

**Recovery from the Trauma of Slavery in Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave* and
Octavia Butler's *Kindred***

A Dissertation

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

I certify that this dissertation entitled “Recovery from the Trauma of Slavery in Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years a Slave* and Octavia Butler’s *Kindred*” was prepared by Rajendra Pokhrel under my guidance. He carried out this research from March 2018 to April 2022. I hereby recommend this dissertation be submitted for viva-voce.

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Letter of Approval

This dissertation entitled “Recovery from the Trauma of Slavery in Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years a Slave* and Octavia Butler’s *Kindred*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Rajendra Pokhrel has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

This dissertation claims that both writing and reconstructing the experience of slavery are attempts to understand history and define one's 'self' in relation to and as implicated by it. This act of narrativization situates the traumatized 'self' in relation to wider junctions of history, place, ideology and politico-cultural milieu, and becomes, inherently, an act of writing trauma. For this purpose, this study undertakes two novels, one *Twelve Years a Slave*, a slave narrative borne out of the firsthand experience of slavery and the other *Kindred*, a post-modern neo-slave narrative that takes on, reconstructs and revisits the very site and experience of slavery with recourse to memory. Primarily, these narratives are narratives partaking history by either attempting to record it via narrative memory or attempting to interfere in the dominant narrative of history by foregrounding the experience of the negated, absent 'other.' Conjoining the spatial dimension with the temporal renders slavery as a limit traumatic experience of America and it calls forth the examination of possibility of recovery and racial reconciliation. Furthermore, it emphasizes that geographic location of human experience in a specific empirical context, as a bearer of historical memory and site of trauma, holds key to understanding the unfolding of slavery, neo-slavery and evocation of traumatic memory. Mainly drawing from the insights of Kali Tal, Suzette Henke, Dominick LaCapra, Michelle Balaev, Jeffrey Alexander, Ashraf Rushdy and other relevant critics related to trauma and historiography, I read these narratives as narratives of trauma, as evident in the register of tropes and as attempts at recovery from trauma chiefly via narrativization, acting out and working through. Thus, this study explores the possibility of recovery from experiential and generational trauma leading to racial reconciliation.

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