Rabbit on the Move:

John Updike's Gradual Revision of *Rabbit, Run**

Haruki TAKEBE

Rabbit, Run (1960) is John Updike's most famous, and at the same time, most frequently revised novel. In his 1984 monograph on Updike, Donald J. Greiner gave a concise sketch of the novel's publication history: *Rabbit, Run* was first published by Knopf in 1960, and the first revised edition appeared from Penguin in 1964. Next year, a slightly revised edition was published by Modern Library.[1] And finally, the novel was, with further revisions, reprinted by Knopf in 1970 (61–62). The differences between these editions were extensively explored by Randall H. Waldron in his 1984 essay "Rabbit Revised."[2] But Updike in the 1990s made further revision when he assembled *Rabbit, Run* and its sequels—*Rabbit Redux* (1971), *Rabbit Is Rich* (1981), and *Rabbit at Rest* (1990)—into a single volume, *Rabbit Angstrom: A Tetralogy* (1995). However, few critics have remarked on this later textual alteration, which includes numerous adjustments of punctuation as well as paragraph-length rewriting. Although none of these changes drastically modifies the novel's plotline, the minor but careful revisions made for *Rabbit Angstrom* nevertheless deserve a close examination, for Updike's artistic grace lies, I believe, not in the plot but in the narrative and stylistic details.

Rabbit, Run presents an immature adult, Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom, who fails to outgrow his palmy days as a star basketball player in high school. Now a mediocre salesman, Rabbit, on his way home from work, casually plays basketball with some

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1) The revision for the Modern Library edition is not covered in this essay since the changes are relatively insubstantial.

2) On Updike's revision, Albert E. Wilhelm's two brief notes should also be mentioned as pioneering research. See "Updike's Revisions of *Rabbit, Run*" and "Rabbit Restored: A Further Note on Updike's Revisions."

reluctant teenagers. He feels momentarily refreshed, only to find at home his drunken, pregnant wife Janice Angstrom (née Springer) and her messy housekeeping. Suddenly disgusted at his domestic life, Rabbit runs away from his hometown, Mt. Judge, Pennsylvania, and drives all the way to West Virginia. However, he soon heads back to Brewer, the neighboring town, seeking refuge with his former coach, Marty Tothero, who introduces Rabbit to a semiprofessional prostitute Ruth Leonard. But while he is living with Ruth, Janice gives birth to a daughter, which makes him desert Ruth and come back to Janice for a while. Nevertheless, Rabbit soon gets away from his family for a selfish reason, and Janice, lapsing back to drinking, accidentally drowns the infant daughter. Although Rabbit returns to attend the baby's funeral, he blurts out heartless words to Janice and again flees back to Ruth's place, where he learns that she is pregnant by him. Beset on all sides, Rabbit runs away yet again. Hence the concluding line—"Ah: runs. Runs" (*RA* 264).[3)]

With such a plotline, *Rabbit, Run* has received diverse reactions from critics. A useful summary of those critical responses is given by Stanley Trachtenberg:

> The central image of running announced in the title . . . has over the years continued to prompt critical attention to the question of whether Rabbit is running away from or toward something, whether he represents an alternative to the mediocrity and deadness of middle-class American life in the excellence he had briefly known as a high school athlete, or is merely childlike and self-indulgent. (10-11).

But here I do not aim to make another moral judgment on Rabbit's movement; instead, my efforts are devoted to exploring the gradual movement of the text itself, or how Updike revised *Rabbit, Run* after its first publication. After reviewing the earlier revisions, this essay examines the novel's last "major update" by Updike, demonstrating how meticulously the author composed and then revised the novel.

1960-1970: Rabbit Restored?

Early in 1960, when he had sent the manuscript of *Rabbit, Run* to his publisher Knopf and was enjoying the winter vacation in the Caribbean, Updike received a letter from Alfred A. Knopf himself. According to Updike's essay "A Reminiscence of Alfred A.

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3) In this essay, the following abbreviations are used for the editions of *Rabbit, Run*: K1 for the first Knopf edition (1960), P for the first Penguin edition (1964), K2 for the second Knopf edition (1970), and *RA* for *Rabbit Angstrom: A Tetralogy* (1995).

Knopf and Myself," it read as follows:

> I have read your manuscript . . . and we all admire it greatly. There are one or two little matters to discuss in connection with it, as well as the question of terms so that we can draw up a proper agreement. It would be best, I think, not to correspond, so I am wondering when you could have a brief visit with us at the office. (*Odd Jobs* 928)

When Updike visited the Knopf office a month later, the "one or two little matters to discuss" turned out to be the potential legal issue that might arise from the novel's sexually explicit scenes; Knopf was asking that the novel be bowdlerized. And the young Updike agreed to go along with the legal advice, expurgating the "obscene" passages from the novel. According to Updike, Knopf's lawyer was especially wary of the "lyrically developed description of a woman urinating, and of what he called 'contact'—*le contact de deux épidermes*, as the French say, in definition of *l'amour*" rather than the f-word itself (*Odd Jobs* 929). Still, Updike edited the manuscript so as to eliminate the four-letter word as well as a scene where Rabbit closely watches his mistress urinate. The first edition of *Rabbit, Run* was thus published by Knopf in the fall of 1960.

"None of the excisions really hurt," Updike later said of Knopf's censorship, "though I did restore them in later editions" (*Odd Jobs* 929). The first chance for revision came his way in 1964 when a British paperback edition of *Rabbit, Run* was prepared by Penguin. As Waldron extensively discusses, most of the former cuts ordered by Knopf were restored for this edition. Thus, the first unexpurgated version of *Rabbit, Run* was released not in the author's homeland but on the other side of the Atlantic. Behind this curious situation lay a gap of social climates between the United States and England. By the end of the 1950s, the US had seen a series of state censorship cases including the sales ban on Edmund Wilson's *Memoirs of Hecate County* (1946). While there was generally a liberalizing trend in the 1950s,[4] Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. took a cautious attitude toward the obscenity issue. In publishing James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), for example, they insisted that the author change some provocative words and phrases; in the case of *Giovanni's Room*, they even gave up the acquisition, and the novella was finally released by another publisher in 1956 (Claridge 281-82). In addition, the first unexpurgated US. edition of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was published in 1959, giving rise to a postal ban. Although the District Court overrode it, the

4) About the American censorship through the 1950s, see Boyer 270-87.

novel's unlimited circulation had to wait until March 1960 when the Court of Appeals upheld the District Court's ruling (Boyer 278–79). It was not too surprising, then, that Knopf refused to publish *Rabbit, Run* as it was originally composed, though Knopf himself stated that "the civilized and intelligent person can never be comfortable in any position other than that of unalterable opposition to any censorship of anything, anywhere, at any time" (Knopf 26). Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the unexpurgated *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was issued by Penguin in 1960. The then-controversial novel was prosecuted for obscenity but was successfully cleared of the charge. In the preceding year, the Obscene Publications Act had passed into law, and Britain was going to experience the gradual relaxation of censorship, or in John Sutherland's term, the "decensorship" after the 1960s.[5] The 1964 Penguin edition of *Rabbit, Run*, therefore, was a product of the socio-cultural climate in Britain at that time, and the reading public was for the first time allowed to access the author's (supposedly) original intention.

Preparing the Penguin edition, however, Updike "also made at that time many additional, or 'new' changes, so that from another perspective the second text may be said to be closer to a 'final' intention" (Waldron 51–52). Waldron's 1984 essay also explores these additional changes. Rabbit's sudden anger toward his drunken wife, for instance, is described as follows: "Indignation rises in him again at her missing the point of why he wanted to watch Jimmy [a character in a children's TV show], for professional reasons, to earn a living to buy oranges for her to put into her rotten Old-fashioneds" (K1 12). In the Penguin edition, the "oranges" became "sugar" (P 12), and this is a typical example of how Updike enriched the text by revision. A few pages earlier, the author also added a preparatory sentence: "Sugar has stained the side [of the glass] she drank from" (P 10). Consequently, the reference to sugar instead of oranges effectively conveys Rabbit's disgust at Janice's drinking (Waldron 56). Waldron also recognizes a major overhaul of the scenes on the afternoon of the baby's funeral and correctly observes that they "are considerably slowed in pace and thickened with detail, thus more effectively dramatizing the tortuous passing of the time" (61).

Although Waldron meticulously covers most of the 1964 changes—even single-word adjustments—he sometimes, it seems, fails to fully grasp the point of Updike's revision. At one point, Rabbit remembers Janice's young flesh from their newlywed days: "He married relatively late, when he was twenty-four and she was two years out of high school, still scarcely adult, with *soft* small breasts that when she lay down flattened

5) For more details about the 1959 Obscene Publications Act and its complicated aftermath, see Sutherland.

against her pliant body that was like a *soft* smooth boy's" (K1 10–11, emphases mine). In the Penguin edition: ". . . with *shy* small breasts that when she lay down flattened against her chest so that they were only there as a tipped *softness*" (P 11, emphases mine). Waldron correctly notes that the phrase "soft small breasts" was changed into "shy small breasts" in the 1964 text, observing that the "casual" wording became more "telling" (56). But this revision might be reconsidered in light of the final phrase—"like a soft smooth boy's." While the word "soft" appears twice in the first edition, the revised text spares one, thus increasing stylistic sophistication. As this case suggests, Updike generally shunned repeating the same words, and such a formal adjustment seems one of Updike's underlying principles for revision, to which we will refer later on.

Another example of Updike's "new" changes which Waldron fails to mention is found in a passage where Rabbit returns to his apartment from the Springers' place after his baby daughter is accidentally drowned (and then, as we know, he soon takes off again).

> Harry goes out through the sunporch, so he won't have to glimpse Mrs. Springer's face again, and around the house and walks home in the soupy, tinkling dark. (K1 276)

> Harry goes out through the sunporch, so he won't have to glimpse Mrs Springer's face again, and around the house and walks home in the soupy summer dark, tinkling with the sounds of supper dishes being washed. He climbs Wilbur Street and goes in his old door and up the stairs, which still smell faintly of something like cabbage cooking. (P 223)

Waldron makes a rather brief observation on this alteration: "The obscurity of 'tinkling dark' is cleared up and Rabbit's stunned loneliness, grief and exhaustion are registered in the revision" (58). But besides such a stylistic adjustment, we should notice that Updike further included another sentence: "He climbs Wilbur Street and goes in his old door and up the stairs, which still smell faintly of something like cabbage cooking." Trivial as it seems, this description actually harks back to the novel's opening, where Rabbit comes home after a game of street basketball: "There is that smell which is always the same but that he can never identify; sometimes it seems cabbage cooking, sometimes the furnace's rusty breath, sometimes something soft decaying in the walls" (K1 7, P 8). Then his first flight follows. The added sentence cited above makes a clear connection to this scene. In fact, Updike contrives to conjure up the smell of cabbage cooking, a rusty furnace, or mold, suggesting the staleness of Rabbit's domestic life and his potential

second escape.[6] As this case shows, Updike's "new" changes for the Penguin edition are sometimes worthy of careful reconsideration.

To complicate matters, the 1964 text introduced a number of simple errata, most of which were corrected in earlier and later editions. To name only a few (my corrections are given in brackets): "You're suppose [supposed] to look tired" (P 12); "Their bed sage [sags] in the filtered sunlight" (P 80); "Flip greetings seems [seem] to trail behind her" (P 134); "This acknowledgement from her husband . . . goads the fat nag [hag] into turning on Harry" (P 161); "He scrumches [scrunches] down" (P 201). Penguin's copyeditor apparently misread Updike's handwritten manuscript, for the above list contains the pairs that otherwise cannot be confused— "sage/sags," "nag/hag," and "scrumches/scrunches." No more than commonplace typos, these instances might seem to have nothing to do with the narrative or its interpretation. But in fact, Penguin's sloppy edition did create an intriguing problem, which we will discuss in the subsequent section.

Around the 1970s, the liberalizing trend had accelerated in the US publishing industry, as is exemplified by some "obscene" publications such as Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969) or Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* (1973). Accordingly, Knopf decided to adopt the revised text for its 1970 edition of *Rabbit, Run* (K2). On this occasion, Updike made still further refinements. After the opening basketball game with teenagers, Rabbit "feels grateful to the boy, who continued to watch him with disinterested admiration after the others grew sullen," saying to himself, "Naturals know each other" (P 7); in the 1970 edition, Updike added another sentence: "Naturals know. It's all in how it feels" (K2 6). As Waldron correctly recognizes, the additional sentence tellingly "highlights at the novel's outset what may be its most crucial issue: whether instinctive reliance on his own 'natural' feeling is the redeeming strength or the destructive flaw in the character of Harry Angstrom" (67). Let us take an example that Waldron does not cover: When Janice goes into labor, Rabbit gets a phone call from Jack Eccles, the Episcopal minister who tries to mediate between the separated couple. In the Penguin edition: "Eccles had reached for him, it felt like, out of the ground. Voice had sounded tinny and distant" (P 154). In the 1970 text, the last adjective became "buried" (K2 191), metaphorically reflecting Rabbit's sensation that Eccles's voice seemed to come "out of the ground."

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6) In the 1995 text, Updike further revised the passage: "He climbs Wilbur Street and goes in the old door and up the stairs. There is still that faint smell of something like cabbage cooking" (*RA* 237). In this text, the additional word "that" connects the two scenes more clearly.

1970–1995: Rabbit Refined

After the seventies, Updike continued to extend the Rabbit chronicle at roughly ten-year intervals—*Rabbit Redux* (1971), *Rabbit Is Rich* (1981), and *Rabbit at Rest* (1990)—and eventually compiled the four novels into a massive volume conservatively titled with the protagonist's name, *Rabbit Angstrom: A Tetralogy* (1995). At this point, the author gave the text a thorough overhaul, in both quality and quantity. As is easily guessed, some of the changes were meant to resolve the factual discrepancies between *Rabbit, Run* and its sequels. Rabbit's birthday, for instance, is shifted from "April" (K1 57, P 49, K2 58) to "February" (*RA* 51) according to the details in the later novels: "he's going to be forty-seven in February" (*Rich* 379, *RA* 964); "[he became] Fifty-six last February" (*Rest* 238, *RA* 1266).

Furthermore, Updike embedded in *Rabbit, Run* an allusion to the central motif of its sequel, *Rabbit Redux*. Near the ending of *Run*, when Rabbit runs off the graveside funeral and rushes into Ruth's place, she gives him an ultimatum, asking whether he intends to marry her. He answers, "I'd love to," but she does not get fooled: "You'd love to, you'd love to do anything. What about your wife? What about the boy you already have?" (K2 305). In the 1995 edition, Ruth's response was revised as follows: "You'd love to. You'd love to be the man in the moon, too. What about your wife? What about the boy you already have?" (*RA* 261). The set phrase later embedded by the author—"the man in the moon"—has a thematic connotation, though not for *Rabbit, Run* but for *Rabbit Redux*, where the 1969 moon shot of Apollo 11 serves as the central metaphor. The author himself acknowledges the importance of the space metaphor in *Rabbit Redux*:

> The novel is itself a moon shot: Janice's affair launches her husband, as he and his father witness the takeoff of Apollo 11 in the Phoenix Bar, into the extraterrestrial world of Jill and Skeeter. The eventual reunion of the married couple in the Safe Haven Motel is managed with the care and gingerly vocabulary of a spacecraft docking. (*Higher Gossip* 454)

In brief, the Apollo 11 mission is to *Rabbit Redux* what Homer's *Odyssey* is to James Joyce's *Ulysses*. This narrative scheme, which might be called the Apollonian parallel in *Rabbit Redux*, pervasively operates on the novel's language. James A. Schiff observes: "Words such as *launch*, *drift*, *link*, *lunar*, and *crater* are applied to events, movements, and places in the characters' lives, and the metaphor of docking and redocking, which describes the connections between spacecraft, also applies to the sexual and personal

couplings in the novel, including the split between Harry and Janice, who eventually drift back toward one another" ("Updike, Film, and American Popular Culture" 138).[7] Therefore, the additional reference to "the man in the moon" in *Rabbit, Run* fittingly foreshadows the sequel's metaphorical language.

The 1995 revision also enhances the thematic consistency within *Rabbit, Run*. While playing golf with Eccles for the first time, Rabbit gets frustrated at his own poor swings: "He doesn't care about anything except getting out of this mess" (K2 134). The last word was later changed into "tangle" (*RA* 115), which carries an important thematic connotation throughout the novel. As a host of critics have exhaustively discussed, the novel's recurrent imageries of enclosure (such as *box*, *cave*, *hole*, *hook*, *net*, *snare*, *trap*, and *web*) serve to illustrate Rabbit's fear of drab domesticity as well as his urge to escape. Tony Tanner, for instance, observes how the word *crowded*, another reiterated expression, "is echoed by words and phrases describing how Harry feels cramped, closed in, weighed down by liabilities, imprisoned in packed rooms, his energy fading in the constant negotiation of clutter. . . . Just as the clutter of the house he has left 'clings to his back like a tightening net' so the roads promising release become a net, a trap (both words are often repeated)" (280–81).[8] Consequently, this single-word adjustment—"tangle" instead of "mess"—aptly connects his particular frustration at the golf course with the novel's keynote, that is, the general sense of deadlock.[9]

Moreover, the 1995 version of *Rabbit, Run* underscores some contrasting aspects of Rabbit's character. After he learns that Ruth has had an affair with his old teammate Ronnie Harrison, Rabbit tries to vent his frustration by forcing her to perform oral sex but cannot articulate its name:

> "What do you think we're talking about?" He's too fastidious to mouth the words. She says, *"Sucking you off."*
> "Right," he says.
> "In cold blood. You just want it." . . .

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7) For more discussions on space imageries in *Rabbit Redux*, see De Bellis, Detweiler, Held, and Vanderwerken.

8) For more discussions on the imagery of the net, see Markle 42–47, Schiff's *John Updike Revisited* 35–39, and Tallent 78–80, to name a few.

9) In this golf scene, Updike also made a playful revision. He changed the phrase "now at the center of this striving dream" (K2 132) to "now at the center of this striving golf dream" (*RA* 114), including a casual reference to his essay "Golf Dreams" (1979), which later lent its title to *Golf Dreams: Writings on Golf* (1996).

> "Don't be smart. Listen. Tonight you turned against me. I need to see you on your knees. *I need you to"—he still can't say it—"do it."* (*RA* 160–61, italics mine)

The italicized words above do not appear in the earlier editions. The 1995 text clarifies the specific sexual activity through Ruth's speech and, lines later, exposes Rabbit's reluctance to utter it, contrasting Ruth's hard-boiled professionalism with Rabbit's selfish fastidiousness. Whereas this episode exemplifies Rabbit's self-centered insensitivity, the following revision suggests his qualms toward Ruth. Returning home for Janice's childbirth, Rabbit visits his parents' house, where his mother abruptly asks him about Ruth, "And what's going to happen to this poor girl you lived with in Brewer?" He answers: "'Her? Oh, she can take care of herself. She didn't expect nothing.' But he tastes his own saliva saying it" (K2 227–28). Here the narrator momentarily registers Rabbit's "tasting his own saliva," implicitly suggesting that he is aware of his self-deception. Preparing the *RA* text, however, Updike spelled out exactly how it tasted: "But as he says this he tastes the lie in it. Nobody expects nothing" (*RA* 195). This version clearly presents Rabbit with a pitying, if casual, interest in Ruth's situation. According to Waldron, Rabbit even has a "meliorative effect on Ruth" (61), who wonders what attracts her to him: "He's beautiful for a man, soft and uncircumcised lying sideways in his fleece and then like an angel's sword, he fits her tight but it must be more than that, and it isn't just him being so boyish and bringing her bongo drums and saying sweet grateful things because he has a funny power over her too" (K2 148). Ruth finds Rabbit's attraction in his personality as well as sensuality, associating his penis with "an angel's sword." This metaphor, which might conjure up a picture of the archangel vanquishing Satan, was later changed into "an angel's horn" (*RA* 127), more appropriately suggesting the couple's idyllic life. These cases illustrate how the author provided his protagonist with two contrasting aspects—the gracious and the hard-hearted.

Rabbit's two-sided character is best outlined in the novel's epigraph taken from Pascal's Pensée 507: "The motions of Grace, the hardness of the heart; external circumstances" (*RA* 4). Of this line, Updike once told an interviewer that "those three things describe, in a way, our lives":

> The external circumstances are everywhere, in this case the pregnancy and family responsibilities and financial necessities. The motions of grace represent that within us which seeks the good, our non-material, non-external side. And the hardness of heart? Clearly Rabbit shows hardness of heart, and there's a way in which hardness

of heart and the motions of grace are intertwined. (Campbell 278)

In short, the epigraph epitomizes the novel's thematic essence. The significance of the epigraph was further reinforced by the 1995 revision—in fact, the reinforcement of the Pascalian connection was the most substantial refinement for the novel, as we will discuss in the following part of this essay.

To understand the term *grace* in Pascal's original context, let us take a look at the English translation of Pensées 507 and 508: "The spirit of grace; the hardness of the heart; external circumstances. Grace is indeed needed to turn a man into a saint; and he who doubts it does not know what a saint or a man is" (Pascal 139). Now *saint* emerges as another keyword in *Rabbit, Run*. It is first introduced when Janice is surprised to learn that Rabbit has quit smoking: "Holy Mo. You don't drink, now you don't smoke. What are you doing, becoming a saint?" (*RA* 10). Her remark is more than a casual sarcasm in light of the novel's thematic context. As Rabbit plays basketball with the teenagers in the opening scene, he refreshes his memory of high-school basketball, resolving to change his "second-rate" life: "Things start anew; Rabbit tastes through sour aftersmoke the fresh chance in the air, plucks the pack of cigarettes from his bobbling shirt pocket, and without breaking stride cans it in somebody's open barrel. His upper lip nibbles back from his teeth in self-pleasure" (*RA* 7). He thus starts to run, toward some spiritual fulfillment as well as away from his responsibilities. In other words, Rabbit's flight is tinged with a spiritual quest from the outset, which is why the author embedded the word *saint* in Janice's remark. Furthermore, Updike reinforced the protagonist's saintliness through his 1995 revision. Rabbit, who often strikes people as charming, is at one point asked by Ruth: "What's so special about *you?*" (K2 144, emphasis original). He, jokingly, tells her: "I'm a mystic.... I give people faith" (K2 144). In the 1995 version, however, Rabbit calls himself "a saint" (*RA* 124) instead of "a mystic." By this revision, Updike clearly strengthened the textual connection to Pensées 507 and 508, suggesting that Rabbit, however self-indulgent he may look, nevertheless has an aspect "which seeks the good."[10] Or in Jeff H. Campbell's words, this revision serves as another instance of "the numerous manifestations of the nonmaterial, non-external side of Rabbit which seeks the good, which responds in some inchoate way to the motions of grace, that prevents the reader or critic from dismissing Rabbit as merely a self-centered reprehensible egotist" (113).

But of course, Rabbit cannot be called "a saint" in the usual sense of the word. "The

10) For extensive discussions on Rabbit's "saintliness," see Hallissy and Galloway.

only thing special about him," Janice's mother comments on Rabbit, "is he doesn't care who he hurts or how much" (*RA* 133). Already implied in the second phrase of the epigraph—"the hardness of the heart"—this conspicuous characteristic of Rabbit's was also underscored in *RA*. When he, after an all-night flight from home, asks Tothero for shelter, the ex-coach insists that they later "thrash out" between them a way to help Janice. "Yeah, but I don't think I can," Rabbit answers, "I mean I'm not that interested in her. I was, but I'm not":

> Tothero says, in a voice too loud, "I don't believe it. I don't believe that my greatest boy would grow into such a monster."
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> Monster: the word seems to clatter after them as they climb the stairs to the second floor. (K2 44)

This dialogue bears major thematic importance because Rabbit's hard-heartedness is for the first time pronounced for himself as well as for the reader. That is why Updike later replaced the word "monster" with "hard-hearted" (*RA* 40), establishing a closer connection to the epigraph. At the same time, this revision is also coordinated with the finale of the whole tetralogy—Rabbit's death from a heart attack at the end of *Rabbit at Rest*. "The last book tries to pick up the epigraph of the first one, which was a quotation from Pascal," Updike explained in an interview: "in the fourth book I perhaps especially show the hardened heart becomes no longer a metaphor, but an actual physical thing" (Bragg 228).

Then how about the final part of the epigraph, "external circumstances"? In this context, an intriguing revision appears when Tothero first introduces Rabbit to Ruth and her friend Margaret at a restaurant. For a clear grasp of the point, let us trace the editorial process from the K1 text to the *RA*. Rabbit tries to impress on Ruth and Margaret how instructive Tothero's coaching was, saying, "When I came out in my freshman year I didn't know my feet from my, elbow" (K1 58). In the 1964 Penguin edition, the revised text reads as follows: "When I came out in my freshman year I didn't know my head from my elbow" (P 49). One could easily notice that "feet" became "head," but that is not my point here. What is significant is that the comma, which had been placed between "my" and "elbow" in K1, disappeared in the Penguin text. As we have seen in the previous section, the 1964 Penguin edition of *Rabbit, Run* contained a considerable number of copyediting errors. Given such poor editing, the disappearance of the comma may well be attributed not to the author's decision but to the copyeditor's carelessness. What was Updike's original intention, then? From the archival materials in

the Houghton Library at Harvard University, we can identify what Rabbit has on the tip of his tongue. In an early manuscript dated 1959 (presumably the earliest), the line in question reads as follows: "'When I came out in my freshman year I didn't know my feet from my'—he thinks 'asshole' but says 'elbows.'"[11] But in a later typescript, the word *asshole* was deleted from the text, with a comma inserted between "my" and "elbow" instead.[12] This was the original implication of the comma in K1. But Updike's subtle punctuation was accidentally altered in the 1964 Penguin edition; therefore the author further articulated Rabbit's hesitation in the 1995 version: "'When I came out in my freshman year I didn't know my head from my'—he stops himself; after all these are ladies of a sort—'elbow'" (*RA* 52). This is presumably what happened to the text.

While this episode in itself demonstrates Updike's stylistic elaboration, it also provides a clue to the connection of his 1995 revision with the third part of the epigraph—"external circumstances." As Janice, after her childbirth, comes home from the hospital, Rabbit attempts to make love but meets with a rebuff from her; infuriated, Rabbit runs off again. Here the narrative point of view momentarily focuses on the deserted wife, describing her resentment in a Joycean interior monologue.[13]

> You can feel in their fingers if they're thinking about you and tonight Harry was at first and that's why she let him go on it was like lying there in an envelope of yourself his hands going around you but then he began to be rough and it made her mad to feel him thinking about himself what a good job he was doing sucking her along and not at all any more about how she felt exhausted and aching, *poking his thing at her belly like some elbow*. (K2 251–52, emphases mine)

Oddly enough, the last phrase (italicized) was revised in the 1995 version as follows: "poking his thing at her belly like some elbow elbowing her aside" (*RA* 215)—oddly because a seemingly awkward repetition of *elbow* is tolerated despite the author's disinclination to a stylistic redundancy. Then why did Updike make, or need, this revision? One possible purpose is to stress the way Janice resents Rabbit's behavior: poking his penis just like nudging her. "It was so *rude*," she concludes (K2 252, *RA* 215, emphasis original). Janice is furious that Rabbit has behaved as if he does not know his

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11) John Updike Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. MS Am 1793 (686).

12) John Updike Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University. MS Am 1793 (687).

13) In his introduction to *RA*, Updike himself acknowledges that James Joyce's "influence resounds, perhaps all too audibly, in the book's several female soliloquies" (viii).

penis from his elbow. The tune may sound familiar—when he came out in his freshman year he didn't know his feet from his asshole/elbow—the implication being that Rabbit has not practically matured since his high school days. This is what Janice's monologue incidentally insinuates. Here is a minor recapitulation of the novel's basic outline: an ex-basketball star who has failed to grow up and cannot change his immature pattern of behavior. To emphasize this point, Updike presumably employed the seemingly awkward repetition of *elbow*.

This revision contrasts Janice's point of view against Rabbit's, effectively foregrounding his immature insensitivity. Indeed, this scheme has been carefully prepared from the novel's outset. When Rabbit notices that he does not have the car key, he wonders "which way Janice was sloppy": "Either she forgot to give him the key when he went out or she never bothered to take it out of the ignition. He tries to imagine which is more likely and can't. He doesn't know her that well. He never knows what the hell she'll do" (*RA* 21). This is a typical instance of how he fails to imagine Janice's interiority throughout the novel. In fact, shortly before her Joycean monologue cited above, Janice insists: "Why can't you try to imagine how I *feel?* I've just had a baby." And Rabbit replies: "I can. I can but I don't want to, it's not the thing, the thing is how *I* feel. And I feel like getting out" (*RA* 213, emphases original). This marital discord ultimately leads to the most tragic event in *Rabbit, Run*—the accidental drowning of their infant daughter—which is exclusively narrated from Janice's point of view. Of the novel's treatment of perspectives, Mary O'Connell observes that "male power is primarily exercised through the control of perspective, specifically through the control of language" (73): "The camera-eye narrator of *Rabbit, Run* reflects the tyranny of Rabbit's imagination by presenting his perspective almost exclusively" (132). Joyce B. Markle, however, points out that the novel's female perspectives are carefully set up against Rabbit's dominating point of view: "Both Ruth and Janice stress separateness in their Joycean monologues—monologues whose stream-of-consciousness form itself implies emotional isolation. Ruth feels Rabbit 'just lived in his skin,' and Janice is upset by 'this thing of nobody knowing how you felt'" (57). Given these frequent emphases on Rabbit's self-absorption, the narrative strategy of *Rabbit, Run* should be to interpolate Janice's voices into Rabbit's, thus implicitly subverting his narrative domination. Therefore, the seemingly odd revision in Janice's interior monologue, which reminds us of Rabbit's childish behavior, in fact complements the third factor in the Pascalian epigraph.

This structural design of *Rabbit, Run* is also suggested in the punctuation of the novel's epigraph: "The motions of Grace, the hardness of the heart; external

circumstances" (*RA* 4). Of these three elements in man, the first two describe Rabbit's internality, and separated by a semicolon, the last belongs to his externality. Updike apparently intended this dichotomy because he modified the English translation of *Pensées* so as to fit into his scheme. The passage in question was taken from the 1908 Everyman edition translated by W. F. Trotter. To quote Trotter's translation again: "The spirit of grace; the hardness of the heart; external circumstances" (139). We see that the first semicolon became a comma, just as Updike marked with a pencil on his own copy of *Pensées*.[14] While Trachtenberg observes that Updike "restored the punctuation, bringing it closer to the [French] original" (8), the altered punctuation nonetheless reminds the reader of the novel's dialectic design for perspectives.[15] In a sense, the narrative dichotomy over the points of view is already given in the epigraph.

* * *

As we have discussed in this essay, Updike carefully arranged the male as well as female perspectives, allowing "the reader to see things largely from Rabbit's position while at the same time keeping the reader sufficiently detached to be able to evaluate both Rabbit and his shaping milieu" (Burhans 342). But quite a few critics have ignored, or overlooked, Updike's subtle intentions in his use of female viewpoints. According to Marshall Boswell: "To isolate one quality over the other—as numerous readers have done—is to miss an essential component of Updike's dialectical vision" (44). A classic example of such a reader is Mary Gordon, who takes up the scene where Janice drunkenly drowns the baby daughter: "This death can be read any number of ways that are conducive to negative mythologizing about women. . . . But it is at least possible to say that a responsible father does not leave his children in the hands of a woman who is clearly depressed. This is a possibility that never occurs to Rabbit or to Updike" (18). Indeed Rabbit is clearly presented as an irresponsible father by Updike, but as discussed above, the same author also revised Janice's monologue, implying a potential criticism of

14) Updike's own copy of this translation (reprinted in 1943) is kept in the Houghton Library at Harvard University.

15) Updike made another modification to the translation. On his own copy of Trotter's *Pensées*, he penciled above the word "spirit" the original French term *mouvements* and two options for its translation: *motions* and *movements*. Apparently, Updike changed the word because the novel is all about Rabbit's motions/movements. According to Updike: "the epigraph in its darting, fragmentary, zigzaggy form fits the book, which also has a kind of zigzaggy shape, settles on no fixed point" (Campbell 279).

Rabbit's self-absorption. Moreover, this ironic implication has been latent in the novel's Pascalian epigraph. On the critical reception of *Rabbit, Run*, Stacey Olster makes a just observation: "It is in conflating Rabbit's perspective with Updike's and neglecting to consider point of view that feminist critics of the Rabbit tetralogy most often err" (116). One ought not to discuss the author's purported misogynist attitude without considering the point of view. William H. Pritchard forcefully argues: "It's true that the present-tense accounting of Rabbit's actions and words and thoughts makes it difficult if not impossible to measure the degree of Updike's identification with or detachment from his hero. But this is exactly how the novelist designed it" (52). Then, Updike's design of *Rabbit, Run* could be epitomized in the well-noted "yes, but" quality—he once told an interviewer that his works say "yes, but" at their thematic cores: "Yes, in *Rabbit, Run*, to our inner urgent whispers, but—the social fabric collapses murderously" (Samuels 33). To highlight this narrative structure was one of Updike's purposes behind the 1995 revision. Or we might even perceive a faint note of the "yes, but" attitude in the whole process of Updike's gradual revision—yes to his celebrated early work, but how could he revise it any better?

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