

Fictional Reflections on War and Sexual Violence in Contemporary African Fiction

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The humanitarian and traumatic toll of children casualties arising out of the recent armed conflicts on the African continent is estimated in the excess of 300,000. This is either as direct armed combatants or auxiliary participants in form of porters, spies and sexual partners to the combatants. Given the fact that rape as a form of sexual violation is used as a weapon of war, its impact on the lives of children is not only traumatic, but also raises questions of subverted sexuality that violates both the bodies of children and the ideal construction of childhood as a space characterised by innocence. In this paper, I investigate Uzodinwa Iweala, Ahmadou Kourouma and Julius Ocwinyo's depictions of child victims of sexual violation within contexts of war and violence in Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Uganda respectively. The respective children: Agu in *Beasts of No Nation*, Birahima in *Allah is not Obligated* and Apire in *Fate of the Banished* find ways of living with sexual violation, subvert it to enable them survive, but they are nevertheless irrevocably damaged by the exposure to inappropriate and damaging sexual experiences. In this sense, I argue that the three texts as cultural products not only construct subject formations of childhood in contexts of war but, by foregrounding traumatisations through sexuality, bring the issue to public discourse as a way of dealing with such debilitating trauma in African childhoods.