

Spring 2017

A Kierkegaardian Interpretation of *Rabbit, Run*

Scott Chalfant

University of North Georgia, swchal1981@ung.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/eng_capstone



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Chalfant, Scott, "A Kierkegaardian Interpretation of *Rabbit, Run*" (2017). *Department of English Capstone Abstracts*. 15.
http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/eng_capstone/15

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at Nighthawks Open Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Department of English Capstone Abstracts by an authorized administrator of Nighthawks Open Institutional Repository.

Scott Chalfant

English 4890

Dr. Edelman-Young

Spring 2017

Abstract

While most critics view Rabbit as an existential figure, they fail to make the connection to Søren Kierkegaard. Since Kierkegaard's principles are interconnected to some degree, it would be difficult and ineffective to look at just one principle to support this argument. Therefore, this essay will explore Rabbit's sense of self and Updike's agenda through three Kierkegaardian principles: indirect communication, stages of existence, and anxiety. Existing scholarship that depicts Rabbit as a saint or a villain is too polarizing. Instead, this essay takes a middle road. While Rabbit's actions are detestable, he is at a disadvantage, as Reverend Jack Eccles' religious counseling is inadequate and the world Rabbit inhabits is irreligious. These two factors result in his reliance on his moral compass of "what feels right." This inwardness Rabbit exhibits is exactly what Kierkegaard prescribes for a truer faith, as he believed the Church had become too materialistic. In essence, this interpretation is a response to David Crowe's essay, "Young Man Angstrom: Identity Crisis and the Work of Love in *Rabbit, Run*," that suggests Rabbit's identity crisis stems from an Oedipal origin. Instead, I would like to suggest that his sense of self is rooted in an immaturity, or aestheticism, that stems from his inability to move past his glory days as a high school basketball star. Considering Crowe is one of the only scholars who has written at length of this subject, his essay will serve as a spring board for calculating Rabbit's degree of faith. In this essay, these three Kierkegaardian principles are

underscored by tracing Edenic parallels that depict Rabbit as an Adamic figure, exploring the use of poeticism at times of self-discovery for Rabbit, and expounding upon Rabbit as an aesthetic character, similar to Kierkegaard's Seducer in *The Seducer's Diary*.