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.
Stories of women and mothers: gender and nationalism in the early fiction of Flora Nwapa. 88. 6. Daughters of the house: the adolescent girl and the nation. 106. 7. Transfiguring: colonial body into postcolonial narrative. 127. 8. The nation as metaphor: Ben Okri, Chenjerai Hove, Dambudzo Marechera. 140. 9. East is east: where postcolonialism is neo-orientalist - the cases of Sarojini Naidu and Arundhati Roy. 158. 10. Tropes of yearning and dissent: the inflection of desire in Yvonne Vera and Tsitsi Dangarembga. 172. 11. Beside the west: postcolonial women writers in a transnational fra Stories of women is a pathbreaking study of the perenially fascinating relationship between foundational fictions of the nation and gendered images. The book focuses critically on postcolonial spaces ranging from West Africa to India. eISBN: 978-1-84779-272-3. 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.³ 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. On the one hand, women’s narratives foreground how strategies of control are somewhat effective precisely because they are reproduced and reinforced in the narratives on the body, on womanhood, and sexuality. What is also incontrovertible is how their narratives are shaped by forms of social privilege. What became clear, after the completion of the interviews, was the importance of not limiting this study to explorations of normality through middle- and upper-class women’s narratives, but also through examining narratives from the margins, namely, from gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered peoples. Clearly, these narratives evince the impact of the postcolonial nationstate—both in terms of nationhood and transnational cultural effects.