

The Crisis and Reconstruction in *Rabbit Redux*

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Abstract

In *Rabbit Redux*, Updike offers numerous depictions of the counterculture movement, encompassing various aspects such as social values, family, marriage, race, and self-identity. Scholars both at home and abroad have carried out extensive analyses on this and achieved considerable outcomes. Nevertheless, their research is predominantly centered on the negative influences the counterculture movement exerted on the society at that time, lacking in-depth exploration of the protagonist's responses to the counterculture movement and the reconstruction of the self. This paper endeavors to conduct a study on this issue.

Key words: *Rabbit Redux*; Counterculture movement; Crisis; Reconstruction

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1. INTRODUCTION

Rabbit Redux is the second installment of John Updike's "Rabbit Tetralogy". The novel portrays the intense impact and reconstruction of American social values in the 1960s, profoundly reflecting the complexity and multiplicity of American society during that era. During this period, American society underwent a series of momentous historical events and social phenomena, including the anti-war peace movement, the women's liberation movement, the Apollo moon landing, the Vietnam War, the black civil rights movement, the environmental protection

movement, as well as hippie culture, rock music, sexual liberation, drug use, and numerous others. These were all significant components of the counterculture movement at that time or were closely related to it, presenting the social turbulence and cultural conflicts of that period. These movements exerted a profound influence on American society at that time, challenging traditional values and social order. These events collectively constituted the social backdrop of the novel and had a far-reaching impact on the values of the protagonist, "Rabbit" Harry, and the characters surrounding him. Through the plot and character shaping in the novel, Updike exhibited the influence and alterations these movements brought to the lives of ordinary Americans.

The characters in the novel, such as Harry, Janice, Jill, and Skeeter, were all influenced to varying degrees by the counterculture movement. Their behaviors, thoughts, and values all reflected the transformation and conflicts of social culture at that time. Harry, as the protagonist of the novel, his life trajectory was closely intertwined with the counterculture movement of the 1960s. He confronted family disintegration (his wife Janice cohabiting with her lover Charlie), career predicaments (working in a printing factory while facing the risk of unemployment), and a personal identity crisis (doubts and confusion regarding traditional values and social norms). These predicaments and choices were the common experiences endured by many in American society at that time. Harry's image emerged as the epitome and representative of middle-class men in the face of social transformation during that era. Harry's experiences not only manifest the survival predicaments and psychological struggles of an individual in a specific historical period but also reflect the various contradictions and conflicts within American society during the transitional phase. Through delicate brushstrokes and profound insight, Updike presents readers with a vivid and authentic portrait of post-war America.

The novel reveals the complexity and multi-faceted nature of social change by showcasing the influence of the counterculture movement on family, society, and personal life. It conveys to us that social change is not achieved instantaneously but demands a prolonged process and profound reflection. Updike artfully integrates various elements of the counterculture movement into the novel's plot, such as hippie culture, sexual liberation, and drug use. These elements form a stark contrast with the traditional lifestyle of Harry and his family. In the novel, the conflicts between Harry and characters such as Jill and Skeeter, who represent the counterculture movement, not only reflect the collision between different cultural concepts but also disclose the universality and complexity of cultural conflicts during the period of social change.

2. THE IMPACT AND RECONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL VALUES

2.1 The Disintegration of Traditional Values

Through his portrayal of the counterculture movement, Updike conducted a profound examination of traditional values. He perceived that the traditional values centered on work, thrift, and abstinence were gradually disintegrating under the impact of the counterculture movement, and people began to pursue a more liberated, equal, and diverse lifestyle.

The American society in the 1960s was undergoing tremendous changes, and traditional values were encountering unprecedented challenges. After returning to his family, Harry discovered that the traditional family ethics and moral concepts could no longer fulfill his spiritual needs. He started to question these values and endeavored to seek new lifestyles and values. This questioning and challenge manifested Harry's reflection on traditional values and his growth, and also mirrored the extensive discussion and reevaluation of traditional values in the American society at that time. The critic Detweiler noted: "Rabbit, now caught in the tension between continuity and change, between a stubborn worship of the dream and a firsthand experience of its dissolution." (Detweiler, 135) Through Harry's perspective, the novel presents the cultural contradictions in the American society at that time. On the one hand, Harry was confronted with family issues such as his wife Janice's extramarital affair and the tragic death of his daughter; on the other hand, he also had to cope with the successive waves of protests in society, such as the anti-war movement and the black civil rights movement. The questioning of the country and traditional values expressed in these movements left Harry confused and uneasy. The rigid white American society, the gradually disintegrating traditional values, and the increasingly prominent racial conflicts made Rabbit "feeling over-whelmed and put upon by all the revolutions in the air" (Updike, xv)

As a representative of the middle-class men, Harry appeared bewildered and struggled in the face of the impact of the counterculture movement. He aspired to maintain the traditional family concepts and lifestyle while being unable to disregard the impact and influence brought about by social changes. What the novel demonstrates is the conflict between upholding traditional values and the inevitable impact and collapse of traditional values. (Jin Hengshan) This contradictory psychology is profoundly depicted in the novel. In *Rabbit Redux*, Harry returned to his family and attempted to confront life with a submissive attitude, but this did not imply that he completely accepted the traditional family ethics and moral concepts. The "new individualism" that emerged in the American society in the 1960s, emphasizing "self-expression", "self-actualization", and "self-satisfaction", gradually supplanted the traditional moral perfectionism, rendering Harry's forbearance and submissiveness feeble and powerless. The belief that Harry once held, "America is the liberator, America is the place of reason, America is the place of light", gradually disintegrated after experiencing a series of social events. He realized that the Vietnam War was unjust and the discrimination against people of color in society was unjustifiable. Traditional values were being relentlessly impacted and shaken by the "counterculture" movement. The technological products such as television and automobiles mentioned in the novel not only represent the rise of consumer culture but also reflect the impact of technology on social values. For instance, the demonstration reports on television bewildered Harry, and the development of new technologies threatened his job. These changes imperceptibly shook Harry's life foundation and values.

Harry's growth process is also reflected in his transformation of racial concepts. In his interaction with the black fugitive Skeeter, Harry gradually shed his narrow racist mindset and began to view people of different races with a more open and inclusive attitude. Harry was a stubborn racist, but in the debates about race and war, Skeeter consistently played the role of a strong figure, shattering Harry's pride as a white person time and again, dragging him out of the emotion of ethnocentrism and pushing him into the bottomless abyss of identity recognition. (Cai Bin) This transformation not only reflects Harry's personal growth and progress but also reflects his self-redemption and growth at the ideological level; it reflects the longing and efforts for racial equality and integration in the American society at that time and also reflects the influence of the black civil rights movement in the 1960s on the American society. Harry's transformation of racial concepts is an important component of the reconstruction of social values.

2.2 Exploration of New Values

In his novels, Updike adroitly integrates cultural phenomena such as hippie culture and sexual liberation,

and reflects the value conflicts and cultural contradictions in society at that time through the delineation and critique of these phenomena. He not only presents the allure and influence of these cultural phenomena on the lives of the youth but also uncovers the hollowness and peril behind them. Through the profound analysis and criticism of these cultural phenomena, Updike conveys his intricate emotions and profound cogitation on social alterations. Every character in the novel is endeavoring to adopt new lifestyles and embrace novel value concepts. Janice leaves her husband and seeks solace and independence in the arms of her lover; Jill runs away from home in search of warmth and ideals; Skeeter escapes from the police station in pursuit of equal sovereignty for blacks. These actions not only embody the individuals' pursuit of freedom and equality but also mirror the entire society's exploration and experimentation with new values under the influence of the counterculture movement.

Jill, as a representative of hippie culture, her lifestyle and value system reflect the rebellion against traditional constraints and the pursuit of a liberated life. The awakening and struggle of these female characters add greater social significance and a sense of the era to the novel. Hippie culture, as a part of the counterculture movement, emphasizes freedom, love, and peace, and opposes traditional social norms and values. Jill, an 18-year-old girl from an affluent family, escapes from home due to her dissatisfaction with her boyfriend's control and her family, and finds herself in a black bar in Brewer. She is young, vivacious, intelligent, and influenced by the sexual liberation movement, with an open mindset. Harry is initially drawn by Jill's freshness and naivety and subsequently offers her shelter. Jill not only undertakes household chores at Harry's home but also cares for Harry's son Nelson like a sister and is even willing to reciprocate Harry's kindness of taking her in with her body. This unconditional dedication and spirit of sacrifice touches Harry to a certain extent, enabling him to experience a long-lost warmth and connection.

Hippie culture is often closely intertwined with freedom, love, and sexual liberation. Harry, a "family man" of the middle class, in such a tumultuous era, is compelled to confront the redefinition of his identity. Harry's acceptance of Jill partially stems from his yearning for youth, beauty, and freedom. Jill's presence brings him the long-absent passion and excitement and prompts him to reevaluate the relationship with his wife, Janice. This release of emotions and desires serves as a relief for Harry and represents a form of resistance to his current living situation. Nevertheless, this relationship is fraught with contradictions and conflicts as it not only fulfills Harry's desires but also challenges his moral baseline and family responsibilities.

Harry's acceptance of hippies is his accommodation and resistance to social changes. During that era, hippie culture was regarded as the subversion and disruption

of the traditional social structure and values. Harry, as a representative of the middle class, was originally expected to side with tradition but opts to embrace hippie culture to a certain degree. He endeavors to strike a balance between maintaining his identity and adapting to changes, yet this effort is often rife with contradictions and struggles. Harry's acceptance of hippies, particularly of Jill, not only reflects his psychological shifts in the turbulent society but also reveals his inherent contradictions and growth. For Harry, Jill represents the most incisive voice to the new-culture concerns. Jill introduces Harry to a type of thinking totally different from his previous experience. (Wang Wei, 23) Harry's acceptance of hippies is not merely the acceptance of an individual but also his reexamination and repositioning of his own identity and social role. This choice reflects his complex attitude towards social changes: a blend of fear and curiosity, rejection and attraction. In this process, he undergoes a mental journey from confusion to reflection. He gradually realizes that he can no longer remain complacent with the status quo and evade problems as before but must courageously confront various challenges and changes in life. This transformation is not only manifested in his attitude towards Jill and Skeeter but also in his reevaluation of himself, his family, society, and even the entire world.

However, Harry's acceptance of Jill is not without reservations. On the one hand, he is captivated by Jill's unique charm; on the other hand, he resents her wealthy family background, excellent education, and the new values and novel ideas she represents. This contradictory psychology reflects Harry's struggle between traditional values and new ideological trends.

Harry's acceptance of hippies constitutes an important plot thread in *Rabbit Redux*, profoundly disclosing the psychological changes and growth trajectory of the protagonist in the tumultuous society. Through this plot, Updike not only presents the complex landscape of American society from the late 1960s to the early 1970s but also conveys profound reflections on human nature, identity, and social changes. Harry's acceptance of hippies is a multidimensional process. This process not only reflects Harry's personal psychological changes and growth process but also offers a unique perspective for us to understand the social changes and cultural conflicts of that era.

In the novel, another character, Skeeter, who is a black fugitive, symbolizes the injustice and oppression imposed on the black community in that society at that time. The inclusion of these two characters, Jill and Skeeter, has imparted greater social significance and a sense of the era to the novel. Harry's interaction with the black fugitive Skeeter constitutes the key to his transformation in racial concepts. Skeeter, a black fugitive, whose emergence further challenges Harry's values and worldview. Skeeter not only represents diverse races and cultural backgrounds

but also brings forth profound insights and critiques regarding the Vietnam War. The interaction between Harry and Skeeter compels him to confront his internal racial prejudice and national identity crisis. Despite Harry's wariness towards Skeeter, he ultimately opts to accept him to a certain extent, signifying a certain advancement and growth in his racial perception. During his interaction with Skeeter, Harry gradually extricates himself from the narrow-minded racist ideology, gradually comprehends the absurdity and irrationality of racial discrimination, and commences to reflect on his racial notions. He endeavors to view people of different races with a more open and inclusive stance and attempts to establish a friendship transcending race with Skeeter. This transformation of racial concepts reflects Harry's aspiration and endeavor for racial equality and integration in the American society at that time. This transformation not only constitutes a part of Harry's personal growth but also constitutes an important step for him to reconstitute his self-identity in a tumultuous society. This transformation reflects the influence of the Black Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s on racial concepts in American society. Although the attempt at racial integration in the novel is not without obstacles (such as Skeeter's eventual misfortune), it still manifests the aspiration and effort for racial equality and integration in American society at that time.

The protagonists in the novel undergo various conflicts and struggles when confronted with social changes, but ultimately, they achieve reconciliation with society to a certain degree. This reconciliation is manifested not only in the reconstruction of their personal lives but also in their comprehension and acceptance of social changes. In the process of facing social changes, Harry gradually embraces and integrates new values. He no longer adheres strictly to traditional moral constraints but pays greater attention to personal self-realization and free expression. The acceptance and integration of these new values render Harry's personal identity more diversified and open. The growth process of the protagonist Harry is profoundly reflected in *Rabbit Redux* through aspects such as his transition from evasion to confrontation, questioning and reshaping of traditional values, transformation of racial concepts, and reflection on consumer culture, embodying the reconstruction of American social values in the 1960s. This process not only reflects the complexity and diversity of American society at that time but also provides valuable enlightenment for us to understand the relationship between individuals and society as well as the changes in social values.

3. TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE FAMILY

3.1 The Disintegration and Reconfiguration of Family Relations

Amidst the tide of the counterculture movement, the family emerged as a crucial battleground where diverse

cultural and value notions converged and collided. Harry's family became a microcosm of this era's shifts, showcasing the conflicts and fusions between tradition and anti-tradition. As women's status escalated and social concepts became more liberal, the traditional family ethics faced challenges. The marital issues between Harry and Janice mirrored the widespread marital crises and the diversified trends of family ethics prevalent in American society during that period. The female characters in the novel, such as Janice, also reflected the impact of the counterculture movement on women's status. In the narrative, Janice's transformation from a housewife to an independent career woman not only signified the elevation of women's status but also facilitated the reconfiguration of gender roles within the family. Janice's career transition was not merely an outcome of personal choice but also an embodiment of the transformation in social gender concepts at that time. Women began to venture out of the family, enter the professional realm, and pursue economic independence and self-actualization. Janice's transformation from a housewife to an independent career woman, while Harry assumed to a certain extent the role of a "house husband," reflected the alteration in gender concepts and the enhancement of women's status in American society at that time. Janice's independence and autonomy in marriage presented Harry with unprecedented challenges and a sense of loss, simultaneously compelling him to reflect upon his role and responsibility within the family. Harry was no longer merely the traditional "breadwinner" within the family but became more involved in all aspects of family life. This transformation of family roles mirrored the openness of gender concepts and the redistribution of family responsibilities in American society at that time and constituted a part of Harry's personal identity recognition.

There existed a notable economic disparity between Harry and Janice. Janice inherited a batch of stocks from her father and obtained a position in a car dealership, emerging as a relatively economically independent woman. This independence reduced her reliance on Harry and endowed her with greater decision-making power within the family. Nevertheless, this economic independence exacerbated the differences between the couple. Harry had been employed as a typesetter in a printing factory with limited income. This economic imbalance led to discrepancies in family status and consumption concepts between the two. Harry might have perceived his family status as threatened, while Janice might have believed she was entitled to pursue her preferred lifestyle and dreams.

Harry and Janice held significantly divergent values. With the augmentation of Janice's economic independence, her commitment to family responsibilities might have diminished, potentially eliciting Harry's

dissatisfaction and disappointment. Harry might have contended that as the primary economic pillar of the family, he ought to receive greater respect and support, yet the reality deviated from this expectation. Janice pursued self-worth and freedom and was reluctant to be confined to the traditional role of a housewife. She aspired to realize her value in both work and life and pursued increased freedom and independence. Superficially, it was Harry's indifference that prompted Janice to escape the family in pursuit of freedom and liberation. In a deeper sense, it was the awakening of Janice's inner self-awareness that impelled her to seek external freedom and liberation. (Li Bin) Whereas Harry inclined towards traditional family notions, emphasizing family responsibilities, stability, and security, believing that women should undertake family duties and care for husbands and children. This variance in values made it arduous for the two to reach consensus on numerous issues. This disparity in values gradually manifested in marital life, resulting in their inability to reach consensus on matters such as children's education and the family budget.

Furthermore, Harry and Janice's marital life gradually became prosaic, lacking passion and novelty. Janice felt disappointed by Harry's indifference and lack of attention, while Harry was perplexed and disconcerted by Janice's independence and pursuit. The contradictions and conflicts between the two escalated continuously, and they struggled to reach agreement on matters ranging from daily trifles to significant decisions. These conflicts not only affected their relationship but also exacerbated the tense atmosphere within the family.

The novel commences by revealing that the traditional structure of Harry's family is on the brink of collapse, and family conflicts have reached an irreconcilable juncture at the outset. After Harry's wife, Janice, became aware that Harry was cognizant of her extramarital affair, she resolutely chose to leave the family and cohabit with her lover, Charlie, causing Harry to lose the traditional family pillar and companion. This action directly disrupted the original family equilibrium and directly led to the disintegration of the traditional family structure and traditional family concepts. The family was rife with chaos, conflicts, and desires, contrary to traditional family tenets, motivating family members to pursue individual liberation and self-realization. The waves of sexual liberation and women's liberation within the counterculture movement spurred Janice to seek spiritual freedom. Her choice to cohabit with her lover, Charlie, directly reflected the challenges posed to traditional marriage and family concepts within that society at that time. The disintegration of the family was not solely the result of personal choice but also a reflection of social evolution. Janice sought spiritual freedom through leaving home and securing employment. This transformation of hers was directly influenced by the women's liberation

ideology within the counterculture movement, embodying the awakening and resistance of women in the context of social change. Janice's departure not only challenged marital fidelity but also subverted traditional gender roles and family responsibilities. She sought spiritual freedom through physical liberation, reflecting the influence of the women's liberation movement in American society at that time. While Harry descended from the core position within the family, encountering unprecedented solitude and frustration. Janice's departure brought about a significant alteration in Harry's role within the family. He not only had to assume more family responsibilities but also had to confront doubts and criticisms from the external environment. This change left Harry confused and uneasy and compelled him to re-examine his identity and value.

3.2 The Formation of Non-traditional Families

Following Janice's departure, Harry took in the hippie girl Jill and the black fugitive Skeeter. The trio, along with Harry's son Nelson, constituted a peculiar "family". This family was not tied by blood relations but founded on shared life experiences and mutual necessities. Jill played a dual role within the family as both a daughter and a lover, caring for Nelson while maintaining an intimate bond with Harry. Skeeter, as an outsider and marginal figure, exacerbated the tension and conflicts within the household. This plotline not only enriched the content of the novel but also manifested the impact of the counterculture movement on social structure and family concepts. The disintegration and reconfiguration of this family relationship directly illustrate the shock of the counterculture movement on family notions. It discloses the fragility of the traditional family model in the midst of social transformation and people's exploration and experimentation with new family patterns.

In *Rabbit, Run*, Harry frequently chose to abscond from home, evading family and social responsibilities. Nevertheless, in *Rabbit Redux*, he opted to return to the family and assume the responsibility of caring for his son. This transformation not only indicates that Harry began to confront his identity and duties but also reflects the conflict and integration between individualism and family responsibilities in American society during that era. Harry's choice reflects society's renewed recognition and emphasis on personal responsibilities and family roles.

After his wife left home, Harry became acquainted with the hippie girl Jill through the introduction of a coworker and invited her to reside in his home. By bringing Jill into his home, Harry subconsciously intended for her to substitute for Janice as the "wife". This action exposed his fantasy of reconstructing his small family in accordance with the traditional middle-class family model. (Jin Hengshan) Jill's inclusion brought new vitality to Harry's life. She not only undertook domestic chores but also cared for Harry's son Nelson like an elder

sister, which to a certain extent alleviated Harry's sense of solitude and endeavored to reestablish a non-traditional family relationship. Subsequently, Jill brought the black fugitive Skeeter home, which further intensified the complexity of the family.

The reconstitution of family relationships was not without obstacles. With the formation of this non-traditional family, family ties became exceptionally intricate. Jill and Skeeter's lifestyles were starkly different from Harry's. Their arrival disrupted Harry's original life order and values. The relationship between Harry and Jill was characterized by both emotional dependence and value conflicts. Jill represented the rebellious spirit and liberal concepts of the new generation, while Harry adhered to traditional moral and value precepts. This generational disparity led to their divergence and contradictions on numerous issues. Jill's openness and Skeeter's rebelliousness perplexed and disconcerted Harry, and this value conflict escalated continuously within the family. Due to Skeeter's black identity and fugitive background, along with Jill and Skeeter's unconventional lifestyle, Harry's family encountered extreme ire and exclusion from the surrounding neighbors, rendering this family increasingly isolated and helpless. This social pressure further exacerbated the internal contradictions and crises within the family.

As the narrative unfolded, various conflicts gradually intensified and ultimately erupted. Skeeter openly exerted sexual violence and force upon Jill, an act that not only enraged Harry and Nelson but also elicited a vehement response from the neighboring residents. Eventually, Harry's house was set ablaze by the neighbors, Jill perished in the fire, and Skeeter fled. This sequence of events thoroughly demolished this non-traditional family, signifying the complete collapse of the family that Harry endeavored to reconstitute and also a significant setback for Harry in terms of identity recognition and family responsibilities. He lost his house and job and plunged into an unprecedented predicament.

Rabbit Redux presents the reconfiguration and conflicts of family relationships in American society during the 1960s through the life experiences of the protagonist Harry. The reconfiguration of family relationships in the novel constitutes a process replete with conflicts, crises, and reflections. Although the novel concludes with the breakdown and tragedy of family relationships, it also prompts profound contemplation on family ties among readers. Amidst a tumultuous social backdrop, traditional family structures and values have encountered unprecedented challenges. The novel not only reveals the fragility of traditional family structures but also explores the possibilities and challenges of non-traditional families. Through the reconfiguration and disintegration of family relationships, the novel profoundly reflects the turmoil and changes of American society at that time and the struggles

and growth of individuals within it. After Harry's family underwent breakdown, attempts at reconfiguration, escalation of conflicts, and ultimate collapse, although the physical form of the family ceased to exist, Harry achieved spiritual growth and rebirth. After experiencing a series of identity crises and mental predicaments, Harry initiated the re-examination of his life and values. His eventual reconciliation with Janice perhaps signals the inception of a new family relationship. This process not only reflects the survival predicament and identity crisis of individuals in a volatile society but also discloses the complexity and mutability of family relationships under specific social circumstances.

4. THE CRISIS AND RECONSTRUCTION OF PERSONAL IDENTITY AND SELF-IDENTIFICATION

4.1 The Crisis of Personal Identity

The various events in the 1960s not only profoundly influenced the values and cultural atmosphere of American society, destabilizing the traditional social order but also deeply affected Harry's personal life and self-identification, resulting in confusion regarding identity. Updike presents the binary opposing forces such as male-female, black-white, and upper-lower classes in the novel, and these forces generate intense conflicts in personal identity recognition. These social, political, and technological changes devalue Rabbit as an American, a white, a male, a husband, and a worker. (O'Connell, 103) As a white middle-class male, Harry felt unprecedented perplexity and bewilderment in the tumultuous social environment, struggling between the traditional values and the conflicts of modern culture, endeavoring to find his own position. Influenced by the counterculture movement, Harry experienced deep confusion and a crisis regarding his identity and role. He desired to maintain the traditional family concept and lifestyle while being unable to disregard the impact and influence brought about by social changes. Facing the violent impact of social values, Harry underwent a crisis of personal identity recognition. He attempted to reconstruct his identity by returning to the family and tolerating his wife's extramarital affair; however, these efforts failed to genuinely address his issues. Conversely, in his interactions with different characters, he gradually recognized his limitations and powerlessness and began to reexamine his values and life goals. This crisis of personal identity reflects the challenges and impacts of social changes on personal identity recognition. It prompts individuals to reevaluate their identities and roles and seek new self-identification and positioning.

Before *Rabbit Redux*, Harry had absconded from home on multiple occasions, evading family and social

responsibilities. Nevertheless, in the second novel, he elected to return to the family and assume the responsibility of caring for his son. This transformation indicates that Harry began to confront his identity and responsibility, ceasing to evade reality and instead choosing to confront and solve problems. This transition from evasion to confrontation embodies the reconstruction of Harry's personal identity and self-identification. Furthermore, Janice's independence and departure significantly impacted Harry's family status and self-identification, compelling him to confront his new role within the family and society.

Harry's position and role within the family also underwent substantial challenges. His wife's independence and departure gradually deprived him of the right to speak within the family, and his position as the head of the family was threatened. This alteration in the family relationship induced unease and confusion in Harry, motivating him to commence reflecting on his identity and value. He began to question his masculinity and family role and endeavored to reestablish his position within the family. Simultaneously, the family tragedy related to the unfortunate demise of his daughter further exacerbated Harry's crisis of self-identification. The inclusion of Jill and Skeeter further intensified the complexity of the family relationship. Jill's openness and Skeeter's black identity caused Harry to feel discomfort and rejection. This sense of rejection also reflects his uncertainty and anxiety regarding his own identity recognition. Skeeter challenged Harry's role as an American defender and guardian on racial and war issues, compelling him to reevaluate his stance and values.

In terms of gender relations, Harry underwent a psychological journey of self-redemption through his complex relationships with three women (Janice, Jill, and Mim). These female characters each represent distinct lifestyles and values, and their existence and struggles prompted Harry to commence reflecting on his own life and values. Particularly, Janice's independence and bravery, as well as the alternative lifestyles of Jill and Mim, exposed Harry to possibilities divergent from the traditional middle-class life, thereby stimulating his rethinking and construction of self-identification.

Harry originally worked diligently, expecting to attain social recognition and family happiness through career success. Nevertheless, with the rapid social changes, especially the rise of hippie culture, he discovered that the values and lifestyle he adhered to were challenged unprecedentedly. The emergence of Jill and Skeeter, like two mirrors, reflected Harry's inner disquiet and confusion. Through interaction with them, Harry began to question his identity and lifestyle, which impelled him to undertake self-reflection and attempt to strike a balance between acceptance and rejection, thereby remolding his self-identification.

4.2 Reconstruction of Self-Identity

After undergoing a succession of social events and alterations in interpersonal relationships, Harry endured profound internal struggles and self-reflections. He gradually initiated objective contemplation of the incidents occurring around him and endeavored to embrace novel value concepts and lifestyles. He commenced questioning his erstwhile beliefs and values, striving to seek a new identity. This reflection was not merely manifested in his stance towards social issues such as race and war but was also reflected in his reevaluation of family, marriage, and personal life. Harry gradually perceived that his existing lifestyle and values failed to satisfy his internal requisites, thereby compelling him to undertake changes to rediscover the significance and worth of life.

In *Rabbit Redux*, family and marriage constitute indispensable and crucial components in the process of Harry's self-identity reconstruction. These domains not only serve as the bedrock of his life but also function as the source for seeking stability and meaning when confronted with social transitions and personal challenges. Subsequent to his wife's departure, Harry was compelled to confront the mundane aspects and solitude of life independently. During this course, he gradually acquired the ability to care for himself and assume family responsibilities. This attempt at independent living facilitated his mental maturation and independence. Harry initially played the traditional roles of "breadwinner" and "family pillar" within the family. Nevertheless, in the wake of social alterations and internal personal struggles, he gradually discerned that this role positioning could no longer fulfill his and the family's needs. He embarked on reexamining his role within the family and endeavored to comprehend the meaning and value of the family from a more comprehensive perspective. During this process, Harry learned to pay greater attention to the emotional needs of family members rather than merely providing material support. He strived to become a more considerate, understanding, and supportive partner and father, which assisted him in rediscovering a sense of belonging and value within the family.

The marital relationship between Harry and his wife Janice underwent numerous twists and turns in the novel. Janice's independence and departure incited Harry's anger and helplessness yet concurrently impelled him to reevaluate their marital bond and the mode of interaction between husband and wife. Nevertheless, after experiencing a series of conflicts and reflections, Harry began to comprehend Janice's choice and endeavored to accept this reality. During this process, he gradually relinquished his resentment and dependence on Janice and initiated the search for his new emotional sustenance. Harry began to apprehend that marriage is

not solely a collection of responsibilities and obligations but also a venue for emotional communion and spiritual alignment. He endeavored to communicate with Janice, attempted to understand her thoughts and sentiments, and concurrently expressed his perplexity and expectations. This process of communication and understanding not only deepened the emotional connection between the couple but also facilitated Harry in rediscovering his position and value within the marital context. He ultimately reconciled with Janice but was no longer in a conventional marital relationship but established a novel, more equitable, and mutually understanding liaison.

Harry resided in the tumultuous 1960s. Prominent social events such as the Vietnam War, the counterculture movement, the civil rights movement for black individuals, and the feminist movement profoundly impacted him. He began to pay heed to these social metamorphoses and reflect upon whether his values and lifestyle were compatible with these alterations. Jill and Mim represented lifestyles and values divergent from those of traditional middle-class women. Interactions with them enabled Harry to perceive the diversity and potentialities of life. He initiated attempts to accept and integrate into this new lifestyle and value system, thereby attaining the reconstruction of self-identity on an emotional plane. Through his association with the black individual Skeeter, Harry gradually recognized the absurdity and irrationality of racial discrimination. He began to attempt to view individuals of different races with a more equitable and inclusive attitude. This transformation not only reflected his personal growth but also his reconstruction in the domain of social identity.

Harry's reconstruction of self-identity in *Rabbit Redux* is a complex and arduous process. Amidst the tempestuous social backdrop and intricate family relationships, Harry incessantly questioned and reflected upon his identity positioning and encountered numerous confusions and setbacks in identity recognition. Facing social upheavals and family vicissitudes, Harry felt bewildered and perplexed for a period. He was oblivious to the location of his value and significance and remained clueless regarding how to address the various challenges in life. After an extended period of confusion and bewilderment, Harry ultimately began to awaken. He realized that he needed to break free from the shackles and constraints of tradition and seek a lifestyle and value system that truly belonged to him. Rabbit's Renewal begins when he opens himself to new experiences that, though painful, prove liberating. (Keener, 67) He was no longer an individual who blindly accepted traditional values and social norms but emerged as an entity with independent thinking and judgment capabilities. He began to scrutinize the various binary opposing forces in American society, such as men and women, black and white, upper and lower classes, with a

more objective and rational perspective and evolved into a more mature and rational individual during the crisis, reestablishing his identity and status. Simultaneously, he also initiated attention to his inner world and sought a lifestyle and values that genuinely belonged to him. This reconstruction not only enabled Harry to secure a better footing in society but also bestowed new happiness and contentment upon his personal life. After a series of challenges and reflections, he gradually clarified his identity and role positioning and ultimately reconstructed self-identity within the tumultuous and complex social backdrop. This reconstruction of self-identity not only facilitated Harry's better establishment in society but also imparted new meaning and value to his personal life. He achieved the reconstruction and enhancement of self-identity through multiple aspects such as the transformation of family roles, adaptation to social changes, and reconstruction of the emotional realm. This process not only showcases Harry's personal growth and alteration but also reflects the prevalent phenomenon of seeking self-identity and value within the American society during that period of turbulence and unrest. This identity reconstruction is not merely a personal victory but also constitutes a profound reflection and response to the social reality; it not only reflects the growth and progress of individuals in the midst of social changes but also discloses the profound influence of social changes on individual self-identity.

5. CONCLUSION

There exists a tight connection between *Rabbit Redux* and the counterculture movement in the United States during the 1960s. The influence of the counterculture movement on the theme of this novel is multifaceted and profound. It not only impinged upon traditional social values and family concepts but also facilitated the exploration of new values and the complication of interpersonal relationships; concurrently, it triggered the crisis and reconstruction of personal identity and self-identification. These influences collectively constitute the profound reflection and unique expression of the social changes in the United States in the 1960s presented in the novel.

The novel, through the portrayal of the protagonist Harry and his family life, as well as the reflection on and criticism of the social phenomena at that time, demonstrates the complexity and diversity of American society in that era. Simultaneously, it also discloses the influence and alterations that the counterculture movement brought to the lives of ordinary people and people's intricate emotions and profound thoughts regarding social changes. Hence, *Rabbit Redux* is not merely a work of literary value but also an important historical document reflecting the spirit of the times and the social landscape.

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