Conclusion
The decade of 1950s in American history was characterised by an air of complacency and tranquility, due to the absence of war and a tremendous economic boom and brought in its trail a general disrespect for order, discipline and the value systems which nourished the roots of religion and tradition. The indulgent view of life fostered by the new ideas brought disaster on the society in general and the institutions of religion and marriage in particular. In describing the postwar America of the 1950s, many historians evoke images of the mundane: The gray flannel suit, mass exodus to suburbia, proliferation of television sets into middle class households, and the sterility of family life, all illustrating stagnation and complacency. Alongwith conformity, this brings alienation of the individuals to the society. The literature of this period, therefore, portrays vain struggles of the characters to assert individual identity in the mid-century American culture. Updike successfully illustrates the introspective struggle of the ‘silent majority’ through Harry Angstrom, the ambivalent non-hero of Rabbit, Run. Through themes of religion, physical action and responsibility, John Updike suggests the stuffiness, disillusionment, and ambivalence pervasive in the America of the 1950s struggling as it was to cope with a conformist post-war identity.
Updike's fiction is rooted in the ethos of contemporary America. He is seeking to sculpt the image of an individual, and continues its development through the corpus of his writing. Updike in his each book places his protagonist with a predicament that prompts him to act or respond in a variety of ways. He records these reactions, vis-à-vis the surrounding society. Distilled from his own experiences, the recurrent motifs revolve around the prominent features of the age. Alongwith the individuals' struggle to forge a new identity for himself, religion, humanism, death, domestic problems, a nostalgia for past and the autobiographical links are also the focus of his attention.

Rabbit's predicament is the predicament of an ordinary American who is obsessed with the dreams of his own specialness. But he discovers, to his dismay, that the specialness is not without reservations. The American middle class has engaged itself into the most unshakeable of complacencies. Rabbit struggles to break free of this complacent society, which is crushing for his spirit. The society, too, rejects him as a nonconformist. In his alienation from the society, his response is to seek new bases of value and order. There is no fixed system or order to guide him, all that he has is himself and his ability
to live. The struggle is not only for an identity but also for new values. His belief in an individual kind of religion and morality are a result of his faith in new values which are dissociated from the society. Rabbit's running is the result of a conscious refusal to lead a disappointed life. His goal is freedom, his weapon choice, and his battleground the self, where the possibilities of freedom may either grow or decay.

Rabbit's return to the constrictions of family and society in the second novel, *Rabbit Redux* is perhaps because he realises that he has to live with public values although they contradict the deepest human instincts. He moves to an acceptance of society's rules. But the acceptance is marked by a resignation to permanent alienation from public values. Although Harry is reintegrated into the society, has a staunch faith in the powers of America; he never gives up his personal values completely. His rebellious spirit never dies, and despite the threats of the society, he insists on keeping Jill and Skeeter in his house. Rabbit's passive rebellion is operative even in the third sequel, *Rabbit is Rich*. Rabbit's struggles against the complacent spirit of the society are a thing of the past, as he himself has become rich and has retired into complacency. His rebellion is dormant, his reintegration into society is complete, his household
is a perfect picture of happiness and prosperity. The concluding novel of the series, *Rabbit at Rest*, portrays Rabbit as an alienated being, not only in society but also in his own house. He is retired and physically degenerated, which is only a sign of his solitude even more isolating than what he experienced in the first novel. His youthful dreams of special identity, individual value and order, have withered. Although he accepts society's laws, society sees him as a reject, a man who can no more contribute to the social order in any way. But he still has a determination to live for the present.

Despite its obsession with the self, Updike's fiction on the whole is not socially irresponsible. His novels insist on a more valid relationship of man with society, on the free assumption of social responsibilities by the self. Because it keeps real alternatives open, this relationship allows for the expansion of human possibilities and for a more meaningful, positive commitment to humanity. The tendency to rely exclusively on the self, the dependence on the individual personality to supplant the institutions, is a result of the inability of the institutions to provide the individuals with a base. Religion is often exposed as insufficient to meet the demands of an individual in the present sterile society.
Rabbit finds the church window in *Rabbit, Run* as dark and unlit. Belief in one’s culture and country is also shattered. In *Redux*, the policies of the government regarding Vietnam are criticised. The institution of the family is found lacking in meeting the emotional requirements of an individual.

Harry’s urge to run symbolizes the introspective dissatisfaction with American institutions. In the absence of these institutions that can guide an individual, the individual has to fall back on his resources, and the faith in his individual powers. The course he takes up is disapproved by social standards. In the absence of social and religious inhibitions, sexual promiscuity becomes a part of self-discovery, a substitute for God and law. Updike’s characters rebel against their environment, yet they are willing to readjust themselves into the society which rejects them as rebels, but without relinquishing their individualism.

Caught between desire and necessity, Rabbit represents the archetypal American male in search of meaning and self definition. He is Updike’s prototypical American character who embodies the fears and hopes, the vices and virtues of his own age. He is the product of the age, shaped by the times, although he does not realise this. Despite his apparent conflict with the society, he is very much a part of
it. Rabbit is only one of the many such characters in real life. His responses comprise, in fact, of the distressing cumulative effect of the society on an individual's psyche. He is a man of action and his running is his own way of coping with the complacency of the times. With maturity, however, his ways of tackling the situation change. In his various interviews, Updike has also pointed out at the autobiographical similarities with Rabbit.

Updike's purpose behind the creation of Rabbit was to portray the life, achievements and downfall of an average middle class American man. By his own profession, Updike seeks to portray the middleness of existences as it is in the middle where extremes clash. Part of Rabbit's appeal to the readers lies in the fact that the reader too might hail from the same social class, same social millieu, engaged in ordinary aspirations and struggles of life.

Although we find Rabbit integrated in society, the conflict between the individual needs and society's demands remains irreconcilable. The quartet offers no solutions to this conflict but only suggests that the conflict is irresolvable.