

## **Widowhood in Igbo Land: A Sociocultural Analysis of Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood***

<sup>1</sup>Ogbodo, N. K, and Ezeorah, I. P.

<sup>1,2</sup>. Department of Foreign Languages and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

### **Abstract**

In this paper we are exploring the theme of widowhood as it concerns the woman, within the sociocultural context of the Igbo society as portrayed in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*. In this novel, Emecheta portrays, through her protagonist, the struggles faced by women, especially widows, in a patriarchal system that does not only devalue but marginalise them. Through the character of Nnu Ego, Emecheta presents a clear picture of a woman whose worth depends on her being able to give birth to children and maintain familial honour, yet she is increasingly vulnerable following the death of her husband. This narrative shows the knotty marginalisation she suffers: social isolation, economic hardship, including a loss of status within both the family and community. The objective of this paper is to analyse and evaluate the cultural norms which do not only maintain gender inequality, but further show how widowhood often strips women of their identity and security. This analysis shows that widowhood, in addition to being a personal loss, is also a societal condition that is formed by adherence to strict traditions that are powered by colonial influences. In addition to the sociocultural theory, the feminist-postcolonial theoretical framework will also be applied because both the feminist, postcolonial and the sociocultural perspectives enable a multi-layered interpretation of gender, tradition, power, and identity in the novel. In conclusion, this paper illustrates the convergence of gender, tradition, and socio-economic marginalisation of the widow in the Igbo society.

### **Keywords:**

Widowhood, Igbo society, patriarchy, gender roles, African feminism, post- colonialism, sociocultural analysis.

### **Introduction**

Widowhood is one of the most socially significant and emotionally complex experiences, not just in Africa but the world at large. In a lot of contemporary African communities and cultures, widowhood is not seen as just a personal, but a social transformation which comes with specific rituals and prohibitions. For example, in many parts of Nigeria and Ghana, widows are expected to go through mourning rites which sometimes can involve isolation, shaving of hair and wearing of dark or white colours for a period of time. Such practices, which are termed as honouring the dead, often reinforce patriarchal control over and stigmatization of widows, thereby making them feel like bearers of misfortune or spiritual impurity. In contrast, in Western societies, widowhood is seen as a private grieving process with little or no rituals. Rather, greater attention is given to the psychological healing of the widow. Common to these different cultures, however, are the loneliness and financial strain that widows suffer.

In this study, we are focusing on widowhood as it affects the woman among the Igbo society, which is one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Igbo ethnic group is one with a

complex and patriarchal social system where a woman's identity and worth are always determined by her husband and children. In the Igbo society, the death of a husband is not just a personal loss but also a societal event that brings daunting, multifaceted cultural, emotional, and economic challenges. So, the loss of a husband in addition to motherhood, and marital identity, plays an important role in how a woman manoeuvres her social life in the Igbo society after the death of her husband.

Emecheta in her novel: *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) deeply explores widowhood in Igbo society through the character of Nnu Ego, a woman whose life is designed by her intense desire to be a mother in order to meet the numerous expectations placed upon her by the society. Her portrayal of widowhood, and its complex implications within the social fabric of Igbo culture, shows the gendered expectations and oppressive customs that dominate women's lives, especially in the postcolonial era. Emecheta in this novel uses the theme of widowhood to explore the intersection of cultural traditions, gender, and colonialism in shaping the lives of African women.

In traditional Igbo society, widowhood has always been seen as a social condition associated with deep rituals and spiritual practices called cleansing in another word. This process is said to signify that the death of a husband is an event that affects not just the widow but also the extended family and community. Widows, traditionally, are seen as symbols of both continuity and susceptibility within the cultural and social order. The widow is said to have respect for ancestors and maintain family unity when she agrees to go through the cleansing rituals during her mourning period. However, her personality is often limited by patriarchal traditions which put her under the authority of her husband's family, whose male members determine her rights to inheritance, decision-making, and autonomy.

Colonialism brought certain changes, which affect the status of women in the Igbo society. The colonial legal system, with its Western influence, disrupted the communal and kinship-based support structures for widows. It aggravated the marginalisation of women by imposing patriarchal legal frameworks that limited women's rights to own property, inheritance, and even social recognition. Thus, widowhood, which had already been a condition filled with social expectations and rituals, became more complex because of the dual oppression of both traditional and colonial systems. Through the character of Nnu Ego in her struggles after the death of her husband, Emecheta, in *The Joys of Motherhood*, captures the tension between colonial rule and initial traditions.

This paper seeks to examine the sociocultural dimensions and the effects of colonialism on widowhood within the context of the Igbo community as portrayed in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*. It will also analyse the themes of widowhood, gender roles, and social expectations through a feminist and postcolonial lens, showing how Emecheta uses widowhood both as a narrative device to explore the individual suffering of the Igbo woman and as a tool for showing how the woman is oppressed by the larger socio-political forces. By understanding widowhood as a deeply embedded cultural and sociopolitical issue in Igbo society, the paper explores the ways in which colonialism, gender roles, and indigenous customs intersect to create a system of disadvantage and marginalisation for widows in Igbo society

## Literature Review

Before delving into the issue of widowhood in African literature, it will be important to define key terms as understood in this research, such as widowhood, patriarchy, gender roles, colonialism and African feminism. Widowhood is the state of an individual whose spouse has died and who has not remarried. Patriarchy is defined here as a social system where men hold primary power and dominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of properties. Gender roles refer to the socially constructed expectations and behaviours deemed appropriate for individuals based on their perceived sex. These roles dictate how people should act, dress, speak and engage with the world, often reinforcing a binary division between masculine and feminine identities. In the Igbo tradition, gender roles align men with traits such as strength, leadership, rationality and dominance. Women, on the other hand, are associated with nurturance, emotion, submission, beauty, and are often confined to caregiving, homemaking and supporting roles. Gender roles are learnt from early childhood through family, religion, education, media and cultural norms. Colonialism is the establishment and maintenance of control over weaker countries by a powerful country, exploiting them economically, politically and culturally. This control usually involves the settlement of the coloniser's citizens in the territories and the imposition of foreign governance, language, religion and societal norms. Finally, African feminism is a diverse and evolving body of thoughts and activism that centres on the experiences, identities and struggles of African women.

The issue of widowhood in African literature, particularly in the context of Igbo society, has attracted significant scholarly attention due to its exploration of gender roles, cultural norms, and societal expectations. Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) is one of the most prominent works in this genre, offering a powerful critique of the patriarchal structures that shape the lives of women. In the novel, Emecheta centres on the experiences of Nnu Ego, a woman whose life is defined by her role as a mother, and whose widowhood marks a profound turning point in her existence. Scholars have widely acknowledged the novel's feminist approach, which challenges traditional gender roles and highlights the hardships faced by women in patriarchal societies.

Florence Stratton (1994) asserts that Emecheta's portrayal of widowhood reveals the limitations placed on women in both pre-colonial and colonial Igbo society. Stratton argues that Nnu Ego's experiences expose the systemic inequities inherent in the patriarchal society that often relegate women to the status of secondary citizens once they lose their husbands. Similarly, Chikwenye Ogunyemi (1985) emphasises that *The Joys of Motherhood* critiques the intersection of colonialism and indigenous cultural practices, both of which marginalise women and restrict their agency. Through Nnu Ego's life, Emecheta demonstrates the tension between traditional Igbo customs and the colonial structures that further disenfranchise women. Building upon these ideas, scholars like Ifi Amadiume (1987) in her work: *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* and Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo in her work: *The Last of the Strong Ones* (1996) provide a broader sociocultural context by discussing the dual oppression faced by widows in the Igbo society. Amadiume's work on "gender in African societies" stresses that when a woman loses her husband in Igbo land, she loses not just her spouse, but her social and economic standing, too. She asserts that Igbo customs, though often presented as unbiased, subjugate women in the actual sense, especially after the death of a husband, when a widow's rights to inheritance and autonomy are frequently compromised. In the same view, Adimora-Ezeigbo (1996) examines the

colonial legal systems that stripped women of their traditional rights to property and inheritance, fortifying their marginalisation both in the family and the community at large.

Nkiru Nzegwu in her book, *Family matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture* (2006), contextualises Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* by exploring the cultural complexities of widowhood and its social ramifications in Igbo land. Both authors evaluate colonialism and its disruption of indigenous gender relations, which result in the systemic oppression of women. Through Emecheta's narrative, Nzegwu spotlights how widowhood in Igbo society is a sociocultural event that cannot be removed from the wider political and economic forces that shape women's lives. The scholarly agreement on *The Joys of Motherhood* underscores Emecheta's feminist analysis, placing the novel as a key text for understanding the intersections of gender, colonialism, and widowhood. Emecheta's work offers a channel through which to critique the broader issues of women's rights and social justice, not only in Nigeria but within the postcolonial African context. By focusing on widowhood, Emecheta challenges the romanticised notions of motherhood and reveals the deep, sometimes painful, consequences of cultural traditions that reduce women to mere vessels for procreation and social stability. Moreover, *The Joys of Motherhood* has been analysed by scholars such as Nwando Achebe (2005), who contends that Emecheta's portrayal of widowhood in Igbo culture serves as a critique of the idealised notions of motherhood and womanhood that are imposed upon women. Achebe argues that Nnu Ego's experiences challenge the idea that motherhood is a woman's sole path to fulfillment, exposing how this notion, in conjunction with widowhood, leads to social and emotional suffering. Achebe's analysis complements Emecheta's critique of societal expectations that women's identities are tied exclusively to their roles as mothers and wives.

Caroline L. A. Quarcoopome (1999) explains widowhood in Igbo culture by examining the symbolic significance of widows within African traditional societies. She explains that widows, in precolonial Igbo society, were not just passive victims but often played active roles in rituals and spiritual life. However, colonialism, with its restructuring of social roles, limited these opportunities, confining widows to a more subordinate role. In this point of view, Emecheta's narrative challenges the view that widowhood is inherently synonymous with social death; rather, she highlights Nnu Ego's experience as a fight for survival and dignity. Scholars such as Nkiru Nzegwu (2006) and Obioma Nnaemeka (2004) have also expanded on Emecheta's treatment of widowhood, focusing on how cultural and historical forces shape women's roles within Igbo society. Nzegwu suggests that colonialism did not merely impose external structures on women, but also redefined the very nature of widowhood and its societal implications. Pre-colonial Igbo society, while hierarchical, allowed for relative gender equality within the family structure, with women participating in decision-making and holding influential roles in rituals and economics. However, the arrival of colonialism imposed new laws that marginalised women and redefined their roles, rendering widowhood a condition that stripped women of their former status and rights. One of such major new laws was the displacement from political power. Traditional African societies often had dual sex systems of governance where women participated in decision-making through institutions like umuada in Igbo land, queen mothers among the Ashanti and female chiefs in various other ethnic groups. The colonial administrators imposed male-centred governance models, recognizing only male chiefs and excluding women from leadership and judicial roles. Land and property rights were another of such new laws. In many pre-colonial societies, women had access to land through family or communal arrangements. Colonial legal systems replaced customary land tenure with formal land registration, often in men's names only. This denied women ownership and control over land,

which was crucial for their economic survival. The third law of importance here has to do with marriage and inheritance. Colonial courts often enforced imported European marriage codes, such as the Christian marriage ordinance, which prioritised monogamy and male headship of households. Customary practices which protected widows or allowed for female husbandry were criminalised or ignored. Women's inheritance rights were severely restricted, leaving them economically vulnerable upon the death of their husbands.

Nzegwu's work is critical in understanding how the intersection of colonialism and patriarchy led to the erosion of pre-existing systems of gender balance and empowerment for women. Obioma Nnaemeka (2004) expands on Nzegwu's ideas by focusing on the resilience of women in postcolonial African societies. Nnaemeka underscores points out that while colonial forces attempted to impose hegemonic patriarchal norms, African women, as portrayed in Emecheta's novel, often subvert and challenge these structures. She argues that the role of widows in the Igbo culture is symbolic of resistance; despite the various challenges they face, widows, like Nnu Ego, continue to assert their agency within a society that seeks to suppress them. Through her detailed portrayal of Nnu Ego's character, Emecheta gives voice to the complex negotiation between tradition and change, illustrating that widowhood does not equate with social death but rather with a reconfiguration of one's identity within a shifting cultural landscape.

Applying African feminist theory, Ama Ata Aidoo (1996) and Amina Mama (1995) explain widowhood as an issue of economic disenfranchisement. Aidoo's work on African women's literature maintains that the economic independence of women is crucial in understanding their empowerment, and widowhood often results in women's economic dependency, leaving them vulnerable. Emecheta's presentation of Nnu Ego's financial struggles after her husband's death reflects this concern, showing vividly how widowhood degrades women's status to dependency, making them rely on the goodwill of their families or the broader community. Mama (1995) similarly asserts that the economic disenfranchisement of women, particularly widows, is a significant facet of African patriarchy that is often overlooked in the discussion of gender relations.

In addition to these feminist perspectives, Robert Reid-Pharr (1999) argues that Emecheta's work functions as a commentary on the racialised nature of gender oppression within colonial societies. Reid-Pharr suggests that, in addition to being gendered, widowhood for African women like Nnu Ego is compounded by their racial identity, making their struggles even more marginalised in the broader context of postcolonial Nigerian society. This intersection of race and gender provides a richer understanding of Emecheta's critique of colonialism, as it acknowledges the complex and numerous disadvantages that women suffer in the face of both racial and gender oppression.

Finally, Caroline L. A. Quarcoopome (1999) and Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza (2009) provide insights into the sociocultural dimensions of widowhood in African traditional societies. Quarcoopome (1999) notes that widowhood in many African cultures, including Igbo society, was traditionally associated with ritualistic and spiritual significance. Widows were often involved in rituals of mourning, and their experiences were viewed as essential to the continuity of family and community life. However, colonialism and its legal systems redefined these traditional roles, reducing widows to figures of pity and social isolation. Emecheta's novel, through Nnu Ego's painful experience, highlights how these ritual roles were displaced by the legal and economic imperatives of colonialism, deepening the vulnerability of widows. By analysing these various views of widowhood, it becomes



obvious that, Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* functions not only as a personal narrative but as a broader social commentary on the oppression of women in postcolonial African society. Emecheta uses widowhood as a powerful metaphor for the stifling of women's voices and autonomy, with emphasis on the socio-political structures that render women vulnerable once they are no longer married. By positioning widowhood as both a personal and collective struggle, she examines the gendered social systems that limit women's opportunities for agency and self-fulfilment.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In order to be able to thoroughly analyse the sociocultural dimensions of widowhood in Igbo society as portrayed in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, the feminist-postcolonial theoretical framework will be applied. This is because both the feminist and postcolonial perspectives enable a multi-layered interpretation of gender, tradition, power, and identity in the novel. The novel throws more light on understanding how widowhood is socially constructed, culturally enforced, and historically transformed under the influence of patriarchy and colonialism.

### **African Feminism and Gender Theory**

African feminist theory, emphasises the need to situate the analysis of African women's experiences within the cultural, social, and historical specificities of the continent. African feminism challenges Western feminist paradigms that often homogenise the female experience and ignore local realities. Nnaemeka (2004) in her article, "Negro-Feminism: Theorising, Practising and Pruning Africa's Way" and Ogundipe-Leslie (1994), in her book: *Recreating ourselves, Africa, Woman and Critical Transformation*, advocate for a contextualised approach that recognises the African woman's special battles with colonial legacies, traditional gender roles, economic exploitation, and social expectations. The African feminist view x-rays widowhood not merely as a personal or familial event but as a gendered institution, a system that reinforces male dominance and female subordination through cultural practices, such as mourning rituals, inheritance laws, and family loyalty norms. Buchi Emecheta, in her feminist narrative style, deconstructs the idea of motherhood and wifehood as paths to female fulfillment. Through Nnu Ego, she critiques how these culturally idealised roles often mask deeper structures of oppression. African feminism provides the critical framework for unpacking these contradictions, celebrated roles that, in practice, result in pain, sacrifice, and marginalisation, especially after the death of a spouse. Emecheta [195]

### **Postcolonial Theory**

The British colonial administration imposed new political and economic systems on Nigeria and also disrupted indigenous institutions, such as kinship systems, property rights, and gender norms. For widows in particular, colonial policies that prioritised Western-style inheritance laws systematically displaced traditional forms of female social support, further marginalising women. One of such a female social support was the umuada system. In the precolonial era, the umuada was a powerful group of women born into a particular lineage or village, irrespective of where they were married to. They acted as moral watchdogs and peace keepers. For instance, the umuada could summon meetings to discuss problems of the community, especially as they concern the women. Furthermore, they could impose fines or even banish individuals (both male and female) who violated communal norms. Above all, the umuada ensured that the interests of women and the sanctity of the family were protected

(Amadiume, 1987). The umuada often supported widows and their children. The postcolonial lens is essential in examining how Nnu Ego's widowhood is shaped by more than just Igbo customs. It is equally shaped by the intrusion of colonial modernity—a world where African women are doubly colonised: first by patriarchy and second by imperialism. As Spivak (1988) famously argues in *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, the colonised woman occupies the most silent position in colonial discourse. Emecheta counters this silence by giving voice to Nnu Ego's suffering, survival, and silent resistance.

Postcolonial theory also helps contextualise the contradictions present in urban life in Lagos, where Nnu Ego experiences both economic hardship and cultural dislocation. Unlike her hometown of Ibuza, where widowhood rituals are rigid but predictable, the colonial city offers no communal protection. This shift exemplifies what Homi Bhabha [2024] calls the “hybrid space” of postcolonial existence, a space where identities are fractured, and traditional roles lose their meaning. Widowhood, in this context, becomes a space of existential alienation and symbolic erasure. Emecheta [205]

### **Sociocultural Theory**

In this analysis, we are also applying the sociocultural theory, as articulated in African anthropological literature by Ifi Amadiume's *Male Daughters Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (1987) and Nkiru Nzegwu's *Family Matters: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture* (2006). This theory posits that gender roles and social practices are not static but are constructed and reconstructed through social interaction, belief systems, and cultural narratives. Widowhood in Igbo society, as revealed through Emecheta's narrative, is not a mere personal tragedy, it is a socially regulated identity status that imposes specific roles, expectations, and limitations on women.

Amadiume's concept of “female masculinity” and the fluidity of gender roles in precolonial Igbo society challenges the assumption that women were always subordinate. In fact, before colonialism, widows and elderly women could attain considerable power and authority in their households and communities. However, as Nzegwu and Amadiume argue, colonial laws formalised male dominance and erased female social agency. *The Joys of Motherhood* illustrates this erasure through Nnu Ego's descent into poverty and isolation after her husband's death, despite her having fulfilled the highest ideals of womanhood—marriage and motherhood (Emecheta, 207). Sociocultural theory thus aids in understanding how widowhood functions as a liminal state, a transition between social inclusion and exclusion, respect and invisibility, life and symbolic death. The treatment of widows in the novel is not random but systematically embedded in the social fabric of postcolonial Nigeria.

### **Analysis**

*The Joys of Motherhood* is an example of Buchi Emecheta's feminist critiques of the societal expectations placed on women. She presents Nnu Ego, a woman whose utmost desire is to become a mother in a society where motherhood is regarded as a woman's ultimate fulfillment. Her longing for motherhood, however, becomes intertwined with the harsh realities of widowhood, as she experiences the hardships of losing her husband and facing the social, emotional, and economic challenges that follow. Through Nnu Ego's journey, Emecheta examines both the traditional patriarchal expectations placed on women and the wider societal pressures that define a woman's value based on her ability to reproduce and maintain familial honour. Nnu Ego's experiences compel readers to confront the ways in

which widowhood is shaped by these cultural expectations and how such expectations limit a woman's freedom, agency, and social mobility.

Emecheta's feminist critique is based on her ability to show the complexities of womanhood in a postcolonial African context, where gender roles are greatly influenced by both traditional customs and colonial influences. While the colonial state sought to impose Western values of marriage, family, and gender, Emecheta suggests that the traditional Igbo society was already entrenched in its own set of gender expectations that placed women in submissive roles. In this context, widowhood becomes more than a personal loss, it is a reflection of the broader gender inequalities that women face within their families, communities, and the nation at large. Emecheta's feminist perspective confronts and condemns the glorification of motherhood as the defining factor of a woman's identity. Nnu Ego's experience reveals that motherhood, though celebrated, is also a burden: one that isolates women, limits their opportunities for personal development, and strengthens gender inequality. The novel examines not only the cultural and societal pressures that define women's roles but also the economic structures that force women into dependency and vulnerability. Through Nnu Ego's character, Emecheta calls attention to the ways in which traditional gender expectations intersect with colonial structures to further oppress not only widows but women in general.

### **Postcolonial Context and the Marginalisation of Widows**

The impact of colonialism on Igbo women cannot be overemphasised. During the colonial rule, Western legal systems and cultural norms were introduced and this disrupted indigenous practices that offered some level of autonomy to women, particularly in matters relating to inheritance and property rights. The colonial imposition of male-dominated legal systems stripped widows of their traditional rights, leaving them economically vulnerable and socially marginalized.

Emecheta's novel explores the compounded impact of colonialism on Nnu Ego's life after the death of her husband. Her experiences reflect the harsh realities faced by many women in postcolonial African societies who were caught between the remnants of traditional gender roles and the newly imposed colonial structures that prioritised male authority and ownership. By using widowhood as a central theme, Emecheta highlights how colonialism exacerbated the marginalisation of widows and, women in general. The loss of a husband, which traditionally held deep social and cultural meaning, now resulted in social exclusion, economic deprivation, and loss of status.

Through her presentation of widowhood, Emecheta examines both the social systems that oppress women and the wider historical forces: colonialism and patriarchy, which design the lives of women. By concentrating on Nnu Ego's experience, she gives an insight into how both indigenous cultural expectations and colonial interventions created a system where women are relegated to the background, reliant on male relatives or the community for survival.

In summary, this paper's theoretical framework draws from African feminism, postcolonial theory, sociocultural anthropology, and intersectionality to explore widowhood as portrayed in *The Joys of Motherhood*. These theoretical tools help to unpack the cultural, historical, and ideological layers that shape women's experiences in the Igbo society, especially after the loss of their husbands. Through this lens, Buchi Emecheta's novel becomes a critical text that



not only narrates personal tragedy but also critiques systemic injustice, offering an invaluable contribution to feminist and postcolonial literature.

## Conclusion

Illustrating the convergence of gender, tradition, and socio-economic marginalisation, Emecheta presents, through the character of Nnu Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood*, a distressing but sensitive portrait of widowhood in Igbo land. Through the character's descent into symbolic and material annihilation after the death of her husband, Emecheta exposes the harsh realities of widowhood, where loss is not only emotional but deeply structural. In this novel, in addition to recounting one woman's ordeals, she exposes the culturally sanctioned mechanisms that render women invisible after their spouses die.

Widowhood, in this context, though a period of mourning, becomes also a socially defined state of transition, marked by disenfranchisement, poverty, and ritual subjugation. This analysis has shown through feminist post-colonial and socio-cultural lenses that these experiences are not isolated, but are symptomatic of broader systemic issues embedded in both indigenous customs and colonial legacies. Igbo traditions that once provided communal support for widows have been reshaped by colonial legal systems, weakening the position of women and institutionalising gendered injustices.

It is necessary to note that Emecheta's work also offers a feminist intervention, a call to critique, rethink, and resist oppressive cultural norms. By giving voice to the silenced and agency to the forgotten, she challenges readers to confront the structural roots of gender inequality. *The Joys of Motherhood*, therefore, is not just a novel about motherhood or suffering, but a powerful critique of the social frameworks that define and confine African womanhood, especially in widowhood.

In conclusion, *The Joys of Motherhood* is not merely a narrative about a woman's life but a poignant critique of the patriarchal structures that govern Igbo society and, by extension, postcolonial African societies. The reviewed literature on the novel emphasises the importance of understanding widowhood as a multifaceted issue shaped by both indigenous practices and colonial interventions, and underscores the need for a broader conversation about gender equality and women's empowerment in contemporary African societies.

## References

- Achebe, N. (2005). *Farmers, traders, warriors and kings: Female power and authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960, Social History of Africa*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Adimora-Ezeigbo, A. (1996). *The Last of the Strong Ones*. Lagos: Vista Books.
- Afigbo, A. E. (1981). *Ropes of sand: Studies in Igbo history and culture*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
- Aidoo, A.A. (2006) *African Love Stories: An Anthology* Banbury: Ayerbia Clarke Publishing.
- Amadiume, I. (1987). *Male daughters, female husbands: Gender and sex in an African society*. London: Zed Books.

Chukwuma, H. (2004). *Woman, the state and the family in Nigeria*. In H. Chukwuma (Ed.), *Feminism in African literature: Essays on criticism* (pp. 103–121). Enugu: New Generation Books.

Emecheta, B. (1979). *The Joys of Motherhood*. London: Allison & Busby.

Mama, A. (1995). *Beyond the Masks: Race, Gender, and Subjectivity*. London: Routledge.

Nannyonga-Tamusuza, S. (2009) “Female-men, male-women, and others: Constructing and negotiating gender among the Bangada of Uganda”. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*. Vol. 3. Issue 2., 367- 380, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531050902973004>

Nnaemeka, O. (2004). “Negro-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing, and Pruning Africa’s Way”. *Chicago Journals*. Vol.29 No.2. University of Chicago Press. URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/378553>

Nzegwu, N. (2006). *Family matters: Feminist concepts in African philosophy of culture*. SUNY Press.

Ogundipe-Leslie, M. (1994). *Re-creating ourselves: African women & critical transformations*. Africa World Press.

Ogunyemi, C. (1985). Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol 11 N0.1. DOI: 0097-9740/1101-002501.00. University of Chicago press

Okeke, P. (2000). *Gender and power in African contexts*. African Gender Institute.

Oluwole, S. (2001). *Sociology and African feminist thought*. In O. Oyěwùmí (Ed.), *African women and feminism: Reflecting on the politics of sisterhood* (pp. 145–163). Africa World Press.

Reid-Pharr, R. (1999). *Black Gay Man, Series: Sexual Cultures*. New York University [NYU] Press.

Spivak, G. C. (1988). *Can the subaltern speak?* In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.

Stratton, F. (1994). *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*. ISBN9780415097710. London: Routledge (Taylor and Francis Group).

Uchendu, V. C. (1965). *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Umeh, M. (1996). *Buchi Emecheta and the African literary tradition*. In M. Umeh (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives on Buchi Emecheta* (pp. 1–14). Africa World Press.

Walker, A. (1983). *In search of our mothers’ gardens: Womanist prose*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.