

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Narrativization of Trauma in J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Kalpana Devi Kharel has completed her thesis "Historico-Cultural Trauma in J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*" under my supervision. He carried out this research from September 2015 to February 2016. I hereby recommend this thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Supervisor

Date:

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Abstract

This research centers on the exploration of war and cultural trauma in J.M. Coetzee's novel *Life & Times of Michael K*, that is about traumatic self of the protagonist K in the post-apartheid South Africa. His deformed life as an allegorical rendering of the deformed, traumatic history of South Africa and the possibility of the protagonist's healing. The protagonist K is colored, deformed and helpless hero who, in the beginning, takes no part in making history. He has a hare lip by birth, difficulty in speaking and making friends, and socially segregated draws parallel to the apartheid history itself in allegorical way. The history of South Africa itself is full of deformities; it has the deformity of the discrimination of the socially marginalized and it creates the alienated, asocial beings that justify the protagonist's attempts to forget the traumatic past. The protagonist has been represented as a passive victim of the turbulent South African history. The trauma of the protagonist is shaped by various factors like social ostracism, his war-ridden surrounding, his continual segregation and sense of othering in the society. As the acting out of trauma, K relates his present to past, his nostalgia and flashbacks remain pervasive. K's resolution that he will not be dictated by any demand and questionings of any social human beings is his way of working through trauma. It helps him internalize his traumatic past and approach the present in determined and practical way. He finally, after escaping the camp accepts his responsibility as a role of a gardener and his ethical point of living for other emerges. The writer has also shown his ethical concern to the trauma of the "Third World" going beyond the appropriated mediation of Western perspective to represent the trauma of the colored and othered of the history of South Africa in the novel.

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