CHAPTER - IV

AFTER EFFECTS OF ADULTERY

Updike shows that adultery has destructive as well as constructive effects. Adultery is shown leading to breakdown of families. Children are left floating like flotsam and jetsam on the murky waters of life. Broken families are seen breeding juvenile delinquents. This is no doubt deplorable. But coupled with this destructive result are certain beneficial results. Updike shows that the sexual fulfillment experienced by adulterers boosts their zest for life. Sexual fulfillment derived from adultery is a boon particularly to artists. The fulfillment leads to the efflorescence of their creative talents.

Also, Updike shows that the fulfillment gained by the adulterer is a profound experience comparable to the mystic ecstasy attained by a seer on achieving identification with God. Updike, 'divinizes' adulterous sex. He shows, through a wealth of images, that it is adulterers who live in harmony with nature, whereas the harsh critics of adulterers represent unnatural, destructive forces.

Critics like the Hamiltons and B.D. Sharma pinpoint only the destructive effects of adultery represented by Updike and come to the conclusion that Updike is dead against adultery. They totally fail to consider Updike's convincing representation of the beneficial results of adultery. Hence, their these are one-sided.
Effects of Adultery on children

We have already seen how children obstruct the adultery of their parents. Now, let us see how children are affected by the adultery of parents. Adultery leads to clashes between parents; such open clashes have a most deleterious effect on the delicate child’s mind. Exposed to violent scenes of parental discord, the child may develop a horror of marriage, which may prove almost insurmountable.

In Updike, anti-marriage position is taken for this reason by Jill of *Rabbit Redux*. Jill's mother is an insatiable adulteress and her father is a mammon worshiper. Jill runs away from this loveless atmosphere and becomes a hippie.

Unhappy parents produce unhappy children who grow into unhappy parents who produce unhappy children—the circle goes on endlessly like this. The eminent Indian sociologists Girija Khanna and Mariamma A. Varghese, in their book *Indian Women Today*, have explained this unbreakable vicious circle through the following chart:
Unhappy Married Life in Parents

Unhappy Home Environment

Results in Marital Problems of the Offspring

Insecurity in Children

Inability to form a Healthy Marital Partnership

Personality Deformation

Emotionally Unstable Adult

The findings of these sociologists are applicable to Sally of Marry Me. Her widowed mother was an irresponsible creature, always racing and gambling. Sally was brought up mostly by her baby-sitter. Not having enjoyed a happy home, she is not able to build up a happy home with her husband and hence she becomes an adulteress. Now, her children are as unstable as she was in her childhood.

The woman abandoned by her adulterous husband is either over-strict or over-indulgent towards her children. Updike finds both these harmful to the
development of children. Richard of Of the Farm is an over-controlled child. Peggy, divorced from her first husband and living with her second husband Joey, is over-cautious and over-protective towards her son Richard. She denies him normal, abrasive contacts with life. She prevents him from doing such manly jobs as driving Mrs. Robinson's tractors, whereas her father allowed him to steer a power boat. Richards' energies being diverted from natural channels, he becomes an abnormal book-worm, an infant terrible, interesting himself in such odd subjects as selenography, earthshine, watertight skin, etc. Lack of control is shown to do as much damage as excessive control.

Billy of Rabbit Redux, left uncured for by both his adulterous parents, associates himself with hooligans. Jerry and Ruth of Marry Me are too busy with their adulteries to devote any time to their children. As a result, the children league with street urchins and are catapulted into premature maturity, using all kinds of vulgar words. Piet's thumb sucking little girl, growing up in a loveless atmosphere, develops an abnormal obsession with death. Piet is too busy with his never-ending adulteries to try to cure the child's longing for death and make it life-oriented.

When an adulterous mother re-marries and brings home a new father for the children of the previous marriage, the children view the father with hostility. Richard of Of the Farm moves with his step-father as with a peer and not as fatherly guide. He says that he does not know how to call his step-father. He simply calls him 'Hey' (p.126).
Updike shows that children are also miserable when parents separate. At the same time, Updike is aware that when a disharmonious couple stay together bickering, then also children are made miserable. Mrs. Robinson's parents stayed together but were always quarreling. Mrs. Robinson feels that it would have been better for her, if her parents had divorced and left her in peace (Of the Farm, p.106).

Updike does not preach the Sunday school morality that a family should be kept intact at all costs. He sees the need to rescue children from the jangling jungle of marital warfare. Child psychiatrist Dr. J. Louise Despert, author of Children of Divorce, sides with Updike when she says that "divorce is not automatically destructive to children, the marriage which divorce brings to an end may have been more so". Divorce may be a cleansing and healing experience for the child. It only ends an intolerable vacillation in the children between hope and fear. It may bring the child’s fears of desertion out of the unconscious into the open, where he can finally learn to handle them.

Updike also shows that even stable homes can produce unstable children. The Springers and the Angstroms of Rabbit, Run and Rabbit Redux are two stable families, and Mim of the Angstrom family is highly unstable. Updike implies that the instability of children is not always traceable to parental discord—it may be due to several other complex causes.

Effects of Adultery on One’s Vocation

Updike shows that the joy experienced by adulterers boosts their spirits and enables them to do their jobs with redoubled enthusiasm. This is one of
the constructive effects of adultery. Updike shows how sexual fulfillment has a
salutary effect of artists. Alicia of *A Month of Sundays*, a musician attached to
a church, after sexual fulfillment with Ned, is inspired to give more music in
the church. Updike shows that artists stop producing works of art when their
sex life is impaired. Peter Caldwell of *The Centaur* is a failure as a painter,
which is traceable to his unsatisfactory sex life with his Negro mistress.

The Jewish writer Bech has become impotent and this is one of the
causes of the growing aridity of his works and the loss of his inspiration. In
London, he partially recovers this virility and manages to have intercourse
with Marisa and this corresponds with a partial recovery of his inspiration—he
gathers together the ingredients of a new novel.

What is revolutionary about Updike is that he has raised extra-marital
sex to the level of a religion. Instead of running down extra-marital coitus as a
sin, he glorifies it in religious terms. One thus gets the impression that if
sexual fulfillment is not available within wedlock, such a sublime experience is
worth seeking outside wedlock.

The adulterers in Updike are invariably associated with Christ images.
The harsh condemnation of adulterers is associated with the crucifixion of
Christ. Sally of *Marry Me*, thinking of rejoining her lover in Washington, is told
by him that she is going to ‘crucify’ herself (p.21). Vera Hummel, the much
maligned adulteress of the *The Centaur*, is condemned by scandal mongers.
She is associated with the “crucified brown skeleton of a rose vine”. (p.106).
Updike associates the oral-gentle sex of his adulterers in all his novels with the Eucharist. The act which squeamish puritans would condemn as filthy and perverted is placed by Updike on a par with the sacrament of the Lord’s supper. The priest Thomas Marshfield of A Month of Sundays associates the women receiving the communion water between their parted lips at the time of the Eucharist.(p.116)

In Rabbit Redux, name-symbolism connects oral sex with the Eucharist. Stavros means ‘cross’ in Greek. Janice says that having oral sex with him is tantamount to eating him. She is eating ‘cross’ – sex is thus associated with Eucharist. Foxy and Piet of Couples also ‘eat’ each other “on the Sunday morning, beneath the hanging Clanguor of bells” (p.482). The pun on bells-balls is obvious here. On Sunday morning, religious minded people go to Church, but Piet and Foxy indulge in oral sex. The literal bodies of the lovers have replaced the Eucharistic body of Christ.

Robert Detweiler says that Updike is offering here an erotic theology as a substitute for incarnation theology. Demythologization and secularization have created a void in American culture. Christianity, lacking the sexual dimensions, is ill-suited to fill in the void. According to Detweiler, Updike suggests oral sex as a possible way of filling the void. Detweiler has unduly narrowed down sex to oral sex. What Updike shows is the possibility of securing salvation through uninhibited sex.

The Updikean adulterers not only raise their sex to the level of a religious experience but also condemn Christianity out and out for its anti-
adulterous stand. Lucy, wife to priest Eccles in *Rabbit, Run* calls Christianity a neurotic religion. Skeeter of *Rabbit Redux*, claiming himself to be the black Jesus, runs down the historical Jesus for his sexuality:

"The Jesus they brought over on the boats was the meanest, most de-balled Jesus the good lord ever let run around scaring people". (p.209).

Thomas Marshfield of *A Month of Sundays*, instead of condemning Christianity for its anti-adulterous stand, takes efforts to prove that Christianity is sympathetic towards adulterers. In one of his undelivered sermons, Thomas points out that even Jesus does not condemn the woman taken in adultery but forgives her. What is more, adulterous women are exalted to lofty positions in the Bible. Bathseba betrayed Uriah in adultery with David but became the queen of Israel and the mother of Solomon. Eve, seduced by the serpent, became the mother of mankind. Finally, Thomas says that Christ forbade adultery only to make it all the more thrilling:

"The Sacrament of marriage ...exists but as a pre-condition for the sacrament of adultery...why...did Jesus institute marriage as an eternal hell but to spawn for each sublimely defiant couple, a galaxy of little paradises?" (A Month of Sundays, p.43)

Thomas's contention is that Christianity is all right and that only we have misunderstood it and made it rigid. What we need to do is to scrap the
accretions that Christianity has acquired through the ages and recover its original message of sympathy towards the adulterers.

Rabbit’s sexual quest is identified with the quest for the Holy Grail. Robert Detweiler does not do justice to Rabbit when he calls Rabbits’ quest a “futile quest for the non-existent Holy Grial”.* Rabbit is striving to attain an inexpressible excellence—the kind of excellence, which he could experience while playing basket-ball or having intercourse with his class-mate Mary Ann. Because this excellence is difficult to attain, it cannot be dismissed as ‘non-existent’.

Rabbit’s quest is invested with various other religious touches. Like Skeeter, Rabbit calls himself a new Jesus, emphasizing sexual unrestraint unlike the historical Jesus (Rabbit, Run, p.121). He also styles himself as a mystic (p.47) and identifies himself with runaway religious leader, the Dalai Lama. (p.43). Running away from his wife in search of a more satisfactory sex life, he comes across some mystical signs. He feels himself lit up by a great spark and also hears a voice urging him on his flight (p.241). One can recall how Bernard Shaw reports in St. Joan that Joan heard voices.

Critics like Rachael C. Burchard, Lyons, and Bryant Wyatt condemn Rabbit’s flight on the grounds that he is not able to define clearly what he is searching for. Now, what Rabbit is running towards can be understood by seeing what he is running away from. He is running away from (I) his meaningless job, (II) his drunkard wife and from (III) people whose religion is a sham. He would like to have meaningful job, an unencumbered sex life and
a genuine belief in God. Rabbit's is a perennial voice reminding us for ever of the losses involved in the twin process of growing up in civilization. It is Rabbit's strength as well as the weakness that he champions something of a lost way of life.

Most critics condemn Rabbit for what they consider to be his last act of selfishness. John Crosby and Michael Diebold take such a stand. So does Edward P. Virgo who, comparing Rabbit with such famous questers as Frank of Malamud's *The Assistant*, Henderson of Saul Bellow's *Henderson, the Rain King*, and Randle P. Mcmurphy of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, says that all these questers succeed because of their capacity for love and self sacrifice, whereas Rabbit fails because of his lack of love.

Critics like sister Tate, Larry E. Taylor, Gerry Brennon, and Robert Detweiler emphasize the destruction caused by Rabbit's quest. The Hamiltons call attention to Rabbit's *Kierkegaardian* dread caused by his vague awareness of having fallen from grace. The limitation of these critics is that they concentrate only on the destruction caused by Rabbit's flights. They are blind to the anguish felt by Rabbit on account of his flights and also to the intensity of his search for a better, more meaningful life.

As opposed to these destructive critics, we have David Galloway, who looks upon Rabbit as a saint and sees in his lack of commitment to individuals or any particular system not irresponsibility but saint's absolute, all-consuming
devotion to a higher ideal. He sees success in Rabbit's unsuccessful search:

"Rabbit doubts that he can succeed, but Toters has emphasized for us the fact that achievement can come even in defeat. For the saint, it is the struggle, not the success of the struggle, which is significant."

R.W.B. Lewis, in his classic book The Picaresque Saint, admires the people who run away from the rotten establishment and calls them saints. Though he does not discuss Rabbit in his book, what he says is applicable to Rabbit also.

Not all people regard Rabbit as destructive. Mrs. Smith, whose garden Rabbit tends, praises him for his life-giving qualities:

"You have ... life. It's a strange and I don't know how we're supposed to use it but I know it' the only gift we get and it's a good one". (p.181).

Joyce C. Markle draws attention to Rabbit's faith in God as evidenced in his gardening activities for Mrs. Smith. Rabbit is delighted to plant seeds because once the seeds are planted with love and care, the plants prosper and remain beautiful, independent of his support. God takes care of them. In human terms, he impregnates women and leaves them to be taken care of by God.

The pity is that society, as it exists causes pain to sensitive people like Rabbit. When the sensitive people try to rebel and reconstruct a better
society, insensitive people like Janice and Ruth are acutely pained. The whole problem is should the insensitive people be allowed to enjoy themselves at the expense of the sensitive people? Updike shows himself aware of this dilemma in such statements as:

“You can’t move without killing somebody” (Rabbit, Run, p.22)

Funny, how what makes you move is so simple and the field you must.

Move in is so crowded” (p.248)

“Growth is betrayal, there is no other route.
There is no arriving somewhere without
leaving somewhere”. (p.72).

“It’s hard to move without touching other lives” (of the Farm, p.138).

Updike implies that nothing sort of a revolution can solve this problem. Before planting seeds in Mrs. Smith’s garden, Rabbit burns out all the clumps and brush piles. This is symbolic of the fact that the old has to be razed down and only on its ashes can a new, meaningful order be built. The epigraph of the novel and the title Rabbit, Run (not Rabbit Runs but Rabbit, Run) shows Updike’s approval of Rabbit’s flight and his encouragement to Rabbit to run from this rotten society, show where Updike’s sympathies lie. The last words of the novel “Ah: Runs, Runs” also show the author’s excitement about and affirmation of Rabbit’s running”.

Arthur Mizener attests this point of view of the novelist by observing: “It is the author’s urgent, ironic advice to his hero, an imperative cry from the
heart". But critics like John Hutcheens and John W. Aldrige are, however, of the opinion that Updike is arguing both for and against Rabbit's flight and thus makes his picture pointless.

We have discussed in depth how Updike establishes the promiscuous Rabbit as a mystic and gives religious colouring to the adulteries of the other adulterers. One can regard Hawthorne as Updike's predecessor in lending a sublime religious touch to adulterous sex. In The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne likes Hester with her body in her arms to the Madonna and child. Q.D. Leavis regards the scaffold at which Hester is made to appear as a symbol of the cross. The adulterous Hester's suffering is thus glorified as martyrdom at the hands of a brutal theocratic society.

And Charles Feidelson, in his book Symbolism and American Literature, draws attention to the significance of the letter 'A' on Hester's gown. Originally it denoted 'Adulteress'. But, before long, the sympathetic reader comes to associate it with 'Angel'.

Adultery and Nature

R.W.B. Lewis, in his book The American Adam, says that in much American writing from Poe and Cooper to Anderson and Hemingway, the valid rite of initiation for the individual is not an initiation into society, but an initiation away from it. Something he wishes to call 'denitiation'. He goes on to show that such denitiation takes place either in a forest or in the midst of some other natural scene. Though R.W.B. Lewis confines his observations to nineteenth century literature, what he says is largely true of much of twentieth
century literature also. For, the urbanization and industrialization that threatened to dehumanize man in the nineteenth century and induced in him a strong wish to turn away from the restrictive moral codes of society and live a simple, anarchistic life close to nature—these two forces are much more virulent now than they were in the nineteenth century.

The adulterers in Updike deplores the man made taboos on sex and yearn for a return to nature. Not always does this yearning materialize. As Lawrence Lerner says, in his *The Uses of Nostalgia: Studies in Pastoral Poetry*, men is deeply committed to a social life despite his hatred of the sterile conventions of institutionalized society and he finds it next to impossible to uproot himself from society.¹⁹ The Duke Senior in *As You like it* leaves Auden and returns to his kingdom. Thoreau, after his all-too-brief Walden experiment, goes back to the city.

Updike's Rabbit is another classic example of man who cannot turn his back on society, however intense his dissatisfaction with it may be. Running away from his stupid wife, he yearns for sex with a “barefoot woman” (p.22) in “Orange groves”. This is an expression of the pastoral wish to live in harmony with nature away from the clustering encumbrances of advanced civilization.

In conformity with the pastoral vision which views wealth as a hindrance and not as a help to sexual enjoyment, he imagines himself sleeping with “A barefoot Du Pont girl... on drab mattresses” (*Rabbit, Run*, p.23). But, as night closes in, he has to stop his pastoral fantasia and return to the city to find a room to sleep in. Du Pont girls are beyond his reach. He has
to content himself fantasying about them, the yearning to return to nature does not materialize.

Rabbits’ pastoral dream of doing away with mechanical sexual responses is realized on two occasions. His intercourse with his class-mate Mary Ann in a car took place as close to nature as possible, with the rain battering on the windshield. The other memorable experience is his sex with the prostitute Ruth. He prevents her from using contraceptive “gadgets”. (p.64). The prostitute, having had loveless sex so far, has concluded that orgasm is no longer possible for her. But Rabbit is able to release her orgasm and make her into a flower… undress her of her flesh and turn her into sweet air”(p.156). Sexually fulfilled, Rabbit feels himself in harmony with the larger cosmos, he tells Ruth: “I made you and the sun and the stars”(p.89).

But, this affair, though ‘natural’ and fulfilling, cannot last long. Rabbit is too deeply committed to his wife to stick to his mistress. He goes back to his wife, when she gives birth to a child. Thus Rabbit keeps shuttling between nature and society.

In an interview also, Updike draws attention to the instability of the tension between “the inner, intimate appetites and … the very real need of any society to set strict limits and to confine its members. Rabbit, Run … (shows) that there is no solution. It is a novel about the bouncing, the oscillating back and forth between these two kinds of urgencies untill,
eventually, one just gets tired and wears out and dies, and
that is the end of the problem".20

The adulterers in Updike are disgusted with the shut-in, claustrophobic
atmosphere of marriage. Yet they cannot permanently leave their homes. All
that they can bring themselves to do is to have their adulterous affairs away
from their oppressive homes and in the midst of natural scenes. They seek far
off 'natural' place not only to escape public notice but chiefly because nature
helps them to shed their inhibitions. The places to which the adulterers are
instinctively drawn are forests, fields, and sea-shores.

Next to the forest, the field holds a fascination for the adulterers. The
girls who visit the fair in The Poorhouse Fair shed their inhibitions after much
persuasion by their boy-friends and strip themselves naked and walk in a
field, stared at by their boy-friends—the stars, it is said, shed light on these
girls. (p.146). It is thus suggested that heaven itself approves of these
uninhibited lovers. Richard and Ruth of Marry Me have hearty sex in a
secluded field.

Some adulterers are drawn to the sea, partly because the sea, with its
restless waves, mirrors their own restlessness.

At the imagistic level, the adulterers are associated with natural objects
whereas the harsh people who are opposed to adultery are associated with
lifeless, unnatural, destructive objects. By this device, Updike stresses that it
is adulterers and not self-repressed people who live in harmony with nature.
Let us first examine the various natural objects with which adulterers are associated. In Updike, abundant sexuality is associated with the sun. Skeeter, boasting of his phenomenal virility, says;

"I am Jesus. Kiss my balls, they are the sun and the moon, right, and my pecker's a comet whose head is the white-hot heart of the glory that never does fail" (Rabbit Redux, p.183).

In Couples, Georgina and Piet are associated with the sun. Stripping herself naked for open-air sex with Piet, she is said to give the sun its turn and bathe herself in "Solar Siam" (p.59). Their sex life, so colourful and enchanting, is fittingly associated with the rainbow also. Piet describes Georgina's vulva as "the rainbow rim of the circular wet tangency" (p.6), holding him secure. As for Piet, "sun rimmed his skull with rainbow filaments", (p.72). The rainbow image suggests not only the colourfulness of their adultery but also its brevity and evanescence.

The Updikean adulterers are associated with the sea also. The inexhaustibility of the sexual energy of Piet and Zimmerman is associated with the sea. To Piet, "the great syllable around his (the noise made by the waves) seemed his own note sustained since his birth" (p.473). Zimmerman’s sexuality is "a vortex of mounting and widening appetite" (p.196). Shakespeare suggests the promiscuity of the ocean into which many rivers empty themselves. Updike also uses the sea image for a similar purpose. In Couples, Foxy's promiscuity is brought out by the image of the sea ploughed
by ships, "ships go back and forth across you and leave no trace. You accept them all". (p.201).

Sexual fulfillment is associated with flowering in Updike. In Updike adulterers are associated with "a flower’s unresisted swelling, a crocus pushing through snow". (Couples, p.33). Piet calls her vulva “petalled rankness …lined with slippery buds” (p.482). Foxy is also associated with the rose flower. She orders rose bushes for her house when her affairs with Piet has just started. The blooming of her adultery coincides with the blooming of the flower (p.219). In the Centaur, the unquenchability of Vera’s sexual passion is suggested by a flower image;

“There is bloom that succeeds the first bloom, and then a bloom upon that. Human biology, up to a point, is not impatient” (pp.208-209)

The flower image, associated with the adulteresses in Updike shows how these women are a source of sweetness. Before the affair wilts and withers, they give their partners ample chances to taste the sweets of sex.

Because adultery is an outlet for the procreative urge when it is denied, or dissatisfied with the normal outlet, namely, marriage, adultery is associated in Updike with such aids to procreation as pollen, seed, and the like. Vera’s craving for procreation is suggested in the Centaur by associating her with pollen: “There was a golden tinge of pollen on the backs
of her thighs”. (p.30). and,

“She was ... a pollen on the nap of the arms of the chair I
was rooted in (p.249).

Several critics have called attention to Vera’s ‘natural’ sexual
behaviour. Vickery says that Vera represents “nature unalloyed by social
circumspection or moral inhibition”.^^ Joyce Carol Oats says that Vera is
“playful, promiscuous as nature, ultimately as the ancient Magna Mater was
so viciously uncaring of the beautiful adolescent youths she loved and
devoured”.^^

Updike fittingly associates his male adulterers with seed. Joey of the
farm, returning home with his dogs after a short stroll, finds seeds shaped like
rounded arrowheads sticking on to the cuffs of his trousers. He realizes that
nature has used him a “seed-bearer” (p.163). Joey is a seed-bearer in the
metaphorical sense in which Tennessee Williams calls Stanley Kowalski of
his play A Streetcar Named Desire a “gaudy seed bearer”. Joey in divorcing
Joan and Picking up Peggy, is thus suggested to be disseminating life and
playing a constructive role. The one-sided Hamiltons dilate upon the suffering
of Joey’s children but they deliberately omit to mention the significance of the
seed-bearing episode.^^

Rabbit of Rabbit, Run is another adulterer associated with seed.
Working in Mrs. Smith’s garden, Rabbit delights in planting seeds and leaves
them at that. What delights him is “The simplicity. Getting rid of something by
giving it” (p.110). He would like to do the same thing to women also, planting
his seeds in them and then getting rid of them. He believes that, after life is created, it should not be meddled with but left to develop independently. God will take care of all life:

"God himself folded into the tiny adement structure, self-destined to a succession of explosions, the great gathering out of water and air and silicon". (p.110)

Rabbit thinks that his business is over with impregnating women. Taking care of the woman and the children is the work of dull, second-rate people like the Springers and Ruth's parents. Now, this will strike people who do not share Rabbit's mystic faith as sheer irresponsibility. A responsible father has to stay with his wife and children as the gardener has to watch and tend carefully and protect the plants till they are sufficient by grown. Looked at from this common-sensual point of view, there is an unmistakable sort of selfishness in Rabbit's vegetative philosophy.

Just as Updike shows his sympathy toward adulterers by associating them with nature, they show their disapproval of a rancorous attitude towards adultery by associating such an attitude with things that are lifeless, unnatural, and destructive. Richard of Marry Me, though an adulterer himself, is very cruel and vindictive with such mechanical objects as typewriter and dry-cleaning machinery. (p.155).

Updike associate's sexless kill-joys with wood on more than one occasion. Lengel of "A and P", who opposes Sammy's sexuality, is economically secure but is associated by Udpike with lifeless, stodgy matter
such as 'peat moss' aluminum furniture 'and Iron'. It looks as if Lengel has "had an injection of iron" (p. 136). The psychiatrist in the story "My Lover has Dirty Fingernail" is associated with wooden furniture (The music school" short stories, p.174) and so is Harlow of A Month of Sundays, who is very proud of the wooden furniture that he has got for his wife but is unaware of her sexual starvation (p,147). Callagher of Couples who harshly criticizes Piet's adulteries is associated with opaque glass (p.107) and sexless Ken Whitman who cannot forgive his wife's single indiscretion is identified with test-tube (p.445). He is also associated with the real creatures kept for experimental purpose in his laboratory.

Updike associates people who are inhibited and or aware of sex with objects that freeze and kill such as ice, cold, snow, and the like. Snow is a recurrent symbol of lack of sexual ardour in Updike's fiction. In this matter, Updike is in keeping with the practice of twentieth century novelists of note. The name of the Malamud character Frank Alpine (The name Alpine is suggestive of the snow-clad Alps) adequately conveys the coldness and sexual inhibitions of the man. The inhibited Gerald of D.H. Lawrance's Women in Love dies fittingly in the snow. In Couples, the inhibited Angela, Freddy and Janet are associated with show. Freddy, inhibited cannot bring himself to have intercourse with Angela, though Angela is sleeping nakedly in response to his demand. Snow is repeatedly mentioned in conjunction with
Freddy’s inhibited behaviour:

“The banister supported baroque shapes of snow sculpted by the melting of the day and the night’s freezing. (p.405)

“Snow light from the window picked out along rim of her/Angela’s/hair” (p.406)

Piet and Georgina live in the neighbouring room on the same night. But, as they are not inhibited, no snow image is associated with them. Janet, the other inhibited woman in the novel, is also associated with snow. “A light from beyond the snow-heaped parch roof” (p.170), breaks into the room, as Janet huddles against Harold “sex lessly”. On a later occasion, her inhibition is somewhat reduced by the combined persuasion of her husband and her lover and she is able to have coitus with her lover in a self-hearted manner which is associated with half-melted snow. After having this half-hearted coitus, Janet drives back home along a thread bare landscape patched with pieces of dry half-melted snow”. (p.181).

In *Rabbit Redux*, Rabbit is too inhibited to take Peggy at once, even though she is inclined towards him. Peggy’s body feels like “a contour map of some snow land” (p.269) to Rabbit. Jill, quite aware of Rabbit’s inhibitions, calls him an “enormous snowman” (p.221). At the end of the novel, Rabbit reunites with his wife but is too guilt-ridden to bring himself to have sex with her. His inhibition is symbolized by the thermostat’s failure to work and the consequent coldness of the room.
The snowfall in *The Centanur* is associated, among other things, with Peter's inhibitions and inability to have sex with his girl-friend Penny (p.223). Critic David Myers associates the snowstorm with God's infinite grace, Tony Tanner with the shifting plasticity of existence and Dr. B.D. Sharma with the sterility following the loss of Christianity. All these interpretations connect the snow image with George Caldwell, and not with Peter. The reason for the author's connecting Peter with the snows (p.223) is to emphasize his inhibitions.

In Updike bigotted attack on adulteress is associated with ferocious animals on repulsive creatures. Ruth of *Marry Me*, though an adulteress herself, has no sympathy for her adulterous husband and his mistress Sally. Ruth is associated with falcon (her car is called falcon). She behaves exactly like that predatory bird when she swoops down upon Sally and tries to persuade her to give up Jerry. Her carelessly holding her dead embryo in her hands shows that she is a force making for death. Her cool self-control and capacity to stop her affair when is threatened to assume staggering proportions evokes only animal images from Updike. Stopping her affair and going back to her former life, she is associated with "Little animals... going back into their burrows". (p.82).

Updike associates uncharitable people who criticize adulterers without in any way trying to understand them with some optical defect or other. Updike associates hard-hearted attack on adulterers with blindness. Hook who bemoans the contemporary permissive trend in *The Poorhouse Fair* is
presented as partially blind. Richard of *Marry Me* has an on law but no eye on such imponderables as love. His serious limitation is symbolized by his optical defect—only one of his eyes functions and the other eye is blind. Viewed with his single eye,

> “Things were just first ... it was the world... as seen without the idea of God lending each thing a roundness of significance. It was terrible”. (pp.188-189).

This Updike views lack of sympathy for adulterers as a defect in one’s moral vision and this defect is symbolized by some optical defect or other.

To sum up, though drawing attention to the destructive consequences of adultery, Updike takes the very unconventional stand that adultery has many salutary effects also. Divinizing adulterous sex and depicting adulterers as being engaged in a valiant fight against mechanistic civilization, Updike has devalued orthodox values.

**After Adultery, What?**

**A Peep into the Future of Marriage**

Obviously, not all the men and women in Updike are satisfied with right monogamous union for life. They are satisfied with a variety of alternatives such as sex without marriage, informal cohabitation, serial mating, group sex, women’s lib., and the like. Eros is the common wind that pushes the sails of these various alternatives and the port they are heading for is greater human fulfillment.
Celibacy and Sublimation of Sex

One of life-styles chosen by the people who want to avoid the marriage tangle is celibacy and sublimation of the sex instinct. Celibacy requires a high degree of self-discipline which very few are capable of. Hence Updike, true to life, represents only a microscopic minority of men and women practicing it. In Updike, men and women wedded to certain religious orders and careers practice celibacy and sublimation. And some people disappointed in their love affairs are also shown by Updike getting stuck up and remaining celibate.

A careful examination of the images which Updike has associated with celibacy shows that they are not quite in favour of celibacy. The atmosphere in America, as represented by Updike is so much sex-oriented that even the celibacy prescribed by religious order there is not, it seems, strictly adhered to. Even the clergy can hardly keep themselves free from sexual contamination. Reverend March to be a celibate, he cannot refrain from flirting with Vera. He considers George Caldwell a nuisance when the latter approaches him to get his religious doubts clarified.

Some careers require absolute dedication which only celibates can afford. The military career is one such.

The permissiveness in American Society is such that even the unmarried soldier, it seems, does not have to deny himself sexual satisfaction. The brothel is shown to be a recognized avenue of sexual satisfaction for the American soldier. Prior to marriage, Rabbit of *Rabbit, Run* is in the army, having a gay time visiting brothels. The soldiers in James Joyce's novel *From*
Here to Eternity openly frequent brothels. Of course, it is wrong to assume that all Indian soldiers are dissolute. All that we can infer from the non-existence of celibacy among the soldiers in Updike is that celibacy is rare among soldiers in America.

Celibacy requires a high degree of moral idealism which not many are shown to possess in Updike. The Indian in Updike's short story, “The Indian” is a 60 year old celibalex, continuing to brood over his unsuccessful love affair. Uncle Rupe, of Of the Farm seems to have been in love with Mrs. Robinson. Not getting her, he did not Marry.

What is the attitude of Updike to celibacy? He does not seem to consider celibacy a viable alternative to the marriage tangle. Updike regards celibacy caused by disappointment in one’s love affair as a waste of the rich potentialities of life. The Indian who has withheld himself from the variegated panorama of life is associated with ice and marches (The Music School, Short Stories, p.16). These images adequately convey how these celibates have started themselves.

As for celibacy caused by religious vow, Updike shows that it is very hard to maintain the vow. The inner conflict experienced by Catherine and Reverend March makes this clear. Updike’s very refusal to treat celibacy in depth shows his disapproval of it.

A Sexual Friendship

A sexual friendship may be resorted to by people who are too inhibited to strive for sexual fulfillment. People witnessing the bitter experiences of
married couples may also develop a biting aversion towards marriage and content themselves with sexual friendships. Thirdly, fighters for a noble cause may not find any time to devote to the upkeep of a family and so may content themselves with undemanding a sexual friendship.

Updike gives only a solitary instance of a sexual friendship caused by sexual inhibitions. The other two kinds of a sexual relationship are not treated by him at all. The reason might be that the American society being permeated by sex, people hardly ever think in terms of sexual obstinence. As the anonymous *Time* reviewer says about the Updikean characters, sex is

“Their toy, their glud, their trauma, their therapy, their hope, their frustration, their revenge, their narcotic, their main line of communication and their pitiable shield against the awareness of death”.  

These people cannot dispense with sex.

**Science and Marriage**

Like all values, sexual values are also undergoing revolutionary changes, thanks to the impact of science. The contraceptive pill has made it possible for the adulterous women to have extra marital sex and at the same time avoid pregnancy. One reason why adultery is rife in the west is that one commits adultery there without the fear of being exposed by pregnancy.

The immense damage done by science to the traditional concept of chastity is pictured by Updike in *Couples*. Georgina, referring to the easy-
going life made possible by contraception, talks of the post-pill paradise (p.106). Foxy lays behind this modern trend. Not taking the pill, she conceives and breaks her family as well as Piet’s. To judge by the modern seawall standard as exemplified by Richard – “the (adulterous) woman’s responsibility was not to get pregnant” (Marry Me, p.234). Foxy is irresponsible not because she commits adultery but because she allows herself to become pregnant. In America as represented by Updike, things have weekend such a stage that adultery becomes a sin only if it results in pregnancy.

Most of the Updikean adulteress find scientific inventions helpful to them in committing adultery; still, they are debarred from ‘Paradise’ because they have not shed the jealousy and possessiveness which are the marks of primitive way of contraception. She cannot enter the paradise that she has visualized. Her possessive love for Piet causes her untold agony and converts, a paradigmatic experience into hell-torture. Updike thus implies that as along as we do not modernize our mental habits in correspondence with modern scientific techniques we can have only a peep into parasites and never become permanent denizens of it.

Jessie Bernard says that scientists are trying to transplant foetuses, so that in time surrogate females may gestate the infants of other females. They are also trying to store sperm so that men could undergo vasectomy without relinquishing fatherhood forever. “We may need a bit, but a generation from now the new techniques may no longer seem shocking, however unpalatable”.
Sex Without Marriage

The clamour for unrestrained sex without marriage vociferated by some of the characters in Updike forms part of a worldwide trend. Freud, in his *Civilization and its Discontents*, posited the view that we have to pay for civilization with sexual freedom. He said that sexuality should be controlled in order to force people to work. With quite a different rationale, the Pauline view of the world also arrived at the same conclusion. Herbert Marcuse now challenges this Freudian – Pauline point of view. In *Eros and Civilizaiton*, he points out that, since work is no longer necessary in modern affluent societies, sexual repression itself is not so necessary as it was in the past. He also argues that work relations would be improved rather than impeded by free instinctual relations.

These insights of Marcuse have found expression is American fiction. Marcuse’s insight that affluence will be attended by sexual permissiveness is abundantly illustrated in Updike. In *Couples* people have no economic problem and therefore devote themselves to sexual pursuit.

The Don Juanic adventurer enjoys sex without possessing and being possessed by anybody. The idea of binding oneself into one’s sexual partner is revolting to such anti-marriage adventurers. The hippie Jill of *Rabbit Redux* has taken a firm anti-marriage stand but has innumerable lovers. All her affairs are indulged in by her in a cool, detached manner.

Now, free sex can be a success only if both men and women are not possessive. Even in the vastly permissive American society, as pictured by
Updike, people are not quite free from possessiveness. Acute agony is invariably caused to the possessive partner. Updike presents several such cases. The prostitute Ruth, got pregnant by Rabbit, wants him to marry her and is reduced to misery, when he leaves her. Bea and Norma are very much upset when Bech dodges marrying them. They are so much disappointed that they become nearly marijuana addicts.

Another serious limitation of free love is that, as a life style, it suits only young people and not old people. Young people are full of vigour and can afford to roam about. But, as old age sets in the effervescence of these sexual wanderers subsides, and they begin to yearn for a prominent life-partner, for the calm pleasures of a settled home and hearth.

Updike points out that sexual unrestraint suits only young and not old people. Old Stavros becomes disgusted with Janice's insatiable sexuality and calls her tiger and sends her back to husband. Rabbit of Rabbit, Run gets old and quieted in Rabbit Redux. In Rabbit Redux, the anti-marriage Nim is stunned when Rabbit tells her that, in old age, no men will care to her and that she will have to die uncared for, though now she is sought after and made much of wherever she goes because of her youth and charm (p.314). She is horrified by this prospect. Updike thus unanimously points out that the marriage that one sneers at as a prison in one's youth becomes a peaceful haven in old age.

Unrestrained sex might create grave problems for adolescents as a loss of capacity for intensity of feeling. Adolescence is a time of enormously
heightened sensitivity that can be thrilling to experience. This sensitivity is frequently eroded, if not destroyed, by promiscuity. The great love affairs of history have typically involved people who were willing to struggle and to wait and as long, as Jacob waited for Rachel for 14 years, according to the Biblical version. Psychiatrist Ralph R. Greenson suggested that waiting and enduring makes the loved person more precious. He states, “The cool set is accustomed to quick and easy gratifications. Instant warmth and instant sex makes for puny love”.

Jill of *Rabbit Redux* discovers when it is too late that her promiscuity has robbed her of her capacity for deep feeling. She bitterly complains that she is all shit inside (p.299) by which she means that she is becoming dead and incapable of feeling. Instead of refraining from sex to recover her lost capacity for intense feeling, she hopes to rejuvenate and revitalized herself by having more and more sex. She wants Rabbit to have intercourse with her to clean her out. When he fails her, she has abnormal sex with the black Skeeter and feels revived a little. She has reached a stage when only more perverted sex such as group sex, fellatio and cunilingus can satisfy her. She has lost the capacity to derive any pleasure from normal sex.

Rabbit also feels that too much sex deadens Americans.

“So much love, too much love, it is our madness; it is rotting us out, exploding us like dandelion polls” (p.101).

The end of *Rabbit Redux* shows how Rabbit and Janice, sapped and exhausted by promiscuity, cannot have mutual sex. The Hamiltons hope that
Rabbit’s and Janice’s sleep night bring about “Restoration of wasted Powers”\textsuperscript{30}. But this opens to serious doubt. Michael Cooke, commenting upon the ending, says that nothing happens.\textsuperscript{31}

Clashes are bound to arise when the husband and the wife want each other to be submissive but neither is preferred to submit. These men, like Henry James’s Gilbert Osmond exploiting Isabel Archer for his sterile ends, batter on their wives, use them, exploit them, make them over for their own ends, instead of reverencing their unique and independent set of life.

To borrow Tonty Tanner’s description of the selfish man in Jamesian fiction, these men turn life into an “awful game of grab”.\textsuperscript{32} Martin Buber, analyzing exploitative marriage partners in his book, \textit{I and Thou}, distinguishes between the ‘I-it’ relationship and the ‘I-thou’ relationship. In an ‘I-it’ relationship, the husband considers his wife as something to be used and looks at her impersonally as if she were a chair, a rock, a tool. Such a relationship is legitimate for the conduct of ordinary affairs but not satisfying to the desire of the spirit for confrontation with an equal (‘I-thou’) which gives a sense of fulfillment rather than dominatnee. By realizing folly and recognizing the otherness and separateness of their wives, men advance the Lawrentian notion that in a loving relationship the self is not annihilated but maintained. “In mystic balance and integrity – like a star balanced with another star”.\textsuperscript{33}

The husband refrains from curbing the independence and individuality of the wife. The husbands and the wives agree to disagree. They are content
to certain "perfectly polarized" to borrow Lawrence's phrase from *Women in Love*. There is no merging, mingling self-abnegation.

In the American Society as represented by Updike, self has been equated with sex. Janice of *Rabbit Redux* and Mrs. Harlow of *A Month of Sundays* fight for sexual liberty, but there is no woman in Updike's fiction fighting for an independent professional career and developing artistic tastes on her own. This is probably because such issues were settled long ago in favour of women, thanks to the women's liberation movement which fought against imposing stereotyped sex roles on women and insisted that women should be given autonomy, self-confidence, and independence of rather than subservience to male-determined standards.

Students of anthropology and psychology such as Gregory Zilboorg, Alexandra Symonds, Robert Seidenberg and the like, have also exploded the myth of male superiority. That male domination became a thing of the past in America is represented in Updike by showing only Mrs. Robinson of the old generation as having has a similar problem. Mr. Robinson of the *Farm* liked farming, but her husband liked teaching. Mr. Robinson did not interface with his wife's preferences. He gave her a tractor and gave her freedom to pursue agriculture. Mr. and Mrs. Robinson lived in parallel grooves, each recognizing in the other essential attributes that make a human being Homo sapiens rather than something less. Contrasts did not create conflicts between them. As human beings, their relationship was equal and transactional, a relationship described by Dewey and Bentley as "transdermally transactional", ...
which if taken literally, suggests that each participation in a transaction event gets under the skin of the other.

Marriage Partners Condoning Each Other’s Infidelities

In *Marriage and Moral*, Bertrand Russell boldly advocated the view that a husband and wife ought to be able to regain good friendship in spite of affairs. Though Updike nowhere states openly that marriage partners should retort towards each other’s weakness, quite a sizeable number of couples are seen practicing tolerance in his works. The wife/husband in Updike forgives in the hope that her/his adultery will be forgiven in future—concessions are given in the hope of extracting similar concessions for oneself in future. There is thus an element of bargaining in the forgiveness practiced by the Updikean couples. Updike shows that marriage with mutual tolerance might smack of business agreement.

The tolerant wives in Updike do not have any noble motives. Their tolerance is merely a gambit in the sexual game. Updike shows that the American wife bent as much as her husband on supplementing marital satisfaction with satisfaction derivable from extra-marital sex. The wife tolerates the husband’s affairs, so that he will tolerate her own affairs, later. It is all give and take, pure and simple. Janice of *Rabbit, Run* tolerates her husband’s affairs and later, in *Rabbit Redux*, walks out of him. Foxy of *Couples* decides to marry Piet but leaves him free to have his fill of extra-marital sex (p.497).
The reason for this tolerance is that, deep in the releases of her heart, she also wants to have unchecked extra-marital adventures after marrying Piet. Her restlessness and readiness to flirt are seen when she is away from Piet for a brief period. She flirts with the promoter of the lodge where in she stays and is drawn to the negroes whom she admires as ‘a very silky people’ (p.499). When the negroes want to sleep with her, she is happy to find that her body is ‘worth something’ (p.499). Writing to Piet, she hints at her desire to have an independent sex life: “Your fate need not be mine” (p.498). The last sentence of the novel is also suggestive of Foxy continuing to have extra-marital sex even after sleeping with Piet.

As Tony Tanner says, the last sentence of the novel echoes the first sentence and suggests the circularity of the whole process. That is, the adulterous experiences that the two underwent in Tarbox are likely to be repeated in Lexington also. Critic Rachael Burchard also supports this view. Robert Detweiler and Edward P. Vargo are not quite convincing when they talk of Piet's and Foxy's abiding relationship... a configuration of Agape rather than Eros and of “their inescapable love for each other.”

What is relevant to our discussion here is that Foxy is so surely prepared to tolerate Piet's adulteries because she expects him to reciprocate and tolerate her affairs. Thus, the Updikean wife's tolerance appears cold and calculating. There is nothing sacrificial about it.

In the world of Updike, the tolerant husband is, like the tolerant wife, cold and calculating. He gives freedom to his wife to gain freedom for himself.
Thinkers like Darwin and Westermarck thought that male possessiveness would be a major prop of monogamy. Darwin was of the opinion that female chastity was buttressed and supported by male jealousy:

"Looking far enough back in the stream of time, and judging from the social habits of man as he now exists, the most probable view is that he originally lived in small communities, each with a single wife, or if powerful, with several, whom he jealously guarded against all other men."^39

And Westermarck, after surveying the anthropological literature on male jealousy, concluded that it has not only been a powerful obstacle of promiscuity, but that its peculiar violence may possibly serve the very purpose of preventing.^40 If possessiveness were, in fact, so innate and so powerful, the future of extra-marital relations for women would be negative, but Updike shows that husbands and wives in twentieth century America are not so very passive; they have learnt to connive at one mother's extra-marital relations, so that they could both have a richer sexual life. Piet encourages his wife Angela to sleep with Freddy, so that he can carry on his affair with Foxy undisturbed.

Thomas Marshfield of A Month of Sundays encourages his wife to have sex with his assistant Ned, so that he can have affairs with other women, without any threat from his wife. The tolerance of Jerry and Richard in Marry Me also stem from such business-like calculation.
In *Rabbit Redux*, Rabbit does not check his wife’s adultery with Starvos, because he has his own affairs with Peggy and Jill to busy himself with. Critic Fred L. Stanley calls attention to Rabbit’s possessive attitude towards Janice, Ruth and Lucy Eccles. But Rabbit is not so very possessive as *Rabbit Redux*. Thus, there is nothing sacrificial about these tolerant husbands. They do not mind the losses, because the gains to them are greater.

Wrath and intolerance, instead of correcting the erring partner, either create a unbridgeable gap between the husband and wife or induce the erring partner resort to secrecy. Updike manifests his disapproval of intolerance by showing the destruction wrought by it in novel after novel. Updike shows that Angela’s divorce of Piet and Ken’s divorce of Foxy only lead to the crumbling of their families and the sufferings of their children.

Updike manifests his admiration of the tolerant partner by showing how tolerance keeps a family unbroken in contrast to the family broken by intolerance. Updike shows how the mutual tolerance of Rabbit and Janice keeps their family intact. Updike makes his disapproval of intolerance clear by covering intolerant people with test – tube, is made out the butt of ridicule in the novel, just as Carry Harlow is in *A Month of Sundays*.

Thus, Updike shows that tolerance towards the erring marriage partner is definitely better than intolerance, as it keeps the family unbroken.
Group Marriage

One bizarre recent development in America has been the growth of the ‘group sex’ movement and the wife-swapping movement. Husband-wife pairs take a night’s holiday, together and yet apart and yet another, swinging and changing partners. The crux of group sex – the vivid narratives by participants in The Group Sex Tapes edited by H.F. Margolis and P.N. Rubentesin — lies in the dissociation it offers between varieties and commitment, thus preserving the marriage and family ties while giving partners chance to act out their intense fantasy life which would otherwise be repressed. The adulterer is thus enabled to have cake and eat it too.

Updike’s Couples is a minute study of the group sex of ten or so couples. Most of the couples of this novel find in group-sex relief from oppressive boredom. Their swinging develops into a highly pleasurable sharing experience adding variety to their lives. They discover not only heightened desire and love for each other but also their ability to give and receive sexual satisfaction increasing with greater experience.

Now, group sexes can thrive only if the partners are free from jealousy and possessiveness. The sexual groups in Couples disintegrate because the people refuse to give their partners freedom to swing according to their likes and dislikes. The saltine group crumbles because, after some time, Eddie Constantine becomes jealous of his wife’s lover Ben Saltz and gets him dismissed from his job and banishes from Tarbox. Piet has innumerable affairs but when his wife is drawn towards Freddy and Eddie, he does not
Though he goes about saying that he will throw rose petals on the lover having intercourses with Angela, he is acutely possessive at the bottom of his heart.

Anjela also contradicts herself in this way. She blindly says that she bothers no more about her husband’s adulteries than she does about his going to the bathroom. But when his affairs with Georgina, Bee and Foxy are exposed, she loses all her patience and promptly divorces him. But for their possessiveness the Hamas could have worked out a four-sided relationship with some Tarbox couples and lived happily.

Sociologists Larry and Joan Constantine find that sexual groups split up not only because of jealousy and conflict but also because of loss of interest brought about by the mechanistic nature of their sex. Cold and unfeeling swinging, that is, sex for the sake of sex without any emotional involvement, is likely to create boredom and ennui sooner than later.

Updike's couples bear out this finding also. The promiscuous Bee says that all are boring. Carol’s interest in her lover Bea Saltz flags in a short period and she considers him a bore (p.495). Foxy says that they all bore God and God is bored with America. After the week-end group-sex the men and women feel not exhilarated but “like flowers from which the Sun is withdrawn ... like a smeared window” (p.86). The couples give and take sex not out of love for the partners but out of a sense of obligation. The result is the creation
of an unhealthy atmosphere. To quote the authorial comment on the Apple-Smith mess:

"The women would sleep with the men out of pity, and each would present the other her men out of a attenuated and hopeless graciousness ... a ramifying fact and cross weave of concern were giving their homes as unhealthy hospital air". (Couples, p.19).

Updike condemns possessiveness, which is the greatest block to group sex. The possessiveness of the couple is paralleled with the wrangling of children over the possession of a bird's nest finally destroying the nest (p.75) This analogy illustrates not only the destructiveness but also the childishness of sexual possessiveness. In Marry Me, the possessive couples causing destruction of families are associated with narrow-minded landowners whose refusal to give away a bit of their land to straighten an s-curve in the road causing accidents frequently (p.136). These two analogies bring out Updike's disapproval of possessiveness.

Updike expresses his unmistaken liking for group marriage as a worthy alternative to rigid monogamy by raising group marriage to the level of a religion. In Marry Me, the families of Jerry and Richard, gathered together to discuss the common crisis facing them as a result of each man having enjoyed the other man's wife, are compared to the gathering
at the holy communication:

"We are all too close to hate. We must all love each other now. As a boy he (Jerry) had been bored by all of church except communion, the moment when a crowd of them rumbled to the rail and dissolved the water in their months. Now he felt that in the living room something comparable... had occurred". (p.181).

A sexual gathering is held on a par with a religious gathering. Also, in several interviews, Updike has publicly announced group marriage as a "religion", evolved to meet the needs of the day. In the interview by Lewis Nichole, Updike calls the group marriages in Couples "Miniature churches" (190). In “One Big Interview”, he calls the group marriage "a religious community founded on physical and psychical interpenetration" and “the Emergent religion... the only thing let”.

Updike only complaints against group marriage in that times which are not quite ripe for establishing group marriage as a workable alternative to monogamy. People have not yet liberated themselves fully from the clutches of old restrictive codes. The abortions in his novels (Foxy's in Couples and Ruth's in Marry Me,) the unripe berries that Peggy plucks in Of The Farm, Freddy's unfinished play in which the protagonist appears too soon, and the premature birth of the Kennedy baby and its death in Couples – all these in a way symbolize the premature and hence abortive attempts made by people at
establishing group marriage as an institution. Group marriage is only a foetus in the womb of time. The photograph of the pregnant Joan to which attention is repeatedly called in Of The Farm symbolizes society on the point of giving birth to the new institution, group marriage.

Updike is not a mere Jeremish to decry moral values. He shows that values are in the melting pot and that the sanest course is to forge such values as suit our conveniences; he condemns a procrustean morality.

Living in a society, which tolerates sexual patterns other than the accepted norm, Updike could freely discuss alternatives to strict monogamy. Updike suggests that Americans are moving towards a 3-layer-cake type of society as far as male-female relationships are concerned. There will be a coexistence of these different patterns. One pattern, as he sees it, will be that a proportion of the people will settle for a sex freedom. They will not marry, but will drift into liaison of long and short terms. There will be no attempts to punish or suppress such persons.

He suggests that the second layer of this cake would involve more structuring, with a number of people choosing to go in and out of marriage and probably having several marriages in a life time. In these second layer there will be an attitude of freedom regarding extra-marital sex while the couples are married.
He suggests that in the third layer of the cake he who accepts the concept of exclusive monogamy preceded in at least some cases by premarital chastity.

Thus Updike shows his awareness of the immense complexity of human life by visualizing a 'pluriverse' to replace the monolithic universal morality.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


4. Ibid., p.46.


11. Ibid, p.29.


35. Tony Tanner, *City of Words*, p.292.


