

Tribhuvan University

Irony in Updike's *Rabbit, Run*: A Kierkegaardian Reading

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Kamal Prasad Sapkota has completed his thesis entitled “Irony in Updike’s *Rabbit, Run: A Kierkegaardian Reading*” under my supervision. He carried out his research from November, 2010 to February, 2011 and completed it successfully. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for the final *viva voce*.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Irony in Updike’s *Rabbit, Run*: A Kierkegaardian Reading” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Kamal Prasad Sapkota has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

John Updike's *Rabbit, Run* exemplifies Kierkegaardian mastered irony. As an exemplar of this type of irony, the novel presents the two sides of issue and then leaves this paradox unresolved so that the intended meaning emerges as a play of contradiction. Updike organizes the moral debates about Christianity and evokes the ambiguity about sexuality and Christianity, paradox of God, faith, immorality and value of goodness. Kierkegaardian dialectical vision of mastered irony contains and maintains a species of controlled dialectical tension between the contradictory materials. The message of any ironic work is not represented by one or the other side of the dialectical issues; nor it is produced by the facial blending of the two; rather it comes out from the dynamic interplay of the unresolved thematic tension. Adopting this method, Updike dramatizes a dynamic play between the thematic tension raised in the novel that he calls the *yes-but* quality of his writing. All of the Rabbit's aesthetic *yes* has its own ethical *but*. *Yes* side of Rabbit's inner-freedom enables him to run and his social identity says *but*. Rabbit's search for something ultimately ends in nothing. Being a Christian minister, Eccles does not believe in anything. He represents the restrictive religio-socio sides of life. Such *yes-but* provides a paradoxical quality in the novel and all the conflicts and ambiguities are left unresolved.

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