Chapter 4
RABBIT IS RICH

The first novel of the Rabbit quartet was an account of Rabbit’s revolt against the constrictions of society, the second, an attempt to reconcile to that milieu which he had despised and fled from earlier, although the consequences of his attempted reconciliation are rather disastrous. The third novel in the series reports the success story of Harry as a man of this world, successfully incorporated into it. Rabbit at 46, in Rabbit is Rich is described by Updike as ‘hearty and huge’ serene in his middle years. Rabbit at middle age has mellowed down and a few changes can also be discerned in his general outlook. Now he has different and less fierce desires. His cravings, selfish, angry and violent self of young adulthood have dwindled. In early novels what Rabbit feared was not actual death or worse, death in the guise of monogamy but what he then resisted—a hated routine without the possibility of change. Now he sees change even amid the familiar. By now life has taught him that there are worse things than being bored.

However, this development has taken ten year’s time. Rabbit Redux was full of dread and confusion. The world looked pale to him and nothing in it
could provide him with equanimity. He had withdrawn into passivity which drew him almost to the point of moral imbecility. Moreover, the plot of Rabbit Redux was unkind to him. He had to deal with a dying mother, an adulterous wife, a failing work situation, a burnt out house, a dead girlfriend and a frightened son who later on turned hostile. Ten years had passed since baby Becky died, yet he was not able to get over the guilt and his relationship with Janice had become 'too dark.. too kindred to death' By Rabbit is Rich, the old anger, fear and guilt are gone and Harry's world has become a lot more peaceful without its sinister turns of events, its disasters, betrayals and violent deaths. Thomas Edwards rightly observes, 'Rabbit is Rich is a story of disasters averted....Updike teases us into anticipating tragedies that never quite occur.'

Harry has made substantial financial progress since the last novel. In the intervening period he has inherited his father-in-law's Toyota agency; his style of living has undergone a remarkable change. The oil crisis that rocked the 80s benefits him as his low mileage Toyotas are in considerable demand.

As a businessman, he is more aware than he has been in the previous two novels of what is happening to the nation and the world at large. Harry enjoys a solid citizen status, he has become a man of consequence in his town, 'he likes the nod he gets from the community, that overlooked him like dirt since high school.'^3 Ironically and inadvertently he has gone back to being the 'star and spearpoint' 'the man upfront',^4 and again he has the approval of the society. In the earlier novels there was no way for him to integrate himself in the society. In the absence of that adulation that he enjoyed in high school, he becomes a lonely figure, constantly affronting and confronting his society. Now he not only has a social status but has also become resolutely social, a part of a circle of friends and acquaintances. This is the most radical change in the Rabbit novels, for in the previous two, Rabbit is projected as the solitary American hero, seeking to evade the constraints of society which offered him no outlet for his disruptive energies. Now, however, his very definition of freedom has changed. He realizes that 'the stifled terror that always made

4. Ibid.
him restless has dulled down. He wants less. 'Freedom, that he always thought was outward motion, turns out to be this inner dwindling'\textsuperscript{5} Giving up outward motion, his energies dwindle and he plants himself in society. Harry's passion for basketball is also replaced by golf which is in tune with his expanding waistline and newly acquired social status. A member of the posh suburban club, he spends his leisure time playing golf and sunbathing with his new friends. Thus, in this novel Harry emerges as a more social and compromising being making adjustments not only with Janice and her mother whom he once despised, but with the society as a whole.

'For the first time since childhood Rabbit is happy, simply to be alive'\textsuperscript{6} Harry sees life as 'just beginning, on a clear ground at last, now that he has a margin of resources.'\textsuperscript{7} In Rabbit, Run he had fled from his wife but now submits to the norms of family life: 'Rabbit is content. This is what he likes, domestic peace. Women circling with dutiful footsteps above him and the summer night like a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5} Ibid., p. 475.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Ibid., p. 421.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p. 475.
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lake lapping at the windows' Home in *Rabbit, Run* is suffocating but now at middle age Harry tolerates restriction. Harry has begun to enjoy what Updike calls, 'relative happiness and freedom from tension that you might find in your 40s.'

Rabbit echoes Sinclair Lewis's character Babbitt, whom Updike quotes in the epigraph. Babbitt is Lewis's satire on middle America. The quotation is Babbitt's definition of the ideal citizen, he is the naive and vaguely unfulfilled man who exchanged ideas for cigars, experiences for routine and then settles down to some putting practice and a good meal. Harry's life too has sunk to this routine and mediocrity. The other epigraph is a quotation from Wallace Steven's poem *A Rabbit as king of the ghosts*. The poem depicts a rabbit who disappointed with his status in the real world, creates a perfect world in his imagination in which he rises to a heroic stature.

Harry apparently looks happy and satisfied, but, in fact, inspite of this economic independence, gold and satisfactory life with Janice, he seems troubled.
by the emptiness of his life, by its lack of excitement and interest and by his incapacity to understand the forces that determine its tenor. He feels a need to run away, though the need is not as urgent as before. He muses on the entire squeezed and cut down shape of his life and realizes he is middle aged, an age where dreams decline to an awareness of limits. He lives his daily life with a strict pragmatic approach trying to serve his business as much as possible. He reads no books except *consumer reports* and his talk with his friends is also about money, income tax or some silly newspaper story. His life and association with friends makes him uneasy but his flight in this novel is not so urgent as in *Rabbit, Run* and thus not so poignant.

Rabbit is faced with the pressures of reality, the baseness of existence. As Donalds Greiner says. 'The ironic soaring of the rocket in *Rabbit Redux* is gone, no one is soaring towards moon in *Rabbit is Rich*, each person is just trying to hang on.'

The novel starts with cliches of decline. 'Running out of gas' the first words of the novel sound like a metaphor for middle age, depleting energy.

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'Running' no longer means the anguished search of an unseen world. The statement refers both to America, which is running dry because of the oil crisis and to Harry, because of loss of sexual energy. But Harry can be satisfied on one account, his financial stability. 'Having enough at last has made him satisfied all over'\textsuperscript{12}. Money matters more in \textit{Rabbit is Rich} because of the ways in which Harry values it. Updike shows how he uses it to measure his distance from his family's sad and impoverished status. A rich man now, Harry holidays in Poconos, a lake resort where the family owns a cottage and recalls his family's poor outings when he was a kid that used to end in a fiasco. The outings smelled of depreciation and filled Harry with disgust. Harry now takes satisfaction in the fact that his father would never have imagined him living so well.

The book is pervaded by a sort of stillness and calm, it is less vigorous than the previous books. Michiko Kakutani says, "Instead of charting, as he did in the previous books, Rabbit's growth and his struggles against the temper of the times, Updike

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 445.
now seems more interested in delineating his character's state of mind.' This impulse is appropriate to Harry's condition as 'Middle age, after all, is a period of consolidation of stock taking, of stasis even, and its peculiar tone and texture are here subtly evoked.' Rabbit in *Rabbit is Rich* emerges as a thinking man, his focus is once more on the needs of the self. Religious speculation and political concerns give way to interior monologues, which are mostly about economic practicability. OPEL'S prices and devaluation of the dollar are in news but Harry discusses them only in so far as they affect his business. Other social details like Pope's visit to the United States, Iran's hostage crisis are closely followed. Spiritually however, it is a stagnant age. Except for a few thoughts about the dead, Harry does not much indulge in spiritual concerns. His response to the world is in fact guided by *Consumer Reports*, which is quoted like a chorus in the background of a gas short world. Thomas Mallon observes 'Updike has in this book caught both the flotsam and the ethos of 1979 with even more exactitude than he bottled 1957 in *Rabbit, Run* and 1969 in *Rabbit Redux*.′

13. Kakutani, p. 14
Harry's apparent happiness and complacency is not entirely without some dissatisfaction. Updike once remarked, "a person who has what he wants, a satisfied person, a content person ceases to exist. Unfalling Adam is an ape."\textsuperscript{15} About Harry's contentment Updike has remarked, 'There's a moment in the organism when its thrust outward into the world and the call to mate and the need to make your mark no longer clamour at you, but the body hasn't quite begun to collapse, so in a strange way its kind of a happy moment.'\textsuperscript{16} This happiness is marred by a 'spiritual discomfort' that comes 'with the quiescence of middle age.'\textsuperscript{17} What keeps Harry fallen and dissatisfied here is sex and paternity. Harry lusts after a younger wife in his social circle and he worries over his strained relationship with his son and thinks about a girl who could be a child he has fathered by Ruth.

In \textit{Rabbit Redux}, Harry associated sex with Janice with death; it reminded him of his dead daughter causing a feeling of guilt. In \textit{Rabbit is Rich}, Harry's indifference towards sex and Janice


\textsuperscript{16} Kakutani, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 15.
is gone. The two of them even admit an attraction for each other. Since Janice can no more have children, the fear of death that Harry associated with procreation is gone as well. Finally, with the safe birth of Nelson's baby daughter, procreation is finally disengaged from death. Now that he has managed to divorce it from death, the anguish attached with it is lost forever. In *Rabbit, Run* sex had a metaphysical dimension and Rabbit equated it with a striving to achieve upward spaces and unseen worlds, but it only brought him worthless achievement because the real always fell short of the ideal causing pain to himself and others. The situation has completely reversed in *Rabbit is Rich*.

Harry had earlier associated monogamy with dying. Monogamy had been the known road which he shunned. Novelty and sensation were given importance and these could be achieved only through adultery as Piet Hanema in *Couples* defends adultery, "It's a way of giving yourself adventures, of getting out in the world and seeking knowledge". ¹⁸ The most striking difference in *Rabbit is Rich* is that Harry no longer frightens himself with his promiscuity and its consequences, he has become

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rather timid. In the first novel he was rather selfish towards Janice after the birth of their baby, now, however, the narcissist sexual side of Harry has dwindled.

Despite this dwindling and the tinge of existential gloom that pervades the novel and Harry's acceptance of the inherent ambiguity of human existence, he is still willing to seek sexual adventure in order to overcome the tedium of the predictable. Because Janice is unable to have children, relationship with her has lost an edge. Harry's thoughts keep on drifting back to Ruth and his classmate in ninth grade. Mathew Wilson says that 'sex is not a mode of revolt or escape in the novel; it is a regression into fantasy.'19 Harry also keeps thinking about Cindy Murkett, the young wife of one of his golf partners. His obsession for Cindy shows that he has not left scampering altogether. Young and confident, Cindy becomes his dream woman. It seems Harry's quest for unseen worlds has ironically narrowed down to Cindy as Donald Greiner remarks, "unobtainable Cindy represents mystery to Harry, evidence for himself as well as the reader that his

longing of the unknown has not totally bogged down in expanding waistlines and safe routine.”

When, during an episode of wife swapping on a Caribbean vacation, it seems Harry’s fantasy would be fulfilled, he ironically and comically gets the wrong wife. Griener rightly observes, ‘Harry doesn’t get Cindy, just as he doesn’t reach the upward spaces except with a tee shot... Updike knows his man. To grant him the rainbow would be to halt his run. Even at age forty six, Rabbit has a lot of running left.” However, the failure to get Cindy brings only disappointment, not despair. Janice once says to her husband, “You always want what you don’t have instead of what you do.” Although the remark is made when Harry confides to her his conjecture about an illegitimate daughter, it is true in this regard as well.

What makes Harry ‘rabbity’ in his responses is that he refuses to be pinned down. But now at least he can define roughly what he wants. In the early novels he cannot describe the object of his frantic quest except to the point of the perfect tee shot.

But the years and the pounds and the comfort of money have combined to readjust his sight closer to earth: a home of his own, a life without Nelson, a real daughter, and Cindy. But at the same time, if Harry is not able to describe the object of his desire in *Rabbit, Run* its because the object is abstract, it has a spiritual dimension, vague sense of some power that wants him to find it. Whereas sexually and spiritually dwindled Harry in *Rabbit is Rich* has calmed down by material comforts and his longings too are for objects real and tangible.

Although Rabbit seeks adventures outside matrimony, he is bound to Janice perennially. Despite his wayward murderous thoughts about Janice, the reason why he has accepted her is that the dumb mutt, Janice of earlier books shows here some mid-life wisdom, easiness and energy that Harry feels he lacks. When he thinks about her as an individual, he accepts her superiority without anger. 'She has had a lot of lessons. The decade past her has taught her more than it has taught him.' Their relative positions have changed. Janice comes up with more possible solutions to their problems and also has mature answers for Harry's queries. 'It sometimes startles Harry how smooth Janice can be in her

When they talk about their son Nelson or any other personal matter, he is the ignorant questioner, she the one with the answers. When he tries to sound adult, affectionate, paternal—tones Janice manages easily—he thinks he sounds like an impersonator. He even admires her physically. Whereas Harry has slackened down and bloated with a forty-two inch waist, Janice has managed to remain slim and energetic by playing tennis regularly.

In M.M. Gullette words 'Having taught himself, like a reader of mid-life decline novels, to expect nothing much from matrimony but burdens, Harry is surprised to be soothed by their' "connivance". He trusts her so much that he even confides in her his conjecture of having an illegitimate daughter. She in turn forgives him for his other longings. Marriage no more constricts him, but in a way frees him so that he finally feels, 'not for the first time in twenty years plus...a furtive rush of loving her, caught with him as she is in the narrow places life affords.' He even admits that she is his fortune; and realises that he is married to her for good.

Running is for adolescents, adults put up with their fate. 'Once when she got like this (flustered frowny, grieved), her fear contaminated him and he ran; but in these middle years, it is so clear to him that he will never run that he can laugh at her, his stubborn prize.'

Harry's problems in his middle years are not theological, political or even economic. His problems are of personal nature. Griener opines 'It seems as if Rabbit's instinctive surge for life has burned out. He is too young to call it quits, but he may be too old to keep it up. The prospect is both sad and frightening, for his internal life shrinks as his external circumstances expand.' He himself is aware of his diminishing spiritual life. '... a lot of topics, he has noticed lately, in private conversation... run dry, exhaust themselves as if everything's been said in this hemisphere. In his inner life too, Rabbit dodges among more blanks than there used to be, patches of burnt out gray cells where there used to be lust and keen dreaming and wide eyed dread.' It is because of these blanks in his spirit, the insatiable craving of the spirit that

27. Ibid., p. 622
28. Greiner, p. 91.
makes him think that the girl who walks into his agency is his illegitimate daughter. This craving of the self, although substantially shrunk from the days of his youth, nevertheless exerts itself at times, that makes Harry uncomfortable and he aspires for something more than his ordinary mortal existence. Harry senses his need for a quest and thinks that an illegitimate daughter in exchange for a dead one would be a sort of blessing from immortality. But unlike young Rabbit he doesn’t rush toward his goal of finding out his daughter, but his efforts are slow.

Drifting into middle age, Harry might not be able to relocate his search for upward spaces, but he is confronted with an additional dimension of life with which he had hitherto been unconcerned i.e. Death. Gradually he becomes aware how his life is not only his but infected with a spooky presence of the dead. The novel moves from light hearted comedy of Harry lusting after Cindy to what William Pritchard calls ‘a rather elegant and sad poetry of the spirit, particularly the spirits of the dead who surround and haunt our protagonist’. 30 Harry muses, ‘The dead, Jesus. They were multiplying and they look up begging you to join them, providing it is

all right....Pop, Mom old man Springer, Jill, the baby called Becky.... The obituary page everyday shows another stack of a harvest endlessly rich...”\textsuperscript{31}

Not only does he think of his dead relations but is plunged into depression at the thought that, \textquotedbl every blade of grass at his feet is an individual life that will die, that has flourished to no purpose.\textsuperscript{32} The lines recall young Harry’s belief in the tree and the stone and in God’s gift of “special talents”. The reflection fails to bring any solace to Harry who finds that not even a game of golf can rouse him from his existential gloom. The golf has become more like work and has lost its metaphysical function. Foreboding of his own mortality moves through the latter half of the book as earlier the family used to worry about his running away, now when he takes up jogging, they worry about his heart. He is more death conscious than ever, thinking constantly of all the corpse that lie under the ground he treads. Reading of Skeeter’s death in a shoot out, recalling Becky’s death by drowning, Jill’s death in fire, he ponders over the inescapable guilt of his life. ‘There’s no getting away; our sins, our seed, coil

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\item \textsuperscript{31} \textit{Rabbit Is Rich} p. 424.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 437.
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back.' The scent of mortality pervades the whole novel. Beneath all the profit, security and fun, behind all the glow of middle age and the sense that life is fun, lurks the leer of death. At the beginning of the novel, he doesn’t want to face it directly but has a foreboding of its ominous presence. However, Harry doesn’t want to contemplate his own ending. Griener says, ‘Money allows him to accept his now limited inner spaces so that his need to wander is partly thwarted and he hopes that the beginning of his comfort signals the beginning of his life.’

George Hunt, however feels that Harry’s sense of the dead’s presence is in fact a ‘communion (that) provides his life with continuity and comparsion.’ Although Harry is not so pious ‘he still retains his sense of miracle of being himself, himself instead of somebody else and his old inkling now fading in the energy crunch, that there was something that wanted him to find it, that he was here on earth on a kind of assignment.’

33. Ibid., p. 590.
34. Greiner., p. 96.
flares only occasionally. In *Rabbit, Run*, Harry is called a mystic, here Updike seems to suggest that Harry might push beyond the emptiness of his material life. His belief in God is sporadic, for example, he welcomes rain because it represents 'the last proof left to him that God exists.' Again, when he leaves for vacation in the Caribbean, he feels hope and propulsion towards God who, "having shrunk in Harry's middle years to the size of a raisin lost under the car seat, is suddenly great again, everywhere like a radiant wind.'

In his youth basketball was his passion which he often associated with sex, and a perfect shot of golf, a corroboration of his spiritual moorings. In *Rabbit is Rich* Harry has taken up golf again, but he plays the game neither in desire to hit the perfect mystical drive, nor in conformity to the leisured life he leads. He enjoys golf because it echoes the elusive mystery of human existence. It is like life itself, Harry says, 'Its performance cannot be forced, and its underlying principle shies from being permanently named.'

The novel in the first part, introduces us to Harry's run of the mill existence at 46, his major

38. Ibid., p. 468.
39. Ibid., p. 531.
preoccupation being worrying about his money, enjoying life and golf and thinking about Cindy. The unexpected arrival of Nelson in Brewer leads to unexpected turn of events. A college dropout, Nelson comes back with the intention of working at his father's Toyota Agency. Nelson further adds to his father's worries about losing his money. His obsession with money leads to comic results especially when on Web Murkett's advice he turns his money into gold, in the wake of the devaluation of the dollar. Then he changes his kruggerands into silver in fear that the price of gold will fall. Nelson's arrival aggravates Harry's dread. Though old enough to establish his own independence, Nelson still lives at home, and struggles to finish college. His irresponsible nature is exceedingly irksome to Harry. He grumbles at his son's generation. Having being reared on television, they know nothing first hand. He even feels his fortune being jeopardized by this generation.

The deep antagonism between Nelson and his father dates back to the night when their house was burnt down killing Jill. Nelson holds Harry responsible for Jill's death as well as the death of his baby sister Becky. Nelson's grievance against his father is more because Harry seems to have come to terms
with the past, and he will not allow past disasters to disrupt his present success. Nelson, on the other hand, cannot forget his past and throughout the book acts against his father; by dropping out of college, by smashing one by one Harry's cars and by marrying against his father's wishes. He feels almost suffocated by his father. Nelson says, 'He is forgotten everything he ever did to us . . . He's so smug and satisfied, is what gets me.'\textsuperscript{40} Harry too takes a perverse delight in Nelson's opposition as he confides to Janice ''I like having Nelson in the house. Its great to have an enemy. Sharpens your senses'.'\textsuperscript{41} In fact, his relationship with Nelson has deteriorated so much that he unconsciously wants another child and it is only the reason why he fantasizes about having a daughter.

Harry's dislike of Nelson is also because he feels his mid-life comfort threatened by his presence. What Harry really hates is Nelson's lack of coordination, a balance and order, the same flaw that he finds in Janice. Even Ma Springer who loves and defends Nelson admits that the boy has not turned out the way she and her dead husband had hoped. On the surface of it, it seems that Nelson

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Rabbit is Rich}, p. 570.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid p. 481.
commits the same mistakes as Harry. If Harry is responsible for the death of his infant daughter in *Rabbit, Run*, Nelson almost kills the baby his wife Pru is carrying. In a siege of anger at the drunken Pru, Nelson half pushes her, half watches her fall down a steep flight of stairs. But unlike *Rabbit, Run* both mother and child are spared. Then he flees as his father had done, deserting his new bride three days before their baby is born.

Similarly, Nelson like his father is compelled to marry Pru after she gets pregnant. Nelson faces the same choice that Harry did when he was young but for Harry there was no choice. Now he doesn’t want his son to rush into marriage and feel trapped later on. He suggests his son to run away and even offers him money. Although his desire for Nelson to go away is self serving, as he would like to get rid of Nelson at any cost, he does see his son as himself, "I just don’t like seeing you caught You’re too much me". But Nelson refuses all help from his father and goes through his marriage. Although he doesn’t flee at the wedding, Nelson eventually does run, deserting his wife but unlike his father he doesn’t run in circles, he goes back to his college

to finish his degree. Thomas Edwards is of the opinion that like his father, 'Nelson too is frightened by the demands of maturity and human obligation and he too is a runner, but both his behaviour and Updike's incursions into his consciousness reveal not Harry's hopeful interest in the terms of his own life but a cynical, surly, grasping, thoroughly stupid, and unimaginative self concern that is not like Harry at all.' Moreover, Nelson utterly lacks grace; which had been the outstanding force of Harry's life. According to Greiner 'Taking the son through many of the physical misadventures of the father, Updike denies him the spiritual qualities that make such bumbling simultaneously reprehensible and appealing.' Nelson mimics Harry's stumble without grace. No one is going to say about Nelson that he has the gift of life or that he gives people faith. He is too complaining and too irresponsible. He has no sense of magic, no need for quest. Harry clumsily loves him but wants him out of his way. His presence in the house increases his fear of being crowded and intensifies his desperation for a home of his own. Nelson plays the role of Skeeter in *Rabbit is Rich*, continuously threatening Harry's

43. Edwards, pp. 100-101
44. Greiner p. 93.
peace of mind and sense of solidarity. Melanie rightly tells him that he lacks a 'capacity for responsibility'. His irresponsible and heedless nature is sufficiently made clear by his capacity to wreck cars. After swashing Rabbit’s Corona, he doesn’t care beyond embarrassment because he says there are no injuries. When Harry looks grieved and concerned, Nelson gets impatient. This attitude is in striking contrast to Harry’s character who despite of being rich, cannot overcome his habit of saving. Even while choosing between a packet of peanuts and cashews, he considers money.

Nelson requests for a job at his father’s agency. Arrogance motivates him to join in sales and he refuses to work with other workers. Although he is totally unsuitable for the job, given his inability to smile, and perpetual whine and short tempered nature, the family specially Janice and her mother feel that they own him the same chance they once gave to Harry. Taking no heed to Harry’s vehement opposition, Becky Springer secures him a job at the lot, by asking Charlie the most experienced worker to make space for him.

Nelson gets his chance to sell cars when he works at the agency during Harry’s vacation at
Poconos. He tries to prove himself as a salesman by remarketing ancient gas consuming convertibles during oil crunch. Harry is enraged at his son's commercial ineptitude and the son is infuriated at his father's repeated attempts to humiliate him. Finally, it is not rage but pity Harry pours out upon Nelson as he feels his son's prospects are blighted from the start. His world is already worn out before he can find a place in it.

The bleaker aspects of the novel are brightened by Pru's arrival as a ray of hope for the family. When she arrives pregnant and lonely, Harry surges to protect her. Although Pru's presence makes Nelson more docile, he is as selfish as ever, as he says that he will go through the wedding because he has said he will. Nelson is not only insolent and impudent with his parents, he has complaints against Pru as she does not go out with him often. In this part of the novel there is an occasional switch to Nelson's point of view. Here he pours out his grudges against his father to Pru. His overbearing complaints, however, fail to evoke any sympathy for him from the readers.

Hope comes in the novel with Pru's baby. More death conscious than ever, Harry is overwhelmed by
the idea of continuing his immortality through his seed. He believes that he may still be life giver through his son. Nelson is a sad option as he does not believe in God and spirituality. This makes him renew his search for Annabel, his illegitimate daughter which however ends in disappointment as Ruth denies that Annabel is his daughter. Now his attention switches over to Pru’s baby and to a house of his own. ‘Her pregnancy promises him a stay against the insistent crowding of the dead.’

At forty seven, he decides that he needs his own house. Although his mother-in-law and Nelson are opposed to the decision, Harry is adamant. The house becomes constricting for him with Nelson around and he realizes that without space and privacy his life will shrink further. Moving into the house, he sees new promise in a life that has been withering too long. He is finally king of his own burrow: no mother-in-law, no Skeeter, no Jill, no Nelson, no trap. When read in isolation this seems to suggest the same move towards freedom of the previous two novels. When read as a sequel we come to the conclusion that the move tends to send Harry more deeply in to the matrix of society. Harry

45. *Rabbit Is Rich*, p. 496
is clearly domesticated unlike the Rabbit of *Rabbit, Run*. Rabbit in this novel discovers such freedom inside his own home's security.

All he needs now is Pru's baby to take place of the daughter he cannot have and the son he does not like. The baby, a girl, fills the void and at 46, Harry a former rebel looks around and finds himself a grandfather. The baby makes him glance at his own mortality, it promises a future but in a dual sense. 'Fortune's hostage, heart's desire, a granddaughter. His. Another nail in his coffin. His.'

It speaks of the death of Harry. He realises that the old have to make place for the young. Harry understands it but does not run, rather he contemplates the truth that the dead crowd him more closely than the living have ever done. Harry's death and continuity are assured in the same sentence. Even as he gets ready for his death the baby assures his continuity.

Ralph Wood rightly says 'Updike has brought his epic character a long way indeed. From Rabbit the scared and solipsistic youth fleeing life's limits to Harry the middle aged grandfather reluctantly accepting

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life's essential ambiguity." Dilvo Ristoff, however, finds no pattern of hope in the novel, 'it is hard to find any indication of hope in *Rabbit is Rich*.' Nelson, Ristoff feels is only a disappointment in all respects. 'The birth of Nelson's daughter at the end of the novel is insufficiently explored for us to be able to say that she represents beyond the known future,' at the moment 'she is no doubt on the train of America, but she is a light in the caboose illuminating nothing except herself.' Further he states that 'Updike's negativism seems to be expressed... in Rabbit's extravagant home.... (it) seems to indicate Harry has

49. Ristoff, p. 140.
definitely jumped on the bandwagon of waste and superfluousness'.

The narrative frame of the novel for the most part is cast in present tense like the early novels of the sequel. Rabbit's singular point of view is maintained except for the concluding part in which there is a shift to Nelson's point of view. The novel records Rabbit's sensations, distractions, reflection and speculation. The narrative mode is less self conscious and is given sensory rather than psychological emphasis. The plot is diffuse with multiple movements and the tragedies that lurk around are all withdrawn towards the end. Updike maintains a link with early novels by frequently bringing up Harry's past in *Rabbit is Rich*. His glorious achievement as a basketball star more than twenty years ago are present as yellowed newspaper clippings in frame in his office. Harry's past experiences are constantly evaluated in the light of present events and circumstances especially when Nelson emulates his father's experiences. Also in his memory, Harry remembers everything, new experiences acquire their meaning by becoming in his mind, a celebration of, or an elegy for something

50. Ibid p. 140.
past, a process of recollection in which nothing is ever truly lost.

However there is little development in the character of Harry as an individual with the onset of middle age. George Hunt believes that 'Rabbit's life, a representative American life, is itself a sequel, that he has not all changed in a radical way since high school, that his values and aspirations, fears and sexual preoccupations are themselves Redux and unaltered.' Since 1959, Rabbit is neither better nor worse, neither wiser nor more idiotic. His frame of mind, his thought structure, his underlying motivations are astonishingly similar in older and richer Rabbit, in an America faced with different realities The spiritual diminishment that he started discerning in Rabbit, Run is now killing him. His tragedy is that he has not grown intellectually in the intervening decades and remains victim of more or less the same beliefs and illusions that guided his life earlier. His belief in the established institutions remains the same as in Rabbit Redux although he doesn't indulge into hot debates defending it.

The difference that comes in Harry's general outlook is the diminishment of his spiritual self and

energy and his affluence which results in his acceptance of domestication and a falling off of his faith in his own uniqueness. With middle age he realizes that "furious running is better than gracious plodding." Although he still complains about the world enclosing him, but his rage lacks the old bitterness and deception and he learns to find liberation in obligation. Though he still obsesses with romantic longings, he sees that he must live in the muddled midground between pleasure and responsibility.