman Empire during Renaissance due to which Jerusalem was forced to let Christianity to find a way out to flourish. In this way, Christianity spread all over the world and acquired towering number of followers and gained its own mastering status. In the same way, America should learn that by giving away its benefits and sharing its power with the world will not victimise it with sense of insecurity. Only then, it will gain respect, have its influence far and wide in good terms and have its place among God’s gifts for other nations which are still developing economies. Eventually America will be acknowledged as no less than the pioneer of new renaissance.

All this benevolence, generosity and perpetual enlightenment can never be achieved without spiritual and religious guidance. Updike himself once experienced ‘a kind of philosophical panic’ in his life and it was the fear of death which overcame him. At such a time he began reading ‘Barth and Kierkegaard and they gave him a kind of solace and renewed his faith’. They convinced him about human condition and Updike managed to ‘leap into his faith’ once again. The ‘world becomes accessible’ to such people. God never wants to leave this world without guides and philosophers. Prophets sent to the world always left behind their disciples to carry on religious teachings towards posterity. With the onset of modernism, hermits and scholars have lost their value and have come to be regarded as unwanted part of society. The worst part of it is that the present religious scholars are not as faithful as ancient disciples. They modify their teachings according to the demands of the age.
Towards the End of Time

These scholars lack the spark to bring the new generations to the track because they themselves have gone astray. (Kakutani, 1981)

Americans have to survive amid the sense of insecurity against the intellectual and sharp minded immigrants who are icons of technology and have the best commands over their respective occupational areas. While writing the novel, Updike must have the vague sketches of World War II, in his mind. Through this imaginary Sino-American war, he relives the moments of humiliation on the part of Japan’s psyche when the nation’s dignity was given an ‘acid-bath’ with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Even now the event has left Japan more destroyed than any other targeted nation. This war which was fought over the question of control on Asia left Japan ‘too ruined to compete’. (End of Time, 148)

But they have the intuition, as in Updike’s mind, that a phoenix always raises from its ashes. The ‘resilience of a demolished nation’ like Japan has already taken them with surprise after world war second. Updike wants to warn the disastrous nations that repeated smashing of a certain country and stripping it of its power, dignity and identity may inflame its honour to the degree of uncontrollable hatred and fury. Instead of inculcating such hateful emotions in defeated generations, care should be taken to create a cobweb of never ending friendly feelings which seldom die. For this, countries will have to give up competition to acquire power or to struggle for more space or to cross barriers. Peace and harmony should flow everywhere, as God knows no boundaries, political barriers, nationality, power, colour, caste or creed. His earth is absolutely perfect in all its chemical and atomic laws to provide enough duration and stability for the evolution of intelligent life. Any minor deduction or increment in any of these dimensions would result in the most inhospitable form or more precisely an impossible mode of life. Ben has to undergo such impossibility the
entire time which he has spent with Gloria – the woman other than his first wife. Any minor disturbance in the first phase of life results in long lasting upheavals. The first phase with its marital bonds is a gifted one, and any wrong step on the part of either partner bears its thorns to the future relations made by them. At this time, Ben considers his marriage a game of thrust and parry. He admires Gloria for her talent in dealing with the life but at times, he is also scared of her terrible domination and distrusts her desire for his well-being.

The rare element of trust is still found there in America even after the Sino-American war as there is still belief in fairness, rudimentary rights guaranteed to everyone regardless of creed or colour. Ben misses this bliss inside his marital life as his wife admires the freedom and carefree living-style of widows.

But Gloria is not the only threat around. There is Deirdre, who appears in images of a deer initially and gradually metamorphosed into the paid-working class slut and in some instances she becomes a superheated fantasy of Ben. Gloria inspires threat and fear whereas Deirdre lust, contempt, hatred, guilt and a mournful longing for lost youth. During the latter’s stay, Ben complains of not finding a teapot or rug while these very things reappear after Gloria returns; this shows that Deirdre was not so realistically present in his life.

A group of juvenile extortionists move into the woods on Ben’s property and run a small-time protection racket, targeting him and his neighbours. Initially, they convince Ben that they are subordinates to Phil and Spin and are assigned to do the collection in nearby areas. In the meantime, they kill Spin to horrify Ben and thus forcing him to submit to this gang of young brutal kids. After seeing Spin’s dead body, Ben’s vain attempts to call emergency toll free numbers or the police department or crime branch, one after the other, bring home the point, how useless
police is in 2020 America. Ben comes back gasping to the crime sight only to find Spin’s corpse disappeared. Ben was being watched by this racket and they were waiting to frighten him to submission. A female member of the gang, Doreen, who had recently stepped into puberty, became Ben’s centre of attention. Ben gets a perverse kick out of turning himself into their fatherly business counsellor, advising them to kill pet animals and to burn down beach houses in return for a percentage while exchanging cash for touching-only privileges with Doreen. He is afraid of Doreen too but she arouses mostly wistfulness. Through her, he has access to the lost pre-pubertal inexperienced self once he was, for which he feels a tense nostalgia.

Apart from enjoying privileges with Doreen and a cut in percentage, Ben safeguards his land earnestly by keeping the kids busy in frightening neighbourhood to submission. A person clings to his land as to his identity. This is the reason why Ben sometimes thinks that after his death he will mind no longer being an American. Not only Ben, but a human being will always miss this earth which has no parallel of itself in the entire universe. The joy of creation, flowing through the generations of birds and bacteria, human beings and areal titans, as they rise and fall is not an illusion but an eternal basis and that a heavenly economy to whose workings we are blind will redeem every one of our living moments and carry to completion each linking of beatitude. And this is possible in the third planet of solar system, in the Milky Way galaxy of all the galaxies in the universe. If man endeavours to come up with an artificial world of himself of another world, sooner or later, the result is a gradual recession and complete disappearance in the vicinity of the constellation, Octans. On planet Earth with its round shape, human race being the last to evolve is given appropriate rights and most of the duties to hold. The unicellular amoeba brought forth the gigantic dinosaurs and mammoth; now reduced to undignified sizes
of lizards and few meters long snakes, have nowhere to go except hiding disgracefully in house corners or crouching somewhere in domestic gardens. It’s really hateful when human attempts to inflict order upon the land, bring death and pain and mutilation to these innocents, whose ancestors enjoyed the earth for tens of millions of years before the naked ape appeared with his technology and enraging awareness of his own sin. People have developed this habit of growing plants and raising flowers of their own choice and interests and uprooting some other plant on pretext of being weeds. Since when human being, a part of God’s creation has got right what is a weed or a pest? Human beings must realise that every piece of nature is perfect in itself, irrespective of its colour, size, characteristics or behaviour. No divine order encourages its creation to kill one another.

Kids from Lynn got stimulus and guidance from Ben to frighten neighbours by killing their pets or burning their sea-beach houses. Both Ben and kids had to pay for it. Ben was killed as man with prostate cancer while Gloria, during Ben’s stay in the hospital, informed Fed Ex which is working nationwide for the utilities, road maintenance and peoples’ protection, having a wide network that can connect big cities and commercial centres about nuisance created by kids. As a result, kids from Lynn, who had trespassed as antisocial elements, were wiped out in just a few moments through metalllobioforms and the arrangements were made by Fed Ex.

After his operation, an irritated Ben had to get used to space and time with his new needs and demands. With his diapers he had returned to his own childhood. Not realizing the acceptance of this fact, yet with his gestures and preconceptions as fumbling as grand-daughter Jennifer, he was getting used to time. Besides irritation and humiliation, his dreams are haunted with Perdita in which he sees her images as a cooperating wife, attending to their children more than anything else.
In this way, a blessed person is one who attends to the needs of other living creatures and other Godly gifts. Vegetation on this earth takes care of all living organisms, directly or indirectly, maybe that is the reason why it has been bestowed with shades of colour as attractive as gold. Even the sun is set to shine with its golden light. In the novel we find that in phrases and proverbs the word ‘gold’ is addressed as ‘common’ and ‘poor’ to denote its simplicity and God expects its creation to cherish the richness of this colour in the form of natural gifts. But the human nature, as thankless as ever, ignored the divine gifts and instead, the element or metal ‘gold’ stimulated the thirst and greed of people. Though God has selected colours to suit human health; for instance, soothing green colour of sky suits all eyes otherwise they would be burned blind – such is the argument of some theologians and they present it as a point proving existence of the Omnipotent.

Updike has to feel guilty for the American aborigines wherever mention of God comes. He feels it through his protagonist Ben Turnbull that the Sino-American war could be seen as revenge administered by the Mongolian super power of that Asian continent from which the North American Aborigines had crossed the Bering land-bridge. Documentary movies of old West show:

. . .photos of vast stony vistas and of impassive bronze faces: Indians chiefs hounded to a humiliating surrender, after creekside massacres and epic marches through Dakota blizzards to a Canadian sanctuary where the distant queen’s providence declines to forestall starvation; they are driven back to a bitter treaty with the bearded Great White Father in Washington and the barren heaven of the reservation. A heap of broken promises and a pyramidal mountain of the skulls of bison spitefully slaughtered to cut the red man’s ground out from under him. 

(End of Time, 308)
It was a race accused of ignorance and promised civilization, literacy and identity among nations racing for modernism and power. But with the hypothesis of receding frontier, there was nothing but disillusion of broken promises and a toll of millions of lives just for pieces of Western rocky land. And ultimately, as a sign of hypocrisy the faces of Native American legend heroes are placed on coinage and postage stamps of triumphant republic. It is the heartburn of modern descendants whose aborigine forefathers were slaughtered to cut the red man’s ground out from under him. Ben uses this reference to aware himself of the Time knocking on his door but this is not Ben’s turn to ignore his spouse but Gloria’s turn fancy herself as a widow, free from clutches of a husband. On his part, Updike uses the reference of the Red Indians to remind America of the Time’s clock preparing to tick the same hours of the History but from a different angle this time. Sino-American war and the resultant destruction in the American mainland is an answer to what American settlers did to the aborigine Red Indian man who once had crossed the primitive rock-land that joined America and Asia long back. This hunter Asian man certainly must have faced even an uglier wilderness than the British settlers claim to have done. This asserts that the Hunter man’s efforts were no less to be acknowledged than those of the European invaders following Columbus to the land of adventures.

With this consciousness of how the ‘Time’ goes by and how the history repeats itself, but now the powerful of the past have to pay the cost. The victorious of the past have to bear the bitter taste of defeat. Victory falls into the others’ hands. Rolling power of time is stronger than arrogant human nature and its unshaken faith in vanity. Time has reduced Ben from ‘Turnbull’ to a useless frame with his ‘Depends’ and his wife giving terrible signals of affection and interest in other men. The situation is going off-hand with his wife musing of her status as a widow; the privilege and
freedom after losing a husband not for alimony but for his entire property and that also in a natural and unsuspected way.

Tossing aside all the bitterness of his present state, Ben, sometimes spends long hours scratching fungus from the moist walls and the land. After tasting different flavours of the Mother Earth, in the form of a biological mother, first wife, second wife and a fantasy girl, Ben is invited by the earth itself to feed on its higher and purer form – its fungus – a decayed and silent structure outwardly but inwardly undergoes all changes that are due to a living organism. This implies that human beings should also learn a lesson from the earth. The earth appears to be inactive yet it is constantly and selflessly productive. The natural world seems omnipresent without being ostentatious and hence, is taken for granted. After the cold inactive and unproductive winter, spring arrives with bounty and vivacity. Men, too, could be productive and progressive without any aggression, selfishness and the urge for destruction. They could care for nature as it cares for them. They could after eons of selfish actions, brings back a degree of nobility, thoughtful attitudes and universal brotherhood.

Since this fungus, now eaten by Ben, does not possess chlorophyll, it depends upon the rotting organic matter in the substrate. In this way, most of the ground under our feet is an abysmal well of time. Ben thanks God for pure water and realizes that love for earth is the ultimate one and the human nature should identify itself with it, irrespective of physical or political barriers. ‘One element of this earth that takes on the aura of the holy is the land itself – the farms, forests, pastures and meadows which have the capability to sustain human beings as well as wild-life.’ Time has taught Ben to love himself as a human being, a creature who depends on God for its needs; instead of loving his gender and taking its advantage. In this way, as time proves to be a healer for grief, so it is a teacher, instructor as well as a judge. (Vargo, 1973)
While Ben has to pay regular visits to the Beverly Hospital due to his infirmity, Gloria has to do all the raking in the garden and she also gets plenty of time to nurture her fantasy of being a widow. She has hired a deer-slayer, John, whom, Ben thinks that she meets enthusiastically in a girlish thrill. Gloria’s beaming expressions made it clear that she saw a ‘miraculous saviour’ in her hired deer-slayer. With his greatly sophisticated instruments like ‘tarantula’ (silencer) and grooved metal arrows and a fawn blat, he was sure of accomplishing his task successfully. After three weeks, John’s efforts were awarded and the deer was killed; the obscene fruit of Gloria and John’s joint conspiracy. The very unsympathetic details of killing in the words of John:

Right across beneath my stand, a clean shot, the little downward angle suited me just fine, at about twenty feet. . . she turned her head, to give me that seven inch circle I spoke about. Zing! Right into the lungs. She didn’t get more than a hundred yards, and stopped breathing where she bedded down. She gave me this one long look, like I was coming to her assistance, and then lay down her pretty little head on the leaves. I didn’t use a second arrow. Depending on what gristle they pierce, they can be the devil to work out.

(End of Time, 323)

Ben compares the deer’s carcass to ‘a lover’s stretched body in bed’ and feels a void created in the world with its death. Ben could feel the disillusion that was experienced by this animal in its death throes. Even after its death, the dead body like a ‘taut russet sack tossed into the square-ribbed flatbed’ could, surprisingly, communicate its utter dissatisfaction at the disastrous behaviour of mankind:

The deer’s head was toward me, on the lowered tailgate, as if to be fed something, her lips slightly drawn back, a lavender sliver of tongue visible.
There were little crusts of blood around her black nostrils, relic of the bloody foam she breathed in her last minute. Her eyes were open, long-lashed, coffee-brown globules. . .and the pellets released from her tidy anus in the sorry unravelling of death. From the inner corners of the deer’s eyes flowed two dark markings, like tear trails. But the consciousness. . . had moved on, into another cosmic space. . . Her conical slender face, with its coarse rubbery muzzle and indelible tear trails, gazed towards me; I could feel myself move, a reflected splinter. . . in the orb of dulling gel.

*(End of Time, 323-324)*

Updike is not hasty with his descriptions this time; he wants us to feel the inner grudge of nature, that ‘one long look’, the nature is giving to us through its different organs which are being thrown into the valley of death day-by-day. The deer, through its gaze wants to awaken the conscience in us – the human beings – who claim to be the best creation of God. Updike also feels, in the stare of the deer, the warning of upcoming ridiculous future of the world with all its extinct wild-life. He is questioning the American attitude about the nothingness it is giving to the Mother Earth and in near future, to its own self.
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