

The Treatment of Women in Selected Works by Bessie Head

Asad Al-Ghalith

Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, Jordan

Asma Nashwan

Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, Jordan

Saif Al-Deen Al-Ghammaz

Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, Jordan

Musa Alzghoul

Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, Jordan

Mahmoud Al-Salti

Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, Jordan

Abstract—The role of women in Africa is one of the most notable issues in modern African literature. African novelists focus on roles held by women in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods, alongside the effect of colonization on African women. This study is a serious attempt at providing a comprehensive analytical investigation of the role of women in Bessie Head's selected works: *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1969), *The Collector of Treasures*, and *Other Botswana Village Tales* (1977). It demonstrates how traditional societies and colonizers treat African women and the influence of Head's personal life and background on her literary works. Various studies focus on the issue of women using the feminist approach. This study, however, concentrates on women's issues using feminist and post-colonial theories.

Index Terms—women, Africa, colonization, Bessie Head, literature

I. INTRODUCTION

The novels under discussion are representative of the concept of the New Woman in Africa. Head portrays women's suffering under a colonialist system, preventing females from improving their conditions. Within the structure of her novels, Head shows that women can succeed in assuming roles other than the traditional roles of mother, sister, wife, and daughter. The woman in Head's novels has power, and her voice can be heard while struggling for her rights and trying to express her issues. Also, she can work like men as Dikeledi does in *The Collector of Treasures* (1977).

In her selected works, Bessie Head portrays the concept of the New Woman in Africa, exploring the issue of sexual discrimination. Her works not only show the suffering of her female characters but also increase women's awareness of their situation. Head, in an Australian interview, said that her literary works represent her life experiences "I had lived and absorbed the life of the village, and I'd lived together with people and thought together with people, and all the stories are touched by daily village dramas" (Driver, 1984, p. 6).

Bessie Head's literary works focus on the lives of third-world women during and after colonization. Head supports women's liberation through the resources available to them, where Botswana women have used their land to redefine their roles. Head's novels are based on her individual experience as a pioneer woman. Paulina Seboso in Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1969) represents the suffering of mothers who lose their sons to tuberculosis. She also has a vast influence over the town, as she encourages the women of the village to follow the new tobacco-growing scheme. Another critical issue raised by Head is the unwanted marriage that Mma-Milliped faces. Head describes Ramogodia, the man who wants to marry Mma-Milliped, as "a drunkard and dissipated boaster and the son of the reigning chief" (Head, 1971, p. 63). Dikeledi Mokopi, the protagonist of *The Collector of Treasures* (1977), represents women's suffering in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. Despite suffering; however, she is very strong as she represents the power of an independent woman. Importantly, the focus of the author's literary texts rests on giving an insight into the influence and effect of the life and discourse of masculine characters on women's lifestyles and social stand (Qutami, 2022).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Edward Said's book *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983) and Gayatri C. Spivak's book *Crossing Borders* (2003)

point out neglected facts about the era of pre-colonization. They criticize the impact of colonialism and its devastating effect on societies. Said assures us that the role of critics is central; he argues that critics can justify the colonizers' aims or disapprove of them. Thus, they are held responsible for standing up against hegemonic forces that attempt to impose cultural reformation.

Ncube (2001) posits that the drama of human interactions and the prospect of individual growth and regeneration are Head's favorite topics. She considers society's balance and each individual's unique contributions. She achieves this goal by combining imaginative power and a distinctive sense of style with a robust moral perspective, ensuring that the woman's identity is vital in all of this.

Şafak (2014) argues that modern African literature has highlighted many aspects of women involved in social restructuring and exposure to the onslaughts of the West intensely concerned with womanhood and motherhood. The exaltation of Africa and the African woman has been an essential objective of African authors during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Whenever she is denied a position beyond her house in pre-colonial and traditional cultures, for example, the African woman is stereotyped for her limited function. He also posits that women are not passive in colonialism, just as they are not passive in a post-colonial society. Women, like men, have attempted to protect or gain individual advantages whenever colonial systems provided the opportunity, either by pursuing pre-existing pursuits or adopting new ones (Şafak, 2014).

In his book *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Said argues that the present reflects the past, and it would be naïve to analyze it without considering the colonialists' role in shaping it. As a result, Said contends that the histories of the colonizer and the colonized are so inextricably interwoven that neither can be separately studied. As underlined by Said (1978), colonizers display their thirst for exploitation, riches, and power by constructing an oppressive discourse for the colonized countries.

Viswanathan characterizes British Literature as a terrible history of colonial expropriation, oppression, exploitation, and supremacy in her book *Masks of Conquest* (1989). She describes the colonists' identity, acts, operations, and administration. Many people protest the spread of English literature and language in pre-colonial and post-colonial India. So "All efforts on their ignorance would be as vigorously resisted as if they were on their religion. The effect of introducing Christianity into the schools would be to sound the alarm and to warn the Brahmins of the approaching danger" (p. 78). Another related study by (Al-Ghalith & Al-Shalabi, 2022) demonstrates that the British colonization's achievements, i.e. political stability and commercial prosperity impose new standards of social behavior and politeness prevailed to distinguish between civilized and uncivilized citizens. The standards of order and hierarchy have also helped some people to participate in and contribute to the emergence of the British Empire and culture. Against the previous literature review, this study serves as a marker of motivation and contribution for readers to make continual efforts to look at the treatment of women in selected works by Bessie from various perception levels (Al-Ghammaz et al., 2022).

III. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

When Rain Clouds Gather

When Rain Clouds Gather (1969) by Head depicts the post-colonial period, her characters struggle with the quest for roots and how it affects people from various social backgrounds and personal difficulties. Three women emerge, each of whom is prone to social abuse, emotional pain, and suffering; despite abuse and pain, each shows eventual progress in wisdom, serenity, and happiness. Head truly presents her characters as people journeying through the darkest recesses of their lives with her typical care and thoroughness. The result of this investigation is the emergence of the individuality that distinguishes each of them (Sam, 1986).

When Rain Clouds Gather (1969) is inundated with personal information and responses to challenges that have been, on the whole, internal and private. Head has attained a level of objectivity, allowing her to expose and analyze the problems of the African woman, both in the small village circle, where old traditional mores and taboos hampered her, and in the slightly larger world of the town cooperative, where the challenges of this new phenomenon have frequently exposed her as being capable of contributing to the unity that Head seeks, rather than destroying it.

Each of Head's female characters is an individual in her own right, which is a distinguishing element of her work. Head represents women and men working together in industry to establish a new human community. Despite their rural location, the women display political awareness, dynamism, and resolve, rebelling against their communities' oppressive norms. Head exposes society's ambivalence toward women in her female characters, so she demonstrates women's dynamism and works ethic.

Paulina Sebeso, like the other members of Golema Mmidi, is a refugee in *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1969). After being widowed, she arrives in Golema Mmidi to start a new life. Paulina's native society thinks that marriage takes precedence over a woman's intellectual and personal accomplishments, as it does in many Southern African civilizations. As a result, despite her exceptional academic record, Paulina foregoes her education in exchange for the stability of her marriage. Unfortunately, her adolescent marriage to a traditional Rhodesian man ends in early widowhood when the husband, in keeping with cultural customs, commits suicide since his honor is in jeopardy.

Paulina relocates to Golema Mmidi with her two children to begin a new life. Paulina makes a name for herself in her new surroundings. Her limitless energy, organizational skills, and originality are now what set her apart. She takes the

initiative and competently organizes all community events for the other women. Her understanding of the various complicated difficulties making up womanhood in her society also sets her apart from the majority of conventional women and men who see sex and sexuality as the total of womanhood. Despite her bodily discomfort, Paulina ignores the men's and women's sexual insults. She sticks to her moral ideals, considering women as human beings rather than sexual objects. When a group of women challenges her ideas one day, she recognizes the attack's goal and its patriarchal foundation.

Paulina's attitude contradicts the customary gender-based subjugation of women. She scorns women who battle over men regardless of their morality, so engaging in their enslavement, just as she scorns men who consider women a commodity to be bought and sold. However, Paulina's yearning for a spouse like Makhaya is different. The feeling is used by Head to demonstrate how human relationships should transcend variables like race, age, gender, position, and creed, which only serve to exacerbate community fissures (Thusi, 1998).

Makhaya seeks a secure refuge where he may break free from his isolation. However, Paulina's compassion for Makhaya is matched by his concern for his fellow villagers. Thus, Paulina assists Makhaya in finding peace in his spirit by letting go of a sad past. From both Paulina's and Makhaya's perspectives, Head condemns racial prejudice and gender norms. Both are spokespeople for the millions of people who cannot voice their pain or establish their origins. Paulina's personal goal drives her to be the best leader of women in the public domain she can be (Thusi, 1998).

Mma Millipede, an elderly woman, arrives in Golema Mmidi as a refugee as well. She, like Paulina, is a victim of the terrible force of ancient customs. She is forced into marriage with Ramagodi, a chief's son. However, she divorces him after he fell madly in love with the wife of his younger brother. Mma Millipede meets and becomes Mma Millipede when she moves to Golema Mmidi.

She lives next door to Dinerogo, a man she is forbidden to marry when compelled to marry the chief's son. Mma Millipede quickly establishes herself in her new surroundings via her hard work and unique character, exhibiting generosity and compassion that both amaze and challenge the residents of Golema Mmidi.

Maria, Dinorego's daughter, is one of the major female characters in the novel. She is reserved, intelligent, and a wonderful partner for Gilbert, the practical man who is the creator of the agricultural co-op, which is one of the novel's most intriguing phenomena. She is soft-spoken and thoughtful, yet she also has a harsh sense of common sense. She is the dominating personality in her marriage, silent but with thoughts of her own. She has silently served her father for a long time, and after three years, she accepts a marriage proposal from Gilbert.

Bessie Head's thoughts are presented to us through these women, who are all strong, determined, pain-educated, and blessed with smart common sense. They have an equal relationship with males. They stand out and are different from most Batswana women, whom Head criticizes for accepting subjugation and keeping their "tribal selves," docile, and inferior (Head, 1969, p. 63), despite having access to missionary education. Women are naturally inclined to hard work even though they suffer from squandered opportunities, as Head contends:

Their sticks that thrashed the corn at harvesting time and their winnowing baskets that filled the air for miles and miles around with the dust of husks, and they often, in addition to broadcasting the seed when the early rains fell, took over the tasks of the men and also plowed the land with oxen (Head, 1969, pp. 99-100).

Head highlights the possibility of opposing tradition from within by depicting Paulina's militancy and Mma Millipede's sympathetic kindness. Paulina not only opposes the conventional view of women as simply sexual objects, but she also demands that their physical and emotional contributions to society be recognized. As a result, they are challenged by Paulina's ultimate relationship with Makhaya, a refugee fleeing political persecution in South Africa. According to Chukukere (1995, p. 278), this implies a "reordering of social ideals".

New Way of Treating Women by Makhaya

Within the first few chapters, the reader can notice that Makhaya comes from a different background than they do. This separate culture has different traditions, but it also has a different attitude toward women. In the country where they lived, men were viewed as superior to women. Makhaya, on the other hand, has a startlingly opposite viewpoint. He says he has never felt at ease being differently treated than women. He has made significant adjustments following his father's death, urging his mother and sisters to treat him equally. Numerous natives in the book appear surprised by his attitude toward women (Ncube, 2001).

Makhaya and the women he encounters have fundamentally opposing viewpoints. Makhaya pays the rent price of living in a tiny hut with a little girl and her grandmother. The young girl enters Makhaya's hut late at night and suddenly offers herself for prostitution. Makhaya immediately pays the girl to leave, observing that she is the same age as one of his younger sisters. The grandmother's response to the girl shows how few men behave like Makhaya: "This is a miracle! I have not yet known a man who did not regard a woman as a gift from God. He must be mad!" (Head, 1969, p. 10).

Makhaya is a man who has fled his homeland because he has despised tribalism. He is well-educated and has a unique perspective on things: "It's only education that turns a man away from his tribe," Dinorego said (Head, 1969, p. 3). Since his father's death, Makhaya has begun to respect women at home, encouraging his sisters to address him by his first name. One of the reasons driving Makhaya to respect women is that he is affected by his mother's beliefs "Why should men be brought up with a false sense of superiority over women?" Makhaya's mother wonders (Head, 1969, p. 16).

Makhaya has influenced many women in Gomela Mmidi. There is a clear separation of roles, and both men and

women are aware of role conflicts. Men are not allowed to build fires because doing so is considered the domain of women. As Paulina said, "Don't touch the fire. It's women's work" (Head, 1969, p. 139). When Makhaya speaks out against this division of labor, he remarks, "It is time you learned that men live on this earth too. If I want to make tea, I'll make it, and if I want to sweep the floor, I'll sweep it" (Head, 1969, p. 134).

According to Davies's book *Black Women, Writing, and Identity: Migration of the Subject* (1994), Makhaya's effort is motivated by his desire for equality between men and women. As a result, Makhaya is portrayed by Head as a hero dedicated to liberating women's minds from the shackles of tradition. "Being a woman is a position often defined in relation to serving the male" as Aidoo stated (Davies, 1994, p. 68).

Paulina admits to being unaware of her rights as a woman. Makhaya respectfully thanks Paulina for giving him a cup of tea. Paulina states that it is her responsibility as a woman to prepare tea and that Makhaya does not need to thank her. Makhaya and Paulina both have had different perspectives on this situation. Makhaya makes it evident that being "used" is not an option. Makhaya has introduced the idea that most men take advantage of their female partners since they are accustomed to it (Ncube, 2001).

Makhaya, the primary character, represents Head's life. Makhaya's persona represents Head's life. Makhaya is a representative of a new age that values equality between genders. Both are refugees in Botswana, and their societies have racial concerns.

Head understands Makhaya's struggle as she has faced comparable challenges, such as the repressive political system in South Africa for black people and the alienation of foreigners in Botswana, denying them citizenship. In Makhaya's reaction to the sexual exploitation of a very young child, she uses Makhaya to make a caustic attack on prevalent societal systems such as tribalism and the status of women in Africa (Thusi, 1998).

Makhaya's reaction to the young girl is intended to elicit sympathy for him from the reader. He begins to win the hearts of the readers. Unlike Makhaya's rebellion against oppression in South Africa forced upon him by his exposure to racial discrimination, Makhaya's decision in Botswana is for the greater good of society. Makhaya's fate, as determined by Head, is to "spend a lifetime in a small rural village", assisting the locals. Makhaya comes to Botswana looking for an alternative to war and the corrupting force of South Africa's political climate, from which he had escaped (Thusi, 1998).

Makhaya does everything he could to help women. His behavior toward women suggested that a man could be sensitive and considerate. Makhaya is not a thoughtless robot. The mode of life in the pre-colonial period differs from that in the post-colonial period. People can adapt their conduct and activities according to the new ways of lifestyles that newcomers bring. The multiple choices defining life in the post-colonial period depend on the person himself. He can select to be an inflexible person who refuses to follow anything new, including fresh behaviors from the colonizing country. The best is the person who merges the fairest or most equitable aspects of multiple societies. In *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1969), for example, Makhaya and Gilbert come from opposite backgrounds; one traditional and the other western. However, both have fled oppressive countries, but when they meet in a small community, they appreciate the value of the other's past knowledge. The two men help each other with the village's agricultural initiatives in this way. Notably, both combine the best elements of the old and new ways of life.

As previously demonstrated, Head's novel, *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1969), strongly supports women's rights. Feminist theory has helped the readers to understand Head's work as Head's characters strike the readers as moderate feminists. Head's feminist treatment includes both men and women, employing the concept of love to strengthen the understanding of love's ability to reshape our disjointed lives. Maria and Gilbert's love has fostered confidence in a foreigner that the inhabitants of Golema Mmidi have struggled to accept. Makhaya's connection with Paulina has transformed him into a person who can relate to others and accept them as they are. Head recognizes the changes in women's thought through the post-colonial period. Women can express their feelings and do what they believe in without hesitation or trepidation.

***The Collector of Treasures and Other Botswana Village Tales* (1977)**

For many years, women have campaigned for equality in male-dominated countries where they are routinely disregarded in various facets of life, including political agendas, concept creation, and even literature. In *The Collector of Treasures* (1977), women have also found themselves essential actors in these areas. Though the story is set in a poor African country, it has its ideas and approaches to womanhood. In *The Collector of Treasures* (1977), women are depicted as more potent when battling males. Isaac Schapera, a writer focusing on the contributions of Tswana women in his book *The Tswana* (1953), observed:

Women tilled the fields, built and repaired the walls of the huts, granaries, and courtyards, thatched roofs with grass which they fetched themselves, prepared food and made beer, looked after the fowls, fetched water, wood, and earth, collected wild edible plants and did the housework (p. 27).

The Collector of Treasures (1977) is a story about male-female interactions. From a woman's perspective, Head stresses the differences between femininity and masculinity. The story revolves around the tensions brought about by gender problems. In other words, women struggle with oppression due to the masculine social construction where males are always in the lead. Women in Head's works are more empowered to intervene to stop their husbands' mischief. What sets this one apart is the obvious delineation of male and female roles, putting the woman's life into sharp focus, owing to her determination to maintain her integrity and independence (Dandey, 2011).

African women's responsibilities are only briefly mentioned in Bessie Head's short stories. However, her tone and attitude remain the same as in her lengthy fiction. Even though the load of women's work is exhausting, her female characters are physically and emotionally strong enough to handle it. As they do the work that tradition has allotted to them, they are filled with zeal and excitement (Vidal, 1989). Bessie Head attributes women's status in society to an old tradition, saying "The ancestors made so many errors and one of the most bitter-making things was that they relegated to men a superior position in the tribe, while women were regarded, in a congenial sense, as being an inferior form of human life" (Head, 1977, p. 92).

The Collector of Treasures (1977) takes place in post-colonial Botswana and follows Dikeledi Mokopi and her estranged husband, Garesego Mokopi. He has abandoned her and their three children, leaving her to care for them while he seeks sexual fulfillment with other women. So far, Dikeledi's next-door neighbors, Paul and Kenalepe Thobolo, get along well. The bond between Paul and Dikeledi, on the other hand, makes Garesego envious. Dikeledi asks Garesego over to her house when she needs money to pay for their eldest child's school tuition. He has the idea that she wants to have relations with him. Dikeledi, on the other hand, uses a kitchen knife to sever his genitals. She is condemned to live in prison for her crime. She befriends three other women in jail who have committed the same crime.

Dikeledi has had a terrible existence since she was a child. Her given name, "Dikeledi" means "tears". She has been orphaned as a child and raised by her uncle, a self-centered man who has treated her as a servant and refused to educate her for six years. He is the one who has forced Dikeledi to marry Garesego, his friend, who had proposed to her. Dikeledi has taken the chance to "get out of my [her] uncle's yard," and Garesego "was the only man who proposed to me [Dikeledi]". The marriage has swiftly devolved into an unpleasant one, not that the partnership had ever been cheerful, to begin with. Dikeledi and their three young children have eventually been left to their own devices. Despite this, Dikeledi has worked hard to raise her three children and utilized her sewing, thatch-making, knitting, and other abilities to obtain money and resources for herself and her family.

Gardner (1989) mentions that *The Collector of Treasures* has "a discernible feminist content" since it emphasizes "the insistence that women have suffered systematic social injustice because of their sex . . . I've never heard of a man being murdered by his genitals being slit," Bessie Head told Susan Gardner (1989) following a discussion about Dikeledi's act of killing her husband. However, it reveals Dikeledi's long-term psychological suffering.

The Collector of Treasures (1977) is yet another attempt by Bessie Head to explore the intersection of masculinity and paternity in the construction of the father she has never known. Our focus should be on Garesego, Dikeledi's rascal husband, and his foil, the good man Thebolo, a schoolteacher who offers to look after Dikeledi's children when she goes to jail. Botswana has recently achieved independence in the plot. It is a far cry from the traditional African civilization she envisages while she is still in South Africa, entrenched in ancestral traditions and practices. The two men, Garesego and Thebolo, react to the shift in radically opposite ways. Garesego maintains the privileges that conventional society has bestowed on males in the past, partly because the checks and balances governing men's use of this power have partially crumbled because he now makes enough money to gratify his cravings. Garesego is revealed to be the worst example of manhood. He is competent in biological paternity and can father children, but he will not take on the duty of protector and provider for the children he fathers (Mwikisa, 2021).

Bessie Head gives a brief history of the changes in *The Collector of Treasures and Other Botswana Village Tales* (1977) that males in Southern Africa have gone through in the century and a half since European colonization has taken over their ancient tribal society. This narrative framing of the story explains how males like Garesego, Dikeledi's spouse, have sprung onto the postcolonial scene as symbols of particularly predatory masculinity. Head describes people like Garesego: "In the old days, before the colonial invasion of Africa, he was a man who lived by the traditions and taboos outlined for all the people by the forefathers of the tribe" (Head, 1977, p. 91).

He has not had much personal choice to decide whether or not these practices were humane. "The colonial era and the period of migratory mining labor to South Africa were a further affliction visited on this man. It broke the hold of the ancestors," Head says. "A man was separated from his wife and children for long periods of time while he worked for a pittance [...] to pay his British Colonial poll-tax" (Head, 1977, p. 91). As a result, the African male's position in the tribe has shifted from one of primacy to one of separation and inferiority: "He then became" the white man's servant and a machine-tool in the South African mines (Head, 1977, pp. 91-92).

Garesego Mokopi is the embodiment of men's phallocratic dominance in society. He is also one of Head's "evil" males, likened to a dog that "imagined he was the only penis in the world and that there had to be a scramble for it" (Head, 1977, p. 91). These men are the worst in Head's stories, according to Femi Ojo-Ade (1990, p. 82): These men "make babies like machines and turn their backs on the poor women". Garesego, according to Ojo-Ade (1990, p. 83) has "all the essentials to feed his hunger for sex and alcohol". The text's narrator attributes this to both the colonial system and the forefathers' code of behavior. The post-colonial man evolves into "a broken wreck with no inner resources," and women become "an inferior form of human life" since the colonial system has never prepared the people for independence and national management (Head, 1977, p. 92).

Garesego's existence revolves around returning home and having sexual relations with Dikeledi. The following explains his purpose: "Dear Mother, I am coming home again so that we may settle our differences. Will you prepare a meal for me and some hot water that I might take a bath, Gare?" (Head, 1977, p. 101).

Dikeledi reads the letter as an expression of Garesego's intent to fulfill his sexual cravings, stating that he is "coming

home for some sex" (p. 101). He not only tries to be affectionate (he refers to himself as "Gare"), but he also plays on her emotions by referring to her as "Mother." He instantly casts her in the role of a kind and supportive wife who will take care of his needs. Acting as though she is his parental superior and he is the prodigal son returning home is the only way he believes he can control Dikeledi. Perhaps he is attempting to push her into the role of an oedipal mother, an influential maternal figure.

In this new post-colonial society, women suffer much more than men. Men have a false sense of liberty due to the changes in society and its structure. New manifestations of male pride, such as administrative employment, money, and power, have resulted in erratic anarchy. Men behave like a pack of wolves on the prowl, and women suffer as a result. This viewpoint is consistent with Paglia's (1992, p. 63) observation that "male lust and male aggression are two uncontrollable forces of nature in society." Sexist brutishness has resulted from years of colonial subjugation. Garesego is an example since he has replaced his marriage relationship with a free-ranging, carefree pursuit of women.

Paul Thebolo, on the other hand, is an educated man who presumably earns the same amount of money as Garesego at his work. He is an academic who preaches Marxism and revolution. However, he could mix his most refined traditional African customs with new methods of approaching modernization. By merging masculinity and paternity, he nevertheless accepts the customary privileges afforded to males by tradition. He, like his wife, is drawn to a diverse group of friends: "They had guests every evening, illiterate men who wanted him to fill in tax forms or write letters for them, or his colleagues who wanted to debate the political issues of the day" (Head, 1977, p. 94).

In Head's writing, Paul Thebolo is the legendary man, the so-called new African man. "Gentle, loving, responsible men, with the standard gendered role divisions otherwise unchanged," writes Driver (1984, p. 246) of the new African society inhabited by men like Paul Thebolo. According to Sarah Chetin (1989, p. 135), Paul may have been named after the Christian St. Paul, who is "a symbol of charity and visionary hope". Paul is in charge of looking after Dikeledi and her family once Garesego has abandoned them, and he is also prepared to look after them if she needs to go to jail: "You don't have to worry about the children, Mma Banabotho. I'll adopt them and educate them all through secondary school" (Head, 1977, p. 103).

Garesego makes other women suffer until Dikelide, who is oppressed by his vileness, is forced to kill him. A man is created to have his accomplishments and disappointments, but only if he respects the component of life that drives a person to revere womanhood, motherhood, and the family. A man like Garesego, doggedly pursues pleasures, even at the expense of those around him, dreads reality, and clings to delusions imposed by colonialism and custom.

A man like Garesego does not have to be perfect. He just needs to sift out his current feelings, thoughts, and moods. He shows how a male-dominated culture might lead to confusing perceptions of masculine dominance. It is a characteristic of "that man," whose deeds only serve to place him on a path to his demise and death (Lederer, 2019).

Paul has sexual power and authority as a male within this patriarchal culture. He plays the usual patriarchal role of providing for his family, unlike Garesego who spends his money on alcohol and abandons his wife and children for other women. On the other hand, he is not like Garesego in that he does not oppress women to maintain his power; instead, he is kind and compassionate. When Dikeledi first met him, he made an impression on her: "The sunlight and shadow played all kinds of tricks with his eyes" because he was "peaceful as a person" (Head, 1977, p. 93).

In society, Head sees two types of men: the good and the wicked. In the figure of Paul, she presents an example of a "good man". Head admires his character's ability to develop himself from the ground up. "He turned all his resources, both emotional and material, towards his family life and went on and on with his quiet rhythm like a river," she says of this type of man (Head, 1977, p. 93).

The Collector of Treasures (1977), a gender-oriented story of African literature with female and male characters, and different perspectives, epitomizes Head's entire life experience and literary profession: "If these stories of the village are simultaneously stories of the modernizing society, they are also versions of Head's own story" (Chapman, 1996, p. 381).

The most emblematic of the book's short stories is *The Collector of Treasures* (1977), which gives the entire collection its title. Pain and loneliness run through all of Bessie Head's life experiences in this short story. "Theirs is not a tender, compassionate, and romantic world," Smith stated (1990, p. 116); Head feels compelled to write about herself in her works, using autobiographical allusions to convey societal issues via her own experience.

Head demonstrates in *The Collector of Treasures tales* (1977) that a man-woman connection may be renewed. Paul Thebolo is inspirational and represents the "new kind of man." Paul Thebolo is shown as a sensitive, cooperative, kind, and compassionate character. Though these characteristics are often associated with women, Paul's cooperative attitude is demonstrated by his assistance to "illiterate men, who wanted him to fill in the tax forms or write letters for them" (Head, 1977, p. 95). The way the character is represented significantly differs. In this talk, Head distinguishes Paul and Garesego in treating women. The male characters' portrayal dramatically changes from Garesego, who is dictatorial and domineering, to Paul, who is kind and accepting of women. Paul sexually treats women with kindness and care, according to his wife, Kenalepe. Throughout the novel, Head identifies him with good power, notably positive power. By doing so, Head draws attention to Paul and Garesego's sexual imbalance (Lederer, 2019).

According to Head (1989), all of the conventional restraints and biases against women work against Dikeledi and threaten to overturn the measure of happiness she has eked out for herself and her children. She murders her spouse because she sees no way out of the trap. Victims — other convicted spouse murderers — try to make a life for themselves in prison by working together and sharing a sense of purpose through mutual understanding and a feeling of

shared purpose.

Despite her anti-violence stance, Head does include grisly scenes of violence in her books on occasion. She performs in her works a true misuse of power by recounting all aspects of reality, demonstrating how horrible dehumanization can be. She permits things to happen on purpose to show that she cannot always influence characters to prevent bloodshed. The tragedies presented in this fashion by Head emphasize that human interactions prosper when all that is compassionate and kind is preserved while that which is dehumanizing is removed.

The role of women is the subject of Head's short stories. She emphasizes that in traditional communities, women should not accept positions solely created for them by males. In *The Collector of Treasures* (1977), she utilizes excellent men like Paul Thebolo to show that she values women as equal partners. Women who have been placed in difficult situations, such as forsaken spouses like Dikeledi, are strong survivors. Being rejected by her husband, Dikeledi utilizes her handicraft skills to support herself and her children. In the stories, women are empowered in subtle ways. "You know I am the woman whose thatch does not leak," Dikeledi says, demonstrating her self-assurance (Head, 1977, p. 90).

The Collector of Treasures (1977) is a comprehensive feminist work. It portrays the African conventional man-woman conflict and all the agony that comes with it. In detail, it vehemently opposes the perceived inferiority of women, regardless of the terrible consequences, and envisions a new reasonable equilibrium based on a new kind of man and a new kind of woman: "The conditions of a society in upheaval: the women of Head's bustling Botswanan village face religious conflict, the burden of poverty, and, partly as a result of the clashes of ancient custom and the modern way, stressful marriages," writes Chapman, (1996, p. 381). As many critics have noted, the teacher behind it is simply identifiable. There's also a hint of the oral story's didacticism (Chapman, 1996).

It draws an interesting connection between African postcolonial independence and political freedom, as well as feminism and African women's emancipation. This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance. For better or worse, her female protagonists are willing to leave the oppression of the past behind them, as all the oppressed women move ahead into the future without looking back. Despite its terrible ending, it is a hopeful story.

Bessie Head is not a die-hard fanatic. Her novels are also not anti-male. It is just the negative kind of man, the one who prevents transformation, is metaphorically attacked and literally castrated and killed. It is not just his responsibility. Much of the guilt lies with history, but it is now hard for him to change.

IV. CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the theme of The Treatment of Women in African Literature in Bessie Head's *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1969) and *The Collector of Treasures, and Other Botswana Village Tales* (1977) has been discussed from various perspectives to show that women in modern African literature have essential roles in society, not just a few superficial ones.

Bessie Head creates a base of operations and eventually arrives at her destination. In Botswana, she realized her roots and identity. Due to this detailed study of Head, the significance of gender mutualism has been recognized in maintaining calm and stable human connections. However, precious times of closeness between couples are frequently squandered in fighting and warding off one another; Head's work should be viewed as a lesson in human coexistence. Individuals in positions of control should be aware that humanity contains "diverse threads that could be woven into a fine cloth of society" (Ezenwa, 1990, p. 130).

In our analysis of character interactions, it is observed that Head creates circumstances that imply that "human life can only be expressed through a complementarity," as Elliott claims (1982, p. 103). Complementarity is tied to phrases such as "compatibility," "balance," "supplementarity," and "mutuality" in my mind. Importantly, we realize that these terms all have the same meaning: wholeness, completion, coexistence, merging, and balance.

When Rain Clouds Gather (1969) demonstrates the value of mutual existence in the interaction between Makhaya and Gilbert in their administration of the Golema Mmidi microcosm as an example. Gilbert has agricultural expertise, while Makhaya possesses the communication skills required to provide a learning environment; Head has demonstrated how working together may be successful. We have seen powerful figures like Makhaya select to improve communities rather than destroy innocent people so that power may be harnessed and used in constructive ways.

Bessie Head has consistently highlighted the difficulties of gender relations in Africa in her works. She is one of the rare male and female African writers of any gender of her time to address not only gender prejudice but also propose a remedy. *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1969) emphasizes how generations of male power have oppressed women. A woman is something you have purchased at some point, like a table you would store in the back room and not give any thought to (Head, 1969). Makhaya's strong anti-apartheid feelings have made him intolerant of his Zulu culture's discriminatory tradition of female servitude. His critique of capitalism is intrinsically related to his condemnation of racism.

The works of Bessie Head depict the roles of women in different eras. Head depicts women's suffering as a result of a colonial system that hinders them from bettering their circumstances. As confirmed by Abd-Rabbo (2019), social distinction and freedom can only be attainable under the prevailing social standards that may lead to the excellence and achievement of women, and thus women are required to respond differently to the prevalent social norms and traditions. In her stories, she demonstrates that a woman is capable of more than just being a mother, sister, wife, and daughter.

We can hear the female, as it is the voice of all other women in Head's writings, as she fights and seeks to express herself. In Africa, Bessie Head depicts the notion of the New Woman. She looks into the subject of sexual discrimination. Her works depict the agony of her female protagonists while also raising women's awareness of their predicament.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abd-Rabbo, M. M. (2019). Overlapping character variations in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. *JNT-Journal of Narrative Theory*, 49(1), 55-81. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jnt.2019.0002>
- [2] Al-Ghalith, A & Al-Shalabi, A. (2022). Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard: A critique of the British political agenda. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies (IJAES)*, 22(2), 251-264.
- [3] Al-Ghammaz, S., Al-Khatib, W., & AbuRas, F. (2022). Emotional Abuse in Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" *Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan Journal for Human and Social Studies*, 3(3), 213-223.
- [4] Boyce-Davies, Carole. (1994). *Black Women, Writing and Identity Migrations of the Subject*: Routledge.
- [5] Chapman, M. (1996). *Southern African Literatures*. Harlow: Longman (1996).
- [6] Chukukere, G. C. (1995). *Gender Voices and Choices: Redefining Women in Contemporary African Fiction*: Fourth dimension.
- [7] Clayton, C. (1989). *Women and Writing in South Africa: A Critical Anthology*. South Africa: Heinemann Southern Africa, Marshalltown.
- [8] Danduş, I. (2001). *Gender Identities in Postcolonial Literature: Things Fall Apart*, by Chinua Achebe and *the Collector of Treasures*, by Bessie Head. Moldova: Universitatea de Sta. Chişinău.
- [9] Debbie T. Marman, Peter Mwikisa. (2021). The Trope of the Absent Father in Bessie Head's *Stories Life and the Collector of Treasures*. *Marang: Journal of Language and Literature*, 1(34), 79-95.
- [10] Driver, D. (1984). Writers in Conversation. *Bessie Head's Australia. Interviews* 7(2), 2-21.
- [11] Gardner, S. (1989). *Bessie Head: Production under Drought Conditions*. Clayton: Cherry.
- [12] Head, B. (1990). *A Woman Alone: Autobiographical Writings*: Heinemann.
- [13] Head, B. (1989). *Tales of Ten De Mess and Power*: Crede Press: Great Britain.
- [14] Head, B. (1977). *The Collector of Treasures*. London: Heinemann.
- [15] Head, B. (1962). *Things I Don't Like*. Vol. 1: The New African.
- [16] Head, B. (1969). *When Rain Clouds Gather*. London: Heinemann.
- [17] Isaac, S. (1953). *The Tswana*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- [18] Lederer, M. S. (2019). *In Conversation with Bessie Head*: Bloomsbury Academic.
- [19] Ncube, T. T. (2001). *A Feminist Analysis of Bessie Head's Oeuvre with Reference to Migration and Psychoanalysis*. Durban, South Africa: Durban University.
- [20] Paglia, C. (1992). *Sex, Art, and American Culture*. London: Vintage, 1992.
- [21] Qutami, M. (2022). Countering normalized violence in Aboulela's "The Museum" and El Guindi's "Trading in my Arab". *Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan Journal for Human and Social Studies*, 3(3), 224-235.
- [22] Said, E. (1983). *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge: Mass.
- [23] Smith, M. (1990). *Grounds of Contest: A Survey of South African English Literature*. Kenwyn South Africa: Jutalit.
- [24] Spivak, G. C. (2003). *Death of a Discipline*: Columbia University Press.
- [25] Thusi, N. M. (1998). *Character and Identity in Selected Works by Bessie Head*. South Africa: University of Zululand.
- [26] Vidal, M. (1989). Women Workers and Warriors in Bessie Head's Short Fiction. *Barcelona English Language and Literature Studies*, 1(1), 225-33.
- [27] Viswanathan, G. (1989). *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Asad Al-Ghalith Dr. Asad Al-Ghalith is currently a Professor of English literature at Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan. He obtained his BA and MA in English literature from the University of Missouri-Columbia and Ph.D from West Virginia University. For the last 40 years, he has taught English in the United States and abroad. He has published three dozens of articles in respectable academic journals in the United States, Canada and the Middle East. In his research, he has focused on English and American literature of all genres.

Asma Y. Nashwan obtained her BA and MA degrees in English literature from Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan (ZUJ). Her research interests revolve around the situation of African women in precolonial, colonial and postcolonial Eras.

Saif Al-Deen L. Al-Ghammaz is an Assistant Professor of English literature at the Department of English Language and Literature at Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan. He received his Ph.D. in English Literature: Postcolonial Literature from UKM in 2020. His research interests revolve around Islam in Renaissance and Restoration drama, Shakespeare's appropriation in English and Arabic literature, post-colonialism, and comparative literature. He is a member of the advisory board of Transnational Literature.

Musa A. Alzghoul is an Assistant Professor of Translation Studies at the Department of English Language and Literature at Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan. Dr. Alzghoul received his PhD in Translation Studies from the State University of New York - Binghamton in 2018. He is interested in Post-colonial translation theory. Dr. Alzghoul is a member of the editorial board of Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan Journal for Human and Social Studies.

Mahmoud Jamil Al-Salti is an Assistant Professor of Islamic Education in the Classroom Teacher Department at Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan. He has obtained his PhD in Islamic Education in 2018. His research interests revolve around Islamic education and its related origins and branches, as well as issues of education, curricula and modern teaching methods. He now holds the position of Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Arts.