The Woman Fights Back : Regaining Control over the Self and the Body

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David Michael Buss, the American evolutionary psychologist states that "the observable differences between males and females derive from different anatomical organization, which makes us different as men and women, and those anatomical differences are the origin of gender inequality."[1]

Margaret Mead refuses to accept the idea of gender construction being determined by the sex construction of the body. She asserts that the concept of masculinity and femininity are culturally and socially conditioned. She subverts the traditional binary gender differences stated by the arguments of biological determinism. According to her, gender roles are culturally conditioned. There are socially accepted ways to perform like a man or a woman. Society always prescribes certain roles for both the male and the female. This imposition of gender roles deliberately makes a woman assume a subjugated position in a society as compared to a man. The feminist icon Simone de Beauvoir articulates, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature . . . which is described as feminine."[2]

Throughout ages, there has been this ubiquitous male control over every aspect of a woman's existence. Sarah Moore Grimke, widely regarded as the mother of the women's suffrage movement, remarks :

> All history attests that man has subjugated woman to his will, used her as a means of selfish gratification, to minister to his sexual pleasure, to be instrumental in promoting his comfort;

> but never has desired to elevate her to that rank she was created to fill.[3]

The sufferings of women are not considered to be "wrong" acts but the part and parcel of everyday life. Moreover, women do not have any authority over their own body and existence. It is the superior male figure who is supposed to own and control the female body, as normalized by patriarchal strictures.

Mahasweta Devi (1926–2016), one of the most eminent literary figures, brings to us stories that speak of the minor details of women's lives, their suffering and endurance. Her writings offer a panorama of women's position in society as well as the politics of their body in a society shaped by patriarchal mandates. Most importantly, Devi's stories subvert gender roles and also capture the multiple layers of domination and resistance. Mahasweta Devi says, "I have always tried to explore people's version of history . . . In all my writings, I've tried to present the subaltern point of view."[4] Of particular interest to her is the plight of tribals, especially tribal women. A writer and social activist G.N. Devy stated, "Her writing addressed one single word: injustice".[5]

As Vandana writes,

> Mahasweta's fiction aims at inverting hegemonic, over-privileged, ever-signifying system of relationships and attempts to bring low what was high through the strategies of subversion and reversal. Her stories come across as the post-colonial, subaltern, gendered responses that serve to topsy-turvy such hierarchical structures, generating aesthetics of opposition in the process.[6]

Every woman does not have the same fate: but they have similar experiences in different atmospheres. This is something Devi meticulously captures in her stories. Her short stories such as

"Breast-Giver", "Draupadi" from *In Other Worlds* (1987), "Dhouli", "Shanichari", "Chinta" from *Outcast: Four Stories* (2002), "Giribala", "Ma from Dusk to Dawn" and "Sindhubala" from *In the Name of the Mother* (2011), demonstrate the paradoxical position and representation of women in society. Devi's stories are narratives of the unspoken misery of the marginalized women in society. Mahasweta Devi has travelled to remote tribal villages of India and has witnessed the trials and tribulations of these indigenous masses. She chooses as her characters tribal women who are subjugated in terms of class and gender. M.N. Chatterjee opines,

> Women, according to [Devi], are much stronger than men. But, in the poorer class their sufferings multiply not only because of their belonging to this class but also because of their bodies. They thus suffer double oppression. No wonder, the most common stories of victimization revolve round their falling a prey to the male lust.[7]

The story of 'Dhouli' gives a lucid account of the politics of caste and gender in a tribal society. Dhouli is a docile village girl who is a victim of child marriage and domestic violence. She becomes a widow at a very early age. A woman losing her husband at an early age is tagged as an ill omen and is herself considered responsible for her husband's death. Society will never allow her to remarry even if she wishes to, but the men around her will try to take advantage of the woman. Misrilal, an upper caste brahman falls in love with Dhouli, and secretly establishes physical relations with her. Dhouli reciprocates his love and becomes pregnant with Misrilal's child in the course of time. When Misrilal's mother gets to know about this, she immediately condemns Dhouli and not her own son. "…it is always the fault of the woman for not considering a brahman's honour. She is even more to blame".[8]

It is the woman who is always deemed to be the one who has

sinned. Men are not even considered guilty, let alone punished. Due to class difference and family pressures, Misrilal does not accept Dhouli as his wife nor does he take responsibility for the child. He marries another woman and settles in Ranchi. Dhouli is left all alone and is even asked to abort her child. But she decides to give birth to her child and raise it herself. The village people look down upon her and do not even dare to provide her with a job since it might offend their deota. Besides, the men in the village make obscene gestures in front of her and try to molest her. Dhouli realizes "this was her fate".[9] With no other option left and her family starving to death, Dhouli finally chooses prostitution as her livelihood.

"Whoever is ready to pay can come in".[10]

She becomes a rebel and turns against that very society which tried to suppress her in every possible way. It is the same society that forced her to opt for prostitution that also condemns her prostitution as offensive. It is men who would like to secretly gratify their desires through her body, but will censure her earning money by selling her own body. Dhouli's choice makes her a rebel against the hegemonic male society. She breaks the social taboo and starts attaining betterment in life.

The ethically and morally upright community at Taharr normalizes the sexual exploitation of *dusad* women by upper caste deotas. Those women who passively accept their tragic fate are patronized and those who dare to transgress the social mandates are subject to exploitation. Jhalo in this story does not resist the exploitation of her body, and thereby safeguards herself through her passivity. But Dhouli will not let men simply lay claim over her body to fulfil their lascivious wants. She refuses to be subjugated by men, breaks social taboos and proclaims her body as a site of individual self-determination. Therefore she is ousted from society:

> Dhouli cannot practise prostitution in this village. [. . .] Such sinful activities cannot continue in the heart of this village.

> This village still has brahmans living in it. Puja is still done in their homes every day.[11]

Finally, Dhouli is threatened and forced to leave the village and practice her profession in some other town. The only choice she is given is to be a concubine to Misrilal's brother-in-law Kundan, which she declines. With Kundan "she would have been a randi in her private life."[12] She would have had a confined life and would have been forced to exist as the commodity of a man. But Dhouli makes a bold move:

> But now she was about to become a professional randi. When you are a kept woman, you're all alone. But now she would be a part of a community. The collective strength of that society was far more powerful than [an] individual's strength. And those who had forced her to be a whore were the ones who controlled the society. They were the most powerful![13]

Dhouli wilfully inserts into public and economic domain her body, over which patriarchy had tried to establish personal claim. Her leaving for Ranchi is an example of the consequences that a woman has to face for going against the constraints of patriarchy. Although Dhouli defies subjugation, stands up for herself, refuses to remain as a kept woman of upper-caste men, yet she is exiled from her native village, and this is a partial defeat for her. Her banishment is definitely a blessing as she finally gets the liberty to lead her life on her own terms, but it is also an instance which proves that a woman going against the brutal social structures will always be treated as an outcast to society. 'Dhouli' has much in common with another story by Devi, named 'The Witch'. In this, a physically and mentally challenged girl named Somri is molested and subsequently demonized as a "daini" or witch by thakurs of Taharr, and forced to flee the village. This illustrates the silencing of the woman's voice, her

subordination and commodification within the patriarchal domains. Not only is the woman's body exploited, but that contaminated body is exiled and chased away out of society's boundaries.

Dhouli becomes a metaphor of the female body as a site for the imposition of hegemonic and exploitative politics of patriarchy. Rekha, a critic of Mahasweta Devi's stories, rightly says, "Though premised on the commodification of the body, her entering the professional market is an empowering act—an act where she becomes the master of her own body."[14]

Mahasweta Devi's 'The Hunt', revolves around the girl Mary Oraon, who is an illegitimate child of an Oraon tribal called Bhikni and her Australian master, Dixon's son. Such birth history makes her both an insider and an outsider within the Oraon community. Mary lives a well-to-do life and makes independent decisions for herself. But the exploitative capitalistic-feudal mainstream symbolized by the Tehsildar-Banwari nexus, targets Mary. Mary tries to resist the "erotic gaze" of Tehsildar Singh, and even threatens him with violence, but Tehsildar is an influential man. "Tehsildar has a lot of money, a lot of men. A city bastard."[15] He disregards Mary's warning and seeks opportunity to lay hands on her. Finally, Mary makes a daring move and utilises the cultural resources at hand to resist the "male gaze" and the objectification of her body. She tactically transfigures the ancient tribal ritual, *Jani Parab* into a tool of resistance to fight her potential rapist.

From the beginning of the story, Mary is a subversive character, who constantly involves herself in activities which are exclusively performed by males. She "pastures the Prasad's cattle. She is the most capable cowherd. She also sells custard apple and guava from Prasad's orchards, driving terrifically hard bargains with the Kunjaras, the wholesale fruit buyers. She takes the train to Tohri with vegetables from the field."[16] At the same time, she does take care of household chores. Therefore, her capacity to perform works of both male and female spheres challenges the biological and socio-cultural

demarcations of polarized gender identities.

In the story, the tradition of the hunting festival in the tribal village is a demonstration of hegemonic gender roles. Women are meant to stay in their houses and take care of the indoor chores, while men are entitled to earning money, hunting, and similar outdoor activities. Men "have been playing the hunt for a thousand million moons on this day."[17] This represents a hierarchical relationship between the predator and the prey; the man being the predator has the capacity to dominate. On a symbolic level, this hunting festival becomes a metaphor for the domination and subjugation of women by men; in this case, Mary, was about to be sexually exploited by Tehsildar. But Devi strategically employs this tribal ritual to transgress this gendered power play. She says,

> It is revealed that the ritual of the hunt that the tribes celebrate at the spring festival is for the women to perform this year. For twelve years men run the hunt. Then comes the women's turn. It's Jani Parab. Like men they too go out with bow and arrow. They run in forest and hill. They kill hedgehogs, rabbits, birds, whatever they can get. Then they picnic together, drink liquor, sing, and return home at evening. They do exactly what the men do. One in twelve years.[18]

In this story, Mahasweta Devi subverts the gender stereotypes which associate qualities such as strength, power and domination with men only. Women are in no way less than men, and they too are capable of all kinds of activities.

Mary's need for self-protection makes her as powerful as a man in a chauvinistic society. Mary's machete becomes the source of her power, a substitution for her lack of the "male phallus". The machete provides her security and helps her defend herself in adverse conditions. When men "had wanted to be her lover, Mary had lifted her machete."[19] At one point she said : "brokers like you, with tight

pants and dark glasses, are ten a rupee on the streets of Tohri, and to them I show this machete. Go and ask if you don't believe me."[20] And finally, with that very machete she kills Tehsildar in the hunt.

Mahasweta Devi revolutionizes the tribal ritual into both a cultural trope for gender empowerment and a tool of resistance. The ritualistic description of the episode of killing a beast/demon sanctifies the violence inherent in it into a legitimate act, and celebrates the latent feminine energy.

> Mary caresses Tehsildar's face [. . .]. Mary is watching, watching, the face changes and changes into? Now? Yes becomes an animal—Now take me? Mary laughed and held him, laid him on the ground. Tehsildar is laughing. Mary lifts the machete, lowers it, lifts, lowers. [. . .] Mary stands up. Blood? On her clothes? She'll wash in the cut. [. . .] Mary comes out. Walks naked to the cut. Bathing naked in the cut her face fills with deep satisfaction. [. . .] In the women's gathering Mary drank the most wine, sang, and danced [. . .] with the greatest relish. [. . .] as if she had made the biggest kill.[21]

The all-powerful woman hunts down her potential rapist and kills him—a subversion of established gender roles.

The dominant feminist discourses of the late twentieth century focus on the idea of the female body being a socially constructed entity. Feminists consider "that imagination of the female body was a socially shaped and historically 'colonized' territory, not a site of individual self-determination."[22] Mahasweta Devi's stories put emphasis on this issue. But Devi also explores the ambiguity of the female body—a site of exploitation that can turn into a site of resistance. Devi articulates the unwritten histories of tribal, subaltern women and also envisages alternative tactics to fight oppression.

All these marginalized women do exercise power but within a constricted space. Long term sufferings and repression of the

female individual have finally led to the eruption of this power. But patriarchy has always tried to sabotage this power and damage it like her identity and body. Yet these women refuse to accept defeat; they do stand up for their own selves and vehemently try to assert their own individuality.

While Mahasweta Devi was delineating the struggles of the tribal women in India, Bessie Head (1937-1986), a contemporary of Devi, was working on the lives of women in the villages of Botswana in Africa. A writer of novels, short fictions and autobiographical works, she is one of the most influential writers of Africa. Head's writings deal at great length with the problems of third world women—the rural women of Botswana. Although she refutes the label of feminist, yet Head's stories demonstrate her acute observation of women's struggles in society, their experiences and fates. Through her writings Head situates herself in a position from where she delves deep into the mind of the African woman.

Bessie Head holds history responsible for the position of women in society:

> 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 congenital sense, as being an inferior form of human life.[23]

Susan Gardner traces "a discernible feminist content" in Bessie Head's collection because it centres on "the insistence that women have suffered systematic social injustice because of their sex."[24]

Psychoanalytic and feminist literary criticism considers the phallus as the metaphor and source of power, which leads to the building up of a phallocentric society. For Lacan, this "phallus" does not merely refer to the penis; it also a metaphor for the male dominance in society. Since women lack the phallus, so they are also lacking in worldly authority and self-possession. Hence, it accounts for the

subjugated position that women experience in society.

Head's major characters are women who fight to establish a kind of equality with men, as for example, Maria, Paulina and the prostitutes in "When Rain Clouds Gather", Margaret and Dikeledi in "Maru", Elizabeth in "A Question of Power" and, Life and Dikeledi in her short stories.

The "The Collector of Treasures", the title story of Bessie Head's collection of short stories *The Collector of Treasures and other Botswana Village Tales* (1977) is read as a de(con)struction of phallocratic society. The story is set in post-colonial Botswana and revolves around the life of Dikeledi Mokopi and her estranged husband Garesego Mokopi. Garesego has left his wife and children in his pursuit of other women for sexual gratification. As a result, Dikeledi alone has to bring up her three children. However, when Garesego returns with intentions of having sexual intercourse with her, Dikeledi cuts off his genitals with a kitchen knife. Subsequently, she receives life imprisonment. In prison, she finds a few other women who have committed the same felony.

According to patriarchy, there is this constant lack in the lives of women because the latter do not possess the penis as a transcendental signifier of masculine superiority. In Bessie Head's story, Garegeso represents this phallocratic supremacy of men in society. The author labels him as "evil" and compares him to a dog who "imagined he was the only penis in the world and that there had to be a scramble for it" (p. 91).[25]

Femi Ojo-Ade finds these kinds of men to be loathsome, for they "make babies like machines and turn their backs upon the poor women."[26] Indeed, the patriarchal society supposes that the sole function of women's body is to satiate the male sexual hunger and to produce offspring. Paglia regards "male lust and male aggression" as the "two uncontrollable forces of nature in society."[27] Garesego is an embodiment of sexual bestiality. He deserts his wife for a casual hunt for women and later returns when Dikeledi wants financial

help for their son's education. Planning on vengeance for the ill-treatment she received as a wife, Dikeledi castrates Garesego. This deed is an attempt by the subjugated woman to deconstruct the phallocentric society in which beastlike men dominate. Marius Crous affirms that "Garesego's anguished bellows are signifiers of his loss of phallic supremacy and the end of male rule . . . He is no longer the supreme representative of the Law-of-the-Father and the language of patriarchal dominance."[28]

In a discussion with Susan Gardner, Bessie Head said that this horrible deed of Dikeledi reveals "the deep psychological trauma the woman had lived with."[29] In response to this story, it is appropriate to quote Kim Master: "Men feel emasculated by the story while women feel empowered."[30]

But patriarchy exerts its control over Dikeledi by imprisoning her. There is a note of dissatisfaction at the end of the story, similar to that of the Ridley Scott directed movie "Thelma and Louise". The two women characters in the film have fought bravely against patriarchal dominance. Lousie kills the man who tries to rape Thelma. At the end of the film, they "commit suicide" to escape arrest by the police who would have refused to believe their story. Was their activity a failed attempt at emancipation? In this regard, Belling (1992: 49) states:

> What does one do with a female hero once she has discovered that her heroism is at odds with the social order that dictates happy endings? The monster killed by Thelma and Louise is a rapist, the rest of the film traces their exhilarating empowerment as outlaws, and the final freezeframe confirms that . . . no satisfactory resolution is available . . . Their liberation remains imaginary.[31]

Similarly, Dikeledi is once again subject to another form of coercion. The prison wall silences her revolutionary deed, and society turns a

deaf ear to the injustice meted out to her. This ending is an emblem of silencing the voices of women throughout the ages in narratives and reality, so on and so forth. The prison is a microcosm for a society that repudiates the courageous voice of the woman.

Dikeledi, named after her mother's tears, embodies the struggle of women who have a long way to go before the cycle of violence on women can be replaced by a spiral of peace. In prison, Dikeledi meets other women who too have killed their husbands. Those convicted husband-murderers are an exemplar of the fact that ages of injustice and oppression on women has left them no other choice but to resort to violence. Bessie Head most sharply and explicitly critiques the angst-ridden condition of women in society. Women are so exposed to suffering, abuse, rape and harassment that when they begin their backlash it comes about in various forms of aggression. So it is understandable as to why Dikeledi decided to punish her husband herself. The emotional shift from "assertion" to "aggression" is also accompanied by a power shift.

Bessie Head's "Life", revolves around a woman called Life who migrates from Johannesburg to a village in Botswana. She has tried various jobs in the city, among others prostitution. After returning to her village, Life starts earning money by selling her body. This astounds the village people. Most of the village women's love affairs very often ended tragically for them. Men used to abandon them after fulfilling their own sexual desires and the women were left alone with pre-marital pregnancies, fatherless children and shame. Life, on the other hand sticks to the carpe diem philosophy. Her motto is: "live fast, die young and have a good-looking corpse."[32] Life feels that she has the right to choose her life style. She is the only woman in the village who starts earning her living as a sex-worker. Life empowers herself by making men pay her for the services she is offering. It is no more the gratuitous sexual satisfaction that men can have simply by treating women as their possession. Men paying her for sex became victims of their own

weakness. "... They could get all the sex they needed for free in the village, but it seemed to fascinate them that they should pay for it for the first time."[33]

Power and leadership often remain as the domain of men. Lesego (one of the most respected and honoured men in the village) marries Life with the intention of maintaining order in a corrupted village by preventing Life from carrying on prostitution in the village. But Life is "a woman who had broken all the social taboos"; she enjoys life on her own terms and shows other women that they too are worth something to men. Life can never accept the fact that she is owned by a man, which is why she finds her married life suffocating. Because of this, she escapes back to the world of men, music, drink, beer, women, prostitution. But Lesego is a determined man who refuses to compromise. She must remain within the boundaries prescribed by Lesego or else be killed. Lesego says, "I thought that if she was doing a bad thing with Radithobolo as Mathata said, I better kill her because I cannot understand a wife who could be so corrupt."[34]

For killing Life, her husband is sentenced to an imprisonment of five years, whereas Dikeledi in "The Collector of Treasures" has a life sentence for killing a husband who once abandoned her—again a clear instance of sexist discrimination. Head demonstrates how women are exploited on the basis of their gender. She depicts how the court was not dealing with individual cases, but with women's inferiority. As a woman, Life too experienced gender oppression in her marriage. Lesego takes control of the money and Life is supposed to account for her expenses. This proves that being a woman she has no right to control economy. In "The Special One", another story in the same collection, a woman named Ms Maleboge is betrayed by her brothers and deprived of her inheritance. "I lost it," sighs Ms. Maleboge, "because women are just dogs in this society."[35] However, the same women who are subject to all kinds of subjugation can destroy men through their own dark powers. "Many women have killed men by

sleeping with them during that time,"[36] says Ms. Maleboge's friend, in reference to the period of menstruation.

After the impenetrable night of despair comes the great illuminating power of awakening. When women finally start to resist oppression and challenge patriarchy, they are dreaded by men. Men cannot accept the very idea of a woman being powerful or entering the domain controlled by men. This is the reason because of which society, especially a patriarchal society, very often associates powerful female figures to witches, demons or such socially constructed evil entities.

Bessie Head gives us various instances of women's resistance to male domination. Head is a committed writer, who rages against the exploitation of women and advocates for a balance and equality between women and men. She does not just advocate for women's rights but depicts her female characters as warriors in an essentially patriarchal society that strives to supress them in every possible way.

Mahasweta Devi and Bessie Head are two different writers of different origin and race, writing from two different continents. But both have observed the same experiences that women go through, be it in India or Africa, or any other country for that matter. Both Head and Devi are radical thinkers who have meticulously captured the exploitation of women at the hands of patriarchy. The plots of their fictions might be different, but they all converge at one point : the politics of the female body. Both have created female characters who assert control over their own self and body; they strategically turn their bodies from sites of exploitation to sites of resistance. Although considered weak and fragile, and robustly exploited on the basis of gender, these women have proved they have the potential to assert themselves as individuals capable of rebelling against the mandates of society. Both are stalwarts who have given voice to an entire race of women, and captured their experiences with startling precision and formidable insight.

As Cecily Lockett rightly puts it,

> The common denominator is the concept of gender: women are subject to control and the oppression on the basis of their gender. This is something that functions to unite women across divisions of race or religion; the common experience of oppression: based on gender identity.[37]

Patriarchy has always shaped mythologies where strong and empowered female figures like Hecate, Medea and Medusa are depicted as fearful and merciless creatures causing death and evil for men. In every man-made narrative, rebel women are categorized as evil-doers, or monsters. Associating strong women with negative images or ideas does not make them flawed. Rather these images of fear, death and other negative attributions make women more empowered. It is better to be dreaded for malignant qualities rather than remain "passive and subjugated". As S. Yumiko Hulvey formulates in her article "Myths and Monsters: The Female Body As The Site For Political Agendas" (2000): "[i]f women today cannot be revered or worshipped as the creators of life, they prefer to be feared as agents of death, as decreed by myth, rather than bow down meekly as the oppressed Other."[38]

A woman's patience should not be tested. Society might label her as fragile and vulnerable, but her latent energy can surface back any time to give a harsh strike to oppressors. The electrifying words of Ashapurna Devi, another significant figure of feminist literature, is noteworthy in this context:

> I always compare women to matchboxes. Why? Because the way matchboxes are—even though they have enough gunpowder to set a hundred 'Lankas' aflame, they sit around meek and innocent, in the kitchen, in the pantry, in the bedroom, here, there, anywhere—women, too, are exactly the same![39]

NOTES

1 David Michael Buss, quoted in Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History,* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 7-16.
2 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1988).
3 Sarah Grimke, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Conditions of Woman,* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970).
4 Mahasweta Devi, *The Queen of Jhansi,* trans. Sagaree and Mandira Sengupta, (Kolkata: Seagull, 2000), 275
5 Ganesh N. Devy, "The Adivasi Mahasweta," *Mahasweta Devi: Witness, Advocate, Writer,* (August 25, 2011), www.der.orgfilmsresourcesMahaswetaDeviStudyGuide.pdf.
6 Vandana, (2007) "Aesthetics of Activism: A Study of Mahasweta Devi's Fiction," (2007), http://hdl.handle.net/10603/186613
7 M.N. Chatterjee, "Re-reading Mahasweta Devi," *Indian Literature* 52, no. 6, (2008): 240, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23348446
8 Mahasweta Devi, "Dhouli," *Outcast* trans. Sarmistha Dutta Gupta (Calcutta: Seagull, 2002), 13.
9 Mahasweta Devi, "Dhouli," 27.
10 Mahasweta Devi, "Dhouli," 21.
11 Mahasweta Devi, "Dhouli," 31.
12 Mahasweta Devi, "Dhouli," 32.
13 Mahasweta Devi "Dhouli," 32.
14 Rekha, "The Poetics and Politics of Space: A Reading of Mahasweta Devi's Subaltern Stories," *Indian Literature* 54, no. 6, (2010): 151, http://www.jstor.com/stable/23348277
15 Mahasweta Devi, "The Hunt," *Imaginary Maps. Three stories by Mahasweta Devi*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 12-13.
16 Mahasweta Devi, "The Hunt," 2.
17 Mahasweta Devi, "The Hunt," 12.
18 Mahasweta Devi, "The Hunt," 12.
19 Mahasweta Devi, "The Hunt," 3.
20 Mahasweta Devi, "The Hunt," 10.
21 Mahasweta Devi, "The Hunt," 16.
22 Susan Bordo, "Feminism, Foucault and the Politics of the Body," *Feminist Theory and the Body. A Reader,* ed. J. Price and M. Shildrick, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 251.
23 Bessie Head, *The Collector of Treasures and other Botswana Village Tales*, (London: Heinemann, 1986), 92.
24 Susan Gardner, "Production under drought conditions," *Africa Insight* 15, no. 1, (1985): 45, https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA02562804_255

25 Bessie Head, "The Collector of Treasures," 91.
26 Femi Ojo-Ade, "Of human trials and triumphs: Bessie Head's collection of treasures," quoted in Cecil Abrahams, *The Tragic Life: Bessie Head and Literature in South Africa*, (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990).
27 Camille Paglia, *Sex, Art and American Culture,* (London: Viking, 1993), 63.
28 Marius Crous, "Díkeledí's revenge: A Reading of Bessie Head's collector of treasures," *Literator* 17, no.1, (April, 1996): 138.
29 Bessie Head, interviewed by Susan Gardner, 1989.
30 Kim Masters, "Sex, Lies and an 8-inch carving knife," *Vanity Fair* 56, no.11, (1993): 118.
31 Catherine Belling, "Where meaning collapses: Alien and the outlawing of the female hero," *Literator* 13, no.3, (1992): 49.
32 Bessie Head, "Life," *The Collector of Treasures and other Botswana Village Tales*, (London: Heinemann, 1992), 40.
33 Bessie Head, "Life," 40.
34 Bessie Head, "Life," 46.
35 . Bessie Head, "The Special One," *The Collector of Treasures and other Botswana Village Tales*, (London: Heinemann, 1992), 81.
36 Bessie Head, "The Special One,"
37 Cecily Lockett, "Sisterhood/otherhood: The politics of contemporary feminism in South African literary studies". *AUETSA Conference Paper,* (1993): 330.
38 S. Yumiko Hulvey, "Myths and Monsters: The Female Body as the Site for Political Agendas," ed. Debra Walker King, *Body Politics and The Fictional Double,* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 88.
39 Ashapurna Debi, "Matchbox," *Matchbox: Stories by Ashapurna Debi*, trans. Prasenjit Gupta, (India: Hachette India, 2015).

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