Stories of women: gender and narrative in the postcolonial nation

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Why is the nation in a post-colonial world so often seen as a motherland? This study explores the relationship between gender icons and foundational fictions of the nation in different post-colonial spaces. The author’s work on the intersections between independence, nationalism and gender has already proved canonical in the field. This book combines her keynote essays on the mother figure and the post-colonial nation with new work on male autobiography, ‘daughter’ writers, the colonial body, the trauma of the post-colony and the nation in a transnational context. Focusing on Africa as well as South Asia, and sexuality as well as gender, the author offers close readings of writers ranging from Chinua Achebe, Ben Okri and Nelson Mandela to Arundhati Roy and Yvonne Vera, shaping these into a critical engagement with theorists of the nation such as Fredric Jameson and Partha Chatterjee. Moving beyond cynical deconstructions of the post-colony, the book mounts a reassessment of the post-colonial nation as a site of potential empowerment, as a ‘paradoxical refuge’ in a globalised world. It acts on its own impassioned argument that post-colonial and nation-state studies address substantively issues hitherto raised chiefly within international feminism.

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"Stories of women' combines her keynote essays on the mother figure and the postcolonial nation, with incisive new work on male autobiography, 'daughter' writers, the colonial body, the trauma of the post-colony, and the nation in a transnational context. Focusing on Africa as well as South Asia, and sexuality as well as gender, Boehmer offers fine close readings of writers ranging from Achebe, Okri and Mandela to Arundhati Roy and Yvonne Vera, shaping these into a critical engagement with theorists of the nation like Fredric Jameson and Partha Chatterjee. The beginning of this study of gender, nation and postcolonial narrative lies, appropriately, in story – a story about a 'girl', a girl at war. The beginning of this study of gender, nation and postcolonial narrative lies, appropriately, in story – a story about a 'girl', a girl at war. The 'girl', Gladys, is the at first nameless young woman whom the narrator of Chinua Achebe's 1960s short story 'Girls at war' encounters at three representative moments during the years of the Biafra War. Achebe has long been intrigued by the power granted women in myth (take Ani, Idemili), but what is at issue in the present story is not so much mythical presence as the 'girl' Gladys's nationally signifying condition. She is in effect on three diff