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HORROR AND TERROR IN ISHMAEL BEAH'S A LONG WAY GONE: MEMOIR OF A BOY SOLDIER

Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English in Partial
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree

Candidates:

Ms. Sabrina MIHOUBI

Mr. Bouhali BOUSHAREB

Supervisor:

Mr. Bachir SAHED

2020

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2020

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that except where due acknowledgement is made; this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted previously.

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An indescribable feeling, we hold towards our precious friends and classmates who made the years turn to moments of joy and happiness, the best companions for the best days.

Last but not least, we thank our families who stood by our sides at all times.

DEDICATION

To my blue, my lighthouse, and the love of my life. My mother.

To my kindest, lovable, caring father.

To all.

SABRINE

DEDICATION

To my precious parents, who supported me all these years.

To my brothers and sisters

To my friends and those who touched my heart

I dedicate this work

BOUHAREB

ABSTRACT

The present study examines of Ishmael Beah's autobiography, entitled *A Long way Gone: Memoir of a Boy Soldier*. It is a psychological scrutiny of the brutality of war and its repercussions on the development of the children's sense of morality. Using the Freudian theories to examine the memoir resulted in discovering the concepts of latency, melancholia, and mourning. Furthermore, a thorough investigation of this phenomenon induces that the availability of children as a cheap alternative to adult soldiers was one of the reasons behind child recruitment. On the other hand, Beah encourages children and adults alike to engage in the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration (DDR) programs which aim to reintegrate children into their societies and reunite them with their families.

Keywords: latency, melancholia, mourning, DDR, child soldiers

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INTRODUCTION

Since the turn of the century, wars have erupted in all regions across the globe and continued to haunt both civilians and warriors. War knows no mercy; even children have met their demise at its hands. Yet, even across the most primitive cultures, children were not a part of the war, but merely victims of it. That was all true until children were dragged into adults' constant clash as worthy contenders.

Child soldiering has begun way back and continued, rather, increased by the passing of time. Today, Thousands of child soldiers are fighting ruthlessly around various parts of the world. These children at the age of six or younger undergo abduction, torture, and indoctrination to create blood thirsty killing machines, forcibly taken away from their homes. It has become the most distressing endless episode of exploitation against children, who are exposed to horrific experiences, varying from torture, regular beatings, unreasonably severe punishment, physical and/ or sexual abuse, ill-treatment, forced intake of alcohol and drugs, inadequate living conditions, and nerve wrecking situations. Furthermore, they are constantly asked to harm other younger children or family members in a ritual to eliminate their fear and be braver.

Child soldiers' phenomenon is not infrequent, nor is a new trending feature of contemporary wars. Children were used in the two world wars and later in most conflicts that started after. Most child soldiers are in Africa, and this dates back to the end of the Cold War when both the USA and the USSR cut their support and funding of the internal conflict of Africa. Recruitment of expensive unavailable adult soldiers hindered the

continuity of the war, and children seemed like the perfect alternative. Billions of children have been killed since then.

Although, this area of research has known many contributions from different scholars and researchers, however, the connecting points between all previous researches were missing. This research paper aspires to bring those points together to their completion. The focus of this study interconnects the previous researches into one category, regardless, the aim is one, which, is the protection of children. Thus, it is a primary concern to reach as many people as possible to spread awareness about the gruesome treatment, children have to endure and how they go by every day in wartime.

In his book, *A Long Way Gone: Memoir of a Boy Soldier* (2007), Ishmael Beah is faced with a hallow reality of fragile human bonds, that collapse with the break of the war, to leave him on his own, swinging between survival and humanity, and between hope and despair. The resurrection of the ruthless crisis of the Sierra Leonean civil conflict, through the mind of a thirteen-year-old soldier, has brought down the very perspective of human race into disarray.

After bearing witness to the gruesome civil war in Sierra Leone which lasted more than a decade, Beah, in his book, illustrates the constant oppression he and other child soldiers undergone at the mercy of the armed group, leaving permanent scars on both their bodies and souls. Using Sigmund Freud's theories as a reference, a thorough evaluation is conducted on the psychological impact of war on children by demonstrating the various post-traumatic scars that appeared on former soldiers.

These symptoms include some if not all of the following: post-traumatic-stress-disorder, severe nightmares, constant flashbacks, social anxiety, severe major depression and the list is long. The study also shows that the constant violence and abuse in which the children grew up into and got accustomed to contribute significantly to their adult's behaviour and increases the probability of their criminal tendencies. In short, former child soldiers are most likely to become the future warlords, militia and genocide perpetrators.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to establish a ground for understanding, about the harrowing fallout of war and inhumanity. In particular, the psychological, emotional, and physical consequences of this alien experience on children. unravelling the indoctrination and uprooting strategies used to engage under-aged soldiers in a massively savage environment.

On the other side, there are several attempts to bring those children back to the civilized world by re-integrating them into society. Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration (DDR) programs aim to help children find the way back to their families and communities which were disrupted by the war and furthermore to prevent future recruitment of children. The research aspires to highlight the post-traumatic life of these children when exposed to new society. Furthermore, it aims to primarily determine the reasons for child recruitment into conflicts.

The study focuses on young soldiers who are dismissed of service. Therefore, It proves difficult to determine the aftereffect of a continuous exposure to military life. Likewise, this paper also demonstrates the changing identity of child soldiers from innocent civilians to perpetrators of violence. Lastly, the ultimate aim of this paper is

shed the light on the phenomenon of child soldiering while highlighting the significant consequences of war on children's moral and physical development.

The world is living in constant blindness towards each other that continuously separate and destroy its bonds. Ishmael Beah fights for this hope and dedicates himself and his life for this purpose. Hence, this research paper will answer the following main question: How does Ishmael Beah, as a former child soldier, illustrate the influence of war and its brutality on the development of his sense of morality, as well as his relationship with associated people during and after the Sierra Leonean crisis? It will also attempt to answer the following sub-questions: What kind of methods used by the military and/or the rebels to brainwash children into believing in the cause? How does Ishmael Beah successfully embody within his work the brutality of war impact on children's mindset and the development of their personality through their experiences? In what pattern does Ishmael symbolize the horrific reality of war crimes creating a mold for horror and terror?

The first chapter undertakes a study of the main concepts of this research. The first concept is the horror in both literature and psychology. The second concept is terror, and lastly, a debate on the definition of a child soldier. Understandably, it is not quite easy to define what a child soldier is due to the fact that in some countries, a child who goes through certain rituals in order to enter adulthood is no longer a child. These rituals may start at the age of fifteen or less. "As an adult once he or she has completed the culturally scripted initiation ceremony or rite of passage into manhood or womanhood" (Wessells qtd in Anthonissen 39) In addition to that, the chapter will tackle the use of death in literature to depict horror and loss of innocence. Finally, it will discuss the

psychological impact of war on the mental and moral development of its victims. Due to the constant exposure to violence, children find themselves between the options of surviving at the cost of harming others, or getting killed themselves. “The rebels told me to join them, but I said no. Then they killed my smaller brother. I changed my mind.” - Former child soldier, age 7 (Singer qtd in Breazeale 2) .

On the other side, the second chapter attempts to determine the reasons behind using children instead of adults in war. According to an interview that dates back to 2007, a senior Chadian National Army officer declared that, under the argument: “because they don’t complain, they don’t expect to be paid, and if you tell them to kill, they kill.” (qtd in Jonasen 4). The chapter also highlights the analysis of the memoir of Ishmael Beah. Employing the visual and verbal metaphors to construct an image of the oppression on child soldiers generally and on the psychological journey of Ishmael Beah specifically. Beah reveals that the armed group used indoctrination as a means to control children and driving them into fighting. “Over and over in our training he would say the same sentence: Visualize the enemy, the rebels who killed your parents, your family, and those who are responsible for everything that has happened to you” (Beah 138). The second part will discuss the theme of the changing identity of children from innocent civilians to perpetrators of violence throughout the war. utilizing, again, Ishmael’s memoir as a case study. Finally, it will observe the process of re-integration of former child soldiers into their communities and families, while referring to the various hindrances that stops these programs from fully functioning.

At last, the study will conclude with the coalition to demand mitigation at sentencing former child soldiers to reduce their penalties and introduce a better world for

these victim-perpetrators hybrids. This explanatory research was conducted in order to establish a ground for understanding the causes and effects of war on children's ability, to develop a sense of morality, and to maintain relationships on the long-term goals. By seeking a precise conclusion on the long-lasting ramifications of the exotic experience of being part of an armed conflict.

Using the data collected, from the autobiography of Ishmael Beah, as a primary source to this research, the psychoanalytical method was applied to get acquainted with the phenomenon of child soldiering and its consequences. This research is based on the significant theories of professor Sigmund Freud. In an attempt to interpret the thirteen-year-old psychological state of Ishmael Beah and his countermeasures used to survive. In favour of attaining to this aim, a set of statistics were analysed using data gathered from secondary sources as part of this research, in which the quantitative method was referred to.

CHAPTER ONE

SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The only recognition of human life since the turn of the century has been the incapacity to exist in harmony. Most of history is filled with bloodshed, chaos, and tragedy. That alters not only the lives of those involved, but innocent civilians, women, and mostly children.

Child soldiers were heavily immersed in contemporary African warfare. The child soldier figure is most often interpreted as proof of the savagery, inhumanity, and mental anguish induced by modern conflicts. These images may conceal the obscure reality of the children's encounters while being part of the armed groups. This chapter utilizes the published memoirs of former child soldiers from different regions, to explore the correlation between child soldiers, memory, violence, and humanitarianism. It assesses how former child soldiers recall and cope with their traumatic experiences during the time of conflicts, and how their memoirs navigate through the realities of war and human survival instincts all to recount their ordeal as a therapeutic framing. All the while analysing the documentation of the recruitment, indoctrination, violence, and lastly rehabilitation and reintegration processes. In which the children shift from the label of victims to being campaigners, forming their identities in a post-conflict environment.

Ishmael Beah and Emmanuel Jal are the most popular among the sub-genre of child soldiers' narratives. Beah was forcefully engaged in the Sierra Leonean civil war. Later he was evacuated into a UNICEF rehabilitation centre in Freetown before leaving

for the united states of America. Beah has become an acclaimed bestseller. The published biographies of the former child combatants can be productive tools in providing a detailed and precise insight into African warfare and the brutality of life during wartime.

This chapter aims to evaluate the realities of these texts by recounting experiences of induction, indoctrination, battle experience, and efforts by their authors to rebalance their identities in a post-conflict setting. “I tried not to believe that I too was dying, slowly, on my way to find safety” (Beah 90). The horror and terror depicted in the former child soldiers’ memoirs serve as a reminder to all humanity that child soldiers are a crisis that needs utmost attention and concern of the world.

Dread loops in one’s stomach and grasps at their hearts. It is an upsetting emotion people for the most part put forth a valiant effort to maintain a strategic distance from. Horror is defined as a morbid sensation that arises whenever individuals are put under threatening events. Horror can trigger the fight-or-flight response, which comes with a boost in Adrenaline, Endorphins, and Dopamine. Freud linked the experience of horror to that of the uncanny which is the psychological experience of something as strangely familiar, rather than simply mysterious.

Horror is likewise notable in the field of literature. The genre of literary horror has ancient roots in mythology and theological beliefs, with an emphasis on death, rebirth, darkness, supernatural, and the concept of the person’s embodied object. These were manifested in stories of beings such as demons, witches, vampires, werewolves, and phantoms. The horror genre is intended to terrify, alarm, sicken, or startle its readers by

prompting sentiments of repulsiveness and dread. By all means, horror is the feeling of revulsion that usually follows a frightening sight, sound, or otherwise experience.

Horror is more related to being shocked or scared at an awful realization or a deeply unpleasant occurrence. The term's definition emphasizes the reaction caused by horror, and Edgar Alan Poe is one of literature's greatest Gothic horror story writers.

The gruesome twentieth century has witnessed the brutal reality of terror, and proved once again, that the widening gyre keeps on turning towards the unknown. Terror is easier to define than terrorism. In the narrow sense, it is generally portrayed as the sentiment of fear and expectation that precedes the sickening experience. By the same token, it is related to being anxious or fearful. Terror is distinguished by its uncertainty and indeterminacy in its handling of extremely horrific occurrences, something that contributes to the sublime. Terror is about the instant of a tension of horror before the real beast is uncovered. The new Terror scale has become a well-acknowledged power in determining how the world operates, in the political sense, terror is defined as the unauthorized use of force or violence against people, or assets to demoralize or manipulate a government, innocent civilians, or any segment of either in the pursuit of social or political goals.

The difference between Terror and Horror is the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realization, Horror is considered as a combination of terror and revulsion. All in all, horror and terror are overwhelming concerns that people often make a serious attempt to hold a tactical gap from. Fear can be so overwhelming that

one's decisions all depend on it, this is what the Sierra Leonean writer Ishmael Beah had to undergo during his lifetime in his home country.

1. Ishmael Beah's Formative Years

Men live through experience and are moulded by their encounters; they grasp the overall meaning and purpose of their existence. Beah was once an innocent child interested in rap music, born to a Muslim family in Sierra Leone in 1980. He grew up in a rather complicated family relationship due to the divorce of his parents. Nonetheless, Ishmael's early childhood had known peace. Yet, the tranquillity was disrupted by the civil conflict in Sierra Leone.

At the age of thirteen, Ishmael had to survive the ferocious everyday life of a child soldier. Subsequently, all the killings he had to do were concluded by the age of fifteen, when he was rescued by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), where he was adopted later by Laura Simms and moved to New York to start his new life in 1998. He graduated from UNICEF school and Oberlin University. Ishmael did not merely fold that part of his past as a distant memory, but rather, all the gruesome moments he had to go through were his fuel to stubbornly stand up for other kids like himself. He was appointed by the UNICEF as the first advocate for children affected by war in 2007; furthermore, he represented Sierra Leone at the United Nations First International Children's Parliament.

Ishmael undoubtedly aimed higher with his determination and officially joined the human rights watch; Children rights division advisory committee. All lead to the establishment of his foundation, named after him, which is dedicated to helping former

child soldiers find new lives and re-integrate into society. Today, Ishmael Beah continues to live for his dreams and a hopeful future as well as introducing his ideas to the world through his writings. His literary contributions continue to inspire millions and reach more throughout the globe; his recent works; *Little Family*, and *Radiance of Tomorrow* have won worldwide acknowledgment. Together with his most famous work entitled *A long Way Gone: Memoir of a Boy Soldier*. Written in the form of an autobiography, in which he thoroughly described the savagery of war.

There were all kinds of rumours going around about war that it seemed to be happening in a distant and foreign land, it was not until refugees began to swarm the next villages including that of Ishmael. Upon leaving his hometown of 'Mogbwemo' for a talent show in the neighbouring area, the rebels hit, tore down, and destroyed his home. Amid the chaos, and turmoil of the fighting, Ishmael, his elder brother Junior, and their companions roam from town to town in pursuit of food and shelter. Their everyday life is a battle for survival, and the boys find themselves committing acts they should never have deemed themselves capable of. Ironically, Ishmael is conscripted into the armed forces as a soldier, and he becomes the very thing he dreads, a death tool. Capable of executing horrific brutality.

Under the impression of avenging their own families, the boys become addicted to cocaine, marijuana, and "brown brown," which grants them the determination and strength to fight and the ability to suppress their emotions at times of war. It was not until the boys were rescued by 'UNICEF' and taken to a rehabilitation center, where they slowly begin to overcome their experiences and learn to share their stories with the world. Ishmael is embraced by his relatives in Freetown and is rescued once again by

their love and compassion. While in Freetown, the rebels hit once again and the war Ishmael tried to avoid besieges him. Following his uncle's death, Ishmael flees Sierra Leone for the neighbouring Guinea and soon finds his way to his new life in the United States. The conflicts between the rebels of 'RUF' and the government of Sierra Leone continues until the year 2002.

2. Death as a Figure to Depict Horror in Literature

Death is equally the other face of life. People handle it from various perspectives. They fear and exaggerate death. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman argues that while death is the most trustworthy experience in human life, it remains inexplicable and unknown. (Hakola and Kivistö 6) It is also notable that death has played a major part in shaping how people live their lives. The awareness of the concept of the ending of life may thus lead them to structure their lives in a meaningful way.

Likewise, death also takes a great share in literature; it provokes its readers to face the unknown. Thereafter, it existed in literary works as a major theme for a long time. The stories also use death in their narrations to create emotional effects, plot twists, suspense, and mysteries. Even in ancient literature, authors employed death as a theme to elicit an emotional response in the reader or the audience. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the ancient epic of Mesopotamia, death is seemingly portrayed through social ties, reacting to the demise of the loved ones and war. As Gilgamesh grows to love Enkidu, the latter passes away, leaving the reader with Gilgamesh's thoughts and response to his friend's passing. But even more importantly, death and storytelling seem to have a fundamental and existential connection.

The literature may offer a means to perceive and visualize death from various viewpoints. Moreover, literary descriptions of death are not solely concerned with the tragic scene of dying or individual loss, but the notion of death can be understood further as a metaphor for many social issues. Through later periods of literature all over the world, authors have continued to use death as a major theme, symbolically, metaphorically, and physically. Evident in such works, is William Shakespeare, who is probably unparalleled in his capacity to evoke a whole range of spectrum of human sentiments regarding death. He employs the death theme in his plays in various ways as well, from the self-destructive Ophelia in *Hamlet* to the downfall of the hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*. As well as the demise brought by the wicked Iago in *Othello*. Characters face death in battle, and even plot the betrayal of other characters.

Literary representations of death, dying and bereavement are of especial significance, as Bradbury argues, “our talk about death has a very real impact on how we die, what we do with our dead and how we experience our bereavements” (Schroth 1). People’s understanding of death and dying as expressed in the various forms of their cultural and social representations, Kübler-Ross in her book *On Death and Dying* (1969), she describes denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance as the five fundamental stages of realizing mortality and the end of life as a resolute outcome. (Kübler-Ross 37, 49, 79, 83, 109). In Don DeLillo’s novel *White Noise* (1985) television and radio programs regularly show spectacles of death, which the novel’s characters watch eagerly. By watching mass death as a spectacle, DeLillo’s characters have a passing illusion that they can cope with their mortality, but in the end, while death is

made a common event and a spectacle the characters are left with yet another way of denying their essentially mortal human nature (Hakola and Kivistö 15).

Language enables heightened levels of conceptual complexity and flexibility in humans. Literature evokes the subjective quality of experience. Consequently, emotions, anger, resentment, sadness, liking, disgust, admiration, embarrassment, envy, and all the rest, are integral to its form of meaning. The representations of death theme in literature can serve the same purpose. Death can be used to advance the plot in detective and crime novels, it usually opens the story and the story revolves around finding the murderer. But more often it is employed as the closure to emphasize its meaning and importance. In comedy, violence may hurt but the victim always survives, whereas tragedy typically represents a meaningful and dramatic grand scale death that prolongs the scene of death as is the case in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The plot of classical tragedy is based on suffering and the drama often ends in the premature death of the tragic hero. In tragedy, the meaningful existence of the hero is paradoxically created by his death.

All forms of imagination transmitted in the arts are evocative and expressive. Death has even been praised and welcomed as it liberates people from the world of distress and the numerous evils of humankind. In his book *The Savage God: A Study of Suicide*. Alvarez claims that "perhaps half the literature of the world is about death" (Schroth 236). Consequently, the representation of death in literature has known various forms, from personalizing it, to giving death a voice as a character. It is sometimes referred to as a shade, as it is the case with *Eldorado*, a poem by Edgar Allan Poe: *Down the valley of the Shadow*. (Poe 21) The poem is about discovering the enigmatic nature of death and the speaker is told by a pilgrim shadow, that he must experience death for

himself. William Ernest Henley employs the 'shade' figure in his poem *Invictus* to examine the importance of remaining strong when facing life's adversity: *Looms but the horror of the shade.* (Henley 12-13)

Along with this manner, death symbols began to swarm literary works in correspondence with the diverse cultures across the globe. From dark or black colours, bare trees, the dread silence in nature, or thunderstorms, to blackbirds and ravens. Last but not least, is the famous work of Markus Zusak, who staged death as a character in his masterpiece *The Book Thief*. Death is not just dying, but the entity itself; it is in no small part responsible for the pain. As a narrator, Death is observant, compassionate, and empathetic. As he speaks, so tenderly, of events not even he understands, he renews the sense of horror. In the end, death finalizes the novel with "I am haunted by humans" (Zusak 649). Nevertheless, the haunting is indeed mutual, for human beings' worst nightmare is more or less death. The fear of death drives people beyond their capacities and evokes their deepest survival instincts, which spur them to commit acts they would have never imagined being capable of.

In Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, the novel's most prominent manifestation of fear is the characters' hopeless quest to control their mortality. DeLillo uses Jack's reaction to death as a way of revealing the human tendency to use analysis as a way of over-compensating for fear, the characters in *White Noise* commit themselves so wholeheartedly to flawed logic that they appear willing to abandon fact. That is, by formulating such strongly intellectual arguments, they feel more in control of their circumstances.

Sigmund Freud assumed that people's fear of death is termed Thanatophobia (Freud qtd. in Walker and Furer 170). Albeit, it was not death that people feared because in Freud's view nobody believes in their death. "our unconscious does not believe in its own death; it behaves as if immortal" (167). The unconscious does not deal with the passage of time or with negations, which does not calculate the amount of time left in one's life. Moreover, what people fear is not death itself, because one has never experienced it before. Nonetheless, writing about death may somehow fulfil a fantasy of individuals and had made them immortal in a way, where they do not have to go through actual death. They ponder about death since it is mysterious and none that was dead ever get to tell about the experience to the livings. This uncertainty is what provokes people's interest as well as why death may be a necessary factor in writing a tale. Regrettably, due to the continuous and unconscious repression on the subject of death in life, people tend to be afraid of it. By thinking about death, people will value their life more.

3. Lost Innocence in a Vicious World

Children's literature is an inseparable part of the literary world. Its popularity is by all means universally recognized. The production as well as the understanding of written children's literature has shifted exceptionally over the course of the last centuries. It was not until the eighteenth century, that children were perceived as a potential audience for written tales. Adam Lerer claims that children's literature originally emerged in 1744, the year in which John Newbery established the first press devoted to children's books (Grenby 4). Following that, during the Victorian era in the second half of the nineteenth century, and for the first time, authors could make a living by writing

solely for children and gain fame out of it. The Victorians were the first to explicitly make children the protagonists of their novels, such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1856) or Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883).

The number of publications of children's books expanded swiftly and particularly since the turn of the millennium. Children's books are well represented in the annual literary publications all over the world. However, despite its significance as an essential part of the modern literary world, it is by no means a smooth task to define it. Karín Lesnik Oberstein argues that "it is a category of books, the existence of which absolutely depends on supposed relationships with a particular reading audience: children" (Oberstein 15).

Writing for the juvenile audience has its merits, but also its complications. Children's Literature embraces the whole content of the child's imaginative world and that of his daily environment, as well as certain ideas and sentiments characteristic of it. It also views the grown-ups as seen through the child's eyes. Though death has always been treated as a complex and puzzling question for the literature of all ages, it is significantly more alarming regarding the literature for children.

Death is a scarcely broached topic. It, besides mortality, continues to serve as integral elements of children's literature. During the Victorian era, death was an ever-present reality due to short life spans caused by plague, disease, violence, and lack of medical care. Therefore, children of the period had an untimely disclosure with death and thus were presented with it in written tales. This was as much a product of such hard circumstances as it was the influence of religious doctrines. Strictly speaking, the

survivors were asked to see tragedy as an act of God and beyond human ken. Writers aimed at younger audiences often utilize animals as a way of presenting death. An illustration within reach is Margaret Wise Brown's classic picture book *The Dead Bird* (1958).

There are numerous works of nonfiction and fiction based on true events that give young readers a glimpse of the most significant and disturbing real-world issues such as war, terrorism, and genocide. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, the most powerfully evocative work of literature for children regarding death, as well as, written by a fellow child, is Christophe Gallaz and Roberto Innocenti's *Rose Blanche* (1985) in which a German girl discovers first-hand the heinous realities of World War II.

Literary representations of death, dying and bereavement in literature for children has shifted from objective and realistic representations in pre-1980 children's novels towards increasing use of narrative devices and fantastic elements in contemporary texts. Representations of these subjects are thus not mere reflections of a culture's view on death, dying, and grief, but can noticeably affect them. This is true for all verbal or written narration. Nevertheless, it is particularly interesting to consider the case of literature written for a young readership. Among the many consequences of the World's conflicts and wars were the changes in the representation of childhood and violence in literature.

Understandably, the depiction of war in children's texts is potentially arguable for several reasons, including the possibility of glorifying violence, reflecting human cruelty, and presenting disturbing imagery to readers unprepared for such material. However,

some argue that the early exposure to the grimness of war may indoctrinate children to the difficulties of conflict and direct them towards more peaceful solutions. Even though it is falling into the domain of adult concerns, Jennifer Armstrong has pointed to recent surveys that show, according to studies by the United Nations, that more children are hurt and killed in today's wars than are soldiers.

Authors explain that they utilize Illustrations of war in works of children's literature to counterbalance dangerous oversimplifications of war in popular culture and the mass media. Jennifer Armstrong specifies that: "If you really want to teach young readers about peace, give them books about war" (Encyclopedia).

As a matter of fact, the use of conflict in literature has ancient roots, Geoff Fox, remembers reading books and comics about war during the 1950s. "The children's books I used to read, we always won," (BBC News) but children's literature has changed. Nowadays, books serve as a reflection of society and contribute more or less in the escalation of day to day ordeal. Caroline C. Hunt adds "the war we see in young adult novels serves as an ideal metaphor for stress, turmoil, and change" (Encyclopedia).

The outbreak of a new tendency of authors of the juvenile in portraying violence and war is the depiction of child soldiers. In defiance of the fact that it is, by all means, an atrocity against childhood's innocence and safety, the child soldier's phenomenon emerged and swarmed both fiction and real accounts of survivors. Bringing into light the crumbling bonds of humanity as well as unveiling the evident wickedness of human beings. Child soldiering is a crime and should be treated as such.

One of the most sacred of human laws is the requirement that children should be protected from cruelties since they represent the future of humanity. Their abusive recruitment into armed conflicts is a grave breach of this sacred law: it is a war crime and, indeed, should also be treated as a crime against humanity (Udombana and Nsongurua 108).

“Turning and turning in a widening gyre,” (Yeats 1). History keeps on reciting the same old tale of the brutality of humans and the inability to live at peace. Most of its account is filled with spilled blood, anarchy, betrayal, and conflicts. That does not only greatly alter the lives of those involved, but also innocent civilians, women, and mostly children. An unprecedented number of children involved in an extremely rapid scale of wars reaches around thousands of child soldiers between the ages of eight to fifteen. Children are particularly vulnerable in all times, and even more so at times of conflict. Truthfully child soldiers had served in significant numbers in every continent of the globe. They perform different roles: raiders, porters, spies, messengers, human shields, and worse of all suicide bombers, or sex slaves.

Africa is most likely seen as the nerve centre of the child soldier’s phenomenon. Beyond question, many children suffer appalling violence as soldiers. Nevertheless, it is essential to define and clarify the meaning of a child soldier.

A child soldier is any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and anyone accompanying such groups, other than family members. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms (Qtd. In CALDERON 8).

There should be no debate regarding the definition of a child soldier. A frightening fact involves the nowadays escalation in the use of children as fighters.

Currently, thousands of children as young as fifteen are fighting on the frontlines on more than forty going conflicts. Children could get affiliated with armed forces and organizations in several ways. The National Resistance Army had an estimated that among thousands of young soldiers, there are almost five hundred girls, most of whom had been orphaned and who looked on the Army as a replacement for their parents (UNICEF).

Joining the army may also be the only way to survive in the middle of chaos, children volunteer in exchange for secure food and protection. Nevertheless, many children are forced into enlisting in the army; this case was documented in Ethiopia, where children younger than fifteen were abducted from their villages. Likewise, poverty and home abuse are far enough reason for children to consider the army as a chance of survival and power. It happens also that children enlist in the armed group for the sake of revenge. Many children aspire to fight for social justice, seeking to avenge their deceased parents, brothers, or sisters. Nonetheless, Parents also choose to volunteer their children for the rebels, just like the case in Myanmar, which was in exchange for clothes and two square meals a day.

While the concept of a child serving in a military position might be unfathomable, children have been used in armed conflict for most of human history. Thousands of youngsters engaged from all sides in the two world wars. Still, Child exploitation existed way before the two world wars. In 1212, the Children Crusade mobilized thousands of children as untrained combatants, assuming that divine power would allow them to overcome the enemy. Although they did not participate in direct combat, they were instead sold to slavery at a later time.

Another recorded case in history is the case of the Orphans of the Imperial Guard, who fought in the Netherlands with Marshal MacDonald and they were younger than seventeen. Likewise, When Napoleon was faced with invasion by a massive Allied force in 1814, he conscripted many teenagers for his armies. By the same token, the youngest known soldier of World War I was Momčilo Gavrić, who joined the 6th Artillery Division of the Serbian Army at the age of 8 after Austro-Hungarian troops murdered his parents, grandmother, and seven of his siblings in August 1914. (Budanovic). There were several youth programs associated with Nazi Germany during World War II. The most noteworthy example is probably the Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth) in the closing days of World War II.

African rebels are far from the first people even in modern history to use children in wartime, but this newest wave of child soldiers started in the 1980s. The African continent has been struck by civil unrest and violence for much of the past century. The end of imperialism was the result of violent revolutions or it was the start of decades of unrest. The newly liberated African nations faced several problems, including political conflicts, weak governing bodies, poverty, and violent cultural clashes. With the constant violence and fleeing populations, military ranks often have difficulty gaining public support and maintaining their power. To fill in the gaps, some seek to fill their ranks with children as young as eight years old.

In the early 20th century, women in the United States and the UK started petitioning their governments to end child labour. They believed that childhood is a fundamental human right. The first international standards set fifteen as the minimum age for direct participation in armed conflict and are accredited to the 1949 Geneva

Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocols. As for United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations (UN). Graça Machel's 1996 report on *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* (Machel) was the first case in which the effort to ban the use of child soldiers begins. In her report, Machel highlighted the disproportionate impact of war on children and identified them as the primary victims of armed conflicts.

Survivors of war try to reintegrate into society and gain new lives away from the chaos and savagery of war. They seek hope in having another chance to live, not as soldiers, but normal citizens, in a normally safe place. Likewise, many of them chose to dedicate themselves to spreading awareness and expressing their life experiences through their writings. One of these survivors is Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier in Sierra Leone. In the brief preface to *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (2007), Ishmael Beah relays his American high school peer's interests as they attempt to inquire about his childhood.

“Why did you leave Sierra Leone?”

“Because there is a war.”

“Did you witness some of the fighting?”

“Everyone in the country did.”

“You mean you saw people running around with guns and shooting each other?”

“Yes, all the time.”

“Cool” (Beah, 13).

The ambition of Beah through his writing is first of all to get rid of the ideal image young people have about war and violence, such ideals, they learn through media and gaming, Beah's school friends express, albeit crudely, a sense of appreciation for

someone who has encountered the extremities of human experience and whose character has been subjected to extraordinary trials.

The point of literature is to transform and not simply to sadden or shock, Chris Abani initiates his novella, *Song for Night* (2007), with “What you hear is not my voice” (Abani 1). The novella is written from My Luck’s perspective, a 15-year-old soldier in an unspecified African country. The entrance’s sentence is an illustration of the cruelty that child soldiers have to face in the army. The reason for My Luck’s silence is in fact, due to the commander of his platoon who had severed his and his young cohorts’ vocal cords so they wouldn’t scare each other with their death screams.

Further authors have acknowledged the experience of child soldiers in their books, and the suffering they get as well as inflicts on people around them. Such magnificent works include, *Allah Is Not Obligated* (2007) by Ahmadou Kourouma, and Uzodinma Iweala’s *Beasts of No Nation* (2005). Nonetheless, some works of child soldier fiction portray psyches tormented by guilt and trauma. It goes without saying that the horrifying experience of war leaves nothing but scars, both physically and mentally.

4. Trauma and Mental Instability of War Victims

Premature sexual intercourse, inadequate living conditions, vulnerability to abuse, overt hostility, rigorous physical training, and indoctrination are all abusive factors that contribute to the display of numerous psychological and mental disorders among child soldiers and war victims. In the life of a child soldier, children continually end up in a state that separates polarities between civilian and combatant, casualty and culprit, defended, and defender. With these multiplexes, child soldiers eventually confront

multifaceted identities and develop a lack of a constant, secure, and socially defined place.

Encouraging children to engage in acts of killing, destruction, and sabotage is another form of abuse, besides terrorization, which is the result of verbally and physically assaulting, bullying, or frightening the child, as well as blackmailing and threatening them of death. The fear of running for their lives, the feelings of hunger, thirst, and pain are also problems that children too often experience amid conflict. Psychological consequences induced by these forms of abuse range from Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder (PTSD), major depression, pathological anxiety, and other forms of psychological distress. The corruption, terrorization, isolation, that children experience in training camps, make them the most complex traumatized populations among others. Among the major consequences to mention in this study, a brief definition is prepared for the terms mentioned above.

Trauma is generally defined as the response to an overwhelming event which precludes cognitive registration in the victim's mind at the time of its occurrence. Due to the fact that the event is not fully experienced when it happened, it belatedly returns in the form of uncontrolled and repetitive hallucinations, nightmares and other related phenomena. The individual is thus possessed by the traumatic event and its belated repetitions which resist being integrated into his or her consciousness (Caruth, qtd in Anthonissen 6).

Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder (PTSD) is a distress condition that develops in many individuals after highly stressful experiences such as war, violence, and injury, or

natural catastrophe. People with this disorder will recollect the experience by recurring thoughts, flashbacks, and nightmares. They eliminate anything that might trigger their trauma and they have severe nervous symptoms that disrupt their lives (American Psychiatric Association).

Depression is a widespread psychiatric illness, marked by anxiety, lack of motivation or pleasure, feelings of remorse or low self-worth, disrupted sleep or appetite, feelings of exhaustion, and impaired concentration. Depression may be long-lasting or chronic, which may considerably hinder the capacity of a person to perform at work or school, as well as to cope with everyday life (World Health Organization).

Anxiety can arise as a response to vulnerability to a sequence of stressful experiences. Anxiety may present itself in different types of conditions, including panic disorder, a social anxiety disorder. Its signs vary from palpitations or difficulty breathing, agitation or discomfort, behavioural changes, or sleeping problems. So much has been said regarding the harmful impact of aggressive abuse and exposure to life-threatening experiences nevertheless, depending on a variety of factors relating to the temperament of the victim and other circumstances. This trauma can be traced back to various causes and can emerge in numerous ways. Whereas most traumatic events do not permanently affect the survivors to the extent, where they no longer be relevant to the human race, they still induce alienation from society. Judith Herman explains. “Traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life. Thereafter, a sense of alienation, of disconnection, pervades every relationship, from the most intimate familial bonds to the most abstract affiliations of community and religion” (Herman 52).

Aside from a few books that glorify brute power and bravery in combat, the literary culture of the 1920s and after has known a great opposition against war, authors such as Ernest Hemingway, Siegfried Sassoon, and Robert Graves branded war as a senseless massacre, a hideous tragedy, and a political and social disaster. Current literary studies have centred on the impact of trauma and how it should be portrayed substantially in literature. The mere description or portrayal of traumatic situations does not account for the effects of the actual harrowing experiences nor the alarming signs of the post-traumatic disorder. By the same token, Stress would certainly provide a more potent and ultimate effect on literature than war itself. Therefore, writers, reflecting on psychological distress and insanity, recognized that the average soldier, often a secondary figure, would become the emblem of the mental and emotional devastation of war.

The sub-genre of child soldiers' literature emerged in the form of autobiographies and semi-biographies. These young adults document their experiences, seeking to develop their identities, their social standing, and assert a place of authority where the world can hear and recognize their voices. For many child soldiers, these memoirs are the opportunity to turn their label as victims to campaigners. Ishmael Beah asserts that "my own trauma is a small price to pay to expose what continues to happen to children all over the world" (Beah 3). These memoirs affirm the significance of rehabilitation and reintegration for males and females' soldiers alike.

In Beah's account, to continuously hear that it was not his fault by civilian workers of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration (DDR) camp, he only slowly began to embrace the perspective of being a victim. On the other hand, female soldiers, particularly those who undergone sexual abuse and become mothers, face high

risks of family and community disapproval, and sometimes need additional self-sufficiency treatment, infant, and vocational care. These memoirs disclose valuable details about the brutal life of a child soldier. Moreover, they represent their eagerness to become a model and emblem for the possibility of recovery and reintegration of other child soldiers and war-affected children.

Former child soldier's memoirs potentially reveal greater details about what took place in conflicts, in particular, the lived realities of child combatants during wartime. Furthermore, these texts are indicative of the eagerness to be a model and emblem of the healing and reintegration possibilities for other child combatants and war-affected children. By the same token, they are part of the writers' strategies for coping with the psychological and emotional damage the war inflicted on them.

Such works are the result of the current global rights agendas and humanitarian discourses. Nevertheless, they illustrate effectively the interrelationship and convergence of misery and endurance, trauma and action, and how, given the intense pain of some of these memories, they were somehow able to endure and step past mere victim identities as well as play a significant role in society and aspire to help others. Lastly, the effective truths revealed by these memoirs and the voices of the African writers will play a major role in speaking out against the exploitation of youngsters in conflicts and other ill-natured social and humanitarian issues.

CHAPTER TWO

A PSYCHOLOGICAL JOURNEY TOWARDS REDEMPTION

Nowadays, the world is bearing witness of the involvement of thousands of child soldiers in armed conflicts in all regions across the globe. Recruited at the age of ten or less, children transform into their worst nightmares capable of even annihilating family and friends. Whereas the triggers of civil wars are somewhat too elusive to be adequately examined, and to understand the living conditions of many African children, it is important to take into account the possibility of a post-turmoil country slipping back into turmoil. It is in this kind of setting that the child soldier phenomenon increasingly appears.

The conclusion of the cold war left many military forces without sufficient funding. Both the United States and the Soviet Union had pulled back their sponsorship of the civil wars. As a result, the armed groups lost their finance, pursued peace negotiations, or defeated. Consequently, recruiting and abducting relatively cheap child combatants seemed to be a perfect choice. To prevent potential future recruitment, international agencies need to address the root causes of child soldier's exploitation. And exterminate them at once. Thereafter, this chapter investigates the underlying reasons for child recruitment and aims to comprehend the processes of joining the armed forces and groups. Child soldiers are vulnerable to war and conflict and joining the armed group might happen at free will for particular reasons.

The life of child soldiers inside the armed force can also lead to future disruption in the psychological development of the children. They undergo a lot of aggression and

abuse and therefore, execute it on others. This chapter also discusses the potential impact of war on the moral, physical, and mental development of child soldiers, and utilizes the case study of Ishmael Beah's memoir on his life as a child soldier to illustrate these effects. Beah successfully employs in his memoir several images of war and child soldiers and demonstrate how war caused these children to lose a sense of purpose and belonging. Later, it will explore the probabilities of re-integration and returning to social life and the civilized society as functioning members. Furthermore, it will discuss the coalition for mitigation at sentencing these young soldiers at the criminal court, arguing that the former child soldiers are victims before being perpetrators of these hideous crimes.

1. Behind the Scenes of Child Recruitment

Ever since the dawn of history, clashes over food, land, resources, strength, and prominence have always been relentless. Civilians have constantly undergone agonizing experiences during those times of clash. Nonetheless, what differs nowadays wartime from that of ancient history is that civilians are now the primary target of these clashes. The operations of ethnic annihilations and genocide have regrettably substituted the rigid standards of morality and chivalry, which have governed the military throughout history. Even the most primitive cultures made a clear division between those who are apt to embrace the dangers of the war career and those far beyond the battlefield. The once unprecedented exploitation of children in conflicts has become a common strategy of combat. While the most fundamental rules of war have steadily been tarnished, there is a more alarming fact enveloping the world today. In particular, children are not merely the

subjects of abuse and atrocities of war, but also the now participants and executors of these atrocities. The use of child soldiers is much more frequent than the limited coverage it currently gets.

Upon first addressing the subject, the advantages of recruiting child soldiers tend to be obscured. One explanation for why child soldiers are employed is because they are deemed disposable as well as replaceable. Recruiters target areas where children are assembled in huge numbers, notably in classrooms, churches, and refugee camps. The rebel forces carry out calculated attempts at locating their targets. They go after grade schools or orphanages, where children of sufficient size are collected in one location. The children are consequently out of reach by their guardians who may try to keep them safe. Indeed, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) even took to set up a unit formed exclusively of orphans (Singer 8).

By the same token, abandoned children and beggars are especially at risk of been forcefully abducted. A real-life case that was documented in Sudan, where the government set up camps for street children under the cover of cleaning the capital of Khartoum. Nevertheless, these camps were in fact, reserves for the military service. (Singer 8). Besides being cheap and readily available, children are quite often psychologically more fragile than adults, who already have a more developed mentality. They may be favoured as they embrace more risky activities without analysing them. Without the shadow of doubts, the rebels take quite the advantage of it and promote the armed forces as a glamorous or honourable option. Promising membership and acceptance in their group, children are tempted to join in the pursuit of the thrill and prestige of having a gun. Generally, children tend to be easily shaped and manipulated.

Since they rely on family's shelter and supervision, if parents, friends, and love ones were to perish, they would vary their allegiance to others, in particular, one who has the authority to compensate and punish.

Additionally, the rebel groups list a variety of other gains of child recruitment, specifically, the assumption that child soldiers tend to have more stamina and endurance than those of adult soldiers (Schmidt 2). Regardless, the process of transforming children into soldiers is way more distressing. Recruitment is generally and immediately preceded by consistent and cruel techniques of training and conversion. Repression and exploitation follow every stage of the process. The ultimate purpose of the latter is to encourage the children's reliance on the armed group and prevent their escape.

The matter of child soldiers has received significant interest in academic studies, yet very few researches have addressed the reasons why rebel fighters are resorting to the enforced recruitment of children. The common assumption to answer that inquiry would be that forced recruitment is a cheap alternative to voluntary recruitment and a strategy that rebel factions would prefer to pursue should they have the opportunity to do so.

One of the prevalent motives which concluded the researches is the relationship between forced recruitment and funding sources. In the lack of a constant form of funding, these factions seem to depend increasingly on local citizens to donate resources and materials such as food and water. Not unexpectedly, these groups avoid assaulting people to retain their funding. Towards the other side of the argument, the groups which have access to the natural sources are less reliant on the local population. Consequently, they undergo varying types of abuse. A known illustration of this argument is the Lord

Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, who initiated the forced recruitment only after strengthening their economic stability.

Many rebellions forces across the globe depend mainly on volunteers, nevertheless, switch to any kind of enforced recruitment once they can no longer draw volunteers. Aside from forceful recruitment, children seem to want to participate in the armed forces as a result of economic and social pressures. Many join to fight for a cause, sometimes with little understanding of its consequences. However, presenting this option as voluntary is rather deceptive. The most fundamental explanation children enlist in armed forces is that they are compelled to by forces outside their grasp. Economics is especially a significant influence; starvation and deprivation are prevalent and unavoidable in war zones.

Children, especially those who get alienated from society choose to enter any group to ensure food and shelter, clothing, and medical care. In simpler words, it is for pure survival reasons. Furthermore, children feel that armed groups can guarantee their safety in a chaotic environment, by gaining strength rather than walking unarmed. Armed forces use another tactic into convincing innocent children into volunteering and that is by presenting them with promises, such was the case in Sierra Leone, where one child fighter confesses “They told us we’d all have our own vehicle. They told us they’d build houses for us. They told us many things” (Kamara, qtd. in Singer 9). Likewise, the commander of the army in Sierra Leone used a constant reminder of the gruesome crimes of the rebel groups as a way to push the children into fighting harder for social justice and revenge. Other children choose to pursue the path of fighting due to the ridiculous amount of violence they have witnessed, from bombing, executions, ethnic cleansing,

massive massacres and so more. Leading to the strong desire for revenge and fighting for social justice.

Perchance, the most troubling is that the underlying factors that contributed to the increasing spread of the child soldier phenomenon are likely to deem difficult to discard, with no sight of ending to the prevailing conflicts, illnesses, starvation, and deprivation. The child soldier matter is more complex than it initially appears. Every child has their own tale to tell about the particular motives which led them to join or to avoid the ranks of the armed forces. In short, the use of child soldiers steals away their childhood, and present them with further struggle than they originally suffered from. Moreover, what needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that the alternative of being a child soldier is not likely to be peaceful or a better choice, taking into account, the violence spreading and lack of education. In pursue of the aim of preventing child recruitment, the social, cultural, and economic circumstances in which children live, must be a crucial part of the operation. Lastly, the reintegration of former child combatants will strive to hinder the future exploitation of children. Dealing with the extremely nuanced issue of child recruitment and reintegration and as well as the prevention of the reoccurrence of this phenomenon is a very difficult and challenging task with major implications and impacts.

2. Verbal and Visual Metaphors of Childhood Oppression

The seemingly ever-lasting conflict of Sierra Leone between the years of 1992 to 2002 was plagued by massive violations of human rights and abuse. The downfall of the government and its failure to maintain public protection and security deemed

consequential. Thousands of lives lost, besides thousands displaced, injured, or scarred for life. Perhaps, one of the most distressing facts about the Sierra Leonean civil war and every other contemporary conflict is the continuous exploitation of children and the use of child soldiers on the battlefield. Children are being used as pawns in a never-ending cycle of clash over territories and resources, turning them into the worst nightmares of being killing machines.

Among the many survivors of the harrowing reality of war, one former child soldier took the burden of delivering the voice of truth to the rest of the world. In his memoir, *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, Beah depicted the gruesome nature of mankind and the brutality of greed and human ambitions for power. It is, by all means, a candid illustration of the horror and terror of war, and its consequences. Ishmael Beah uses various images to deliver his message and takes advantage of the power of the word, using similes, metaphors, and imagery. The memoir is rich with literary devices that contributed and in a significant matter to the depiction of the horrifying experience children go through during wartime. Before engaging in the book of Ishmael Beah, a brief explanation of the used literary devices is necessary.

Writers use metaphors to emphasize their ideas and delivers their expressions, Beah includes these techniques in his book. An example of that is when he compared the time he spent with the army as in the time with a family. “My squad was my family, my gun was my provider and protector” (Beah 126). Beah is directly relating the army to his family and providers. He implies equality between the two and signifies the familial role the army had played in his life.

A simile is literary term used to apply a comparison between unlikely related items using words such as 'like' or 'as'. Beah effectively illustrates to the reader the imagery he bore witness to during his time as a child soldier by re-creating them through words. In his book, he describes a sudden ambush of the rebels who cornered Beah and his friends, Gabriella. Gibrilla was terrified and the rebel described him as "He is scared like a soaked monkey" (Beah 31). The images conjured here are that of a pitiful shaking creature which makes more of an impact than expressing it through Gibrilla was scared.

The word imagery refers to the usage of figurative speech to describe things, actions, or ideas in a manner to which it appears to the physical sense. Ishmael Beah uses imagery to paint his thoughts and sentiments as a child soldier in the face of the danger. He gives the reader the chance to peek through his mindset and morality that continued to grow throughout the book. Ishmael uses the imagery to depict the brutality of war and violence to allow the audience to re-experience it alongside him. Not only his country that was damaged by it, but also him as a person. In his attempt to illustrate his change as a person and the loss of innocence, Ishmael states: "The Corporal gave the signal with a pistol shot and I grabbed the man's head and slit his throat in one fluid motion. His Adam's apple made way for the sharp knife, and I turned the bayonet on its zigzag edge as I brought it out. His eyes rolled up and they looked me straight in the eye before they suddenly stopped in a frightful glance, as if caught by surprise. The prisoner leaned his weight on me as he gave out his last breath. I dropped him on the ground and wiped my bayonet on him" (Beah 125).

Symbolism is a literary device where one thing stands for another, often for a bigger idea like freedom and hope, despair, and longing. Beah employs symbolism

excessively in his book serving to provide a stronger emotion and understanding of life in war, either as a civilian or a soldier. One of the most significant symbols in the book is the cassette. Beah uses it to depict the remnants of his childhood and innocence. With the disappearance of the cassette, Ishmael completely turns into some entirely different, and his aim changes from wishing for peace back to survive by all means. “I ran toward the fire, but the cassettes had already started to melt. Tears formed in my eyes, and my lips shook as I turned away” (Beah 135).

Beah successfully employs various literary devices to serve the aim of providing a clear illustration of the abhorrent savagery a man can master. At the age of twelve, Beah was faced with a sudden and unavoidable reality of war and the fragility of human bonds and trust. The latter left him hanging between the choice of survival and his humanity, as well as between hope for a better tomorrow and today’s despair. The child oppression that was present in almost every page of the memoir all goes to show the eternal cycle of men’s history of violence. “...Killing had become as easy as drinking water” (Beah 122).

Beah describes the consequences that war had left his body and soul with. He shows his fears, insecurities, and internal conflict during wartime through a sequence of figurative sentences, holding bigger meaning to what they do seem to have. One of the most notable is the cassette, which was given to Beah as a child, he learned to dance to hip hop and encountered a new world. “During the holidays, he brought me cassettes and taught my friends and me how to dance to what we came to know as hip-hop” (Beah 17). Beah uses the cassette, which he held onto it until his recruitment into the army, to depict the last moments before his complete transformation into a different person, before his innocence was lost. “I took off my old pants, which contained the rap cassettes. As I was

putting on my new army shorts, a soldier took my old pants and threw them into a blazing fire that had been set to burn our old belongings. I ran towards the fire, but the cassettes had already started to melt. Tears formed in my eyes and my lips shook as I turned away” (Beah 135).

The experience of Beah and other child soldiers seems plausible as far as to cause and effect, the conflict had led many children to extreme situations where their lives were almost taken away, the only thing that mattered is their instinctive desire to survive. Doing anything, even killing, to live another day.

Another significant element of Beah’s memoir is the employment of Nature, Beah uses nature to show how the universe interferes in human lives and feelings. In this employment, readers can react to the events in a wholly different manner, the sky is watching, and the violence that is engulfing the land will not go unpunished. “The branches of the trees looked as if they were holding hands and bowing their heads in prayer” (Beah 145). Creating a dramatic effect on the audience and in other words, captivating them.

Beah expresses various emotions using nature, his feelings of safety, and the instinct of facing danger, the moon symbolizes both in his memoir. “Everyone becomes happy and appreciates the moon in their own special way. Children watch their shadows and play in its light, people gather at the square to tell stories and dance through the night. A lot of happy things happen when the moon shines” (Beah 29). Beah describes the peaceful times he lived through in Sierra Leone and relate it to the brightness of the moon. Beah continues to hold onto his values and live by his morals during his day to day

survival journey, and the moon was his company. “I get a chance to observe the moon now, I still see those same images I saw when I was six, and it pleases me to know that that part of my childhood is still embedded in me” (Beah 30). Preserving his innocence and childish side until the bad happens.

On the other hand, the moon also represents the coming danger when its brightness disappears. “The moon wasn’t in the sky; the air was stiff, as if nature itself was afraid of what was happening” (Beah 35). Beah and generally child soldiers undergo various types of cruel and direct oppression under the mask of training which often consists of terrorizing and manipulating them. Wessells states,

Typically the training agenda is not to develop military or survival skills but to break children’s will and to achieve high levels of dominance and control... This training often includes – [f]orced participation in killing . . . to harden new child recruits to violence and make the horrific seem normal (Wessells qtd. in Anthonissen 42).

Ultimately turning them into ruthless killing machines, “my squad was my family, my gun was my provider and protector and my rule was to kill or be killed” (Beah 154).

Beah continues to think about the moon as he goes on in his journey, even though the gunfire rings amid the night, and the fight closes by. Engulfed by terror and fear, Beah watches as the moon accompanies him and his companions. “At night it felt as if we were walking with the moon. It followed us under thick clouds and waited for us at the other end of dark forest paths. It would disappear with sunrise but return, hovering on our path” (Beah 102).

The moon does not only play an important part in Beah's life but also serves to foreshadow the events of the story as its light disappears at the apparition of danger "Normally, the crickets, and birds sang in the evening before the sun went down. But this time they didn't, and darkness set in very fast. The moon wasn't in the sky; the air was stiff, as if nature itself was afraid of what was happening" (Beah 34). The situation gets direr and more desperate as Beah and his companions struggle to survive, and as the plot progresses, nature gets more complex depicting the gruesomeness of war and illuminate danger itself, "even the air seemed to want to attack me and break my neck" (Beah 66).

Eventually, as Beah grows and matures, he realizes that nature lives for itself, not caring about people violently killing each other within it, "the rain washed the blood off the leaves as if cleaning the surface of the forest, but the dead bodies remained under the bushes" (Beah 181). Nature is no comfort to anyone; it washes away its surface and leaves everything untouched. The employment of nature and the figurative language challenge readers to soul-search their ignorance of acts towards the atrocities of war against children.

War-related injuries are not merely inflicted on the physical body, but also the mind and the soul. Scarred with horrendous flashbacks and nightmares, the trauma of war and death is by far the lowest as well as the worst of human sufferance. The complications undergone during wartime infringe deeply on the children's development, physically, mentally, and emotionally. In fact, alongside the increasing number of conflicts throughout the years, the severity of wars has also increased alarmingly.

How many more times do we have to come to terms with death before we find safety?" he asked. He waited a few

minutes, but the three of us didn't say anything. He continued: "Every time people come at us with the intention of killing us, I close my eyes and wait for death. Even though I am still alive, I feel like each time I accept death, part of me dies. Very soon I will completely die and all that will be left is my empty body walking with you. It will be quieter than I am (Beah 90).

The traumatic experience of war and killings and the encounter of death at every stage of their lives left the children with little to no hope for a better tomorrow. The horrid consequences of slaughtering innocence out of children end up being engraved in their memories and however they move on, their bodies still remember the fear, the terror, and the horror of war. Violence becomes their way of living, and thus, they are abandoned by the world and considered unnecessary evil.

3. Ishmael Beah's Dreams, Flashbacks, and Trauma

The autobiography of Beah is an act of testimony to call the attention of a worldwide audience to what is occurring in Sierra Leone and all over the world. The atrocities and exploitation of children into armed forces have become an alarming matter with the constant increase in the casualties and victims of such oppression, both adults and children hope to stop and avoid further massacres. There is a space for memories, introspections, flashbacks, and awful remembrances that are coloured by pain, wounds, and trauma. Introspection is the careful examination of a person's thoughts and feelings intuit that every character tends to think a lot about her own thoughts or feelings. Ishmael Beah uses his photographic memory to capture the smallest details on his journey, allowing the reader to literally live it with him.

Often, my shadow would scare me and cause me to run for miles Even the air seemed to want to attack me and break my neck. [...] I had seen heads cut off by machetes, smashed by cement bricks, and rivers filled with so much blood that the water had ceased flowing. Each time my mind replayed these scenes, I increased my pace. Sometimes I closed my eyes hard to avoid thinking, but the eye of my mind refused to be closed and continued to plague me with images (Beah 66).

Among the expressions employed in his work, Dreams play a significant role of Beah's story. They are composed mainly of nightmares in which Beah relives his war memories. Nightmares also consist of the same remnants of the traumatic past, and the victim perceives them as if the painful incident is occurring anew. Like nightmares, Beah also finds himself besieged by painful flashbacks that repeat themselves. Both flashbacks and nightmares can be evoked by triggers in everyday life. "I was afraid to fall asleep, but staying awake also brought back painful memories" (Beah 32).

Beah also uses hyperbole to deliver a clear image to the readers, "We were so hungry that it hurt to drink water and we felt cramps in our guts. It was as though something were eating the insides of our stomachs. Our lips became parched and our joints weakened and ached" (Beah 44). Fear, terror, and starvation took their share of children's remaining power, "often, my shadow would scare me and cause me to run for miles. Everything felt awkwardly brutal" (Beah 66). Near the beginning of the book, he comments, "these days I live in three worlds: my dreams and the experiences of my new life, which trigger memories from the past" (Beah 33).

In one of his recurring dreams, he is taking a corpse to a cemetery. He unwraps the body from the bedsheets that hold it and sees his own face on that body, which suggests that Beah died slowly on his way to find safety and his consistent encounter of

violence. Additionally, Beah could no longer differentiate between his dreams and reality.

I couldn't make out his face as the sun was against it. That person pointed the gun at the place where I had been shot and pulled the trigger. I woke up and hesitantly touched my side. I became afraid, since I could no longer tell the difference between dream and reality (Beah 27).

After a period of time, Beah and other trauma victims suffer from their repressed memories, because according to Sigmund Freud the victims do not experience the traumatic events consciously, and therefore, they seem unharmed. Nevertheless, the repressed traumatic past eventually returns to haunt the victims. Freud coined the term "Latency" to describe the time between the traumatic experience and its actual effect. Evidently, Freud exemplifies the concept of repetition-compulsion. This concept expounds how the mind slowly prepares itself for the traumatic experience that has already happened by continuously returning to that point of time in the form of nightmares and flashbacks, "These dreams are endeavouring to master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis" (Beah qtd. in Anthonissen 10).

This process has two aspects that make it ambivalent. Either the victim may remain caught in this continuous repetition, which Freud calls melancholia, or it can help them fulfil redemption and it is termed mourning by Freud as well (Beah qtd. in Anthonissen 10). According to him, in order to reach a complete recovery from trauma, the narrative role is essential, and therefore, one has to tell one's story, "each individual hysterical symptom immediately and permanently disappeared ... when the patient had described that event in the greatest possible detail and had put the affect into words" (10).

By the same token, Beah, like other war traumatized victims, undergoes the process of constant repetition of his experiences in Sierra Leone and his reintegration. Beah comes to terms with his reality, as a war victim, he recognizes that the war cannot be undone and the killing cannot be justified. “Mourning the dead wasn’t part of the business of killing and trying to stay alive” (Beah 180).

Beah is confronted by the brutality of war as he shudders at this gruesome encounter, “I felt nauseated, and my head was spinning. I felt the ground moving, and people’s voices seemed to be far removed from where I stood trembling” (Beah 25). He and his friends spend days escaping, traveling from village to village, striving to survive. During this time, Beah realizes how much was left and how much was lost in regard to his person, “our innocence had been replaced by fear and we had become monsters. There was nothing we could do about it” (Beah 73).

At the beginning of the memoir, Beah describes his childhood as peaceful and calm. He has learned to sing and dance to the beat of rap music with his brother Junior and friends. That seemed to bring eternal happiness and satisfaction, he enjoyed a simple childhood with his family, despite not having his mother with him. He was always optimistic towards life and always lived by the values that his father taught him, “if you are alive, there is hope for a better day and something good to happen. If there is nothing good left in the destiny of a person, he or she will die” (Beah 72).

Music played an important part in Beah’s story. It initiates the story by his attempts to learn rap music by listening to the cassettes that Junior brought him, later, music becomes his escape from all the madness that accompanied the break out of the

war. Beah's impression of war was always based on distant rumours, not until refugees of war started to pass by the village, that he comes to understand what is yet to come, "at times I thought that some of the stories the passersby told were exaggerated. The only wars I knew of were those that I had read about in books or seen in movies such as *Rambo: First Blood*, and the one in neighbouring Liberia that I had heard about on the BBC news" (Beah 16).

Later as Beah witnesses the sudden rush of the refugees in Matru Jong, he listens to their testimonies about war and only then sees for himself how people can be lifeless while living. "The adults among these children from the war zones would be lost in their thoughts during conversations with the elders of my town. Apart from their fatigue and malnourishment, it was evident they had seen something that plagued their minds, something that we would refuse to accept if they told us all of it" (Beah 16).

The young Beah did not grasp the meaning behind their lifeless faces. He describes the sight of a woman rocking her dead baby and it haunts his mind, "the image of that woman and her baby plagued my mind as we walked back to Matru Jong. I barely noticed the journey, and when I drank water I didn't feel any relief even though I knew I was thirsty" (Beah 26). One of the running refugees warns Beah and his friends that what had been there, was already lost, "we started walking, and a woman carrying her flipflops on her head spoke without looking at us: "Too much blood has been spilled where you are going. Even the good spirits have fled from that place" (Beah 23).

As civilians, Beah and his travel companions flee from village to village, fighting hunger and fear and seeking to survive and return to their families. Beah always had

internal conflicts at every stage of his journey. Because as his survival instinctive interferes, he finds himself losing parts of him as a person as he commits acts, he could not imagine himself capable of, “That night we were so hungry that we stole people’s food while they slept. It was the only way to get through the night” (Beah 43). The escape continues as the story progresses, Beah and his companions travel to find shelter and food, as they walk, they meet civilians and aspire to get help, nevertheless, help does not come. War has destroyed all kinds of trust between people and Beah realizes that eventually, “this was one of the consequences of the civil war. People stopped trusting each other, and every stranger became an enemy. Even people who knew you became extremely careful about how they related or spoke to you” (Beah 52). Eventually, Beah and his friends get caught by rebels during one of their attempts to find food. Beah then only observes the rebels from afar, without any intentions of confronting them or crossing paths with them; however, he knows exactly how things would turn, the moment he gets associated with the rebels,

Young boys were immediately recruited, and the initials RUF were carved wherever it pleased the rebels, with a hot bayonet. This not only meant that you were scarred for life but that you could never escape from them because escaping with the carving of the rebels’ initials was asking for death, as soldiers would kill you without any questions and militant civilians would do the same (Beah 38).

Beah gets to slip unnoticed by the rebels; however, he also gets separated from his companions. He wanders around the abandoned villages on his own. The towns in which the rebels had passed through were left annihilated, burnt houses, and piles of corpses. “that night for the first time in my life I realized that it is the physical presence of people and their spirits that gives a town life. With the absence of so many people, the town

became scary, the night darker, and the silence unbearably agitating” (Beah 34). Beah begins to lose hope as he recalls the words of his friend Saidu and feels that the road to safety is a long way to go, “every time people come at us with the intention of killing us, I close my eyes and wait for death. Even though I am still alive, I feel like each time I accept death, part of me dies” (Beah 90).

As the events of the story intertwined, Beah arrives at the village of Yele, under the control of the government army, which ironically, was the safe space the boys strived to find. But also, another twist in their lives was awaiting them. War is approaching. The lieutenant calls upon the children to defend the village. Beah becomes a soldier, “I had never held a gun that long before and it frightened me. The closest thing to it had been a toy gun made out of bamboo when I was seven” (Beah 137). Beah is terrorized by the sudden change of events and the initiation of the hellish training, he and other children, had to undergo. The skinny malnourished bodies of the children lacked strength and ultimately were overpowered by the weight of their guns. Both their bodies and minds were exhausted by the war, “the guns were a little heavy for Sheku and Josiah, who kept dropping them and picking them up as we went along” (Beah 138).

In his memoir, Beah explains how easy it is to lose one’s humanity and transform into someone completely different. The lieutenant knows how to do that through a set of harsh training and indoctrination to change the cores of children’s understanding of the war and their positions,

Blood poured out of the bullet holes in him like water rushing through newly opened tributaries. His eyes were wide open; he still held his gun. My eyes were fixed on him when I heard Josiah scream. He cried for his mother in the

most painfully piercing voice that I had ever heard (Beah 144).

The children were now soldiers, “you will get used to it, everybody does eventually” (Bea 124) From battle to battle, the boys grow into their new roles. They trade in their soccer shoes for AK-47s. Beah slowly recovers from his first shock and embodies his new role as a soldier, and soon perceives the army as his only home and family, “my squad was my family, my gun was my provider and protector” (Beah 154).

Beah eventually loses what was left of his innocence as he does more killings, “our innocence had been replaced by fear and we had become monsters. There was nothing we could do about it” (Beah 73). Under the impression of avenging their families’ death and to punish the brutality of the rebels, Beah and the child soldiers were forced to kill rebels and even other civilians at times, without questioning the orders of the supreme commander,

I joined the army really because of the loss of my family and starvation. I wanted to avenge the deaths of my family. I also had to get some food to survive, and the only way to do that was to be part of the army. It was not easy being a soldier, but we just had to do it (Beah 239).

Beah finds himself stuck in those horrendous scenes that he comes across to. It plagues his mind and keeps him up at night. Beah attempts to busy himself to forget, however his anxiety overpowers him and manifests itself in his dreams and flashbacks as well as his migraines. While agonizing in his pain, Beah recalls scenes he has witnessed and the people he encountered. According to La Capra, Beah is in a stage of denial, during his time with the army, he denies the traumatic experiences he undergoes. Nevertheless, by the time of his first mission with the army, he starts to feel numbness at

his limbs that are caused by his fear and the haunting trauma. Beah describes that feeling as:

I lay there with my gun pointed in front of me, unable to shoot. [...]. I had begun to fall into some sort of nightmare [...] I covered [Josiah's] eyes with my fingers and pulled him from the tree stump. His backbone had been shattered (Beah 144,145).

Beah depicts the consequences of this experience on him as it triggered something inside him that eventually kills his humanity and compassion to other human beings. In addition, the army depends on drugs to claim full control over the children, Beah, as well, explains how drugs contributed to the numbing of his emotion and his transformation into a ruthless killer, "I remember feeling a tingle in my spine, but I was too drugged to really feel the pain, even though my foot had begun to swell" (Beah 189). Essentially, Beah did not have the time to think about any of it thanks to the corporal constant observation,

The commanders made it in such a way that you had no time to sit by yourself [...] we're bringing some things we have looted to the base, we were doing drugs, or we were watching a war film or we were having a killing exhibition or we were, you know, shooting the guns to test them or there was always some form of violence going on. There was never a time to reflect or to think about something else you know (Beah qtd. in Anthonissen 50).

Beah used denial as a defence mechanism against his trauma, but eventually, it all comes back to haunt him during his rehabilitation period, "In fact, most of the horrible events that I went through didn't affect me until after I was taken out of the army and put into a psycho-social therapy home years later" (Beah qtd. in Anthonissen 50). After two years of fighting to the army, Beah is finally admitted to a rehabilitation process at Benin Home. Alissa Swango comments that Beah, aside from his physical withdrawal from the

drugs, suffers from a mental withdrawal from the people he got attached to, the army (Anthonissen 50). Beah then starts to act out his trauma which he had denied previously, and it comes hard on him and the other boys who suffered both mental and physical wounds, “but at night some of us would wake up from nightmares, sweating, screaming, and punching our own heads to drive out the images that continued to torment us even when we were no longer asleep” (Beah 179).

Beah additionally, suffered from the constant flashbacks that brought back horrific memories, “I tried to think about my childhood days, but it was impossible, as I began getting flashbacks of the first time I slit a man’s throat. The scene kept surfacing in my memory like lightning on a dark rainy night, and each time it happened, I heard a sharp cry in my head that made my spine hurt” (Beah 193).

Another symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder is the hallucinations that child soldiers have occasionally,

Whenever I turned on the tap water, all I could see was blood gushing out. I would stare at it until it looked like water before drinking or taking a shower. Boys sometimes ran out of the hall screaming, ‘The rebels are coming.’ Other times, the younger boys sat by rocks weeping and telling us that the rocks were their dead families (Beah 175).

These symptoms resurfaced in consequence to the time the children finally had, to reflect upon their past, to think, and to remember. Beah recognizes his trauma and realizes that the only way to break through is to face it head-on, “the war memories had formed a barrier that I had to break in order to think about any moment in my life before the war” (Beah 180).

Beah recalls his time as a child soldier during his rehabilitation period and describes it in a more detailed manner than when he was actually living it. Eaglestone clarifies that in this manner “the text echoes the accounts of trauma that stress that the events are not experienced as they happen but only afterward, in fragmentary and broken ways, as the self struggles to work through and reintegrate itself” (Anthonissen 52). As time flies by, Beah learns to talk about his past as part of his rehabilitation and chooses the nurse Esther as his listener, “I only liked talking to her because I felt that she didn’t judge me for what I had been a part of; she looked at me with the same inviting eyes and welcoming smile that said I was a child” (Beah 200).

Ultimately, Beah starts to believe in Esther words and finally understands that none of it was his fault, He also recognizes his trauma as something which is part of him. Thus, tries not to forget, but to live with it. He sometimes wishes to erase that part of him, even though he realizes that it makes him the person he is today, “could wash away [these painful memories], even though I am aware that they are an important part of what my life is; who I am now” (Beah 33).

Even now, Beah still experiences flashbacks and nightmares that take him back to the time he was a soldier, as he claims that he lives in three different worlds, “three worlds: my dreams, and the experiences of my new life, which trigger memories from the past” (Beah 33). The sole purpose of writing this memoir according to Beah was not merely to overcome the traumatic past, but essentially to give hope to the children who suffered and still suffering from war and violence, “‘We can be rehabilitated,’ I would emphasize, and point to myself as an example. I would always tell people that I believe children have the resilience to outlive their sufferings, if given a chance” (Beah 204).

4. Child Soldiers: from Civilians to War Criminals

It is devastating enough now that children are trapped in the fog of war, how much more frustrating it is if they are explicitly part of it. Used as pawns, from porters, informants, or sex slaves, if not as regular soldiers in the frontlines.

Children are extremely susceptible to the consequences of war and they account for at least half the population in war zones. They suffer from anxiety, terror, and uncertainty, as well as disruption at every phase in their lives. The mental and physical effects of war are by no means oblivious to the world. They accompany these children for a lifetime, and determine to a great sense, all their future decisions. If children are too lucky to survive the war, they would find themselves abandoned, deprived, and without doubt, scarred by the memories of war and anguish.

There have been long-lasting years of political crises, violent clashes, and violent massacres, displacement, and devastation of all social and economic infrastructures. Ultimately, former child soldiers typically experience various and deep-rooted psychological and physical trauma during their time with the armed forces, which render all their relationship with civilians and adults. Not to mention that communities are not necessarily too forgiving to easily accept those children in the embrace of a new life, once a soldier, always a soldier. And thus, they are feared, sometimes, even by their family members.

This opinion is shared by the child soldiers as well because they adapted to their lives and identities as soldiers; it is not at all a simple matter to be a civilian again. The longer these children prevail with the armed group, the harder it gets to return. They

adopt the army's values and behaviours that it becomes the standard to follow. And it is indeed a quick process when it comes to shedding their civilian identities by demolishing what they previously knew and re-identifying themselves as soldiers. Essentially, this is mainly the result of the consistent and persistent training and indoctrination they undergo in the army.

In his memoir, *A Long Way Gone: Memoir of a Boy Soldier*, Beah illustrates how he completely dismantled his civilian identity and embraced his new self as a soldier. Beah exemplifies the process by showing the indoctrination tactics employed by the army superiors who installed hostility against the rebels by repeating certain words, "Visualize the banana tree as the enemy, the rebels who killed your parents, your family, and those who are responsible for everything that has happened to you...Is that how you stab someone who had killed your family?" (Beah 138).

This particular statement triggered inside of Beah a deep hatred towards the rebels and sparked the desire for revenge, "They have lost everything that makes them human. They do not deserve to live. That is why we must kill every single one of them. Think of it as destroying a great evil. It is the highest service you can perform for your country" (Beah 133).

Beah and the other boys were slowly convinced by the cause, and their hate for the violence they have witnessed had overpowered them, "All of us hated the rebels, and we were more than determined to stop them from capturing the village" (Beah 133). Beah adopts this view and eventually sees the rebels as his absolute enemies, "I imagined

capturing several rebels at once, locking them inside a house, sprinkling gasoline on it, and tossing a match. We watch it burn and I laugh” (Beah 139).

This transformation was complete the moment Beah lost his last connection with his childhood when the rap cassettes melted in a blazing fire. The cassettes symbolized Beah’s innocence and therefore, their destruction ultimately means the destruction of that part of Beah’s life. Even though Beah did not favour the idea of being part of the conflict, over time, everything begins to make sense for him and he establishes meaning and a purpose in his new army life, “I stood there holding my gun and felt special because I was part of something that took me seriously and I was not running from anyone anymore” (Beah 151).

Nonetheless, Beah was not oblivious or at least realized the transition he went through in the army, he keeps track of his heart and emotions and he describes it like, “We had been fighting for over two years, and killing had become a daily activity. I felt no pity for anyone. My childhood had gone by without my knowing, and it seemed as if my heart had frozen” (Beah 154).

Hereafter, Beah has embraced his soldier self so hard that going back to being monitored by civilians was unthinkable. It makes him angry and it makes him aggressive to be put under watch. Surely enough, Beah has suffered from loss when he first got separated from his family, later his friends, brother, and everyone in his community. Beah finds it hard to adjust to another loss, that of his newly founded family in the army. His anxiety grows bigger as he spends time in the rehabilitation program before he finally gives in and starts listening,

What was happening? ... Why had the lieutenant decided to give us up to these civilians? We thought that we were part of the war until the end. The squad had been our family. Now we were being taken away, just like that, without any explanation (Beah 158).

Beah as many other child soldiers experienced what might be described as reborn in the army, because once they embrace their lives as soldiers, they become the property of the army, and eventually re-establish a new-self to wear on as fighters. Indeed, Beah successfully employs the construction of identity and its loss in his memoir.

By the same token, the theme of displacement is also apparent in the pages of the autobiography. Another large-scale result of the civil war was that more than two million people were forced to leave their homes behind and flee the war. Displacement does not necessarily lead to safety; they crowded the seemingly safe zones, and ultimately, chaos irrupted, sexual violence, abduction, molestation, and intentional amputation of legs and arms became commonplace.

The term displacement is yet to get a good working definition. It refers to all persons who are forced to flee their homes because of persecution or armed conflict and are unable to return at their own will. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are some twenty-two million displaced children in the world. Many are displaced for years on end (Alfredson 2).

Be it war or peace, there seems to be a solid interrelation between the risk of recruitment during displacement, as well as the risk of displacement as an outcome of recruitment (Alfredson 3). Beyond the shadow of doubts, children are vulnerable to both recruitment and displacement.

Achvarina and Reich (2006) find that in the case of African conflicts, significant access to refugee, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps correlated directly to an increase in child soldier employment (“Why Use Children in War” 11-12). In fact, child soldiers who leave the army and abandon conflict are still at risk of being re-recruited; furthermore, may as well be by the opposing conflict side to what they previously served at.

During escaping the fog of war, and chaos, the children get separated from their families and end up as refugees, street children, or soldiers. As mentioned before, displacement does not necessarily equal safety, even after fleeing war zones, families, and unaccompanied children alike suffer from poor living conditions, malnutrition, diarrheal diseases, and infections (Schauer & Elbert 314).

To be fair, there are facilities and a significant number of international attempts to return former child soldiers to their families; however, even if that could be as easy as it sounds, these children very often, have no place to return to. Their families are either killed, displaced, or fled the country at once. Even worse, the families may reject their children either due to the crimes they committed as soldiers, or psycho-social pressures, disability, pregnancy, and the risk of being targeted by their former armed group (Schauer & Elbert 315).

The most effective and reasonable outcome to child soldiers is re-integration processes that are offered by the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and other organizations, even so, when children are not part of these reintegration processes, they may be transmitted to rehabilitation centres and for months,

eventually, they would not find a place to return to once they are released. In the worst cases, they may spend their whole lives in camps (Alfredson 4). At the end of it, these children most likely end up being street children, re-recruited, or jailed for the crimes committed by the armed group they once served.

Life narratives were often written and published in contexts of global displacement. Beah wrote *a Long Way Gone: Memoir of a Boy Soldier*, where he recounts his life as a soldier and his experiences in the government army in Sierra Leone during the decade-long civil war. Sierra Leone was devastated by war from March 1991, when a group of rebels calling themselves Revolutionary United Front (RUF) who were backed by the Liberian leader Charles Taylor, invaded Sierra Leone from the borders of Liberia. It lasted until officially declared over in January 2002. Though inaccurate, it is estimated to rob the lives of more than seventy thousand people beside couple thousands exiled from their homes. The brutality of the war is forever engraved in the memories of those who survived it,

5. Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration

Assuming peacekeeping has proved successful and the war is over, an important inquiry is necessary about the future of the combatants, children especially. Every year, thousands of children are in urgent need of re-integration. To be released out of the army ranks and start all over again, and re-engage in civilian life and social communities.

The process of re-integration refers to the various attempts to re-introduce former child combatants into society in a peaceful manner. Understanding that former child soldiers have witnessed traumatizing experiences and need a long time to recover, re-

integration usually includes a psychosocial support system, mental as well as physical health care centres, and quality education. These attempts serve to fight the stereotypical image of former child soldiers as damaged goods, a lost generation.

Many assume that former child soldiers not only have lost their childhood and innocence but also their education and sole opportunity for moral development. Nevertheless, evidence has proved children as resilient, not damaged. Besides, they can re-join the civilian life with varying degrees of success (Wessells 515). Without the shadow of doubts, these former child soldiers have been part of something horrific, abduction, mass killing, decapitating, land mines, and family separation at very young ages. Death was their only company.

In Sierra Leone, children were forced to kill a family member or a member of their community as a ritual to join the armed forces. Hence, one cannot be oblivious to the fact that their foundation of human ties and trust was severely damaged, and their support system collapsed. Such experiences can and will leave searing memories and emotional, psychological, and social scars.

In 2017, thousands of child soldiers were released from the army; however, this is a necessary step, it cannot be the only step towards re-integration. Adequate services must be provided, from mental, physical health care, to education and vocational training system to prepare them for civilian life. Thereafter, the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration (DDR) system has played a major role in providing adequate living conditions to former child soldiers through a long-term process of three basic steps, starting from disarmament, which is as essential as the other two. Former combatants are

required to turn in their weapons, furthermore, they are asked to mass destroy them all. This process has a significant value to it, and it helps children eradicate the remnants of war that was left with them. It also requires close military surveillance with extensive security preparations.

Children are reintegrated through local Interim Care Centres (ICC) that are set up by Non-Governmental Organizations such as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). These centres are designed to accommodate youths for a short period, usually weeks, and up to several months or longer in some cases. This process follows the disarmament of children and is yet another essential step into re-integration. It concentrates on moving children away from war zones and devastated villages into safe ready-made care centres. The demobilization includes the verification of children's identification and status in their former armed groups. Later, an identification card is provided for them to introduce them to their new lives as civilians.

Children at the ICC centre will receive a noteworthy range of services that will essentially cover their needs. It includes food, clothing, and medical assistance. Once their condition has stabilized, children re-join local schools or special education programs for basic reading, writing, and mathematical skills. They also receive psychosocial support activities that are tied to local use and may include art, singing, and dancing, sports, play, storytelling, and group discussions (Wessells 519).

This long process allows children to express themselves and come to terms with their past experiences. Aside from this program, children are assigned to task groups to do cooking and cleaning to gain a sense of responsibility and get accustomed to civilian

life. The next step requires a lot of energy and effort and is also a part of ICC's system service. It is the most important step of the process and essentially the most challenging, to reunite children with their families and community. Generating empathy is an important part of the foundation of community reconciliation reintegration demands a lot of extensive work and tolerance. Once the family or community is traced, a small awareness campaign must be processed to prepare them to welcome the lost child.

In Sierra Leone, people in the district of Koinadugu have created an extraordinary discourse of unity to decrease social divisions and build a common sense of identity, to help people overlook that some were members of RUF (Revolutionary United Front). The re-integration process requires the establishment of a secure environment for children, and future support by assisting them to find employment and earn an income which will enable them to function as citizens in positive social roles. Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration (DDR) programs have proved miracles for a great number of children whose stories were left untold. Only a few have had the will and the means to voice their lives and illustrate the struggles of a child soldier.

In Sierra Leone, rehabilitation processes have worked day and night to provide children with the adequate living condition and help them overcome their crisis. Among those, Beah proved a successful case of re-integration. After serving in the army for two years, Beah is released and placed in a rehabilitation program at Benin House. Although the journey was long and arduous, his will to live and with the help of the kind-hearted nurse Esther, as well as the music cassettes, marked his return to his normal life. Beah was able to outlive his suffering and dedicate his life to help other child soldiers.

In his speech, Beah emphasized the importance of looking at the big picture, and instead of focusing on child soldiers solely; the community also must be taken into consideration. Despite the countless programs of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration (DDR), and the significant force of volunteers to help former child soldiers, it proved difficult to take full control of the operation.

Unfortunately, the process knows several hindrances and among them is the very perception of it. Children's (DDR) is underestimated and thus, under-funded. Besides, disarmament is very difficult where light weapons are widely available, in post-conflict areas; weapons contribute greatly to the re-emergence of violence and even war. Assuming disarmament is successful and children are demobilized, there is a long separation between these steps and the actual re-integration of children.

Theoretically, the re-integration is the utmost essence of the operation and the ultimate aim of the process, because after all, the aim is to help former child soldier feel at home and function as civilians. Nonetheless, in practice, there is sometimes a break down between demobilization and re-integration. Some countries use demobilization to show the world and demonstrate their attempts at peacekeeping because the actual displacement of former soldiers is more credible to the world's eyes than the long uncertain and slow process of re-integration. Although re-integration has a bigger and greater impact on peacekeeping of the country in the long-term goals, this attention given to demobilization resulted in underfunding to the process of re-integration.

By the same token, Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration (DDR) programs target former child soldiers and neglect other children and also communities

which can lead to social division at a time when unity and collective mindset is most required. (DDR) programs must include all children seeking re-integration into the community because non-combatant children now choose to enter the armed forces for the sake of having the privilege of joining the program.

Furthermore, the focus on former child soldiers solely can turn them into targets. Villagers may perceive it as unjust to reward those who attacked their villages and exclude them, the victims. On the other side of the argument, assuming that demobilization and re-integration are two simple steps is misleading, because communities, where children are supposed to return to, are often disrupted, schools closed, families displaced, and livelihood was disturbed. (DDR) programs must take into consideration that the transforming of an entire system is required instead of taking a bunch of children and put them back into what is there.

On another point in the discussion, one important thing the (DDR) usually neglects is the cultural difference. Many communities believe in the group rather than the individual. They understand that child soldiers have suffered because of the war and are mostly forced to commit their crimes, but also the community has suffered as well in poverty, inadequate housing and sanitation, disrupted health and education facilities. Therefore, assisting child soldiers alone can bring more damage than the greater good. Some arguments claim that rehabilitation centres should be viewed as a last resort and are not entirely necessary in all situations.

Moving on, another problem that arises at the discussion of the (DDR) program's credibility is the neglect of female child soldiers. Women and girls have been invisible at

all levels and thus, are being neglected by the world community. In Sierra Leone, (DDR) programs set the qualification to join the program that was unjust to females. It included that the children must demonstrate their abilities to disassemble and reassemble an automatic weapon, which was not mostly used by girls during their time with the armed group. Not many girls have assumed combat roles; hence, it was impossible to join the rehabilitation programs.

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration (DDR) programs should include a section dedicated to assisting female former soldiers and provide equal support with extra sensitivity. Indeed, the impact of war on girls is far different from it on boys. Yet, too little research has been conducted to analyse the situation of girls and decide the approach that better fits girl soldiers. The need for research is significant, and perhaps greater regarding the prevention of future child soldiering.

Beah recalls the world of a wise man as well as his caring grandmother. “We must strive to be like the moon” (Beah 29). The moon symbolizes the good nature. His grandmother told him that one must always be on their best behaviour, because no one grumbles when the moon shines. Beah took it upon himself to always look at the moon and keep himself in check. He believed in a better tomorrow for all child soldiers and argues against the idea that former child soldiers are a lost generation, “children have the resilience to outlive their sufferings, if given a chance” (Beah 204).

Child soldiers are victims of adults’ long-lasting clash. Nevertheless, these innocent children have committed unforgivable crimes against humanity. Some believe that children must be punished for what they did, while others argue that there must be

mitigation to sentencing former child soldiers. All in all, the child soldier's phenomenon will continue to haunt this world as long as wars and conflicts continue to merge in their lives.

6. Mitigating Former Child Soldiers Sentence

Child soldiers are spread around the world in various regions, recruited to serve in different roles from porters, informants, guards, and most likely frontline combatants. Child soldiers grow up surrounded by all kinds of violence and savagery. Moreover, aside from witnessing acts of killing and abduction, they are required to participate in these acts as a ritual to officially join the force. They are exposed to a series of mental, physical, and sexual abuse, and are forced to drugs and alcohol to get more daring. Ultimately children adopt the mindset of the army group and let its principles sink in that they no longer regard human life or sympathize with victims of such horrendous crimes.

A huge number of these children are slowly, but surely transforming into the next generation of militia leaders. They might become responsible for future savagery against humanity and perpetrators of genocide. Nevertheless, these children are still victims of indoctrination done by adults. Therefore, there's a huge coalition for mitigation in sentencing former child soldiers. This movement specifies that the court should consider mitigation even for crimes committed as adults. Arguably, the psychological studies of childhood trauma clarify that the violence that the children witness at an early age contributes greatly to their vulnerability to mental illnesses, and thus add to the probability of committing crimes as adults. Constant exposure to violence might be perceived by children as a norm since they lack a sense of morality and judgment.

By the same token, the case for mitigation to sentencing children who experienced trauma is not entirely new and has been used before to reduce sentences for these individuals. Nonetheless, these cases treated child soldiers rightfully, as victims only when they were released from the army while they are still children. Their emblem as victims falls as they enter adulthood even though it is not arguable that their early exposure to violence has a profound impact on their adult's actions.

It is necessary to specify that the mitigation for sentencing child soldiers should, or need to consider these factors when sentencing adult former child soldiers. Most research about the mental illnesses impact on child soldiers has been conducted on individuals who left the army while still young. Therefore, it is hard to determine the impact of the continued activity in armed forces on the soldier's mental and moral development. In short, mitigation cases work usually for young individuals who cannot be held responsible for their actions. These researches shed light on the effects of violence on child soldiers and their correlation with future crimes as adults.

While children everywhere experience some levels of trauma and abuse, it is fairly moderate compared to what child soldiers undergo through their time of service. Regardless of their roles inside the armed forces, children witness and are subjected to various levels and forms of violence that may include beatings, torture, sexual assault, and forced intake of drugs and alcohol. Aside from being forced to commit the acts of abuse towards younger or other children which can further deep down their trauma and increase the probability of their minds snapping and losing control over themselves.

Some arguments against the mitigation suggest that children are initially forced into these acts of savagery, yet these children themselves confess to starting to enjoy these acts of harming others and celebrating their accomplishments. As one child in Sierra Leone said, “I didn’t have the mind to kill someone initially ... but later on I enjoyed the wicked acts” (Seyfarth 14). The constant encounter with violence and abuse will numb the children’s senses and the commitment of these acts will eventually sink in and adjust in their minds,

I was in an ambush and bullets were flying back and forth, people were shooting. I didn’t want to pull the trigger at all but when you watch kids ... being shot and killed and ... dying and crying and their blood was spilling all over your face you just moved beyond, something just pushed you and you start pulling the trigger (Seyfarth 9).

In fact, an individual cannot be deemed guilty unless they possess the mental capacity for culpability, which, is not the case for children who are less culpable than adults. The United states Supreme court held that “it was unconstitutional to impose the death sentence for crimes committed when the perpetrator was less than eighteen years old.”(Seyfarth 15) Thus, this is still by all means applicable to the case of child soldiers “[t]here would seem to be no disagreement that almost all of these child soldiers are a great deal less than fully culpable for the actions they might be charged with, and ... are more appropriately viewed as victims than as perpetrators” (Seyfarth 16).

However, the real issue starts that these individuals were abducted at a young age and failed to leave the armed force until adulthood. Even though the psychological impact plays a great role in their behaviours, it still does not affect their culpability as adults. In fact, children as well commit these acts in a conscious state of mind and

sometimes purposefully. Therefore, it is justified to say their culpability must be lessened. Since mitigation is based on specific characteristics of the individual in question, such cases include an individual showing signs of remorse, responsible for a family, or particularly young at age. Furthermore, some individuals choose to seek treatment and atonement. These cases might be reduced from the death penalty to life in prison according to the severity of its nature. Nonetheless, personal mitigation is necessarily fully accepted by all sides.

There has been strong resistance in the United States against the claim of the 'rotten social background' defence. Professor Paul H. Robinson argues that it is not enough of an excuse to alter the views of the judges. He also claims that mitigation will weaken the credibility of criminal law and destroys its principles of justice. Besides, he predicts that future criminals will fantasize about being relieved of their crimes' punishments because of their background which will crush the purpose of incapacitating dangerous individuals. Lastly, he ends his argument by pointing out that many people experience abuse and violence, but it is a standard for becoming criminals. (Seyfarth 18).

On the other side of the argument, these claims are not entirely applicable to the child soldier cases. The background defence is not meant to be an excuse as the professor names it, because it does not change the fact that they are guilty, but instead, it lessens their punishment. Furthermore, comparing the experiences of people in the developed world to those of child soldiers who are constantly at wartime is significantly misleading. Additionally, mitigation to sentencing former child soldiers is meant to decrease slightly in the length and severity of the punishment, not cancelling it. This will not destroy the

purpose of incapacitating dangerous individuals. Judges also can determine if an individual is too dangerous to be released early and contain them.

However, some children are not willing to express regret or apologize which is far worsening this plea. Further research is urgent, to determine the interrelation between the psychological and moral development of these children and their mental health and future. The studies will enable the international community to better judge and treat the unique victim-perpetrator hybrids at sentencing.

Regardless of their roles, child soldiers are subjected to a constant rush of aggression and violence that may include all or some of the following: regular beatings, torture, severe punishment, sexual assaults, forced intake of drugs and alcohol, and most of the times are forced to inflict harm on others that may even reach killing. Child recruitment is not a new phenomenon. Ultimately, they are an easy target for recruitment by war commanders.

Children are not fully mentally developed and their sense of morals is quite under-developed. Therefore, it is hard for them to determine the right and wrong. Thus, they usually act upon imitation and guidance of their caretakers, or parents. Child soldiers, who lost these privileges, find themselves shifting attention and minds towards the new source of authority, which are their commanders. Therefore, they follow their orders and imitate them under the impression of doing what is normal for others. Children are also a cheap alternative to expensive adult soldiers besides being available. Warlords find the recruitment of children more beneficial on many levels. Furthermore,

the availability of light weapons enables these children to become true contenders on the stage of the war, and as dangerous as an adult fighter.

Children, however, are very sensitive and vulnerable to war and violence, and the continuous oppression they undergo during the time spent with armed forces leave permanent scars on their mental, physical, and moral aspects. These children might feel lost and no longer accepted into life before the war. The constant violence leads them to forget themselves and what they used to be like. And soon, they adapt to their new lives and adjust themselves to it.

Exploring the autobiography of Ishmael Beah; *A Long Way Gone: Memoir of a Boy Soldier* reveals that the war had made children into ruthless killing machines who can no longer identify themselves. Beah describes this feeling, Beah believed in his capability to rewrite his fate and regain his peaceful life with the constant help of the people at the rehabilitation centre. Thanks to nurse Esther and his new family, Beah was able to re-integrate himself as a functioning member of society.

The re-integration of former child soldiers attracts much attention as the child soldier phenomenon is gaining more sights from the world stage. Even though there are a lot of hindrances concerning community, funding, and child soldiers themselves, but Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration (DDR) programs continue to work towards the aim of preventing further recruitment and saving children. Lastly, there has been a wide-ranged coalition demanding to consider mitigation at sentencing former child soldiers to lessen their sentences and provide better circumstances for these children. Personal mitigation is being debated by various voices; yet, it is not new or

uncommon. Thus, these children find their hope in these coalitions and look up to a better future, for both children and their communities.

CONCLUSION

War has devastated the world ever since life was blown into it. Constant clash for land, resources, and authority has devoured the remaining bit of sympathy among human beings and destroyed the joy of the very experience of meeting people. War knows no mercy, apathetic to all living beings and the latter have proved nothing but their inability to live at peace with forty-plus active conflicts going around the globe causing much greater destruction of human nature and how they perceive life.

Yet, what differentiate the contemporary eulogized wars of those of ancient times is the emerging young enemy forces of child soldiers. Without fathoming the forthright images of the abhorrent savagery, a man can master, and led by the impression of fighting for a cause. Child soldiers join the armed forces sometimes at free will for food, safety, and power. Other times children are forcefully abducted into the army. Regardless, children face the same fate as they enter the armed group and that is of extreme oppression and severe violent atmosphere. They undergo various types of mental and physical torture, including regular beating, physical or/and sexual abuse, threats, starvation. This horrid experience can cause children to develop severe kinds of trauma and depression.

Furthermore, in some countries such as Sierra Leone, children are ordered, under the threat of death, to kill a family member or one of their communities to pass and become a member of the force. Needless to say, the violent surroundings in which the children grew up contribute greatly to furthering the traumatic disorders and fuel the desires for aggressiveness and revenge. This study has concluded that the psychological

impacts of war and violence are the first indicators of future criminal tendencies. Because as mentioned before, children adopt the mindset of the group and perceive violence as a norm, thus adjusting their bodies and minds to be apathetic towards harming others. Some children confessed that after some time, they began to enjoy killing, which demonstrates how their identities before wartime were completely lost.

After witnessing the devastating civil conflict in Sierra Leone that lasted more than ten years, Beah, in his novel, describes the relentless abuse endured by him and other child soldiers at the hand of the armed militia, creating lasting scars on both their bodies and their minds. Taking Freud's theory as a guide, a detailed assessment of the traumatic effects of war on children is carried out by explaining the numerous post-traumatic wounds that have appeared on former soldiers.

These conditions include some, if not all, of the following: post-traumatic stress disorder, intense nightmares, frequent flashbacks, social anxiety, and severe major depression. The research also indicates that the persistent harassment and violence with which the children have grown up, greatly correlates to their adult attitudes and increases the likelihood of their criminal tendencies. In short, former child soldiers are likely to become potential warlords.

This research referred to Beah's memoir as a case study for the mental and moral disruption caused by the war on child soldiers. Beah developed a sense of isolation and apathy towards other people. He suffered from constant nightmares and realistic flashbacks that haunt him while he is fully conscious. According to the findings, Freud explained this as the victims do not experience the traumatic events consciously; and

therefore, they seem unharmed. Nevertheless, the repressed traumatic past eventually returns to haunt the victims who return to that point in time in forms of nightmares and flashbacks. Freud termed the period between the two events as 'Latency'. He also described that these memories might cause the victim to be repressed in that particular time and he termed this case as 'melancholia' or they might help the victim feel redemption and he termed it 'mourning'.

These symptoms remerged as a result of the time children gradually had to reflect on their experiences, to learn, and to recognize their past. Beah acknowledges his trauma and understands that the only way to break through is to face himself and move on. Beah begins to reflect about his experience as part of his rehabilitation work. He also acknowledges that his trauma is part of him. As such, learn not to overlook, but to cope with it.

Therefore, most child soldiers, including Beah, welcome the chance to leave the army behind and start anew. Following the rehabilitation programs offered by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and various organizations towards a better future for children. Disarmament, Demobilization, and Re-integration (DDR) programs are spread all around the conflict areas and are working quite hard to help former child soldiers reunite with their families and communities.

The process of reintegration includes the production of a stable atmosphere for children and future assistance by encouraging them to find jobs and earn an income that will allow them to act as civilians in significant social positions. The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs have shown wonders for a vast

number of children whose stories have not yet been told. Just a few had the will and the means to articulate their lives and to demonstrate the hardships of a child soldier.

Despite the shortcomings of these programs that are regarding funding, miscommunication, and the range of focus, they proved quite successfully that, children may and will outlive their suffering if given a chance. Hence, former child soldiers fall into the category of traumatic individuals who deserve mitigation at sentencing in the criminal court. Former child soldiers need to be addressed as victims before perpetrators and have their penalties reduced to some extent. Child soldiering continues to exist today. These children seek faith in these coalitions and look forward to a brighter future for both children and their families.

There might be a child soldier next to everyone without them knowing. Lastly, these children need and must live as children, not soldiers. The war zones are lurking with the smell of rotten humanity, this is nowhere for a child to grow up in. The horrid consequences of slaughtering innocence out of children end up being engraved in their memories and however they move on, their bodies still remember the fear, the terror, and the horror of war. Further studies need to be discussed into the probability of preventing the child soldier phenomenon, which caused a huge collision between war and childhood.

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الملخص

لقد انبثقت من أصل الحروب ظاهرة مريبة مثيرة للجدل الواسع والتي هي انضمام الأطفال إلى ساحة المعركة. أطفال تتراوح أعمارهم ما بين السادسة والخامس عشر. يواجه الأطفال صغيرهم وكبيرهم أشد أنواع الظلم والتعذيب من ضرب وتعنيف وقتل واعتصاب. وقد تمت دراسة هذه الظاهرة بغرض فهم طبيعتها وأسبابها وتوصلت النتائج إلى أن تجنيد الأطفال يرجع إلى قلة الموارد والبالغين. وأيضاً بسبب كثرة عدد الأطفال وسهولة السيطرة عليهم. وقد استسقى هذا البحث من نظريات الطبيب المعروف سيغموند فرويد في علم النفس ليسلط الضوء على نتائج الحرب القاسية على نفوس الأطفال. وكانت النتائج كالمتوقع ذات منحنى سلمي. فقد عانى الأطفال من اكتئاب حاد ونفسية مهزومة. بالإضافة إلى ميول عنيفة وكوابيس مزعجة ترافقهم طوال حياتهم. انطلاقاً من نظريات فرويد فإن الضحية لا تعيش التجربة القاسية في حينها بل بعد مدة على شكل كوابيس تبدو حقيقية. وقد أطلق عليها اسم المرحلة الكامنة وقال إن الضحية إما أن تبقى عالقة في تلك اللحظة الزمنية إلى الأبد والتسمية العلمية لهذه الظاهرة حسب فرويد هي الملتخوليا أو انها تصل إلى تحرير نفسها وقد أطلق عليها فرويد تسمية الهجاء. تم تطبيق هذه النظريات النفسية على كتاب شهير والذي هو لب هذا البحث. قام إسماعيل بيا بتقديم كتابه 'ذكريات فتى جندي' من أجل مستقبل أفضل للأطفال لتشجيعهم والكبار إلى اللجوء إلى برامج إعادة الدمج المتخصصة في إنقاذ أطفال الحرب وإعادتهم إلى عائلاتهم ومجتمعاتهم إن وجدت. تواجه هذه البرامج عدداً من المشاكل لكنها لا تزال تتقدم وتحصد صيتاً واسعاً حول العالم. وقد حدث نتيجة ذلك ظهور عريضة تدعو إلى تخفيف عقوبات الأطفال الجنود الذين تركوا القوات المسلحة. وكذلك تروجو العريضة من الناس أن ينظروا إلى الأطفال نظرة الضحية بدل الإجرام.