

The Place Of Identity And Hybridity On Literary Commitment In Bessie Head's Maru

Elizabeth A. Odhiambo, Doctoral Student Department of Literary Studies, Maseno University, Kenya.

Dr. Jack Ogembo, Department of Literary Studies, Maseno University, Kenya.

Dr. Kitche Magak, Department of Literary Studies, Maseno University, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the influence of identity on literary commitment of Bessie Head – a multicultural writer. In particular, the study was interested in the hybrid syncretic crossings reflected in her work and which defined her as a writer in the Third Space- the contact zone within which different cultures encounter. The objective of the study was to analyze how the writer's identity influences her commitment in the text Maru. The study adopted the analytical research design. The data collected through content analysis was coded according to thematic concerns, the mode of characterization and vision of the author. The postcolonial theory was instrumental in the reading, analysis and interpretation of the selected text. The findings reveal that the writer's identity influences her commitment as reflected in her choice of characters that like her are cast in the in-between space. These characters shuttle between points of inclusion and exclusion. The quest for a universal identity that defies definitions of race or tribe is shrouded in shackles of prejudice enshrined in the traditional outlook which must be dismantled in order to attain total liberty. The writer's desire for a race free society in which everybody projects a global identity is projected through the creation of Margaret, a borderline character that was hardly African but something new and universal, a type of personality that would be unable to fit into a definition of something as narrow as tribe or race or nation. However, this dream is encumbered with a lot of challenges thus reflecting the difficulty of erasing cultural differences. The text thus offers hybridity as a bridge which bonds though it does not obliterate cultural differences. It implies an unsettling of identities so that the characters consistently grapple with issues of being and becoming in their quest to redefine their identity.

Keywords: Identity, Hybridity, Literary commitment, Bessie Head.