

Selfhood, Solipsism and the Capitalistic Model in John Updike's *Rabbit, Run*

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Abstract: *John Updike's Rabbit, Run is a very consistent literary substance that uses banal everyday confrontations, over familiar marital situations, and shopworn cultural merchandise to expose the deep societal malaise that afflicts the postwar American middle-class. The novel vividly captures the striking downfall of the normative cultural system that once tied America together. This three-section paper is an attempt to cast light upon the social dislocation resulting from the shift towards capitalism during the late 50s. The first section tries to understand Updike's implied critique of the newly glorified "selfhood" phenomenon which is revealed to be a far-flung national subterfuge. The 2nd section discusses solipsism as both a cause and consequence of social egotism. Updike grasps this salient obsession with the self and conveys it as a collective faulty mental state that keeps producing defective individuals who narcissistically seek positive feedback to choose their social circle. The last section investigates the impact of the overseas exportation of the capitalistic model, the birth of mimetic societies, and their resistance against rampant acculturation. Updike's novel is a disguised didactic lecture about the unspoken enactment of the everyday as seen through the eyes of Harry Angstrom and a neat set of Dramatis Personae.*

Keywords: Capitalistic Model, John Updike's *Rabbit, Run*, Selfhood, Solipsism

Introduction

In the late half of 20th century America, Harry Angstrom is pulled back and forth between the mighty magnetic poles of desire and repulsion. This stern space between the hammer and the anvil is not a place to be and, as such, Harry, or Rabbit (as nicknamed by Updike) suddenly finds himself running away. A seemingly simple story that encompasses much more than it wants to tell. The over simplicity of events is rather frustrating as the story goes on. Banal everyday confrontations, over familiar marital situations, and shop worn social merchandise are shaping the narrative in a way any reader can easily relate to them. Paradoxically, this perturbing ease in storytelling is what makes the novel a very consistent literary substance as it demands Olympian mental force to make composite social and political motifs comfortable to read. The story of Harry Angstrom, as simple as it is, hides a deep social malaise.

For Postmodern critics, it is essential to cultivate a healthy reflexive distrust towards meanings exposed in plain sight. Thus, the deconstruction of meaning into fragmented segments is crucial. This method of semantic dismantlement is believed to emancipate non-literal meanings. From a deconstructionist point of view, meaning is believed to practice systematic self-denial that requires a methodic dismantlement to grasp some of its cryptic signals and construe them. This method, as clinically methodic as it seems, leads to no fixed meaning and engenders disparity between the sign and the signifier. In this regard, Paul De Man argues: "For the statement about language, that sign and meaning can never coincide is what is precisely taken for granted in the kind of language we call literary" (17). This statement sounds like a capital sentence over any attempt to gather around a semantic consensus, but when in history humans were able to mentally unify? Blotted out and unvoiced expectations were always pressured under the controlling influence of the Cannon. Texts like *Rabbit, Run* are spaces where cryptic signals are being sent to whom with possession of "the code" to decrypt. This harsh literary environment is the perfect cradle for a semi-hibernating intellectual rebellion that craves to see the light.

In this line of thought, one can feel lost in an ocean of meaningless interpretations, but amidst the seemingly otiose lines of Updike's human jeremiad, guiding landmarks are available for all to see. Cultural dynamics within a shifting American society are vividly captured in the novel. In a postmodern context, these dynamics are symptoms of a society in labor that will later give birth to the contemporary globalized American cultural landscape. The spectacular metamorphosis of the American society is in some instances offensively loud it resonates beyond the geographical borders of America. *Rabbit, Run* is a vehement outcry against the striking downfall of the normative ethical system. This derangement at the core of the national culture works as an alarm system to drive attention to the fast-growing repertoire of social diseases. One

serious case of social unsoundness is the preoccupation with the self as a prime concern. This is so divisive it shatters any society to its basic unit “the individual”. With the rising sense of economic freedom among the American middle class encouraged by principles of free enterprise, the pursuit of profit, and self-reliance, collective conformity appears to be an expired formula. Individualism as such is not a bad concept since it allows more room for free actions and accords to each one a voice to express his/her uniqueness in a crowded world. But when this healthy concept is maximized the result is disastrous.

Postmodern novels are laden with maximized cultural models. *Rabbit, Run* is no exception. Despite the minimalistic manicured narration action within the book, the character design adopted by Updike inflates some of the social behaviors thus maximizing the results. In this context, a supposed ambitious American everyday man like Harry Rabbit is stretched to the extreme it becomes the epitome of bad social breeding. The portrayal of this antihero is as selfish, domineering, imperious and deceitful, but also committed to a system of values and ideas makes him an interesting study case. Then, to how much degree does Updike take the notion of the “I” or “the self” in his narrative? Does the rampant concept of the “I” amplify social dissolution? And is this typical behavior endemic to American society, or does it resonate offshore? These are some questions among others that this article will try to investigate in further lines.

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I-Exploring the Selfhood Phenomenon

Going down the “Rabbit” hole makes it incredibly difficult for one to extricate himself. It is stunning how straightforward everyday social interactions can hide complex underlying nets and nettles of deeper signification. These interactions are behind the shaping of societies and individuals. In other words, socialization bears a mutual reciprocal action of learning and teaching. Consequently, individuals are not the product of a sudden surge of self-consciousness, but rather the craft of complex social demeanors that gradually forms someone’s image of himself. Goffman contends:

What the individual is for himself is not something that he invented. It is what his significant others have come to see he should be, what they have come to treat him as being, and what, in consequence, he must treat himself as being if he is to deal with their dealings with him. (279)

Goffman’s view of the forming of the self is accurate since it explains the chains of actions and reactions that drove Harry Angstrom to run. It also explains why he is trapped in a vicious continuous circle that keeps bringing him back to *Brewer*, Pennsylvania. Through this, Harry is unable to foster a new life outside the borders of a society that harbors his own identity. This raises the question about the ability of one to live outside human societies. Stories of severe isolation like the ones with characters such as Robinson Crusoe and Chuck Noland (*Castaway*. 2000) show that their journeys into the wild were the result of forced separation and not of well-thought choices. Therefore, living deliberately outside sheltering societies can turn one’s life into a chronic struggle for survival which contradicts the most basic of human instincts, self-preservation.

Harry is designed by Updike to not be an exception. He is forced to fit into the established social system. As an omniscient narrator, Updike is the master of his puppets. He leaves no choices for his characters to stand out and was criticized for adopting such a narrative choice. This kind of criticism takes its legitimacy from the fact that Harry is supposed to be a free self-aware decision maker which is paradoxical to his limited range of action in the novel. In fact, he is not the only character to be smitten with this disability. Updike makes his characters unconsciously abide by a normative code of behavior as he wants to hint to the reader about the restrictive influences of a crippled society upon its individuals. In this regard, Harry Rabbit is nowhere close to a typical American success story where the hero rebels against a limiting society and then goes free to confidently escalate the pyramid of needs. He is, contrarily, easily confused as soon as he quits his geographical zone. In *Rabbit Run*, and during his first escape attempt, Harry finds himself like a lost child, unequipped to face the unknown. The narrator tells: “The farther he drives the more he feels some great confused system, Baltimore now instead of Philadelphia, reaching for him” (34). Such a situation seems to be nothing more than anecdotal as Harry’s self-confidence dissolves as he approaches major cities. These big conglomerations are depicted by the author as reaching for him. Such a subtle allusion to juvenile literature where hazarding outside the safe zone bears dramatic outcomes is a brilliant literary feat.

Updike's fictive yet sharply realistic society functions as a social incubator that keeps its never developing characters in a state of perpetual gestation. Then, how can "the self" grow autonomous under constant watch? Escaping the system is the short answer, yet the narrative makes it futile. Driven by utilitarian impulses, postmodern America conceived the *American Dream*, a catchy and trendy way to celebrate freedom and promote economic bravery. The farming of this newly acclaimed wisdom is rather paradoxical. It both extols the nation as a group marching towards wealth under the massive U.S. banner and promotes extreme individual independence despite the blatant downfall of ethics that implies. For this reason, it is logical to assume that Updike's Rabbit as an apostle of this self-aware society is alone in the crowd as there is no such thing as a collective dream.

Updike's ironic tone about the promotion of self-reliance is in some instances explicit in the novel. For instance, when Rabbit followed his impulse to escape his monotonous life, he encountered an old farmer who's running a suburban hardware store. The discussion that ensued is a vivid testament to how the postmodern American concept of selfhood is a far-flung national subterfuge.

"Suppose I go straight?"

"That'll take you to Church town."

"What's after Church town?"

"New Holland. Lancaster."

"Do you have any maps?"

"Son, where do you want to go?"

"Huh? I don't know exactly."

"Where are you headed?" The man is patient. His face at the same time seems fatherly and crafty and stupid. (29)

Not even crediting Rabbit with the minimal status of being responsible, Updike afflicts his character with a strident deficiency in his sense of orientation. Harry lives in a complete state of confusion. The surprising question about his destination abruptly brings him back to reality. Alone amid his unplanned venture, his answer is so truthful it can sum up the point of inquiry of this section of the article. He does not know.

At this point of narration, Updike's view of American selfhood is set. The cultural archetype of the Self as a capable free entity is annihilated. The power mechanisms that manipulate postmodern America are the principal causes behind youth upholding fallacious images of themselves. Consumerism combined with corporate rivalry resulted in greater protection of the interests of consumers and consequently produced a generation that knows exactly how to spend but miserably fails to earn. The dialogue ends with a subtly executed piece of literary pasquinade where Updike mocks the pseudo-patriarchal society represented by the "fatherly" farmer; patient, fatherly, crafty, and stupid. The man who is supposed to be an adjuvant in a helpless situation is mocked, and by who? By Rabbit, a complete social failure. The acme of irony.

Another trait of the self that can be extricated from this dialogical stance is the unhesitating assertive dispositions and unflinching temperament of Rabbit to guard his ground against any encroachment. The traditionally more highly regarded figure of the "Father" is seen as overly intrusive and should be dealt with as such. In this regard, Updike often portrays any cooperation between generations as a series of continuities and ruptures and advocates these joint efforts as a temporary tactical maneuver, not as a basic alliance. Paradox is another instrument that Updike uses to generate sarcastic images against the absurd reasoning of the auto-proclaimed self-confident individuals exemplified in the novel by Rabbit. If this latter feels resentment against the patriarchal intrusive demeanor, then he should validate the opposite behavior. Harry shows no sign of obedience to such logic. In one instance, the Zims (neighbors who used to live next to his parents) decided to sell their residence to an old couple. Updike recounts Harry's irritability against the restrained demeanor of these new occupants:

They (The Zims) had sold their half-house to an old couple, strict Methodists, and the old man refused to cut the strip of grass between his house and the Angstroms'. Mr. Zim, who

worked outdoors rain or shine on weekends, as if it's his only pleasure in life and I don't wonder, had always cut it. The old Methodist cut exactly his half. (22)

Not only does Harry disapprove of past intrusions of the Zims, but he also despises the social abstinence of the newcomers. Although his complaints keep being quite minimal, Harry is a recidivist grumbler. His paradoxical temper is symptomatic of internal inconsistencies that Updike hints a ton many occasions. He represents both the repulsive and the attractive which induces a tremendous deal of fluster among the novel's characters he is smitten with. Rabbit also works as a center ground around which everything gravitates. This might allude to an egocentric being—first and foremost, yet the novel's highly stratified contexts render a much more diluted version of this.

If Updike utilizes his central character as an aesthetic articulation of the wider American society, then it is within this frame of thought that one should investigate ideology and institutional practice inherent to the state. In other words, Rabbit is a product of an already existing American social factory and bears within his core construction all the cultural traits of his country. Instead of being a hive of beneficial cultural exchanges, America seems to many social critics as the emblem of egotism. Much like Rabbit's, American selfhood is purely oriented toward self-interest. The U.S. approach to foreign policy is driven by ragged egocentrism. On many occasions, the U.S shows that international relations are dealt with in a unilateral perspective where a country's value depends upon its utility to the White House. The wall that America wanted to erect along its southern border is quite similar to the strip of grass that divides the Angstroms and the Zims. Borders (in the broader sense of the word) are not only built by rational prudential concerns but also by the utter desire to clamorously express existence. Updike grasps this salient self-focus at both national and individual levels and conveys it as a collective faulty mental state that keeps producing defective individuals who narcissistically seek positive feedback to choose their social circle. In a strictly passive respect, this behavior is representative of psychological distress that involves a deep sense of worthlessness and lack of control that ironically manifests as faux self-confidence.

Rabbit's whimsical escapade is an indicator of the terrible finitude of selfhood in a postmodern setting. Although his sole presence exerts some dictatorship the narrative often bends under; this bending seems to shove him down even more profoundly into the hole. Updike narrates:

He thinks again of his goal, lying down at dawn in sand by the Gulf of Mexico, and it seems in a way that the gritty seat of his car is that sand, and the rustling of the waking town the rustling of the sea. (42)

This highly phantasmagorical instance is a testimony about how the whole world severely twists to accommodate Rabbit's desires. The great appeal of the sandy shores of the south seems to win over a desperate position. Nevertheless, this situation is comparable to a drug trip from which the wake-up to reality is a severe downgrade. The self is proven here to be extremely weak. It sounds like no amount of pleading or persuasion can liberate Rabbit from his grim self-constructed existence. His ever-growing isolation is a sharp marker of an increasing devaluation of his social bonds. The next section will try to cast light on the solipsistic tendencies that affect both Rabbit and the American middle class he represents.

II – Solipsism: Beyond the Catchword

Solipsism as defined by *Collins English Dictionary* is the extreme form of skepticism which denies the possibility of any knowledge other than of one's own existence or the theory that only the self exists or can be proved to exist (Collins). This superlative form of radical separatism cannot be imagined taking shape outside the realm of scholastic philosophy. Indeed, its manifestation in the literary corpus is much more nuanced. It is very unlikely that one develops a consciousness outside the sphere of interactivity. Human beings are social by design; therefore, their actions are the pure results of socialization. Solipsism as defined by theorists is excessively affirmative and cannot be fully applicable to the maverick sphere of humanity.

Nothing seems more solipsistic than the Cartesian doctrine of the ego. As exclusive as it seems, the “I think; therefore, I am” is not a completely veridical axiom. As mentioned before, the way the *Self* perceives itself is widely constructed upon its interactions with the Other. Therefore, the act of proving self-existence expands beyond the mental world to manifest in the physical one as well. Even though Descartes draws a sharp delimitation between the thinking substance (the mind) and the expanding substance (the physical body)

respectively referred to as *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, the human being proves to be a wonderful combination of these two. Then, how does Rabbit harbor a seemingly solipsistic psych and contrarily maintain the temper of a free particle?

“Everybody who tells you how to act has whisky on their breath” (Updike31). Such a simple sentence underscores the radicle subjectivism Rabbit imposes on the narrative. This technique of framing the events through the eyes of Rabbit is what grants the novel its claustrophobic tone. The truth resides in only the mind of Rabbit. This Kantian approach to truth is as exclusive as Descartes’, therefore, it constructs a one-sided view of the world that lacks a 3rd dimension necessary to perceive depth. Rabbit ironically associates wisdom with inebriation and nullifies at the same time its foundational ingredient which is ‘Reason’. Consequently, the society in which Rabbit evolves is denied access to reason, and any action performed outside the closed circle of Harry himself is considered irrational and dealt with as an alcohol deprivation symptom. In this respect, the only sane individual is Rabbit as he judges. The others’ doings are simply considered misconduct without any further investigation. This can explain the mistrust and suspicion Harry associates with his surroundings. A lucid interpretation of this kind of behavior hints toward existential insecurity, identity crisis, and other social pathologies that Updike camouflaged within an ordinary setting. Rabbit’s solipsist behavior is a defense mechanism deployed to maintain the delicate equilibrium between sanity and complete mental breakdown. This explains in part his stubborn close-mindedness and his constant moving.

To this point, it seems that Rabbit is the sole entity responsible for events and their consequences. Yet close attention to the narrative disfavors this approach. The other characters are not paragons of a conservative society either. The novel is more a story about David versus Goliath than about Nero burning Rome. Rabbit is a victim, an unfortunate person who suffers from inauspicious circumstances. His social retreat and revulsion towards his entourage are well justified. “There is this quality, in things, of the right way seeming wrong at first.” (Updike 37). Rabbit’s impulsive venture may seem like an act of pure cowardice but even the bravest of soldiers’ retreats when the conditions become seriously life-threatening. Harry’s leap of faith is rather a disorderly retreat of an unarmed postmodern “David” in the face of the social abnormalities he cannot stand against. Solipsism (in Rabbit’s case) is to be understood as forced and not embraced by choice.

On the one hand, Harry does not deny the existence of reality outside his mind, he denies only the part involved with his immediate surroundings and considers this area as a massive vacuum. On the other hand, he believes that once he crosses the frontiers of this void, the real world will unfold to welcome him. “His goal is the white sun of the south like a great big pillow in the sky.” (Updike 32). Rabbit is not affected by solipsist syndrome as a psychological pathology that needs clinical care. He does not negate the existence of the physical world, nor he completely dissociates himself from it. He rationally knows what lies within his society, only his reactions to the abrasive social milieu are intuitive. Harry is not erudite enough to rationally consider solipsism as a sound choice. Johnstone clarifies this idea:

Since the tactual body is integral to the perceiving subject, any impartial (irrational) solipsist who declares the sensuous world to be unreal, must, by an involuntary self-referential manoeuvre, include himself or herself in the unreal world. (323)

This statement can be taken as cogent evidence that Harry is not an intellectual social troglodyte. He is to be understood as a rational person forced into compulsive behaviors that make his world appear unreal to him.

Harry is part of a whole. Chosen by Updike to fall into the middle region of the social spectrum, he can meddle with the extremities of human behavior but is unable to adequately maintain intelligible communication with them. Such a situation creates ambiguities and makes the novel a very slippery substance. Mr. Updike told Jane Howard in a 1966 interview for Life magazine. “I like middles,” he continued. “It is in middles that extremes clash, where ambiguity restlessly rules.” (Lehmann-haupt). Although solidly constructed, the novel narrative addresses highly unstable substances ranging from insecure individuals to the morbid downfall of social ethics. It is in such troubled contexts that solipsism manifests itself either as chosen or forced. With that as a point of anchor, society is reduced to a mere agglomeration of disharmonious individuals who are discordant with themselves. Rabbit for example lives on the memory of his former self, a great basketball player who turned into a trapped family man with no choice but to cope with a mind-wearing life routine. His dissonant interactions with others are manifestations of a burgeoning rebellion that craves to burst.

The troubles that haunt Rabbit come from the immediate entourage he openly despises, thus, his retreat from such an asphyxiating atmosphere. Surprisingly enough, Rabbit encompasses both roles of the tyrant and the victim. The novel's iconography of a social despot is wonderfully counterbalanced by a subtle victim like discourse. The cohabitation of opposites drapes the narrative with the right amount of ambiguity to maintain a constant sensation of unease. What ties the tyrant and the victim together is their deep solipsism and the systematic rejection of any other alternatives to their own certainties. Both believe in the legitimacy of their deeds and sayings and see themselves as bearers of the holy emblem of truth. Therefore, the novel's version of solipsism keeps oscillating between cause and consequence. On some occasions, solipsism is the cause of extreme individualism, in others; it is the consequence of living in a society driven towards consumerism and self-reliance. Between these two instances, solipsism is formulated as non-beneficial to both individuals and the society they live in. Updike is undeniably a very talented postmodern literary architect. Across the novel, the actions are simple, clear, and well-articulated, their meaning, however, is everyone's guess. This article tries hard to stay objective by evading firm formulations since such works of fiction are often made extraordinarily slippery in purpose "to put the whole notion of conventional rationality in question" (Morrison 30). In this regard, the exact framing of solipsism in such complex contexts is downright jeopardy.

III – Rabbit Globalized

America is an excellent cultural exporter. Relying on its strong legal institutions, the U.S cultivates its image as a brand. The national flag becomes then a trademark for various cultural products. What was once considered endemic to America has become a global matter. Rabbit is a cultural product made in a post-WWII booming America. It has all the signs of being crafted under the new dictums of the postwar counterculture. During the fifties, the American culture has moved from rigorously normative to a less regulated business in which individuals are invited to embrace freelance orientations. This sudden burst of liberty after the abrasive years of war paved the way for some daring forms of liberalism. As part of the human culture, literature has also been affected by this cultural transition, and some unthinkable ways of writing made their way to the once closed circle of academia. The new literary curriculum is obliged to incorporate works such as Jack Kerouac's 1957 best-seller *On the Road* which is written on a simple roll of paper and devoid of correct punctuation and adequate paragraph structure. The book is a glorification of the carefree attitude and an appraisal of group disaffiliation. Kerouac's book is acclaimed by many critics and regarded as one of the best novels to ever grace 20th-century literature. If this alludes to something, then it must be to "Change".

As America's growth to super-economic power greatens, its cultural attraction grows also in tandem. In these circumstances, other countries start to exemplify American culture as the one to follow. Of course, other civilizations are successful, yet none comes even close to the colossal success that America has had during this era. The spectacular social metamorphosis of the American landscape caused an entire revamping of what it means to be an achiever. Propelled by the American media giants, the adoption of the "economic individual" concept quickly spread all over the world. Soto argues: "You cannot walk through a Middle Eastern market, hike up to a Latin American village, or climb into a taxicab in Moscow without someone trying to make a deal with you(17). The form of capitalism expressed by Soto is worth paying attention to. Despite the diverse geographical space in which it occurs, it betrays a profound social anomaly that ties these locations together. It shows that profit is the major social driver among individuals.

As in *Rabbit, Run*, people all over the world are growing more materialistic. With the establishment of a globalized media system in the fifties, the leading U.S foreign policy starts implementing localized forms of acculturation in farther countries with no need to physically interact with them. By exporting its cultural commodities, not only does America expand its marketing territory but also advertises the benefits of the whole capitalist system. It is hard for anyone to find flaws in a system that generates miraculous rates of economic growth and grants citizens more freedom and autonomy. Therefore, many nations not only joined the capitalistic system economically but also adopted its social variation as well. This behavior favors the emergence of mimetic societies. "An important facet of social globalism involves the imitation of one society's practices and institutions by others: what some sociologists refer to as "isomorphism" (Keohane and Nye107). The social isomorphism referred to here is seen across the globe and can be easily linked to the consumer culture as exported by America. Although some societies are historically resistant to foreign culture penetration like Japan, China, North Africa, and the Middle East, one can see that they aren't what

they used to be anymore. The social change in these countries is quite substantial as Inglehart and Baker state:

Evidence from around the world indicates that economic development tends to propel societies in a roughly predictable direction: Industrialization leads to occupational specialization, rising educational levels, rising income levels, and eventually brings unforeseen changes in gender roles, attitudes toward authority and sexual norms; declining fertility rates; broader political participation; and less easily led publics. (21)

The list of changes as reported by Inglehart and Baker is typical of the social mimicry adopted by nations to align with the capitalistic directives. The Impact on their economies is good but the social side effects of such blind adoption are ravaging. Updike's exposition of the social disintegration of the American middle class is a warning to whom it may concern. Family dislocation, corporate individuals, profit-based socialization, and mental solipsism are fallouts of extreme capitalism. For Rabbit, the family has become a hindrance to his autonomy and well-being, therefore, his only alternative was to break free from them and his depressing surroundings.

Rabbit's choices and behavior are not exclusive to the white American middle class anymore. They found a way to other completely different societies. Arabic TV shows and films for example are laden with stories about family men who try to fulfill their dreams away from grumpy wives and troublesome children. The chattering of families has become a globally redundant theme in postmodern art productions. Proverbs such as "Minus one, minus a problem" recently appeared in conservative societies like Morocco to indicate how social relationships are becoming synonymous with problems meaning that the fewer friends one has the fewer problems one can face. The only viable friendship then is the one with benefits.

It is quite irksome to believe that conservative societies have lost to the capitalistic invasion, yet recent studies show that there is an active cultural negotiation process going on. For example, Morocco can identify as a liberal market in concordance with the global capitalist view on the matter. But the statistics show otherwise. *Hofstede Insights* asserts via numerical data that Moroccans "exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively small propensity to save for the future, and a focus on achieving quick results." And have "a very high preference for avoiding uncertainty". A reading of such results shows a resistance to the all-encompassing capitalistic formula. In other words, some conservative countries such as Morocco prefer to always keep a safe distance from anything foreign to their own culture even under the invasive strategies of global media. Full trust is then refuted, and new cultures are negotiated. "The "Death of Distance" is the battle cry of the information age. In some domains, this refrain is true; as a generalization, however, it is a half-truth." (Keohane and Nye 110). As stated here, believing in a complete fusion with capitalism is wrong as there always be a safe distance that allows room for rethinking choices and taking adequate decisions.

IV- Conclusion

The selfhood phenomenon is not naturally inbuilt in individuals themselves, but it is the result of their social interactions with the milieu. Therefore, the emergence of selfhood as the new in-vogue doctrine to adopt is a reaction to the austere social atmosphere that favors material wealth over any other consideration. *Rabbit, Run* was crafted to address this problem in an aesthetic format with beauty and taste. The building of a character such as Harry Angstrom is nothing short of a tour de force by Updike. Rabbit is a postmodern anomaly that exists also outside the novel and should be seen as both a fictive character that abides by the author's authority and as a representative of a confused new generation as well. With no fixed life plans, Rabbit is a mental roamer. Physically unable to escape his surroundings, he retreats into a fabricated world where he is the master. This made-up mental existence severely impacts the real world and makes rational decision-making a surreal matter. Updike's fictional universe reflects the social turmoil that afflicts postwar America. Although the characters are designed to aesthetically fit in a brilliantly composed piece of fiction, their basic substance is grounded in the real world.

The obsession with being completely autonomous resulted in the birth of a social form of solipsism. Rabbit is completely unable to see through the eyes of anyone other than himself. Updike punishes this solipsistic behavior by disabling Rabbit's sense of orientation and denying him access to responsibility. Crippled, Rabbit becomes a social burden rather than the free energetic individual he craves to be. This afflicting disability is not an act of literary callousness by Updike but is rather an act of mercy to keep the character

within the safe zone he does not see. The mental solipsism in which Harry retreats is, therefore, a comfort zone that allows him to freely express his inner turmoil and allows the reader to see through the thick carapace he surrounds himself with.

Capitalism has gradually shifted from being an economic system to setting itself as a full-fledged cultural formula. It is regarded as a magical recipe to reinvigorate economically lax countries and boost their finances. In this regard, countries with low economic rates start to mimic the American system of values. Far from the original, they became mere replicas not arranged by any clear capitalistic incentives except for pure material gains. Capitalism in some countries was not completely assimilated as it is. It underwent a process of negotiation that resulted in the forming of hybrid cultures that identify as both conservative and liberal at the same time.

All in all, Updike's novel resonates outside the limits of America. It brings to light the human dimension and exposes its deficiencies. The novel is also an excellent debate ignitor since its literary substance incorporates paradoxes, controversies, and other postmodern traits that constitute a fertile ground for academic argumentation.

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