

Abstract

This article reads Kenyan novels that catalogue the trauma of the Luo veterans of World War I and II. The focus is on Grace Ogot's *The Promised Land* (1966), Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* (1994), Marjorie Macgoye's *The Present Moment* (1987), and Yvonne Owuor's *Dust* (2013). Unlike Kenyan male authors who strategically extract revolutionary figures from the world wars, the women novelists' reimagination of the veterans underscores cultural trauma as they dwell on calamity and its long-term psychosocial effects more than imagined aftermath revolutions against imperial systems such as colonialism. This presents rare perspectives of narrativizing war through acknowledgement of defeat as definitive of a postcolonial ethnic group's identity. The novels register the world wars' trauma on the community when their sons were enlisted, sacrificed in large numbers or returned as wrecks of the war. A focus on the Lake Victoria Basin experiences of the world wars is significant since it is the region that contributed the largest number of world war veterans and arguably the most affected in the history of the world wars in East Africa. By exploring how the selected novels monumentalise the otherwise unacknowledged casualties of the veterans, I evoke reconnections with a past replete with incomprehensible imperial violence.