

Following his concept of “pragmatic criticism” Ezenwa-Ohaeto delineates the contours of recent Nigerian prose writing. With the thematic categories of the literary representations of political, military or social power, the representation of gender issues and the images of childhood, he establishes the major concerns of recent Nigerian fiction. Ezenwa-Ohaeto thus manages to cast new light on the social and political relevance of literary production by looking at it from a different angle. While a literary historical approach documents the development and growth of the literary landscape, Ezenwa-Ohaeto’s emphasis on biographic and thematic research foregrounds the intentionalities of the different authors and the potential for social and cultural change through literary interventions. Literary and cultural production as an active and progressive force shows the socially stagnant Nigeria under the various military regimes in a different and more positive light.

Ezenwa-Ohaeto (1958–2005) was one of Nigeria’s most prolific poets and critics. When he died of cancer in Cambridge, where he was appointed Distinguished Research Fellow at the Centre of African Studies, his revisions of the manuscript of *Subject, Context and the Contours of Nigerian Fiction* were still under way. The current book is an attempt to complement posthumously Ezenwa-Ohaeto’s oeuvre as a kind of critical legacy for the appreciation of the colleagues in African and Nigerian literary studies.