

## **Maru Bessie Head**

*This book is a selection from the letters Bessie Head wrote Randolph Vigne, a politician and literary friend from her Cape Town days.*

*Maru* Waveland Press

*The first collection of nonfiction critical writings by one of the leading literary figures of post-apartheid South Africa. The most significant nonfiction writings of Zoë Wicomb, one of South Africa's leading authors and intellectuals, are collected here for the first time in a single volume. This compilation features critical essays on the works of such prominent South African writers as Bessie Head, Nadine Gordimer, Njabulo Ndebele, and J. M. Coetzee, as well as writings on gender politics, race, identity, visual art, sexuality, and a wide range of other cultural and political topics. Also included are a reflection on Nelson Mandela and a revealing interview with Wicomb. In these essays, written between 1990 and 2013, Wicomb offers insight on her nation's history, policies, and people. In a world in which nationalist rhetoric is on the rise and diversity and pluralism are the declared enemies of right-wing populist movements, her essays speak powerfully to a wide range of international issues.*

*A Guide to Study and Teaching*

*A Gesture of Belonging*

*A Study Guide to be Used in Conjunction with 'Maru' by Bessie Head*

*A Novel*

*In Conversation with Bessie Head*

*Roman*

This is an anthology of stories, personal observations and historic legends. It reflects the author's fascination with Africa's people and their history as well as her identification with individuals and their conflicting emotions.

The story of Desdemona from Shakespeare's Othello is re-imagined by Nobel Prize laureate Toni Morrison, Malian singer and songwriter Rokia Traoré, and acclaimed stage director Peter Sellars. Morrison's response to Othello is an intimate dialogue of words and music between Desdemona and her African nurse Barbary. Morrison gives voice and depth to the female characters, letting them speak and sing in the fullness of their hearts. Desdemona is an extraordinary narrative of words, music and song about Shakespeares doomed heroine, who speaks from the grave about the traumas of race, class, gender, war and the transformative power of love. Toni Morrison transports one of the most iconic, central, and disturbing treatments of race in Western culture into the new realities and potential outcomes facing a rising generation of the 21st century.

In Conversation with Bessie Head shows how reading the novels and letters of Botswana's most influential writer, Bessie Head, fosters an ongoing conversation between reader and writer and is in fact a very personal undertaking. Each chapter tackles two parallel threads, the first regarding Mary S. Lederer's own history of reading Head—from her first purchase of Maru, through completing a Ph.D. on Head's trilogy, through living in Botswana and connecting with various aspects of Head's life, to examining how reading Head has affected her own development as a human being. This history then ties each chapter into discussion of how Head develops her own vision of the "brotherhood of man." Alongside critically informed discussion, Head's vision is examined through the prism of specific questions. Why is madness not a useful concept for understanding Head's ideas? Why did Head say she was not a feminist, and what is the significance of "male" and "female" in her novels? What is the relationship between individual, race, and community? How can the nature of God be a clear expression of love but also an indistinct force for both good and evil? Head's novels present opportunities for personal growth, and through these "conversations" with her, we become different readers.

Achebe, Head, Marechera

Maru

Teaching Bessie Head's Novel Maru

The Collector of Treasures and Other Botswana Village Tales

Bessie Head's Maru

Looking Inward

"Bessie Head's short stories have an extraordinary simplicity and breadth of vision," heralded a review in The Tribune after publication of Head's first collection of short stories, The Collector of Treasures. Regarded today as one of Africa's best-known woman writers in English, Head draws on the rich oral tradition of southern Africa and masterfully applies storytelling's language and imagery. Carefully sequenced, the anthology gives special focus to village people from independence-era Botswana and the status, position, and plight of African women. "This is a cogent analysis of the complexities of gender in the work of nine contemporary Anglophone and Francophone novelists.... offers illuminating interpretations of worthy writers..." —Multicultural Review "This book reaffirms Bessie Head's remark that books are a tool, in

this case a tool that allows readers to understand better the rich lives and the condition of African women. Excellent notes and a rich bibliography." —Choice "... a college-level analysis which will appeal to any interested in African studies and literature." —The Bookwatch This book applies gender as a category of analysis to the works of nine sub-Saharan women writers: Aidoo, Bá, Beyala, Dangarembga, Emecheta, Head, Liking, Tlali, and Zanga Tsogo. The author appropriates western feminist theories of gender in an African literary context, and in the process, she finds and names critical theory that is African, indigenous, self-determining, which she then melds with western feminist theory and comes out with an over-arching theory that enriches western, post-colonial and African critical perspectives.

"Monumental a wonderful read."--Stephen Gray, Mail & Guardian, South Africa "Eilersen's account of Head's childhood is a gift to admirers of Bessie Head for it offers a fascinating insight into the events and circumstances that shaped Bessie Head's sense of self and her strong political identity. Eilersen's book is invaluable and represents a long-awaited study of Bessie Head that manages to undo much of the enigma that has surrounded her and her ideas." --Kwame Dawes, African Affairs In July 2007, the acclaimed writer Bessie Head would have turned seventy years old. Her friends, colleagues and literary critics will honor her with a series of conferences, new books and theses, re-namings, tree-plantings, writing prizes, composing music inspired by one of her novels, Maru, and the founding of a permanent Bessie Head Heritage Trust to guarantee the future of her house and literary papers. Wits University Press takes this opportunity to repackage and republish this excellent biography. It will appear with new--never before published--photographs of Bessie Head's life. Gillian Stead Eilersen studied at the former University of Natal (South Africa) and Odense University (Denmark), where she now lectures in the Department of English.

Identity and Alienation in Southern African Fiction

On Power and Change in Africa

Race, Nation, Translation

Village of the Rain Wind

A Bewitched Crossroad

The Creative Vision of Bessie Head

Rural Botswana is the backdrop for *When Rain Clouds Gather*, the first novel published by one of Africa's leading woman writers in English, Bessie Head (1937–1986). Inspired by her own traumatic life experiences as an outcast in Apartheid South African society and as a refugee living at the Bamangwato Development Association Farm in Botswana, Head's tough and telling classic work is set in the poverty-stricken village of Golema Mmidi, a haven to exiles. A South African political refugee and an Englishman join forces to revolutionize the villagers' traditional farming methods, but their task is fraught with hazards as the pressures of tradition, opposition from the local chief, and the unrelenting climate threaten to divide and devastate the fragile community. Head's layered, compelling story confronts the complexities of such topics as social and political change, conflict between science and traditional ways, tribalism, the role of traditional African chiefs, religion, race relations, and male–female relations. Concentrating on issues of power and change, this analysis of texts by Chinua Achebe, Bessie Head and Dambudzi Marechera teases out each author's view of how colonialism affected Africa, the contributions of Africans to their malaise, and how many reacted in creative, progressive, pragmatic ways.

The moving tale of an orphaned Masarwa girl who goes to teach in a remote village in Botswana where her own people are kept as slaves. Her presence polarises a community which does not see Masarwa people as human, and condemns her to the lonely life of an outcast.

Autobiographical Writings

Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol

When Rain Clouds Gather

Serowe

Thunder Behind Her Ears : Her Life and Writing

Room 207

**Introduces key concepts needed for map reading and map making. This series explores different types of maps, photographs and illustrations, and includes activities and quizzes, making it ideal for learning essential map skills.**

**This book investigates themes of exile and oppression in Southern Africa across Bessie Head's novels and short fiction. An exile herself, arriving in Botswana as a South African refugee, Bessie Head's fiction serves as an important example of African exile literature. This book argues that Head's characters are driven to exile as a result of their socio-political ambivalence while still in South Africa, and that this sense of discomfort follows them to their new lives. Investigating themes of trauma and identity politics across colonial and post-colonial contexts, this book also addresses the important theme of black-on-black prejudice and hostility which is often overlooked in studies of Head's work. Covering Head's shorter fiction as well as her major novels *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1969), *Maru* (1971), *A Question of Power* (1973), *Serowe: Village of the Rain Wind* (1981), and *A Bewitched Crossroads: An African Saga* (1984), this book will be of interest to researchers of African literature and postcolonial history.**

**Crimes from the past erupt into the present, splintering Silas Ali's fragile peace of mind, in the tale of a brittle South African family on the crossroads of history. Reader's Guide available. Original. 25,000 first printing.**

**Between the Lines**

**A Study Guide**

**A Collection of Short Stories**

**Tales of Tenderness and Power**

**The Cardinals, with Meditations and Short Stories**

In this fast-paced, semi-autobiographical novel, Head exposes the complicated life of Elizabeth, whose reality is intermingled with nightmarish dreams and hallucinations. Like the author, Elizabeth was conceived out-of-wedlock; her mother was white and her father black—a union outlawed in apartheid South Africa. Elizabeth eventually leaves with her young son to live in Botswana, a country less oppressed by colonial domination, where she finds stability for herself and her son by working on an experimental farm. As readers grow to know Elizabeth, they experience the inner chaos that threatens her stability, and her constant struggle to emerge from the torment of her dreams. There she is plagued by two men, Sello and Dan, who represent complex notions of politics, sex, religion, individuality, and the blurred line between good and evil. Elizabeth's troubling but amazing roller-coaster ride ends in an unfettered discovery.

A collection of autobiographical writings, sketches, and essays that covers the entire span of Bessie Head's creative life.

The Lovers collects Head's short fiction of the 1960s and 70s, written mainly in Serowe, Botswana, and depicting the lives and loves of African village people pre- and post-independence. An earlier selection called Tales of Tenderness and Power was published in the Heinemann African Writers Series in 1990, but this expanded and updated volume adds many previously unavailable stories collected here for the first time. Anthology favourites like her breakthrough 'The Woman from America' and 'The Prisoner who Wore Glasses' are included, leading up to the first complete text of her much translated title story. Stephen Gray is a noted South African scholar and novelist.

A Question of Power

Critical Essays on Bessie Head

Maru by Bessie Head

Bessie Head and the Trauma of Exile

The Road of Peace of Mind : a Critical Appreciation

Gender in African Women's Writing

*This work provides an insight into the Serowe village community and its history.*

*In 'When Rain Clouds Gather' a South African political refugee and an Englishman join forces in Botswana to revolutionize the villager's traditional farming methods, but their task is fraught with hazards. 'Maru' is the moving tale of an orphaned Masarwa girl who goes to teach in a remote village in Botswana.*

*Explores the narrative strategies Head employs to inscribe an idealistic vision in response to the psychic fragmentation and rootlessness she experienced as an exiled black South African woman writer.*

*Bitter Fruit*

*Intertextuality in Contemporary African Literature*

*Racial Prejudice and the Question of Otherness in Bessie Head's Novels with Particular Reference to Maru, The Cardinals, and A Question of Power*

*A Communicative Approach*

*A Woman Alone*

*South African Essays, 1990-2013*

Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol are among the most successful African literary works. Song of Lawino is an African woman's lamentation over the cultural death of her western educated husband - Ocol. In Song of Ocol the husband tries to justify his cultural apostasy. These songs were translated from Acholi by the author. They evince a fascinating flavour of the African rhythmical idiom.

This book is an exploration of the way in which Head's writing is her idiosyncratic response to her personal life. Her desire to portray and yet subvert oppression- political, racist, and sexist- that she encountered in South Africa and Botswana, led to a Romanticism born of her need to create an antithesis to what she perceived to be the reality around her. Her eagerness to discover a haven in her adopted rural Botswana led to a Utopia of her own making, a literary resolution imagined, not actual. A mental breakdown led to the creation of her greatest novel, A Question of Power, one which examines the depths of evil, but allows also for the dawning of the heights of goodness. The appendix contains many heretofore unpublished letters that help to explain the personal compulsion that provided for Head's creativity.

Set in a block of dilapidated apartments in Hillbrow, an inner-city neighborhood in Johannesburg, this novel tells the story of six young men who will do anything—including hustling and conning anyone they can—to survive. Painting an engrossing portrait of the friends, it shows the hopelessness and despair of a group stuck in their position in life, having to compromise themselves to make a living and reach for their dreams.

Bessie Head

Life

An African Saga

Letters from Bessie Head, 1965-1979

The Lovers

Identity, Sexuality, and Difference

*Read worldwide for her wisdom, authenticity, and skillful prose, South African-born Bessie Head (1937-1986) offers a moving and magical tale of an orphaned girl, Margaret Cadmore,*

*who goes to teach in a remote village in Botswana where her own people are kept as slaves. Her presence polarizes a community that does not see her people as human, and condemns her to the lonely life of an outcast. In the love story and intrigue that follows, Head brilliantly combines a portrait of loneliness with a rich affirmation of the mystery and spirituality of life. The core of this otherworldly, rhapsodic work is a plot about racial injustice and prejudice with a lesson in how traditional intolerance may render whole sections of a society untouchable. The Cardinals--thought to be the first long piece of fiction Head produced and the only one she ever set in South Africa--is an exciting literary event.*

*This book is a study in African literary influence. It focuses on the importance of indigenous sources to new writing. The analytical framework for the study draws on recent conceptual advances in theories of authorship. Juxtaposing works and authors that are traditionally thought to be unlikely bedfellows, the book persuasively identifies their hitherto unexamined points of contact, opening up a vigorous debate about the roots of African literature and offering a radical critique of the assumptions underlying conventional notions of African literature. The book provides valuable insight on the roles of such activities as appropriation, copying, pastiche, parody, simulation, foraging, grafting, padding, recycling, and remodeling in underwriting literary expression in Africa. Alive with wit and full of delight in the texts it discusses, it is a marvel of close and attentive, detective reading.*

*Interviews with Bessie Head, Sheila Roberts, Ellen Kuzwayo, Miriam Tlali*

*Desdemona*

*The Story of an African Farm*

*Subversive Identities in Exile*

*The Collector of Treasures*

**One of the foremost African writers of our time, who dispelled the silence between colonial and feminist discourses by "talking back", Bessie Head at last gets her due in this first book-length, comprehensive study of her work. This book locates Head's unquestionable importance in the canon of African literature. Author Huma Ibrahim argues that unless we are able to look at the merging of women's sexual and linguistic identity with their political and gendered identity, the careful configurations created in Head's work will elude us. Ibrahim offers a series of thoughtful readings informed by feminist, diasporan, postcolonial, and poststructuralist insights and concerns. She identifies a theme she calls "exilic consciousness" - the desire to belong - and traces its manifestations through each phase of Head's work, showing how "women's talk" - a marginalized commodity in the construction of southern Africa - is differently embodied and evaluated. Bessie Head's works are frequently featured in courses in African literature, third-world literature, and fiction writing, but there is little critical material on them. Ibrahim offers readings of Head's novels *When Rain Clouds Gather*, *Maru*, and *A Question of Power*, as well as the collections *Tales of Tenderness and Power*, *A Collector of Treasures*, *A Woman Alone: Autobiographical Writings*, and *The Cardinals*, the histories *Serowe: Village of the Rain Wind* and *A Bewitched Crossroad*, and her letters to Robert Vigne collected in *A Gesture of Belonging*. In Head's exploration of oppressed people, especially women and those in exile, Ibrahim finds startling insights into institutional power relations. Head not only subverts Western hegemonic notions of the third-world woman but offers a critique of postcoloniality.**