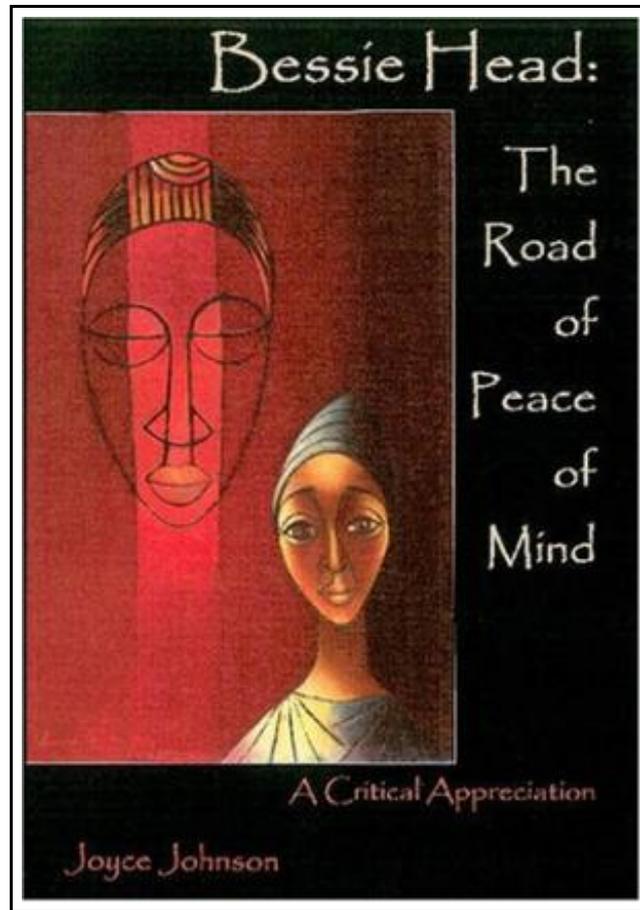


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BESSIE HEAD: THE ROAD OF PEACE OF MIND - A CRITICAL APPRECIATION

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University of Delaware Press, Newark, 2008. Hardback/Cloth. Book Condition: New. 1st Edition. 224pp . [In stock in Australia, for immediate delivery] This book directs attention to Bessie Head's literary preoccupations. It reviews the context in which she wrote in relation to her ideas about the creative imagination, the art of fiction, and the situation of the writer in modern Africa. It notes, in particular, her views on reading as a source of inspiration for the writer, her uses of local oral tradition, and the blending of heterogeneous materials that she valued in her fiction. The discussion also includes references to Head's encoding of meaning, her texturing of language, and the techniques by which she develops complexity and concision in her writing. The works examined include *The Cardinals*, *When Rain Clouds Gather*, *Maru*, *A Question of Power*, *The Collector of Treasures*, and *A Bewitched Crossroad*. The tendency in critical writing on Head, so far, has been to interpret her works as they highlight issues in the socio-political and cultural environment in which she wrote, and her construction of female identity. Head, however, repeatedly expressed concerns about the responsibilities of the creative writer in contemporary Africa, and the issue of political commitment. The dilemmas of her central characters who must choose between the path to 'fame and fortune' and 'the road of peace of mind' also reflect her situation as a writer who must either choose to adopt the prevailing orthodoxy or be judged to be irrelevant. Head's fiction shows her attempting to find a middle way. Reading helped her to fashion a response to her own situation. Reading, Head asserted, was a necessary preliminary to writing. A career in writing, she observed, first begins with a love of reading and a love of books' (*A Woman Alone*). Head's reading caused her to develop an international outlook'...



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