

MICHAEL K
NTHIKENG MOHLELE

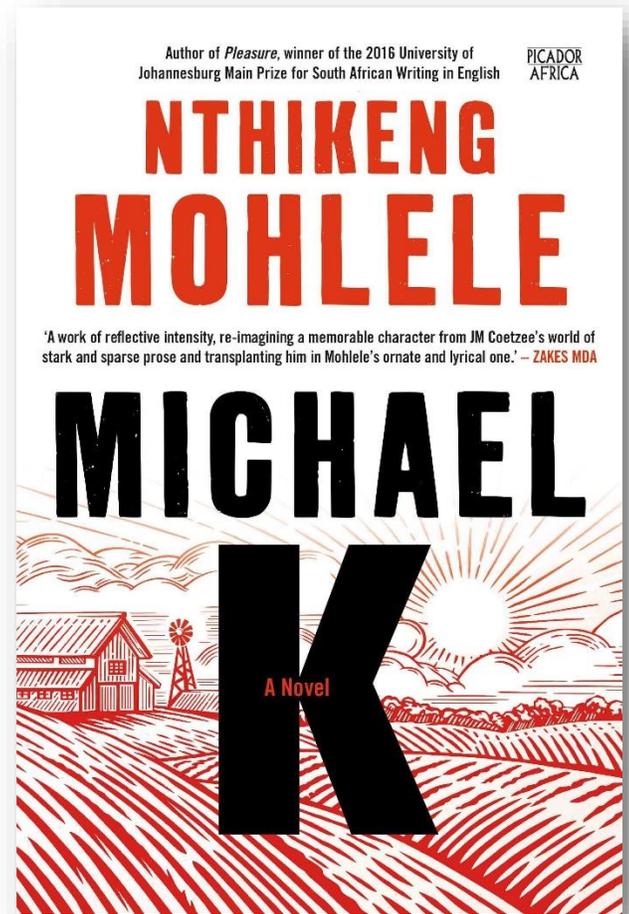
‘Those in the know claim Michael K disembarked from a diesel-smoke-spewing truck one overcast morning, looked around, and without missing a beat, chose a spot where he set down a small bucket (red, burnt and disfigured) that contained an assortment of seedlings, some fisherman’s twine and a rudimentary gardening tool – probably self-made.’

How is it that a character from literary fiction can so alter the landscapes he touches, even as he – in his self-imposed isolation – seeks to avoid them? How is it that Michael K, bewildered and bewildering, can remain so fragile yet so present, so imposing without attempting to be so?

In this response to JM Coetzee’s classic masterpiece, *Life & Times of Michael K*, Nthikeng Mohlele dabbles in the artistic and speculative in a unique attempt to unpack the dazed and disconnected world of the title character, his solitary ways, his inventiveness, but also to show how astutely Michael K holds up a mirror to those whose paths he inadvertently crosses.

Michael K explores the weight of history and of conscience, thus wrestling the character from the confines of literary creation to the frontiers of artistic timelessness.

NTHIKENG MOHLELE was partly raised in Limpopo and Tembisa Township, and attended the University of the Witwatersrand, where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Dramatic Art, Publishing Studies and African Literature. He is the author of four critically acclaimed novels: *The Scent of Bliss* (2008), *Small Things* (2013), *Rusty Bell* (2014) and *Pleasure* (2016). *Pleasure* won the 2016 University of Johannesburg Main Prize for South African Writing in English as well as the 2017 K. Sello Duiker Memorial Prize at the South African Literary Awards. It has also been longlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award. *Michael K* is Mohlele’s fifth novel.



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