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*Moses, Citizen & Me* by Delia Jarrett-Macauley: A Novel about Child Soldiers, Dealing with Trauma and the Search for Identity

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1. Introduction

This master paper will analyze Delia Jarrett-Macauley’s debut novel *Moses, Citizen & Me*. Jarrett-Macauley, a British writer with a Sierra Leonean background, chose her motherland as the setting for her novel. *Moses, Citizen & Me* is at first glance a narrative about a family coping with the aftermath of Sierra Leone’s civil war (1991-2002). The protagonist of the story, Julia, leaves London to visit her uncle Moses in Sierra Leone. The reason for her departure is a disturbing phone-call from Moses’ neighbour Anita, who informs Julia that her Auntie Adele is dead and begs her to return to her homeland. Once Julia arrives in Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone, she discovers that during the civil war, Adele was killed by a child soldier, namely by Adele’s own grandson Citizen. Though living in the same house again, it is not easy for Citizen and Moses to communicate with each other after everything that has happened. “Torn by distance, communicating with signals and gestures as cold as serial numbers, they had passed the days until Uncle Moses called for me” (80), Julia tells the reader. However, Julia steps in and tries to reconcile Moses and Citizen, not only with each other, but also with their inner selves and with the past. Anne Whitehead argues, that “[t]he family narrative thus comes to stand as a microcosm for the broader social difficulty of post-war reconciliation in Sierra Leone” (242).

In this respect, it is not surprising that, in 2006, Jarrett-Macauley won the Orwell Prize for *Moses, Citizen & Me* and, thus, received “Britain’s most prestigious prize for political writing” (“About the Prize”). Firstly, Sierra Leone is well-known for its political history. Its colonial past as well as its civic war conflict with its consequent atrocities have been extensively discussed by scholars. Secondly, the recruiting of children during the civil war has attracted a lot of attention. In fact, during the past decade, the awareness of the phenomenon of ‘the child soldier’ has fairly increased in the humanitarian discourse and in the media. It has been estimated that worldwide 300,000 children are active as military combatants
Alexandra Schultheis argues that “the development [...] of a growing market for the stories of child soldiers in literature and film” strikes even more (31). She mentions the rise of different fictional and non-fictional publications of African child soldier narratives in literature (31). The best known examples are probably Ishmael Beah’s autobiographical novel _A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier_ and Uzodinma Iweala’s novel _Beasts of No Nation_, but _Moses, Citizen & Me_ is certainly also one of them. Schultheis also brings up the ongoing popularity of the activist organization Invisible Children (38). Not only the film _Invisible Children: Rough Cut_ received a great amount of attention, but also the organization’s most recent campaign _Kony2012_ has become known in the entire world. A short film about Joseph Kony, leader of the Ugandan rebel group Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), was released with the intention to make him (in)famous for the atrocities he committed against the Ugandan population, and in particular against the many children which have been abducted into his rebel army. The ultimate goal of the campaign is to arrest Kony by the end of this year. Due to the massive use of social networking sites, the short film got spread throughout the world in no time.

Stories of the massive suffering of child soldiers, in particular African ones, have never reached us before as they do now. We abhor the thought of those innocent children being abused for political and military goals, being abducted and separated from their family and being forced to kill. However, David Rosen states in _Armies of the Young_ that there is “a much more complicated picture” (1) and that the image we get through the one-sided depiction of the media and humanitarian organizations is leaving out a great deal of information.

_No simple model can account for the presence of children on the battlefield or the conditions under which they fight. The specifics of history and culture_
shape the lives of children and youth during peace and war, creating many
different kinds of childhood and many different kinds of child soldiers. (132)

One of the examples Rosen uses to support his statement, is that of Sierra Leone’s child
soldiers. Although the West African country is considered to be “the poster-child case of the
modern child-soldier crisis” (2), he argues that it is a very distinctive case because of the
country’s unique past and culture. Using Sierra Leone as a model case, he wants to show how
complex the child soldier problem actually is (2). Since the setting of Moses, Citizen & Me is
in Sierra Leone, it is useful to get an overview of the country’s history and culture. This will
be briefly discussed in the first chapter of this master paper. Although the West-African
country has an interesting past, of which many aspects can be discussed, here, the focus will
be on the impact of the Atlantic slave trade, Sierra Leone as a former British colony and some
features of the civil war. Several images in Moses, Citizen & Me can be linked to Sierra
Leone’s historical, political and cultural facets and these will also be mentioned in the first
chapter.

The third part of this master paper will be devoted to the child soldier matter. There
will be concentrated on what the concepts ‘child’, ‘childhood’ and ‘child soldier’ constitute in
the humanitarian discourse. Additionally, a brief synopsis of the law regulations concerning
war will be given, of which the focus will be on child combatants in war. Several scholars
have levelled criticisms against the portrayal of child combatants. They are mostly depicted as
victims, because they were abducted or forced by adults to engage in a war conflict.
Consequently, their active role in the war conflicts is often ignored. They are not seen as
perpetrators, and their political agency and possible responsibility are disregarded because of
the belief in the children’s innocence. Especially the criticisms by David M. Rosen, who is an
American professor of law and anthropology, will be discussed. The third chapter will also
concentrate on the reintegration process of child soldiers, and in particular on that of Sierra
Leone. Finally, everything which is discussed in the third chapter will be applied to Jarrett-Macauley’s novel. The focus will be on how the different child soldier characters are represented in the novel. Both David Rosen and Anne Whitehead have claimed that the child soldiers in Jarrett-Macauley’s novel are merely represented as innocent beings. With their arguments as a foundation, this master paper will try to demonstrate that this is indeed the case.

In a fourth chapter the representation of trauma in the novel will be discussed. The novel’s most significant images of trauma will be brought up, and here, Judith Herman’s term “unspeakable” will reoccur several times. Additionally, the “more fantastical mode” (Whitehead 252) of the novel, namely Julia’s dream cycle of her encounters with the child soldiers and Bemba G, will be dissected. Several aspects will show how the child soldiers are able to recover from their traumatic war experiences in the Gola Forest. This will be linked to the importance of the reintegrating process in the novel. Finally, this chapter will try to show how several invigorating acts help Citizen, which constitutes the most significant child soldier character of the novel, to overcome his personal trauma. It must be noted that some of Anne Whitehead’s results of her analysis on Jarrett-Macauley’s novel will be taken into account.

The focus of the fifth chapter will be on Julia’s search for identity. This theme has practically been ignored or has not been fully analyzed in the few literary reviews of Jarrett-Macauley’s novel. The child soldier problem and each aspect that seems to come along with it, is considered to be the main subject of Moses, Citizen & Me. The great importance of this subject will not be ignored, but extensively discussed in this paper. However, a new assumption will be made, namely that Julia’s search for her identity is of equal importance in the novel. First of all, Julia’s role as the main protagonist of the narrative will be discussed. Secondly, signs of Julia’s struggle with her – both British and Sierra Leonean – background are indicated throughout the novel. Her sense of belonging concerning London and Freetown
will be analyzed, and here the relationship between Julia and her Uncle Moses will prove to be of crucial significance. Furthermore, Julia’s identity awareness will gradually evolve and attention will be paid to the catalysts in this process. A discussion of Julia’s final identity acceptance will follow. Finally, Marianne Hirsch’ concept of postmemory will be connected to Julia’s search for her identity.

Finally, the sixth chapter will give an overall conclusion of what has been discussed in this master paper on Delia Jarrett-Macauley’s novel *Moses, Citizen & Me.*
2. Sierra Leone: Slavery, Colonial Past and the Civil War

It is significant for the analysis of *Moses, Citizen & Me* to outline different aspects of Sierra Leone’s civil war, its role in the child soldier issue and its history in general. The prologue of Jarrett-Macauley’s novel begins with a description of the current Freetown as Julia gets to see it.

_The place is not like everywhere. Normally as you walk through the city,[...] you can hear various greetings; some say ‘Indireh’, others ‘Buwa’, occasionally you might get a ‘Bonjour’, and many people just say: ‘Mornin, ma.’ It is a city where everyone speaks at least two languages, and meeting and greeting is not necessarily a quick and simple thing. That is how different people have lived together for a long, long time. But war came, and greeting near-strangers became a fool’s pastime._ (1)

The different ways of greeting refer to the variety of ethnicities which live in Sierra Leone. The largest communities are formed by the Temne and Mende people; but also the Krio, the Limba, the Loko, the Kono, and many more are a part of the West-African country’s population (Alie 1). Julia’s family, for example, belongs to the Krio people, who mostly live in and around Freetown. The way in which the period before the war is described in the quotation above, gives the impression that life was easygoing for the people of Freetown. However, the outbreak of the civil war brings an end to the “meeting and greeting” of everyday life and seems to change everything. Although this extract is an example of only one aspect (the way in which people greet each other) of only one place in Sierra Leone (Freetown), it seems to denote that life in Sierra Leone was of a good quality, until the war came along. Thus, the prewar life in Sierra Leone seems to be romanticized here, given that David Rosen argues that violence and war fighting “have deep historical roots” in Sierra
Leone (*Armies* 63). He writes about how different communities battled against each other during the Atlantic slave trade, looking for slaves to send overseas and to use them inland for domestic tasks. He explains that although the era of the Atlantic slave trade ended at the beginning of the nineteenth century, slavery existed until 1929 “within rural Sierra Leone” (Ibid.). He concludes that “slavery and warfare associated with slavery are not simply a dim historical memory” (Ibid.). Jarrett-Macauley often refers to Sierra Leone’s history of slavery and slavery in general. For example, when Julia sees Citizen for the first time, she sees him “munching on some tobacco like a Cuban plantation worker” (7, emphasis added). Another example is that of the description of Sierra Leone as “the home of descendants of struggle, free and freed, settlers and migrants” (16). Trying to answer Julia’s question as to why the Sierra Leonean women are “so strict”, Moses wonders whether their people “were [...] ever really free” (96). Furthermore, the child soldiers in the novel are compared to slaves when Julia and Bemba G meet for the first time in the forest and Bemba G starts a conversation:

‘And you? You here to see someone?’ ‘Yes, I was looking for some child soldiers.’ ‘Who?’ ‘Child soldiers, a group of about fifteen.’ ‘Who are they? Are they slaves?’ ‘Oh, no...sort of – yes, yes and no.’ ‘They’ve gone. All gone.’ ‘Who?’ ‘The slaves. All gone now. Listen.’ He raised his arm into the cool moist air and splayed his fingers: the movement released the sound of men’s feet trudging, diffuse voices and sibilant sea spray. The forest threw in a faint smell of salt, freshly spilled blood, coarse sweat. This stale odour form the past filled my nostrils and caused me to retch. ‘No, they’re not slaves in that sense; they are mainly soldiers, small ones...’ (85-86)

This is an example of how the past is interwoven with the present. Rosen claims that “the war recapitulated in modern form some of the worst excesses of precolonial and colonial slavery,
which transformed Sierra Leonean men, women, children, and youth into forced labourers, sexual slaves, and slave soldiers” (*Armies* 59).

Next to its history of slavery, Sierra Leone also has a colonial past. In 1808, the country became a British crown colony. Paul Richards explains how by the end of the nineteenth century the local people lost their participation in the country’s policy as “[c]olonial rule was imposed over the interior” (37-38). Alie claims that colonialism had both positive and negative consequences for Sierra Leone, but a change in attitude seems to be the most persistent negative one.

Many Sierra Leoneans imbibed Western values and developed insatiable tastes for European goods and services. They were made to believe that anything African was bad and inferior and anything European was good and superior. And sadly enough, this attitude has persisted to this day and some Sierra Leoneans continue to measure their own way of life by Western standards.

This influence is also mentioned in *Moses, Citizen & Me*. Elizabeth, Anita’s eldest daughter, fantasizes about going to England and Julia encourages her: “I promised to welcome [her] to London whenever it took her fancy. She was warming to the idea and with a light-hearted laugh asked me some questions” (21). Later on, Julia says: “Don’t you see, Elizabeth, you could have it all” (217). Furthermore, other indications of Sierra Leone’s colonial past can be found. The fact that Julia has lived in London her whole life is also a link to the colonial bond between England and Sierra Leone. When looking with Uncle Moses at pictures of the 1870s, made by J.P. Decker, Julia sees “African ladies in bustles, leaning against Grecian urns [...] many prosperous turn-of-the-century costumes, [...] brass buttons or stiff white sleeves in an African setting” (44). Rosen points out that by then, the upper-class of Freetown, which
consisted of British colonists and successful Krio people, compared the city to Athens (Armies 65). While talking about the photographer Lisk-Carew, Moses explains to Julia how the man had to take photos of “all the top men in the colonial administration and the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall” (105). Subsequently, Julia pictures the “nineteenth-century African [photographer] in their arboured grounds, making small talks, giving thanks for their patronage, witty, erudite, conscious” (105-106). Other examples are the British “Good Housekeeping magazine[s] from the 1960s” (11), of which Adele had many; Aunt Sally’s “colonial-style house in Murray Town” (96); and Moses being invited by the Commonwealth to take photographs for a forthcoming exhibition “to demonstrate the richness and variety of photography in a number of countries within the Commonwealth” (69).

A ‘product’ of Sierra Leone’s past is the lingua franca Krio. When the British started colonizing Sierra Leone, they were strongly against slavery. According to Alie, it was the British navy’s task to stop and capture slave ships. The freed slaves, also called “Recaptives or Liberated Africans” (Alie 66), were then brought “from the United States, Nova Scotia, and Britain” (Beah 20) to Freetown. Due to the need for communication between the many different ethnicities and cultures, a new language came into existence. Alie writes that “the Recaptives never assimilated [...] [British] culture completely. They made certain cultural selections which eventually produced a new culture – that of the Sierra Leone Krio” (78). In 1964, three years after Sierra Leone had gained independence, Thomas Decker, a “Sierra Leonean playwright and political figure” (Caulker 208), translated Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar into a Krio version called Juliohs Siza. Caulker claims that Decker’s creation of Juliohs Siza “amounts to both an assertion of a sovereign linguistic identity after having gained independence from England [...], as well as an appropriation of the powerful democratic message carried by the political legacy of Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar for a newly independent Sierra Leone” (208). The play is also integrated in Moses, Citizen & Me.
Bemba G, who guides the child soldiers in Julia’s imaginary rainforest adventure, lets the children perform Decker’s *Juliohs Siza*. Anne Whithead argues that, to a degree, Jarrett-Macauley assimilated *Juliohs Siza* into her story, because it shows how “the play’s warning” became real for Sierra Leone (256). Democracy did not get a chance in the country. Only a few years after the independence, the state consisted of a single political party. Caulker states that

> [a]fter the election turmoil of 1967 and the coup of 1968 Sierra Leone would transition to one-party rule in 1968 under the APC [, or the All People’s Congress,] and Siaka Stevens, and would remain a one-party state until 1991 when free elections were held for the first time since the 1960s. Sadly, these elections in 1991 were followed by a decade-long civil war waged by those who feared the damage that the democratic process would do tyranny of hegemony. (222)

Like Decker made the translation to convey a message, Jarrett-Macauley uses *Juliohs Siza* to refer to Sierra Leone. It seems as if she is giving a summary of the play, but in fact she is referring to the political instability and the run-up to the civil war, which can be deduced from the first and last sentence of the following extract:

> *Our tale begins in a beautiful land, a land inhabited by free and brave people though some have slave ancestors. To a city sore from internal strife, where warring, shifting groups never rest, returns a victorious general, famous both at home and abroad. The common people swell to honour this ruler supreme, celebrating their great good fortune. But among those in the body politic the mood is different – they plot, they meet at night and plan his demise. They scheme to be rid of him with clever speeches and devious ways. Unnatural*
happenings! Uneasy alliances! Some claim exalted motives for their actions. Others hunger for power, long for equal glory. What results is a bloody end; the general’s demise. Then the stage is set for a long civil war, defeat and the death of thousands... (148)

In *Moses, Citizen & Me*, Sierra Leone’s civil war is described as “a decade of internecine bitterness” and “one of the most vicious [...] of our time” (5). In 1991, the rebel army Revolutionary United Front (RUF) wanted to bring down Joseph Momoh and his APC-government and install a democracy consisting of more than one political party (Richards 5). However, the RUF’s political agenda lost its “credibility” in the eyes of the Sierra Leonean populace, due to the “mercenary terror and looting” (Ibid.). Although the rebel army grew out of a fundamental student group, it became “one of the worst agents in terror in contemporary Africa” (Rosen, *Armies* 60). The Sierra Leone army, also a key armed force of the civil war, opposed the RUF. However, the army was not strong enough to overcome the rebel forces, due to an already weakened status (Ibid. 83). Other fighting forces opposing the RUF were, for example, the Kamajohs, the Tamboro or the Donsos. These were a part of the Civilian Defense Forces (CDF), “a loose amalgam of independent ethnic militias and self-defense [sic] groups” (Ibid. 82). Although the most child combatants were a part of the RUF, children were also employed in the CDF and Sierra Leone’s official army. In his book *Fighting for the Rainforest*, Paul Richards gives a detailed explanation of the RUF’s involvement in the war and, thus, an analysis of the civil war in general. He explains how the APC’s system of patrimonialism made several people feel excluded and how violent behaviour was “justified to recover the nation for the people” (161).

As mentioned in the introduction, the large involvement of child soldiers in the RUF (and in the war in general) provoked world-wide notice. The abduction and forced recruiting of children has led to a great deal of controversy in the humanitarian discourse. According to
Betancourt, some of the Sierra Leonean child combatants voluntarily entered armed forces, but most of them were forcibly recruited, of which half of them were abducted at fifteen or younger (22). Rosen slams the “[h]umanitarian and media accounts” for not considering “the RUF’s origins as a political youth movement” and Sierra Leone’s own responsibility in the endorsement of youth aggression (Armies 83).

The seeds of civil war were sown in the prewar peacetime politics that mobilized large numbers of children and youth in the years following Sierra Leone’s independence in 1961 and turned them into political thugs. Youth violence was encoded into the normative structure of everyday political competition in Sierra Leone. Its legitimatization opened the door to unrestrained bloodshed. (Ibid. 59)

The combination of youth organizations already playing an important role in society (e.g. the Poro), economic crisis, poverty, political corruption, and the need for schooling and jobs is what led Sierra Leonean youth to become “alienated” (Ibid. 80). The RUF took advantage of this and “recruited dislocated [...] youth from many segments and strata of Sierra Leone society into the political struggle for power and resources” (Ibid. 84). The country’s most important resource is diamonds, which can be mainly found in the Kono District. In Jarrett-Macauley’s novel, Sierra Leone is indeed described as “the land of gold and diamonds” (16). Richards explains how the RUF made use of Sierra Leone’s forest regions for their camps to instruct the child soldiers. The “bush school” initiated the children “from childhood to adulthood” into the RUF, and was believed to serve as a substitute for education (29-30). Jarrett-Macauley makes a reference to this in her novel: the child soldiers have to “listen to a lecture” by Lieutenant Ibrahim in the bush, which is described as “the day [on which] childhood finished” (52). Further on, the same is repeated, but in a different way. By claiming that the child soldiers “need an education” (89), Bemba G also instructs them in the Gola
forest. However, he does not want to transform them into good fighters, but he wants to prepare the children to move back into society (Whitehead 253).

Ultimately, Rosen states that Sierra Leonean youth becoming involved in the fighting, was nurtured by the country’s “particular history and culture” (Ibid. 58). A few extracts in Moses, Citizen & Me can be linked to Rosen’s claim. For example, Jarrett-Macauley makes several allusions to Sierra Leone’s corrupt political life and how that was a part of the run-up to the civil war, in which “at any time [...] some five thousand children were serving a soldiers, fighting on all sides of the war” (Ibid. 61). “[I]n the early 1970s” (110), Moses gets into contact with Harris, a politician, who asks him to take “government photos” (112). Although at first, Moses feels “a surge of enthusiasm about his project” (113), he ends up fooled by Harris’ nice words. Harris promises him “money up front”, “benefits” and “[a]ll pros, no cons” (116). Moses cannot refuse; he dreams of the possibility to “make a name for himself” (117) and he is interested in documenting the lives of “the ordinary people who made life tick” (Ibid.). However, he soon realizes that Harris and the government in general, are extremely corrupt. While Moses is promised money, the rest of the population does not even get their salary. The pictures he takes show “the president on tour, with officials in a motorcade, up-country, in Freetown making speeches, shaking hands, admiring babies, engaging with teachers and nurses, patting a small boy on the head, [and] laughing heartily at a cultural evening” (118). However, when this sort of disguise is lifted, other things can be noticed. Freetown’s “electricity was cut” (116); Miss Wright, a teacher, utters that “pay day comes and goes without paying” (118); and the doctors in the hospital are running short of resources. In the meantime, Harris tries to win Moses for him by uttering that he has “got no reason to worry” (116), he knows that Moses is on their side. This shows how corrupt the government actually is, and how exceptions are being made for people who help the government at being successful, while the rest of the population becomes disadvantaged. The situation makes
Moses feel uncomfortable and he explains to Harris that he is “not really a politics man”, but a photographer; and that his pictures “can help people” and “help them see the truth of who they are” (Ibid.). Moses finds his pictures of the government “both the most fantastic and the most winning images [...] ever taken”, but “[t]he truth appeared as a shadow on the print” (119).

Moses stepped closer to the prints and picked up a couple of them. Then he saw a faintly sketched figure hovering over the head of the president. It was the figure of a small boy holding a gun. In each print the figure appeared – distinct but soft like a breath. What shocked Moses was that he felt neither horror nor surprise. Yet knowing Harris’s eyes were upon him, he uttered a low ‘Oho.’ (Ibid., emphasis added)

This passage alludes to the role the government has played in instigating youth violence and eventually child soldiering. Moses is not surprised, because he sees it coming. He tells Julia: “I knew a child would come and disrupt my life. I did not know how” (100). The pictures show how the present, which is formed through the past, will influence the future. However, Moses tries to clean his lens and does this “so carefully that no contamination or fault could attach itself to future prints [and] [...] so lovingly that the future tears of the boy soldier [a]re gradually wiped away” (121). Mackey states that the figure of the child soldier returns in the form of Citizen and, thus, “reappears to haunt him” (239). There is another passage in the novel, in which an allusion is made to Sierra Leone’s political situation. In chapter seven, Julia goes on a “night’s journey” (122) to Bemba G’s forest compound again.

Once the terrain was illuminated, I noticed I had a large feline companion: a stealthy leopard, its pelt gleaming yellow with rosetted spots, was strolling along a thickly forested ridge above me. Usually when people around these
parts say ‘the leopard has come to town’ (*lepet don kam na ton*), they mean that problems from the rainforest have entered the city. (Ibid.)

According to Richards, the leopard symbolizes “malign, and illegitimate, political agency in Sierra Leonean life” (31). Without explicitly explaining every detail, Jarrett-Macauley shows parts of Sierra Leone’s history by inserting these kind of images in her novel. In that way, she shows that the country’s past has shaped its present and how that still has a great influence on what happens in the West-African nation and also on the lives of the novel’s characters.
3. The Child Soldier Problem

Although the recruiting of child soldiers in war conflicts occurs on a world-wide scale, the African continent has received the most attention in discussions to that effect. David J. Francis mentions that “Africa accounts for 40% of the total global estimate of 300,000” child combatants (208). In his article, he has listed a few important questions that have been raised in the on-going debate about (African) child soldiers:

[W]ho is legally/internationally/universally recognised as a ‘child’, and what constitutes ‘childhood’? How do we define a child soldier or what constitutes ‘child soldiering’? How are child soldiers recruited, and what are the motivations or reasons for child soldiering? In particular, how does this help us to understand or make sense of the current debate on voluntary versus coercive recruitment? Furthermore, how do we contextualise and categorise child soldiers, and is this the ‘new face’ of the traditional child labour practices prevalent across much of Africa? (210)

3.1. Child soldiers and the International Humanitarian Law

An answer to Francis’ first question is provided by the UNCRC’s (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) “universal definition of childhood”, which describes that a person is considered a child from its birth until it is eighteen years old (Rosen, “Child Soldiers” 296). Furthermore, states Rosen, the idea of the word child being connected to soldier is one that upsets us (Armies 1). “The first [word] [...] connotes immaturity, simplicity and an absence of full physical, mental and emotional development. The second, soldier, generally refers to men and women who are skilled warriors” (Ibid. 3). Usually, the notion of innocence is connected to children, which makes it difficult for people to imagine them as combatants who commit crimes. In this respect, the so-called ‘Straight 18 position’ was created, based on the
UNCRC’s definition of childhood. This notion prohibits anyone younger than eighteen being recruited and exploited by armed groups. This also implies that child combatants under the age of eighteen cannot be brought to trial for crimes they committed during wartime (Rosen, “Child Soldiers” 296). Several humanitarian and human rights organizations (e.g. Amnesty International, the Quacker United Nations Office, etc.) are behind this position. They hold strong objections towards the recruitment of children and they believe that the adults who forced them into soldiering should be held responsible, and should be indicted for the recruitments and for other committed crimes (Ibid.). Rosen explicated how the “International Humanitarian Law (the laws of war) seeks to make clear legal distinctions between civilians and combatants, and between so-called lawful and unlawful combatants” (Ibid. 300). Whereas civilians are not allowed to kill neither other civilians nor combatants, combatants can kill other combatants, but no civilians (Rosen, Armies 138). In addition, the group of lawful combatants exists of all those who are part of an accepted military force, e.g. of a country or a party. They are protected by the law, legally allowed to kill other soldiers in war conflicts and, thus, cannot be handled as criminals when arrested. Unlawful combatants are not considered to be “prisoners of war” when taken captive (Rosen, “Child Soldiers” 300). This group refers to insurgents and rebel groups, who are not linked to any official authority. Rosen explains that they can never be seen as lawful combatants and that they are actually no combatants at all, “because the legal concept of combatant is reserved for armed forces and groups involved in international conflicts between sovereign states” (Armies 138). Additionally, not only captive, so-called lawful child soldiers get the law’s protection, but also child soldiers who are a part of illegal combatant groups are being protected against harsh penalties, no matter which crimes they have committed (Rosen, “Child Soldiers” 300).

Taking a closer look at the different treaties which constitute the international law regarding war, Rosen finds that the Geneva Conventions of 1949 as to how people should be
treated during war, do not seem to be significant for child soldiers in particular (Armies 139). Protocol Additional I and Protocol Additional II, which were created in 1977, do include specific child soldiering rules. Both treaties “have distinguished between [...] international armed conflict (wars between sovereign states) and noninternational conflicts (civil wars, rebellions and insurgencies) and [between] younger children (below age fifteen) and older children (between ages of fifteen and eighteen)” (Ibid. 139-140). International law can be used when it comes to international conflicts, but they do not apply to civil wars and rebellions. Therefore, Rosen states that

The sharp differences in how combatants are treated in interstate conflicts and domestic conflicts spills over into the issue of child soldiers. [...] As nonstate actors, humanitarian groups are completely dependent on sovereign states to sign, ratify, and implement the treaties that encode human rights and humanitarian concerns into international law. But the political interests of states often put them at odds with humanitarian groups. States, especially in the developing world, wage a continual battle to balance the desire for international legitimacy against the zealous protection of state sovereignty. They eagerly sign and ratify international treaties because they regard them as important sources of legitimacy. But they eschew international legal instruments that undermine state sovereignty. In regard to children, this pattern of action creates both a double standard and what Jeffrey Herbst calls a “compliance gap.” States make use of double standards by promoting a stringent legal rule for child protection when it comes to suppressing rebel movements but adopting a far more relaxed standard in regulating the recruitment and use of children in state armed forces. (Ibid. 141)
Concerning the age for the recruiting of children, Protocol Additional I expects that all possible steps should be undertaken by states and privileged rebels to not let children younger than fifteen directly involve in hostilities. Furthermore, both lawful and unlawful child soldiers under the age of fifteen are protected by the law and people below the age of eighteen cannot be sentenced to death for their committed offences. Rosen claims that Protocol Additional I consists of a rather “weak language” (Ibid. 144). Protocol Additional II contains the same regulations as the first one, but, says Rosen, “[t]he key difference is that Protocol Additional II creates a blanket ban on recruiting children under age of fifteen and on their participation in hostilities in any way” (Ibid., emphasis added). The 1998 Rome Statute is considered to be a major development in barring the use of child combatants, because it “comes closest to establishing a universal legal standard” (Ibid. 145), which can be applied to both international and noninternational warfare. However, it only focuses on the recruitment of children younger than the age of fifteen and it does not question children’s criminal responsibility (Ibid.). With the Optional Protocol, the age limit for recruiting children was raised from fifteen to eighteen and it “invites the collective international suppression of rebellion by all parties to the treaty” (Ibid. 146). Despite this change, the Optional Protocol is much alike in language as Protocol Additional I. However, Rosen argues that the limit of eighteen has made it more difficult for recruiters to keep up so-called uncertainties about the age of younger child soldiers (Ibid. 145).

3.2. The Depiction of Child Soldiers in the Humanitarian Discourse: Criticisms

Several scholars have levelled various criticisms against these law regulations. For example, Rosen objects to the generally accepted description of what childhood represents, because there is no proof for a universal model of childhood whatsoever. He takes his argument further in suggesting that anthropological studies do put forward a correct interpretation of what childhood can be. They show that “a multiplicity of childhoods, each culturally codified
and defined by age, ethnicity, gender, history, location and so forth [exists]” (“Child Soldiers” 297). Francis, who particularly focusses on Africa, shares the same idea. He claims that the “Western-based definition” (222) of childhood does not correspond with how it is perceived by most African societies. Thus, context is regarded as highly important when talking about what childhood constitutes. According to Rosen, the overall child soldier problem has become inherent in the “politics of age” (Armies 10), which is “central to the competing agendas of humanitarian groups, sovereign states, and the United Nations and its constituent agencies, and it brings them into complex struggles over the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, the ideological and political manipulation of the concept of ‘childhood’, and the definition of who should be considered a ‘child soldier.’” (“Child Soldiers” 296)

According to Abbas, children are being recruited by rebel groups because they are successful at their soldiering duties and because they are practically inexpensive to employ, “but also because their limited psychological development means that they can be manipulated more easily than adults” (40). The humanitarian discourse mostly displays the abduction and forced recruitment of children, without paying much attention to those who joined rebel groups by themselves. This would have to do with the humanitarian scholars’ depiction of the innocence and helplessness of child soldiers, which is also being attacked by Rosen (Armies 16-18). He does acknowledge that several children were indeed forcibly taken away from their family and environment, and that the consequences have been terrible for the children’s lives. However, he claims that a lot of child combatants willingly and consciously join rebel groups or other armed forces (Ibid. 17). Francis talks about ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors, which prompt children to take part in war conflicts. Poverty and social deprivation are considered to be pull factors; whereas personal gaining concerning the possession of weapons and, thus, power, are counted as push factors (211-213). Investigating “the controversial debate on voluntary and involuntary recruitment” (213), Francis argues that children who
chose to recruit often do not have any other choice. For example, a “study on both Liberia and Sierra Leone reveals that what may appear as ‘voluntary’ recruitment is only a form of lack of any alternative” (214). Michael Wessels confirms this in his article “Child Soldiers, Peace Education, and Postconflict Reconstruction for Peace”. He too lists a few possible ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. The prospect of provisions, money, health care and protection, wanting vengeance because of a dead family member and being in control, are factors which can drive or draw children into the world of soldiering (364-365). In addition, “[c]hildren also join armed groups out of disaffection with a political, social, and economic system that has failed them. Lack of educational opportunities, which children see as necessary for building a positive future, is one of the main sources of alienation” (365).

Alongside the general humanitarian view of the innocent and defenceless child, the idea of the child soldier being only a victim of what adult agents put them through in war conflicts, is being portrayed. Invisible Children’s campaign Kony2012 is an example of such a portrayal. In the short film, the atrocities of what happened and are still happening in Uganda’s civil war are pinned to one person only, namely Joseph Kony. Indeed, he is the leader of the LRA and has committed serious crimes, which he should be sentenced for. However, the arrest of Kony will not solve everything. His arrest cannot undo the harm, nor can it fix Uganda’s state of being in one second. Furthermore, the part which other people have played in the war’s terrors are not addressed in this film, let alone not the active part which several child soldiers have taken in the civil war. The victim role of the Ugandan child soldiers is emphasised. This film, several other organizations and the humanitarian discourse in general “insist that child soldiers themselves ought to be understood as ‘victims,’ [however], the child soldier figure remains an ambiguous one” (Moynagh 41). The “criminal culpability” (Rosen, Armies 147) of child combatants is a complex issue. Whether abducted or forcibly recruited into an army, or whether the participating happened voluntarily, these
children are being drawn into something immense, of which they are not the initial instigators. However, once they become a part of an armed group, many child soldiers execute serious crimes “including innumerable acts of terrorism, murder, rape, sadism, and torture” (Ibid. 137). This calls the innocence of the children into question and makes one think about their “agency” (Baines 165). Baines wrote an article on Dominic Ongwen, a former child soldier of the Ugandan LRA, who is “the first known person to be charged with the war crimes of which he is also a victim” (164). He became a member of the LRA through abduction at the age of ten, became a devoted insurgent and ‘worked’ his way up the LRA rank ladder. Baines argues that Ongwen is both a victim and a perpetrator, and describes him as a “complex political perpetrator” (163). She explains that “the concept of complex political perpetrators [...] describes youth who occupy extremely marginal spaces in settings of chronic crisis, and who use violence as an expression of political agency. Ongwen represents a troupe of young rebels who were ‘bred’ in the shadows of illiberal war economies” (Ibid.). Rosen argues that children are actually able to make decisions, comprehend and access situations, and that they have the “capacity for rational judgement” (Armies 134).

In contrast [to humanitarian accounts], empirical studies in anthropology, history and sociology offer a new paradigm for the study of childhood. This paradigm stresses the diversity of childhood and embeds the understanding of childhood in a cultural, historical, and social context. It rejects preconceived notions of children as irrational or prelogical beings. Its starting point is the premise that children are active players in the social order who dynamically shape the world around them. (Ibid. 133)

What Rosen also criticizes, is the tendency of the humanitarian discourse to make distinctions between earlier wars and warfare going on today, the so-called “old” and “new” wars (Armies 10). Whereas old wars (e.g. the Thirty Years’ War during the 17th century) are
now considered to have been within boundaries, new wars have no limits at any level. The foundations of earlier wars were clearly spelled out; rules concerning the treatment of humans were much more accepted; geographical boundaries were not crossed; and the fixed period of a war eventually lead to obvious triumph for one of the parties. Recent wars do not seem to share any similarities and are often linked to postcolonial nations (Ibid. 11-12). According to Rosen, Graca Machel’s report *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* has had a great influence on the current view of the humanitarian discourse. It “characterize[s] modern warfare in postcolonial states as involving ‘abandonment of all standards’ and having a special ‘sense of dislocation and chaos.’” (Ibid. 12) Although he agrees that “the child-soldier crisis is the crisis of the postcolonial state”, he does not believe in rendering wars of the past into mythical history (Ibid. 14).

Nor does he believe that the growing occurrence and use of smaller, and thus, lighter weighing weapons has stimulated the expansion of child combatant. He lists a number of facts regarding such weapons, that are apparently not always taken into consideration in the humanitarian debate. First of all, he argues, many weapons have been available for decades (e.g. the AK-47 since 1949) and the weight of newer weapons has not changed that much when compared to older ones. Furthermore, some weapons might weigh less, but that does not mean they are easy to carry along. An example of such a weapon is the M-16, which is hardly used, because it is rather unmanageable. Combatants also have to carry the weight of other things than their weapons. It is hard to imagine that a smaller weapon lessens the burden that much for a child combatant. The fact that modern guns have greater firepower could imply that firing becomes easier, but there seem to be a lot of practicalities which make it much more complicated. For example, “[a] well trained soldier can perhaps fire 150 or more rounds per minute but will quickly run out of ammunition” (Ibid. 16). The last fact, which Rosen uses to support his view, is that knives and machetes were mostly used to kill people instead of
guns during several African civil wars. Although he does not deny that the use of small arms can cause horrific outcomes, Rosen concludes that the utilization of such weapons cannot be directly linked to the increasing child soldier problem (Ibid. 14-16).

3.3. Reintegrating Child Soldiers in Sierra Leone

The question of the innocence and/or guilt of child soldiers is, as said, not easily answered. Legally speaking, children who do not cross the age limit for recruitment, cannot be sentenced for their committed crimes. They are seen as guiltless victims and “are not responsible for their actions” (Ibid. 178). In reality however, it is not experienced that way. For instance, there was a gap in postconflict Sierra Leone between what humanitarian groups proposed for the further treatment of the many child combatants, and what the population, who suffered severely from rebel (and other) attacks, wanted. The Special Court was established with the notion to bring those, who were the most accountable for the war’s atrocities, to trial. Thirteen people were charged, of which former RUF-leader Foday Sankoh was one. One of the many charges against war atrocities was, for instance, the recruiting of children below the age of fifteen. Both the Sierra Leonean government and the country’s population supported the idea of bringing some child combatants to trial, because that at least could have brought some justice (Rosen, Armies 146-147). Humanitarian groups and organizations, however, did not see it that way.

Adopting the Straight 18 position, most humanitarian groups lobbied hard against prosecuting anyone who was below eighteen at the time he or she committed a war crime. Human Rights Watch, UNICEF, Cause Canada, Save the Children, and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers were among many humanitarian organizations who led the opposition. (Ibid. 147)

Eventually a decision was made:
The final agreement gave the court jurisdiction to try children ages fifteen through seventeen as “juvenile offenders” but no jurisdiction over younger children. Although these juvenile offenders could be subject to a full trial, the statute granted them the presumption of rehabilitation and reintegration into Sierra Leone society and immunized them from imprisonment. The final disposition of juvenile-offender cases fell to nonpenal institutions, including child-protection agencies, foster-care institutions, approved schools and other organizations responsible for education and vocational training. (Ibid. 148)

Instead of trying the child combatants, an alternative was created, namely the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Thus, the TRC’s task was to create an authorized account of Sierra Leone’s civil war “in the absence of any other institution’s effort to address individual criminal culpability or achieve substantive justice” (Ibid. 149). According to Rosen, not many Sierra Leonean people were pleased with this development, but it was carried through by the United Nations Mission anyway, to fulfil “the needs of the international community” (Ibid. 150). The TRC provided the opportunity for child soldiers and other combatants to come clean with what happened during the war. The goal was “to create an impartial and official historical record” (Ibid.). Although the intentions were present, the TRC was not very successful. Rosen assigns its unsuccessfulness to the low finances of the commission, the short period of time in which it operated and the fact that the testimonies were probably further from the truth than was expected. He argues that the “[t]ruth was fashioned by the victims” (Ibid. 151). Thus, it did not really matter whether the victim was ascribed as a grave war perpetrator. Neither the Special Court nor the TRC was able to attend to the criminal agency of the Sierra Leonean child combatants (Ibid. 150). Susan Shepler claims that several explanations are used by child soldiers to induce their victimization, which she calls “‘discourses of abdicated responsibility’” (199). She argues that those justifications
make it easier for the local population to accept child soldiers into their lives again and easier for the child soldiers themselves to reintegrate into society (Ibid.). That is what reintegration, rehabilitation and reconciliation programmes do after a war conflict has come to an end. Wessels argues that

> [f]ollowing armed conflict, a high priority is to reintegrate former child soldiers into civilian life, enabling them to find meaning and positive roles as civilians rather than fighters. Reintegration is a long complex process that is as much about helping children find an appropriate social place as it is about individual rehabilitation, although that, too, is important. (366)

Shepler describes the reintegration of child soldiers in Sierra Leone as problematic. On the one hand, it should have been less difficult for local communities to pardon child soldiers because of “[t]he notion of innocence that forms the basis of Western constructions of youth” (205). On the other hand, by accepting the Western youth model, Sierra Leonean youth dared losing something, namely their “political agency” (Ibid. 206). Furthermore, she claims that several communities tried to benefit from international funds, to build schools, for example. Thus, not only the child soldiers were “strategically deploying [...] youth discourses” (Ibid.).

During the war and within its aftermath, “a process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)” (Williamson 187) was applied to the Sierra Leonean (child) soldiers. It started in 1998 and ended in 2003 (Mazurana 2). According to John Williamson’s study, the majority of the Sierra Leonean child combatants could ultimately return to their homes, but he argues that the children experienced many different outcomes, of which some were positive and some negative (185). He claims that it was easier for child soldiers who had been a part of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) to re-assimilate within their local communities, because they stayed in the community’s neighbourhood during the war. Children who fought with the RUF
experienced more trouble to reunite with their homes. Williamson explains that RUF child combatants were often forced to kill family or community members, thus, they were indoctrinated with the idea that they could never return home. In addition, these children were hated amongst the people, because of their rebel attacks and all the atrocities which came along with them (189-190). Nevertheless, “98% of the children demobilized in Sierra Leone were eventually reunited with parents, close family members, or relatives, though some subsequently migrated to other areas” (Ibid. 195). Williamson sums up nine features of the DDR process, which enabled the success of reintegrating the former child soldiers:

- community sensitization;
- formal disarmament and demobilization;
- a period of transition in an ICC [, i.e. Interim Care Centre];
- family tracing, mediation and reunification;
- traditional cleansing and healing ceremonies, and religious support;
- ongoing access to health care, particularly for war-related conditions, for those in school or training;
- individual supportive counselling, encouragement and facilitation;
- and an effective collaborative approach.

This successful number of reintegrated child soldiers of course only applies to those who were in the DDR programme. According to Mazurana, only about 7000 of the 48,216 children who fought in armed forces entered such a programme (3). Several scholars comment on the fact that so few girl soldiers were involved in the process (Mazurana, Williamson, Park). Nevertheless, they too played an important role during Sierra Leone’s civil war. “Women and girls were present in large numbers in pro-government and rebel forces and were involved in a variety of activities” (Mazurana 2). Many of them had to cook and clean, spy, become the wife of a commander and carry out “sexual services” (Park 322), but they also fought, ransacked houses and killed. On the one hand, Park claims that girls are often forgotten, because they are either categorized as ‘women’ or as ‘children’. She argues that girls are both “a marginalised gender [and] [...] a marginalised age group” (316), and that when talking
about ‘children’, mostly boys are addressed. On the other hand, she suggests that the agency of girls during the war conflict should not be denied and that they should not be seen as mere “super-victims” (Ibid.).

### 3.4. The portrayal of Child Combatants in *Moses, Citizen & Me*

Anne Whitehead claims in her article that Jarrett-Macauley uncritically replicates the “discourses of abnegated responsibility” identified by Shepler, which allow the child soldier to be reintegrated once more into social and familial structures [...], but which are notably deployed by the adults rather than the children within the novel, leaving the former child combatants lacking in both social agency and political insight.” (250)

Her idea is similar to that of David Rosen, who claims that the child soldiers in *Moses, Citizen & Me* are “reduce[d] [...] to the stereotypes of human rights reporting” (“The Child Soldier” 122). Both scholars’ arguments appear to be quite convincing, because throughout the novel evidence is present that the child soldiers of the narrative are under control of adults’ decisions and, thus, maintain the innocence and victim status with which child combatants are mostly displayed in the humanitarian discourse and the media.

#### 3.4.1. Citizen: The Child Soldier with the Small Hands

Citizen, one of the main protagonists of the novel, is “a small boy” (Jarrett-Macauley 32) of only eight years old. Nevertheless, he becomes a child soldier during the civil war and kills his own grandmother Adele. “There were several bullets in her back” (2). However, it was not Citizen’s idea to murder Adele, but something that “‘the big soldier man’ had made him do” (Ibid.). This indicates that already from the beginning of the novel it will not be likely that the
agency of Citizen will be questioned. Several images confirm these suspicions. His height is only “three feet six inches from the ground” (15) and he can still be “carried [...] to bed” (18). There is one excerpt where Julia bathes him and she watches him “paddling in the water with the exuberance of a duckling” (46) and afterwards he goes to bed “clutching the hippo brush” (47), with which he played in the bathtub. These images emphasize Citizen’s childish behaviour and, thus, him acting his age.

At a certain point, Julia asks herself whether there is “any bridge back to normal childhood” (15, emphasis added) for Citizen. What exactly does she mean by the word ‘normal’? Her view of what childhood signifies was shaped in England and, thus, in the Western world, which is different from how childhood is perceived in Sierra Leone and also in other parts of the world. While looking at Moses’ pictures, she reminisces about her own childhood: “me pushing a bicycle up our road and playing under our fruit trees” (43). When she sees Anita’s youngest daughter Sara riding around on her bicycle, it makes her think of “the boys in Brixton” (21). Sara, who is nine years old, is a character which is opposed to Citizen, not only by gender, but also by experience. Although they are almost the same age, Sara does not seem to suffer from the war. She is a happy child, who draws, tells stories and pleasurably spends time working in the garden. Everything she does seems to be normal, infantile behaviour and Citizen comes across as weird, because he does not behave in such a natural way. Accordingly, Julia and Anita are very pleased to see when Sara allows Citizen to join her in her activities.

Citizen and Sara [...] were on their hands and knees planting some shoots in the earth she had dug up that morning and rearranged elsewhere. From our spying position it was obvious that this was a cooperative venture: the four hands were clearing holes, putting in the shoots, and patting down the earth. [...] Citizen
had responded to Sara’s new gardening with an enthusiasm that took us all by surprise. (45)

However, Julia rapidly senses that Sara orders Citizen to do things for her and calls it “a lesson in leadership” (Ibid.). She describes how Citizen obliges, without complaint, to everything Sara asks him to do. This occurrence might have two meanings. On the one hand, Citizen might be happy to participate in something so pleasurable and ordinary as opposed to what he experienced, that he lets Sara lead the way. On the other hand, this might refer to his time as a child soldier, when he also carried out what he was told to do by his commanders, even if that meant killing his own grandmother. This refers to Citizen’s lack of agency and, thus, to his innocence.

However, a few extracts in the book show that Citizen’s agency is being questioned, especially by his grandfather Moses. Moses is not really able to talk about what happened and he distances himself from his grandson. This is understandable, after all, to him, Citizen is the killer of his beloved wife. On one of the first days that Julia is in Freetown, she sees Citizen holding a dead bird. When Moses sees that the boy is burying the animal in their garden, he is reminded of what happened to Adele. He is clearly not astounded, because he knows what his grandchild is capable of.

Citizen [...] had placed the carcass on the kitchen table, opened a drawer and taken out a large cooking spoon. He had gone back into the yard and with the spoon began digging by the tree. Meanwhile, Uncle Moses had come back in. His gaze registered the little carcass, the boy outside and me just as one might unpleasant memories, with weariness but no particular surprise, and he had returned to his studio with a glass of water. He had not witnessed Citizen’s
return to the kitchen, *his cradling the bird*, his burying it under the tree. (12, emphasis added)

Although Moses questions Citizen’s behaviour, Julia immediately focuses on how Citizen gently holds the bird and gives it a place to rest. Thus, contrary to what her uncle thinks at that moment, she sees the innocence of the child. However, this abstract does not show that Moses has completely given up on the boy. He did allow Citizen back into the house after Elizabeth found him in the rehabilitation camp Doria. “She knew, as everyone knew, that many families resisted taking child soldiers back. [...] But Uncle Moses said: ‘Let him come, let me see his face.’ When Moses set eyes on his grandson, he could barely conceal the quaking within” (78). The “quaking within” that Moses experiences is because when he looks at Citizen, he is reminded of the fact that Adele is dead and that Citizen is the one who killed her. It does not prove that he does not believe in the child’s innocence. If he would have believed that Citizen was fully responsible for killing his own grandmother, he probably would not have let the boy stay home again. On the other hand, Moses recognizing Citizen’s blamelessness, does not mean that it is still not difficult for him to deal with what happened.

A few describing images of the boy suggest that although he may be a child, he seems to behave like an adult: “[p]erched high on the balustrade, arms akimbo, he was munching on some tobacco like a Cuban plantation worker more than twice his age” (7) and “[h]e came and went as he pleased, like an independent adult” (15). These are contrary to the images described above, but they occur in the beginning of the novel, when Julia gets her first impressions of the boy. However, these impressions are parts of an outward appearance, and after a while Julia notices that Citizen is indeed still a little child. The scene where Julia finds Citizen in his bed, surrounded by flames, is the one where she realizes this. The sentence “was I dreaming?” (48) indicates that what follows is not real and that the flames which form a light in Citizen’s bedroom are imaginary.
Gently pushing open his bedroom door, I was alarmed to see the room on fire. I rushed to his bedside. [...] But there was no crackle of burning wood, no sign of ash, no hissing of fire. The fire made no impact on the room. [...] A stray thought floated into my mind: *A child’s bedroom is adapted to his life, his imaginings, his dreams.* [...] Anita had told me about child soldiers who set fire to villages, terrifying people, killing them in their homes, in their beds. (48-49)

The italicized sentence, which is marked as one of Julia’s thoughts, suggests that the flames are a part of Citizen’s dreams, which are again based on his life. Citizen used to be one of those child soldiers of which Anita has told Julia. In fact, he was a member of the “number-one-burning-houses unit” (53). This explains why exactly flames are hunting him in his dreams. However, the flames suddenly stop. As Whitehead mentions, “the vision of the child as perpetrator is quickly extinguished, along with the flames, as Julia thinks of Citizen as ‘a small terrified boy, not as one who terrifies’” (259). Here again the innocence of the child is portrayed.

Another image of Citizen’s innocence appears when Julia goes to Doria, the camp for former child combatants. She meets Sally, who arrived together with Citizen in the camp and who remembers Citizen’s hands as being “surprisingly small” (36). The image of the small hands returns at the end of the novel, when Citizen is reliving the moment of Adele’s murder as he is playing the character Lucius during the performance of the Shakespearean play *Julius Caesar*. “He feels a gun being pressed into his hands, another gun pressed to his head. He cannot respond: his hand are small” (208, emphasis added). Whitehead argues that this sentence describes how Citizen’s responsibility for Adele’s murder is neglected, although, he was the one who pulled the trigger. Furthermore, she claims that the motif of the small hands gets another important implication when Julia is introduced to Olu, a male nurse of the reception centre where Citizen stayed before returning home after the war (259-260). Olu
talks about how a Dutch journalist wanted to know Citizen’s story, but that the boy could not speak. Instead, he “whispered into [...] [the recording machine] that he had killed his grandmother, and he fell down on the ground” (Jarrett-Macauley 218). To Anita, Citizen “said he had done it, but not with his hands” (109). Olu talks about how Citizen’s small hands were striking:

“Look at him han, tiny tiny han.” Sally pointed out Citizen’s baby-sized hands and fingers. Adam [, the Dutch journalist,] took the boy’s hands into his own and examined them. The baby fingers wrapped determinedly around Adam’s index finger. The features of the boy Citizen looked wonderfully calm, free of cares. But his fingers gripped tightly like an infant’s.’ (219)

Here, it is indicated that Citizen has the hands of a baby. During his stay in the centre, Citizen is fed milk by Olu, who also sings him lullabies about Sierra Leone. These two images are mostly associated with babies and, thus, Citizen is figuratively transformed into a baby, who needs love and kind-heartedness. He receives this in the centre and after a while Citizen’s hands start to grow bigger: “Kindness had slipped into his body like heartsease, permitting his hands to grow. Over the next few weeks, changing like molten glass forged in fire, Citizen’s hand grew big. Forgiveness came” (Ibid.). Thus, in order for Citizen’s hand to regain their size, forgiveness is necessary. In the story the growing of his hands indicate that Citizen is ready to talk to the journalist about what happened when he killed his grandmother. Citizen’s hands were not always that small, they only got smaller after he killed his grandmother. As Olu recounts to Citizen during his visit:

‘Your hands began to grow. It was when your hands had grown again to the correct size, you told Adam how after you pulled the trigger on your grandma, the hands became small. So small after that, you could never pull a trigger
again. You said you were so shamed of the small hands. They told you to raise a stick and beat a boy, but you could not lift a stick. They told you to carry weapons but they fell from your hands. Only small, small things could you carry.’ (220)

On the one hand, the small hands denoted the shame and guilt which Citizen felt. On the other hand, the tiny size of his hands refer to his innocence. The transformation from being a baby with small hands to a child with normal-sized hands corresponding his age, could indicate that he has forgiven himself and that perhaps he realizes that it was not his fault. Whitehead claims that the image of Citizen’s hands growing small after murdering his grandmother is a paradox, because Jarrett-Macauley depicts a child combatant who is not capable of fighting (260). This image returns in chapter three, when Julia watches the child soldiers do their duty under the command of Lieutenant Ibrahim. Citizen’s “ability to carry [a gun] and fire was in doubt” (Jarrett-Macauley 60) and when he was told to beat up someone with a birch, “it fell haphazardly from his hands” (63). Therefore, Whitehead concludes that Citizen’s redemption is only achievable “through a gradual erasure of the ‘soldier’” (260). Julia’s reflections on Citizen confirm this: “Citizen, wear your name with pride. Be the country boy or be the city boy. You were never meant to be a soldier, just a boy-citizen first named George” (195).

3.4.2. Other Child Soldiers

The way in which child soldiers as a group generally are perceived by the Sierra Leonean civilians in the novel, is different from the way they are each individually observed by, for example, Julia or Anita. One of the few times that the agency of child soldiers in general is called in question, is when Anita, Moses’ neighbour, gives a description of how the child combatants are seen by the people in her country, which is similar to reactions which came from the population in real-life post-war Sierra Leone. Anita utters that “[m]ost people will
not even let a child like Citizen near their house after what he’s done. They cannot stand the sight of them. They believe they are little devils” (19-20). “’They look and feel it cannot be. Who wants a child who only knows how to kill? What kind of nightmare is that? What kind, eh? If they keep these children here, is like keeping something bad in the blood. Something rotten, isn’t it?’” (20). The people see them as “the most destructive elements in society” and, more than once, they are compared to “devils”, who should be tossed “into a crypt where skeletons go to live” (78).

These descriptions change as soon as the child soldiers are perceived as individuals. The occurrence of the erasure of Citizen’s soldier side, which is mentioned in the previous chapter part, is also applied to other characters in the novel. For instance, when Julia meets Corporal Kalashnikov in camp Doria. He is an ex-child soldier, who is nicknamed that way, because he used to be in charge of the guns during the war. He explains it to Julia and the priest, who guides her: “’When I first became a soldier I had many jobs to do and I did not like it. I was always tired. I did not want to be a soldier. But then they promoted me and put me in charge of the guns.’” (37) He protected the weapons in an oil drum, of which he refused to come out for almost two months, because he did not want to give up on them. The priest introduces him to Julia as “one of our youngest” (36). The many tasks he had to do as a soldier made him tired, probably because he is so young. Being put in charge of the guns must have lightened the heavy burden for the boy. Three reasons can be given to why he did not want to give up the weapons. First, because it was the only thing he had to do, he did it with so much determination that he did not want to give up on it. Secondly, it was perhaps easier for the boy to handle with objects instead of the atrocities happening around him, that he distanced the guns from their purpose and implication. Thirdly, he might have felt more powerful because he was the protector of the guns, which made it more difficult to give up
that control. When hearing the story, Julia immediately separates the boy from the soldier he once was.

He saluted and his fingers splayed enough to show me he did not know how to salute any better. So much for the corporal’s war history. There were no guns now. The empty barrel had a couple of sticks on top. I was thinking it could be a drum, or maybe even a steel pan. It could certainly make music. The melody might be saying: *Today my colours are black, brown and grey; tomorrow they could be red, purple and yellow.* Corporal Kalashnikov could be leading a parade at the Notting Hill Carnival. (37)

As soon as the image of the guns disappears, she sees no link at all between the boy and the soldiering. She transforms the oil drum into a ‘music machine’ and she imagines the boy wearing cheerful colours instead of dull, camouflage soldier colours. Thus, she “perceives him as a caricature of a soldier who could be leading a carnival parade” (Rosen, “The Child Soldier” 120). In this case, it is the parade of the Notting Hill Carnival, which takes place in London every summer and is famous for its bright colour spectrum and its music vibes. Ultimately, this shows that Julia takes Corporal Kalashnikov away from his environment and places him in a more innocent and less harmful context.

Although Whitehead gives a few examples of how Citizen is not the only child soldier which is portrayed as lacking responsibility, she does not really provide a thorough analysis of the other child soldier figures in the novel. The only child soldiers who really exist and who Julia meets are Citizen, the girl soldier Sally and Corporal Kalashnikov. However, when Julia enters the rainforest in her “magical dream-like state” (Ibid.), she encounters other child soldiers. In chapter two and three of the novel Julia watches the child soldiers, of which Citizen is one, fight under the command of Lieutenant Ibrahim. Whitehead argues that
Ibrahim’s “calculated violence propels them into combat and killing” and that “no political understanding or motivation” is given for their actions (258). The example which Whitehead uses to underline her statement, is the one where Sesay, a newly recruited child soldier, asks Citizen and his friend Abu who the enemy is against which they are fighting (258).

‘Who is the enemy?’ ‘People.’ ‘People who want to kill us,’ added Abu. ‘Yes,’ confirmed Citizen. The boys explained that orders had to be obeyed exactly. Always do what they say – ‘exact’, not ‘more or less’. Although they did not know where they were or how they were doing, it was best to follow orders. ‘Do what they say or they will kill you.’ They wanted to be sure Sesay had understood. (Jarrett-Macauley 62, emphasis added)

There is another indication of the children’s lack of political awareness, namely when Julia watches the children being trained into soldiers. They were “lecture[d] on why they must fight for their rights and better times”, but “[s]hocked and confused, they were asking what were rights?” (52). These examples indicate that these children have no clue whatsoever as to why they are combating. This representation does not correspond with the analysis on Sierra Leonean child combatants, which Rosen makes in his book *Armies of the Young* (see chapter 2).

The only soldier who seems to have voluntarily joined the rebel forces is Lieutenant Ibrahim. It says that he is twenty years old, but that he stole a knife from a dead body “on joining the army five years previously” (53), which means that he joined the army when he was fifteen. Although it is not explicitly expressed that he willingly became a rebel, it is clear that he has done everything to rise to higher ranks: “He loved his rank, second in command of his unit; he had earned it, like everything he had had in his life” (Ibid.). Although he was still a teenager when he joined the army, he is not described as a guiltless person. He has crossed
the age of eighteen and is, therefore, held accountable for his deeds. Ibrahim is the one that beats Abu because he is “blubbery” (53) for missing his mother; he is the one that sets a village on fire; he is the one that punishes Citizen with lashes because the boy was not able to beat up some other boy; he shoots Abu’s brother Masu who started having malaria; and he obligates the child soldiers to dance so they would stop grieving over Masu’s death (Rosen, “The Child Soldier” 121). Chapter three is the only chapter in the book which portrays the hostilities and atrocities that the children have to perform as rebel soldiers. Rosen too, concludes that “despite their participation in murder, the children in the novel [...] retain their ‘innocence’ and their humanity in this war” (Ibid.).

Especially through the eyes of Julia, the reader is convinced of the child combatants’ innocence. After having witnessed the terrible scene where Ibrahim and the child soldiers set a village on fire and wage war, Julia is glad that it is over: “Away those scenes of risk and death with people screaming in terror. But wait, they were not trigger-happy snipers but half-naked kids, shrieking with fear because there was nowhere called ‘home’, no comfort blanket” (Jarrett-Macauley 67, emphasis added). There is not that much attention paid to the victims of the village, but rather to the victim status of the child combatants themselves. When in her dream Julia meets with Bemba G in the forest and an assembly is established for several child soldiers, the children’s immaturity is constantly emphasized. Hinga, who is twelve and who’s “manner suggest[s] a young adult”, is perceived as “too small” for his age by Julia (89). At first, the older the children are, the less childish they are represented. The sixteen-year-old Peter, for example, comes across as a real soldier during the first encounter in the forest. He smokes, wears real soldiering clothes and shows that he is tough by pointing his gun at Bemba G. However, Peter’s ‘tough’ mask gradually falls off. When Julia meets them for a second time, Peter complains that he had to go fighting again after their first encounter. He and the other children are tired of fighting. This again takes away any responsibility the children
might have in the fighting. Peter complains that this time, it is Julia who drove them towards the fighting: “’Where could I go? What could I do?’ asked Peter. ‘And it is your fault. You called us here and then you left us. Where would we go? All of us, where would we go, eh?’” (126). Peter even starts crying when he sees all the food that Bemba G has fixed for them. At that moment, the children express their unwillingness to kill and fight and they explain how they became child soldiers. Except for one child being a street child and having no family, all the others were forced to join the rebel army. Victor, for example, calls himself “bad” (Ibid.) because he killed people. However, his feeling of guilt is immediately suppressed by someone else who answers “[i]f you don’t kill people, they will kill you” (Ibid.), emphasising the circumstances in which child soldiers are forced to murder. Later on, when Victor tells Julia his war story, he complains that his head is “blowing up” (152). At a certain point, he says “’[m]y head gives me trouble’” (153). This can refer to the actual headaches he is having, but it is more likely that it refers to the feeling of guilt he is experiencing. His conscience is troubled. Julia tries to take his guilt away by saying that it was not his fault. Again, she takes away any agency the boy might have had.

3.4.3. The Girl Soldiers Sally, Miriam and Isata

With regard to Park’s analysis on girl soldiers, it is interesting to look at how girl soldiers are represented in Jarrett-Macauley’s novel and whether their image strokes with what is experienced and described by scholars. In his article “The Child Soldier in Literature”, Rosen argues that Corporal Kalashnikov is the first former child soldier with whom Julia meets (120). However, Rosen seems to have overlooked Julia’s encounter with Sally, the girl soldier who arrived together with Citizen in the rehabilitation camp Doria. Sally is one of the few girl soldiers who appears in the novel. Although the girl reappears in Julia’s forest dream, where she and Bemba G try to heal the child combatants, Sally also exists for real. On seeing her in the camp, Julia describes her as being “not so much a wallflower, [but] more a guerrilla” (33).
Thus, at first, Sally is not portrayed as a weak girl who is merely a victim of the civil war. Julia and Sally start talking, and Sally tells Julia how she and Citizen could reach the camp and how she became a child soldier. However, a few sentences indicate that Julia invents Sally’s story, namely: “Sally and I sat opposite one another and said nothing but exchanged thoughts” (Ibid., emphasis added) or “To my unspoken question [...] she did not answer” (36, emphasis added). The description of how Sally and Citizen reached the camp and of how Sally was abducted is written in indirect speech, which also indicates Julia’s invention of the story. Sally is portrayed as being brave, because she and Citizen dared to escape while their commander was drunkenly asleep. However, Sally’s victim status is again emphasised when Julia imagines her abduction. Sally loses her mother out of sight during a coup and she gets “pulled [...] into the war” (35).

The two other girl soldiers in the book are Miriam and Isata. Both girls are a part of the ex-child soldier forest compound created by Julia’s imagination. Isata, who is six years old, lacks any agency in the novel. She is just a sweet, little girl, who follows Miriam around. During the children’s conversation on fear, she utters that she does not know what fear is. What follows after that, is a description of what happened to her mother:

Six-year-old Isata said she did not know about fear. One morning she had been playing in her mother’s room when she heard footsteps and hid under the bed. A man entered and took all her mother’s precious things from a drawer: her golden lappa, jewellery, some china cups. When she went downstairs, her mother was lying dead in the kitchen, so Isata had gone back upstairs to play under the bed. (175)

Isata must have had some kind of fear, otherwise she would not hide under the bed. However, it must not have been a conscious fear of what was actually happening. The excerpt suggests
that Isata is too young to realize what has happened to her, because when she sees her mother lying dead, she starts playing again. Thus, of all the characters in the novel, Isata is the one who is most depicted as unknowing and pure. It is hardly imaginable that she could take part in soldiering duties.

Miriam, who lured Julia “through a door to another world” (54), is Ibrahim’s wife and has a baby. She is a representation of the many so-called “bush-wives” (Park 327). Park explains that

[g]irls were [...] either taken or given to men or boys as ‘wives’ in ‘bush marriages’ or ‘AK-47 marriages’, as they are sometimes called [...]. ‘Wives’ were sometimes given as rewards to boys or men for good fighting. Qualitative research suggests that being a ‘wife’ had some limited ‘benefits’. Becoming a ‘wife’ typically shielded a girl from sexual violence by men or boys other than her ‘husband’. Moreover, ‘wives’ would often have a more stable source of food as they would have access to their ‘husbands’’ leftovers. The ‘wives’ of commanders also exercised considerable power in camps [...]. Notwithstanding these relative ‘benefits’, girls who acted as ‘wives’ were subject to ongoing sexual violence from their ‘husbands’. (Ibid.)

In the third chapter, where the child soldiers are ‘in action’, Miriam is nowhere to be seen. She does not seem to take part in the hostilities against the village. She is only once mentioned, at the end of the chapter, when Ibrahim touches and kisses her to point out that the unit should be moving on. Thus, although many commanders’ wives had access to power, this is not shown here. On the contrary, Miriam is not that important in this scene, her only duty is to be Ibrahim’s wife. Although at first, Miriam does not seem to play an important role in the story, this turns out to be different. She is the one who leads Julia through the forest and
guides her to Bemba G and the child soldiers. She wants to play a role in the rehabilitation process. When Bemba G decides to let the children perform Thomas Decker’s *Juliohs Siza*, the Sierra Leonean Krio version of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, Miriam asks whether she too can play a role in the play. This is in contrast with the fact that so few girls were a part of the DDR process in Sierra Leone (see 3.3.). Williamson describes how some girls did not want to participate in the process, because they were either afraid or ashamed, because their husbands did not permit them to, or because “they did not want to be stigmatized by family or community members” (191). When the roles of the play are divided, Miriam ends up with the role of Brutus’ wife Portia. As Mackey (239) indicates, Portia’s role is rather small and Miriam questions whether “all the big parts [are only] for men and boys?” (Jarrett-Macauley 148). Mackey claims that “[d]espite her importance for the story, and the visible presence of her “Baby” as physical evidence of her experiences in war, because she is a girl she is not afforded the same agency as the boys” (239). However, she speaks up during the actual performance of the play, which gives her the chance to show everyone what she has experienced.

‘Here in the thigh; can I bear that with patience, And not my husband’s secrets.’

[...] Nothing in the performance had prepared them for her parade in stony-faced elegance before them, pressing in so close that the cuts on her back, upper arms and wrists were seen for what they were. It was spontaneous, nothing contrived; no theatre game brought from rehearsal, Miriam gave all the clues she could of how the act of love and the acts of war had combined.

(Jarrett-Macauley 204)

This scene refers to all the girl soldiers who did not get the equal chances as boys in the reintegration process in Sierra Leone and might be seen as a criticism against the way the DDR process in Sierra Leone failed to take the suffering of girls and young women into
consideration. The naming of Miriam’s Baby also refers to this. The baby does not get a name at first, because it is associated with the badness of the rebel forces. Julia describes Miriam as having an “undersized body” (86), which points out that Miriam is still a girl and actually too young to have a baby. After Miriam tells Julia how she was raped by two men and delivered Baby on her own, Baby gets the name Adele: “It seemed that we must be prepared to leave the forest, filled through it is with wondrous plant and animal life, and be able to travel and to explore. This had to be true for Miriam and later for Baby. And the first step in any lifetime? Be named, be somebody, not an enigma” (189). Here, Julia pleads for the acceptance of Miriam and Baby, or in general for girl soldiers who were in the same position as Miriam, to be recognized, integrated in reconciliation programs and accepted by the community even though their experience might form a taboo or a problem at first. In this way, the girl soldiers in the novel are too represented as mere victims of the civil war and of adults’ decisions. Therefore, Rosen is right in claiming that in Moses, Citizen & Me “we never get a child soldier who departs from the stereotype” depicted by the humanitarian discourse (“The Child Soldier” 122).

3.4.4. Rambo and ‘Brown Brown’

Two things which seem to help the children fight are drugs and the American film figure Rambo. In the third chapter, it is described how Citizen inserts drugs in his arm with a needle and how it is supposed “to protect them or make them feel strong” (59). When Citizen gets caught up in a fight with Sesay, Abu wonders where Citizen finds so much strength. The drug is clearly the answer here. Further on, when the child soldier assembly suddenly starts to protest against Julia and Bemba G, the children start demanding a “powder fix” (171). Although after a while, the children were very happy being a part of the assembly, the craving for drugs makes them start to protest and question Bemba G’s knowledge. This image is used to show how drugs can control the children and make them do anything, even murder people.
There is another reference in the novel to the so-called ‘brown brown’, which is “cocaine fixed with gunpowder” (Beah 121). Before the children have to get up on stage to perform the play *Juliohs Siza*, they admit that they are frightened. The feeling of fear is something which they have been experiencing since they became child soldiers. Bemba G shows them that the fear of getting on stage is different; that this kind of fear is smaller and “not at all like before” (Jarrett-Macauley 177). However, he gives them a sort of forest potion that will help them overcome their fright.

‘But I will give you something.’ Bemba G was being conciliatory. ‘Powder!’ repeated Victor. Ignoring this, Bemba G continued, ‘It is a rainforest drink [...]. The dark liquid looked delicious [...]. It was almost a mud brown, much darker than apple juice but without the ruddy glow of berries. And it seemed to guarantee satisfaction, judging by the belching that started. The child soldiers each in turn pronounced the brown drink very tasty. [...] Victor said he felt ‘very strong’. (177-178)

On the one hand, the rainforest drink has the same effect as drugs, in that it makes the children feel very “strong” and “courageous” (178). On the other hand, it does not make them restless or gives them more adrenaline. On the contrary, it calms them. It makes the children ready for their performance. Bemba G uses “a packet of [...] brown powder” for the “rainforest concoction” (Ibid.), but Julia does not know of which ingredients the powder actually exists. It is a reference to the ‘brown brown’, because this too is something which makes the child soldiers do something they would otherwise perhaps not do. To conclude, the use of drugs can be seen as another implication that the child soldiers do things by being influenced and this again stresses their guiltlessness.
The figure of Rambo also occurs in the novel. One evening, when the children are telling stories, a fight bursts out. When Bemba G tells Julia about it, he asks her whether she knows “John Rambo” (132), because that is what caused the fight. This figure refers to the film character Rambo, which is played by the American actor Sylvester Stallone in several films (e.g. Rambo: First Blood), and which is known for fighting against US’s enemies with a great violence that is supposed to be the only way to accomplish goals. In his autobiographical novel *A long way gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, Ishmael Beah describes how several Rambo-films were shown to the child soldiers, because that encouraged them to fight like the film character: “We watched movies at night. War movies, *Rambo: First Blood*, *Rambo II*, *Commando*, and so on, with the aid of a generator or sometimes a car battery. We all wanted to be like Rambo; we couldn’t wait to implement his techniques” (121). The excerpt where the image of Rambo occurs in the novel, makes clear that Jarrett-Macauley makes a reference to the rebel commanders’ application of the Rambo films to encourage child soldiers to fight and let Rambo inspire them.

‘Help me. Do you know John Rambo?’ I told him I did not know him personally, though I could picture him shooting his way out of some American backwoods. ‘They all know him.’ Bemba G stretched his arm in the direction of the sleeping child soldiers and recalled some of the American’s lines from the night before. ‘*Did that make them fight?’* ‘They will probably say it wasn’t him, but I think it was.’ (132, emphasis added)

Julia’s question whether Rambo made them fight that night, can also refer to other moments when the child soldiers had to fight. In that case, Bemba G’s answer is another explanation for the children’s fighting that has nothing to do with their own accountability and emphasizes the children’s blamelessness, because they were easily influenced by a film icon, who is praised for his fighting. However, Jarrett-Macauley’s use of the Rambo figure in her novel is
contradictory to the lack of the child soldiers’ political awareness and responsibility. Since
Paul Richards argues in *Fighting for the Rainforest* that “the film speaks eloquently to young
people in Sierra Leone fearing a collapse of patrimonial support in an era of state recession”
and that RUF rebels realised from very early onwards that the film had great “political
potential” for their youthful combatants (58).
4. The Representation of Trauma in the Novel

“[T]rauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (Caruth, Unclaimed 11). This general definition of trauma is included in Cathy Caruth’s Unclaimed Experience, of which everyone who engages in trauma studies will certainly have heard of. Caruth is, amongst others, one of the “leading figures” in the area of trauma research, which developed increasingly from “the early-to-mid-1990s” onwards (Craps 1). The foundation for this master paper’s analysis of trauma in Moses, Citizen & Me is Anne Whitehead’s article on the novel. She begins her analysis with referring to Stef Craps’ and Gert Buelens’ study on postcolonial trauma novels (241), in which they argue that trauma theory has mainly been concentrating on “a Euro-American context” (2). They claim that, even though Caruth’s argument of trauma, “address[ed] beyond itself” (Caruth, Traumas 11), having the capacity to connect cultures (Ibid.; Craps 2), there is a “need to acknowledge traumatic experiences in non-Western settings and to take account of cultural differences in the treatment of trauma” (Ibid.), because trauma studies have been attaining the opposite result. Based on this theoretical work, Whitehead determined assertions on the representation of trauma in Jarrett-Macauley’s novel. One of them concerns the way in which the traumatic experiences of the child soldiers in the novel are dealt with. She claims that in the novel there is “a resistance to external, non-indigenous models of post-war healing and recovery” (251). Chapter part 4.2. will expand on Whitehead’s findings, but first some representations of traumatic suffering in the novel will be analyzed.

4.1. Signs of Trauma
According to Ronald Granofsky, the trauma novel is a genre that delves into the experience of trauma “through the agency of literary symbolism” (5). He explains how language carries imagery and is a fundamental means “for the transmission of collective trauma” (170). Several images are contained in Moses, Citizen & Me which indicate that the traumatic experience of the civil war has left its imprint on Sierra Leone and its people. Jarrett-Macauley uses the images of “darkness”, “blackness for true” and “vultures” hovering over the city, to denote that Freetown is in distress (1). This is also illustrated by the “weeping buildings” (6) of “a troubled world” (40). Furthermore, the people walk around with “bowed heads” and “despairing glances” (1). In the prologue is described how Moses’ friends “could [at first] not speak the unspeakable” (Ibid.) when they found out what had happened to Adele. The meaning of the word ‘unspeakable’ lies, according to Judith Herman, in people’s normal reaction to bar atrocities “from consciousness”, because certain harmful events are “too terrible to utter aloud” (1). The image returns when Julia finds out about Adele: “My feet were cold, so cold they were dying, and speech had deserted me. I remember thinking stupidly that I knew how to speak and how to move my limbs. I had done both for thirty-nine years. If I tried now...” (8). Here, the image of not being able to move is included. The sea waves also symbolize the image of the unspeakable: “With the coolness came the restlessness of waves. It felt as though they were looking for answers and, finding none, fell back into silence” (10-11). Silence also symbolizes Moses’ difficulties with narrating what happened. “Don’t know how I can begin to tell you” (11), he says during Julia’s first week of her visit. Eventually, Moses and Julia will talk about several things, but only in the tenth chapter, which is near the end of the novel, will Moses tell Julia about the course of the day on which his wife was killed. This shows how Moses is troubled by what has happened.

In Trauma and Recovery, Herman claims that
[w]itnesses as well as victims are subject to the dialectic of trauma. It is difficult for an observer to remain clearheaded and calm, to see more than a few fragments of the picture at one time, to retain all the pieces, and to fit them together. It is even more difficult to find a language that conveys fully and persuasively what one has seen. (2)

This text extract describes precisely Moses’ and Julia’s role of victim and observer respectively. However, there is one group of persons which Herman does not address in her claim, namely perpetrators. Herman does not take into account that perpetrators too can be traumatized. In “Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response” Michael Rothberg claims that “not all traumatized subjects are victims” and refers to Dominick LaCapra’s extensive study on how the involvement of perpetrators in extreme brutalities can also make them suffer of trauma (231). As previously mentioned, child soldiers are seen as both victims and perpetrators. This shows how both ‘categories’ can be blurred. The third chapter of this paper showed that the child soldiers in Jarrett-Macauley’s novel are rather portrayed as innocent victims than as guilty perpetrators. The ex-boy soldier Citizen clearly shows signs of traumatisation, which is again represented by the symbol of the unspeakable, which obviously pops up several times in the novel. Mackey notices correctly that Citizen hardly talks throughout the storyline (232). On the one hand, it is not unlikely that the reader does not get to see much of Citizen’s thoughts and feelings, since Julia is the main protagonist of the novel (see 5.1.). On the other hand, Citizen simply does not really communicate with the people in his direct environment, because he is “damaged” (16). Julia tries several times to break through his silence, but all she gets from him is a “no” (9) to one of her questions. Most of his time Citizen spends alone, except for the occasional activities he helps Sara with. Even during these activities he does not utter a word. At one point the boy’s silence cracks:
[Citizen] whimpered and slumped to the floor. [...] Without warning he jumped to his feet, *shouting* into the air, hitting and punching in a way that suggested *combat with several ghostly enemies*. *Sounds* emerged from his lips *but nothing we could make sense of, no actual words* – just noises and grunts that until that moment had been pinioned beneath his tongue. [...] Released from his *nightmarish* fight, he was still breathing heavily, emitting [...] *the sounds of a voiceless or wild creature*. [...] More than a year since he had been rescued, he was still ‘the silent boy’. But the *urge to speak* must have been there. (41-42, emphasis added)

Citizen being described as a “wild creature” could be connected to the concept of “regression”, of which Granofsky claims that it is, next to “fragmentation” and “reunification”, one of the three phases of trauma response (107). Immobilizing fear or “overwhelming guilt” may cause regression “to a primitive and nonresponsible state of development” which can ease guilt or take away fear (108). According to Granofsky, it is not uncommon in trauma fiction that an individual character returns to, for example, childhood or has “an atavistic relapse to an animal state” (Ibid.). There is one chapter in which Citizen does speak a few times, namely the third chapter of the novel, in which Julia watches the child soldiers commit several crimes with their unit. The fact that Citizen is not yet a quiet boy here, probably indicates that the suffering from a traumatic experience, whether as a victim, a perpetrator or both, only fully begins after the event has passed a while. When Olu recounts the story of Citizen’s time in the recovery centre, Citizen carefully listens, “longing to hear this story about himself since, it seemed, he had only had fragments” (218). The fragment that mostly convinces the reader of the fact that Citizen’s ‘inability’ to speak derives from traumatic suffering is the one in which Moses describes his grandson’s personality in the period before the civil war: “You should
have seen him at two, Julia. Thought he was in charge of the place. So [...] we all [...] nicknamed him Citizen” (195).

4.2. Dealing with Trauma

4.2.1. Recovery in the Gola Forest

A remarkable element of Moses, Citizen & Me is that a great part of the novel is a creation of Julia’s imagination. After Anita fixes her hair and “African ‘bush’ images” (51) enter her mind, she keeps on meeting with an assembly of child soldiers “in an imagined reality” (Whitehead 252). Julia explains the reader that “she could remember nothing between leaving Uncle Moses’ house and arriving in the Gola Forest with Bemba G, as if [...] [she] had been miraculously translated” (Jarrett-Macauley 88) into it. Bemba G, an old Mende man, which is also described as a “soothsayer”, will become a teacher to the child soldiers and will guide them in their process of rehabilitation and recovery from their traumatic experiences. According to Hermann, the first step of recovery is creating safety (155). Although “distant gunfire” (Jarrett-Macauley 131) is heard in the forest, the child combatants are reassured that the place is safe: “The space here, our safe space, extends more than three-hundred-and-fifty paces from halfway silk-cotton tree. This is like a walled garden. Enjoy the hush of Gola Forest, children, you need not be afraid” (Ibid.). Whitehead argues that the activities which Bemba G provides for the child soldiers “have a profoundly transformative effect” (253) on them. However, she does not fully analyze how those activities help the children in their healing process. When Bemba G starts educating the child soldiers, he begins with instructing them mathematics. The children become highly enthusiastic and show a “reawakened interest in [...] [the] modest world of sums” (90). Mathematics is a science in which a clear distinction can be made between right or wrong. The choice between right or wrong, seen in light of the civil war, is often not clear-cut, because in some situations the moral boundaries between
what is ‘good’ and what is ‘wrong’ are blurred. A second activity with which Bemba G grasps the children’s full attention is the game “HA” (135). As soon as Bemba G says ‘HA’, the children have to repeat it, which at first results in an artificial sequence of ‘ha-ha-s’, but soon transforms into real laughter. This makes the child soldiers look “light and full of fun” (Ibid.). Furthermore, each of the children narrates about what they have been through and which crimes they have committed. Eventually, they will learn how to translate their inner emotions into actual language and this will gradually restore their traumatized selves.

Therefore, an important element of the meetings in the forest is the telling of stories. Bemba G tells Julia “the story of salt” (124), which is an allusion to the slavery period. While telling his story, Julia notices that Bemba G “had grown pale [...] and mopped his brow” (Ibid.). The collective suffering of the Sierra Leonean people, which resulted from the horrors of slavery, are reverberated in Bemba G’s persona. The child soldiers also have to listen to the man’s stories. “He told of trees that talked in the night, men who became spiders; he told forest stories that amused the eager listeners and reminded them not to fight over narrative lines” (134). The sign for true stories is made by holding a gin bottle above the head. Bemba G calls all true stories “history”, and if a story is not true, then “[w]ho needs to know?” (124). The child combatants also get the task to tell some stories of their own, however, the first time they try to do that, it does not work the way Bemba G wants it to. Mackey argues that Jarrett-Macauley suggests in her novel that the children’s trauma can be overcome by inserting logic in their stories (236). For example, the guidelines for storytelling are: “first, true stories about soldier days; second, inventions that everyone could understand” (Jarrett-Macauley 149). It turns out to be that some children’s war stories hamper their storytelling competence, as is the case with Victor. Once he has to narrate about his war experiences, he “blurt[s] out something [...] [without] making sense” (150). This again alludes to the image of the unspeakable. Victor has not yet found the words to talk about what he has seen and done during his child
soldiering period. It could be said that the significance of storytelling lies in “the way in which one’s own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another’s wound” (Caruth, Unclaimed 8). This is also shown in the enacting of Thomas Decker’s play Juliohs Siza. By performing the roles of the ancient characters in the play, the child soldiers get to identify with the trauma entrenched in other histories and have a chance to process their own experiences. Practising for the play “allows them to reclaim their stories” (Whitehead 254) and the actual performance serves as a liberating moment for each of them, which gives them the chance “to move on” (Jarrett-Macauley 211).

A notable aspect of Jarrett-Macauley’s usage of Juliohs Siza can, according to Whitehead, be considered as an analogous assertion “of the value of Sierra-Leonean culture and resources” (255). On the other hand, it can also visualize “cultural hybridity”, as the Krio language is itself a mixture of different languages (Ibid. 256). The child soldiers perform the play in front of a mixed audience, which consists of Sierra Leonean people as well as people from other parts of the world:

The audience was a mixed bunch, a medley of ages, nationalities and types: British and American soldiers in uniform, village people from across the river, some of the Freetown elites with their own kerosene lamps in the hand, and more child soldiers walking barefoot. A group of schoolgirls in fading cotton dresses placed themselves in front of the representatives from one of the international agencies. The press bench was occupied by a troupe of South African actors and musicians – all crowded into our compound home. (201)

This scene makes an allusion to the rehabilitation process in Sierra Leone (see 3.3), which was mainly based on aid systems of international NGOs. This does not match with Craps’ and
Buelens’ proposal to start including “cultural differences in the treatment of trauma” (2). Therefore, Whitehead is right in concluding that

_Moses, Citizen & Me_ accordingly seems in many ways to support the notion that recent humanitarian interventions in Sierra Leone have not been sufficiently cognisant of, or sensitive to, local modes of rehabilitation, [but] the novel also seems to embrace a culturally hybrid range of responses to the war in which indigenous approaches play their part alongside other therapeutic modes. (257)

4.2.2. The Healing of Citizen

Citizen can be regarded as the most important child soldier character in the novel, even though the boy’s actual thoughts are almost never expressed. The reader gets to observe Citizen through Julia’s eyes, which show how he behaves. A general analysis of how the boy soldier is presented in the novel as an innocent child, lacking any responsibility for his war actions, has already been made in the third chapter. However, in her analysis, Whitehead poses an interesting question: “If the logic of the novel tends towards the reframing of the child as a victim, then what crimes has Citizen committed from which he needs to be cleansed and absolved” (259)? Indeed, Citizen has killed his grandmother Adele. However, Citizen’s victim status is emphasised throughout the entire novel. If it depends on the other characters of the novel, Citizen is not to blame. However, it is certain, that Citizen does bear feelings of guilt within his inner being. Here, the link can be made to the – previously mentioned – trauma of which perpetrators can also suffer. The acts of cleansing and absolving, of which Whitehead narrates, may be a means to reduce the amount of guilt which Citizen carries around, and may gradually erase his suffering. It is Julia who is each time involved in the
rituals, which may denote that Citizen needs her help, because he is not able to complete the healing process alone.

The symbols of oil and water as typical cleansing rituals occur in the novel. For example, Julia bathes Citizen with the use of an “ointment” : “Come on then, time to get clean” (46). Another ritualistic performance is Citizen’s carving of the number “439K”, which is “cut into his back”, into a block of wood (Ibid.). Julia calls the number a “cold beauty [...] which store[s] the mystery of his time in the war” (163). Symbolically, Citizen buries the block of wood:

Citizen, lingering behind me, looked relieved, as though he had given up a world. The block of wood rested on the mat before me. I could barely keep my eyes off it, so assertive was its presence. Citizen had needed to make it and I had needed to see it. [...] I began with a wish for the future: that the 439K scar would not follow him to his grave, that Citizen be free of 439K. [...] I pushed into the thickest part of the forest where the trees, a dense mass of vegetation, remained undisturbed by humans, to a quiet place, yards from where the others were. ‘Let’s bury this,’ I suggested, ‘let’s lay it to rest.’ He agreed. [...] He went at it with both hands, forcing the earth to part, tearing out stones that were in his way. He worked hard and fast, producing a deep hole in the ground. Then he took the block and buried it. Its descent was quick and clean. Citizen pushed back the soil, patting it down until 439K was covered. (164, emphasis added)

A while after that, Citizen looks “like a freshly washed child” (166), in which the image of the water’s cleansing function is again visible. Furthermore, Mackey argues that the process of dealing with trauma does not necessarily reside in the act of telling, but that other creative
forms can also be applied (237). Her claim is based on the novel’s scene where Citizen, playing the role of Lucius in *Juliohs Siza*, can sing “the Malian love song” (Jarrett-Macauley 181) instead of speaking his lines. Indeed, Jarrett-Macauley seems to promote more creative ways in the process of coping with traumatic distress. This seems to be expressed by the inventive character of the play. For example, the song ‘If you’re happy and you know it’ is included and the play’s lines are interrupted “with intercessions of drumming, dance and mime” (203).

The key moment of Citizen’s healing process takes place during his act as Lucius in the play’s performance. All of a sudden he falls asleep during the act and dreams about Adele. In his dream he is transferred to the moment where he was about to kill his grandmother. When he wakes up, “his eyes say there was a dream, a dream of self-mortification. His face spoke of a heart softening from fossil to pearly shell. His open lips said the shell was ready to be broken” (208). Herman claims that such a dream can “carry with it the emotional intensity of the original event” (42). The image of the shell alludes to the fact that Citizen has relived “the unspeakable” again for the first time, which is a huge step in the right direction to coping with what he has done. The fact that this moment has occurred, does not mean that Citizen is rid of his anxieties nor does it mean that he has completely healed. It means that he is ready to move on just a little bit more, which is perfectly expressed in the following fragment of the last chapter: “Elizabeth began to sing. [...] Citizen [...] slowly stood up and moved next to her so that she must have felt the warmth of his body. *He opened his lips* and joined her song. Tiny currents of excitement ran around our circle, the same electric thrill that accompanies *baby’s first word, first step*” (222, emphasis added).
5. The Search for Identity

5.1. Julia as the Main Protagonist of the Novel

On the back cover and on the first page of Moses, Citizen & Me several newspapers’ and magazines’ opinions on the novel are given. The favourable reviews all contain words like “child soldier”, “civil war”, “horrific backdrop”, “scars”, “horror”, “rehabilitation”, “haunting”, “salvation”, etc. At the top of the back cover, one sentence in block capitals serves as the concise summary of the book: “A remarkable novel about Citizen – A child soldier in Sierra Leone”. The reviews speak for themselves; the novel has been mainly read as a story about the child soldier problem, here specifically situated in Sierra Leone, and about the difficulties, which follow in the aftermath of an armed conflict, to reintegrate child combatants in society. However, when read thoroughly, the novel reveals another important subject, namely that of Julia’s search for her identity. Neither Rosen nor Whitehead address this idea in their analysis of the novel. In fact, Allison Mackey is the only scholar, who mentions something about Julia’s identity struggle. She claims that “[i]n some ways, perhaps this story is as much about Julia’s conflicted loyalties and second-generation cultural identity, [and] an exploration of the double-consciousness [...] as it is about child soldiers” (232-233). At the end of her discussion of Jarrett-Macauley’s novel, she again describes the story as a “meditation on Julia’s second-generation ambivalence” (244). However, Mackey falls short of providing a meticulously analysis for her statement. Like other scholars, she mainly focuses on the character of the boy soldier Citizen.

When interpreting the summarizing sentence on the back cover, the reader immediately presumes that Citizen will be the main protagonist of the story. Nevertheless, this is not true. Although Citizen, and Moses too, are clearly two important characters of the story, Julia is the main protagonist. The argument presented here is based on several findings.
Firstly, the title of Jarrett-Macauley’s novel is *Moses, Citizen & Me*. The word ‘me’ indicates that the story will be told by that certain ‘me’, and not by Moses or Citizen. Thus, the title already gives away that the protagonist of the story will be that ‘me’-person. Secondly, when one starts reading the novel, it becomes clear that the story is told by Julia. The connection between the ‘me’ of the title and Julia’s person is immediately established. The story is told in the first person, and everything and everyone is perceived through Julia’s eyes. Even the prologue, which at first seems to be told by an omniscient narrator, eventually attests to be part of Julia’s account. Some text parts are italicized and refer to Julia’s thoughts. The sentence “I was thinking, *This is where Citizen was born*” (194) illustrates this. Thirdly, a great part of the novel is made up by Julia. As already mentioned a few times, her imagination leads her to the forest, to the child soldiers and to Bemba G. The people in her environment tell her stories and the reader gets to know everything through her account. This means that Julia has the opportunity to add things to their stories or make changes in them.

A few elements in the novel suggest that she actually does that. For instance, Sally’s story is likely to be made up by Julia (see 3.4.3). The reader gets to know Citizen’s war story, but only through Julia’s imagined adventure, thus, what actually happened to him might have been different in reality. Furthermore, at the end of the scene where Julia’s mother and Uncle Moses discuss Sierra Leonean politics when Julia is still a child, Julia points out that she is not sure whether the conversation actually ended the way she tells the reader: “Perhaps they found a better ending than this. It is quite possible. At a distance of so many years, how can I truly recall exactly what was said?” (72). Another indication to Julia’s twisting of several anecdotes is the character Eddy. In the second chapter, Eddy is introduced as Moses’ and Adele’s “short gap-toothed monkey” (30). Julia meets him when she visits Sierra Leone for the first time at the age of nine. Moses is the one who tells Julia everything about the animal, for example, that he has plenty of friends and that he “loves […] long drives up into the
mountains” (Ibid.). Since Moses often created the opportunity for little Julia “to slide into other worlds” (26), meaning imaginary worlds, it is not likely that Eddy really exists. Moreover, on her visit to Doria, Julia suddenly sees a monkey who looks just like Eddy. “[I]t was not a surprise to me when our journey to the ex-child soldier’s camp at Doria a monkey who resembled him followed us all the way” (30). She calls him her “company of a sort” (38) or her “companion” (221) and “a bridge between [...] [her] awakening self and the children at the camp” (38). One night she has a dream about Eddy getting into an argument with a soldier and when she wakes up she realizes the following: “I was in Freetown, where monkeys do not dismiss soldiers, where fires destroy wood and the time is exactly 8 a.m.” (75). Nor do monkeys consciously “no[d] back” (31) or wait by the car “like a valet” (37). She talks about the “purview of my dreams” and about “the wildness of my imaginings” (75). These findings suggest that Eddy is her imaginary friend, of which she started enjoying the company when she was still a child and on which she still depends when she is older. Furthermore, every once in a while Eddy pops up again, not only in present events, but also in stories of the past (e.g.: when Julia narrates an anecdote about Adele and Moses). In that case, several scenes of Moses’ past are influenced and perhaps changed by Julia, which seems highly probable because her imaginary friend Eddy appears in them. For example, “Adele [...] swept the floor [...] and began to make breakfast. Eddy came and sat on her chair by the kitchen door” (113). Julia was not even around when this happened, she only tells the reader what she has heard from Moses. Thus, she is in control of the readers’ view of the other characters in the novel. This again could be used in the argument that the novel is more about her than it is about Citizen.

5.2. Julia’s “Sense of Belonging”

In her PhD dissertation, Mackey focuses on “stories of immigration, displacement, and second-generation experiences of doubleness in their uneasy sense of (un)belonging to both
parental, diasporic origins and the national spaces in which they find themselves situated” (4). Julia’s story can certainly be linked to this. She has inherited her Sierra Leonean background from her mother and her father must have been British. His background is never explicitly mentioned, but her dead father’s “old tartan” (25) tie hanging in a wardrobe suggests that this is indeed the case. That explains why Julia was born in England and practically lived there her whole life. Thus, she grew up facing two different cultures, both combined into one, namely her own person. While reading the novel, it becomes clear that Julia struggles with this identity. Her journey to Sierra Leone releases all the troublesome feelings she has been experiencing in relation to her dual identity. Mackey claims that “throughout her life Julia has chosen to identify with her Englishness over her Africanness” (234). However, this is not completely true. To clarify her point she chooses Julia’s utterance: “oh yes, England is my home” (Jarrett-Macauley 18). Indeed, Julia gives in to her Englishness, but Mackey seems to ignore that Julia, from her childhood onwards, desperately tries to discover that Sierra Leonean part which is concealed within her.

5.2.1. The relationship between Julia and Uncle Moses

The fact that she is willing to get to know that part is shown through her bond between her and Uncle Moses during her childhood. She talks about them having “a good history” (14). When she was young, he brought several visits to London and even stayed there for a while. She was always excited when Moses was around. She utters: “I don’t know which Christmas it was, but I must have been either six or seven. It was my happiest Christmas ever and the one during which I got to know Uncle Moses much better” (25). Every day he spends with her is one “of such excitement” (27). For instance, one day he takes her to a field full of buttercups to take pictures; another day he teases her and her mother with a pig’s foot during dinner. He also convinces her that “an old African beggar” lives in an air-raid shelter in her garden.
Uncle Moses promised to lure him out by dancing on the top of the air-raid shelter and stamping his feet in an exotic rhythm; but the beggar man never did appear. ‘Click your fingers, Uncle Moses,’ I encouraged. He tried, but his stubby fingers would not click, nor would the beggar man emerge. Beyond the air-raid shelter was a muddy rubbish dump sealed off by willow and nettles all around. [...] After the non-appearance of the beggar man, Uncle Moses agreed to go and investigate this forbidding terrain. He returned with blackened leaves and gnarled twigs in one hand. The fingers of his other hand were closed over the palm. As he opened them, a ladybird, black and red and beautiful, trailed across it. (24)

Obviously, the beggar does not really exist. Moses creates a fantasy world and introduces Julia to it. She talks about how she “became desperate to slide into other worlds whenever he gave [...] the nod” and how she “was never in fragments when he was there” (26). The word ‘fragments’ clearly alludes to how she feels about her identity. How she feels as if she is made up out of pieces which do not seem to fit together. “My mother would never understand what a world he brought – my Uncle Moses – where instead of air there was magic, buttercups and a flying pig’s foot” (27), she expresses. Her mother might not get it, because perhaps she does not question her roots, nor her present life as an English ‘immigrant’. Moses is the one who brings her into contact with her Sierra Leonean background and makes her feel a part of it. When Moses meets Adele during his stay in London, they soon fall in love, get married and return to Freetown. Julia feels devastated:

After he left, I went into the garden and the paths went straight ahead to the air-raid shelter. There was no one. Inside me was a hole that was dark and brown. It was a place I recognized from before but could not yet name. It made me
thirsty and tired. It told me that I did not just miss him, *I missed myself*. (29, emphasis added)

Moses leaving London, means that Julia no longer feels connected to her ‘second’ motherland. The path to the air-raid shelter is suddenly no longer “sealed off by willow and nettles all around” (24), but straight. The magical world is gone. She feels as if there is a gap inside of her, a part which she is missing. That part is Uncle Moses, but also herself. This indicates that she wants to give in to her Africanness, but that she does not know how to do it without Moses being around.

When Julia grows older she becomes inclined to her English background (see 5.2.2.). However, she still does not have the feeling that she fits into one of both cultures. When Moses comes back to visit them, she talks about how “[i]t was good to hear his voice again” (70). A “deep, purely African and resonant” voice, different from her mother’s voice, which “was flatter and Anglicized, posher, though the African accent was still there” (Ibid.). “And I”, she says, “sounded as if I had come from nowhere in particular” (Ibid.). This confirms that Julia has no sense of belonging somewhere. When she matures she tries to find her way in the world, but that causes a break between her and Moses: “When I was a girl my uncle had always meant so much to me. But that was when we were still speaking, before I grew up and began to find my own way” (5). She sees the “separation of more than twenty years” as “a long and painful silence” (5-6). The silence between the two starts when the adolescent Julia decides to leave London to travel around Europe with her friend Jenny. In a letter, Moses tries to convince her to come “home”, meaning Sierra Leone, and become a teacher there. His argument “[t]hink how your ancestors would feel in their resting place...” (104), does not really convince Julia. On the contrary, she sees it as “a sharp slap from across the ocean” (Ibid.) and does not comprehend why her much-loved uncle does not see that she is struggling to discover her own identity. She asks herself: “Why did he not see that I was trying to find
my way here?” (Ibid.). Thus, when even Uncle Moses does not understand that she is struggling with her background(s), she feels as if she has been “badly let down” (101).

5.2.2. Home in England?

Mackey’s conclusion that Julia chooses her English background above her Sierra Leonean origins, as previously mentioned, is a comprehensible conclusion. Several indications in the novel can lead to this assumption. Julia’s mother blaming her for being ‘too English’ is one of the examples. Her mother calls her “difficult”, claims that she is “forgetting” herself and that she is “trying to be like the English girls” (70). Furthermore, when Julia tells her that she wants to travel around Europe, her mother exclaims: “Why do you have to go so far away from me? You are so keen on these English ways and this wild life” (102). Additionally, Julia does call England her home and encourages Elizabeth to visit her sometime in London, because it is so great there. The first days in Freetown, she cannot forget about London: “The idea of London was constantly there in our war-torn yard, like the ticking of a clock” (21). Furthermore, she tries not to think, “This is when you would be getting dressed for work. This is when you would be rushing for the train, knowing more or less what the day might bring” (Ibid.). She even tries to impress Moses by saying that she knows London “better than anywhere” (193). Julia and her family also never felt rejected by the people in England. They “were no longer different to the point of legend”, because “Asian families, from India, Pakistan and East Africa had moved into the area and multiculturalism was swaying in a hammock over all […] [their] heads” (69). Thus, on the one hand, England can be seen as a place where Julia feels comfortable, because she is used to the language, the habits and the places. On the other hand, the fact that she still feels that hole inside of her, makes her doubt her English identity. Mackey seems to ignore this. When Julia’s mother asks her why she wants to be so far away from her, during their conversation about Julia’s travel plans, Julia tries to convince her mother that it is not because of her that she is leaving for Europe. “You
know that’s not it at all. [...] It’s just that I need to move on. I can’t stay here. [...] I just need to go for a while and see” (102, emphasis added). Furthermore, in Paris, she is “skirting the subject of returning home” (103). Julia desperately needs to fill that hole inside of her and she tries to do that by travelling. She needs to wait and see what will happen next, because if she stays in London, she will never know how it feels like to be at peace with her dual identity.

5.2.3. Discovering Sierra Leone

In the novel, Julia’s departure for Sierra Leone is described as her “flying ‘home’ from London” (1). The fact that the word home is between single quotation marks already suggests that Julia does not really experience the West-African country as her home, even though she is one of its descendants. She explains how Sierra Leone is not a part of her “local map”: “I could not get there on foot, yet it was imprinted on my life, war or not” (5). By this she means that it was not so easy for her to distance herself from the war as it was for “[m]ost people in England” for whom “the images in the newspaper and on television were [...] a world away” (Ibid.), because she is connected with the country through her ethnicity and her family. However, that does not mean that she understands what has been going on in Sierra Leone: “I have never been good at West African politics. I know that had I been there I would have interpreted the conflict differently” (Ibid.). She feels quite removed from all of it, perhaps because the hole inside of her, of which she talks, got even bigger after her ‘dispute’ with Uncle Moses. “What was I flying towards?” (Ibid.), she asks herself while waiting for her plane to Freetown.

Her first impression of the capital city Freetown is one of roads where “no sudden moves at the checkpoints” could be made, “evacuated commercial quarters”, “weeping buildings” and people “whose limbs had been chopped off” (6). Thus, these impressions are
completely different from the feeling she got when she came to visit Sierra Leone for the first time.

The boat sweeps into harbour, the sun pampers us, down the ramp I run into the bustling market street [...] , bounding into African sunshine, warm beyond the compass of imagining. It is not the colours that strike me at first, nor the compelling smell of fruits but how the black faces shine back at mine, smile and look with joy at me. And I look all around, turn and run back again, eager to be sure that what I think I am seeing is real and for true, run into my mother’s arms and cry out: ‘Oh, Mummy, Mummy, all the people are black here.’ And for this she loves me and says, ‘Yes, my dear, this is Africa.’ (17)

The atmosphere which she felt during her first visit obviously varies from the one which she experiences during her latest arrival. Julia was very excited during her visit as a child, because she notices how all the people have the same skin colour as her, which is not the case in England. This shows that Julia feels connected to her Sierra Leonean background, but somewhere along the way loses parts of this tie. She is a “novice” (67) to the country’s customs, language and environment. For instance, she has a “small Krio vocabulary” (87). Several expressions in the descriptions of her imaginary forest adventures allude to the fact that everything is new for her.

[Bemba G] realized that I was a novice to his regional ways, for local people all knew about crop rotation, which plants and shrubs to use for medicinal or recreational purposes and why land was left fallow for up to ten years, while I was agog as he taught me. (123)

And:
For hours, *I lost my way. I attempted to turn right* but the road twisted the other way and *judged me a novice*. I stood on the correct path and beseeched it in the cold midnight to *let me move forward* without falling down a cliff or hurting my already weary feet. *I was shepherded back.* Only once did I tumble down a hill but that led me straight to Uncle Moses’ house. (67, emphasis added)

This extract can also be seen as a metaphor for Julia’s search for her Sierra Leonean identity. She loses touch with that part of herself and tries to find a way to fill the hole inside of her, but because of what happened with Citizen she has to return to Sierra Leone and gets drawn into the middle of things. Thus, this involvement leads her back to discovering those parts of her which she could never before embrace.

### 5.3. Catalysts for Julia’s Identity Awareness

Although Julia always felt like she needed help from Uncle Moses, eventually, it turns out to be the other way around. After the civil war has ended, Anita calls her up to come and help restore what is left of the family bond between Moses and Citizen. At first, Julia wonders how she needs to deal with “this reversal of need” (23). The first three days in Freetown are days of “silent company” (11). She does not know how to approach Moses, nor does she know how to connect with Citizen “without much knowledge of what he had been through” (15). Moses tries to convince her to start taking care of his grandson, who is “lost” and “ruined” (16).

‘We all are [damaged],’ his voice continued, ‘but he needs care. Someone who would care; someone like you.’ There was a pause before I answered: ‘Oh, does he? I thought he’d need people here; people who understand what’s happened to boys like him, what they’ve been through.’ ‘Maybe.’ ‘I don’t know. I just assumed this environment would be best. Surely he needs something familiar; something as close to home as possible?’ (17)
This excerpt shows again that Julia does not consider herself to be a part of that “home”. Anita too tries to persuade Julia: “‘Maybe it wasn’t your plan, but you could help them, both of them. Did you know that?’” (20). Eventually, Julia actually starts to think about it, utters that she has “been trying to understand what has happened here” (Ibid.) and asks Anita to give her time. “It does involve me”, she realizes, “I need to take it in properly and learn more; only then can I see what I can do to make a difference” (50). After visiting Doria, she has an image of what could have happened to Citizen and that gives her “some peace and contentment” (37). On the way to Moses’ house again, she says: “I moved closer to him; I moved closer to myself, into a narrow space where every emotion was restored to its full essence” (38, emphasis added). The italicized words of the previous sentence are the first signs of the assumption that Citizen acts as a catalyst in Julia’s search for her identity. By helping the boy heal, she moves closer to the world which she was not a part of at first. She opens herself up to it. Therefore, she is able to step into the magical world of olden times, which she discovered through Uncle Moses, and lets herself slide into a dream-like forest adventure.

Additionally, Anita can also be seen as a catalyst for Julia’s growing identity awareness, because while she is fixing Julia’s hair, Julia slides into that fantasy world.

‘Sit here, your hair needs doing. Who plaits it so small-small like this?’ [...] Anita put my head between her two strong knees, clasping it tight like a hazelnut in nutcrackers. [...] I surrendered my head to her, neck and muscles softening like dough at her touch. With a mixture of pleasure and pain [...] I sagged into her command [...] Gripping my shoulders firmly, she advised me: ‘I’m going to fold it big for you now and you’ll see things better.’ While she started to work the hair, [...] I attempted to control my mind. I was observing scenes I had never witnessed before. Her big plaits were a trap, a device for opening up spaces in my head that hadn’t been tampered with since I was a
little girl. She was using this hairdressing ritual to push African ‘bush’ images in those spaces. *I fought back*, gathering memories of London – me sampling couchillo olives in a Battersea delicatessen, me catching Eurostar at Waterloo station – *but I was losing*. […] My head was a map of Sierra Leone […]. (50-51, emphasis added)

The woman helps Julia surrender to the emotions she felt concerning her twofold self when she was a young girl. Thus, Julia sticks her “Afro-Brit nose into Gola Forest business” and calls it “a London-Freetown-Gola Forest adventure” (93). Whitehead explains that with the invented extracts in the novel, Jarrett-Macauley tries to create a place of salvage and healing for ex-child combatants (252). This is certainly the case, however, Julia’s naming of the adventure suggests that Jarrett-Macauley had additional plans for the function of the forest journey, namely creating a space for Julia to rediscover herself and to come to terms with her dual identity.

The third catalyst that helps Julia in the search for her identity, is not a person, but an object. That is to say, more than one object, because Moses’ photographs are of great help to his niece. By assisting her uncle in classifying and labelling “archives and some family photos” (108), Julia gets to know pieces of the history of her Sierra Leonean roots and details of her family’s life. Anita warns her that she “need[s] to look forward, […] not always back” (Ibid.). However, without looking back, Julia would not be able to move forward and think about the future. That future is concealed within Sierra Leone’s youth. Since a great part of that youth has both experienced or committed atrocities during the civil war, Julia finds it important to give them a chance and to help reintegrate them into society. This is what happens during her visits to Bemba G and the child soldiers. As mentioned before, the performance of *Juliohs Siza* is a changing moment for the child soldiers and, thus, for Julia. That performance is the
last stage for her to accept her mixed background and to embrace especially her Sierra Leonean roots.

5.4. Julia’s Identity Acceptance

Gradually, Julia starts to see Sierra Leone as a “[w]onderful land” (135). “Wouldn’t you relish this for ever?” she asks herself (Ibid.). Furthermore, when Uncle Moses likes her own photography work of England, she comprehends her “chance to be different and the same”, to be “two of a kind” (194). These text extracts already point out that, eventually, Julia will accept her own identity. As mentioned in the previous chapter part, after the former child combatants’ performance of Juliohs Siza everything changes. Chapter twelve, the last chapter of the novel, is dominated by Julia’s renewed attitude towards herself.

I dressed in cotton jeans and a striped blue blouse, looking in the mirror to brush my hair. The mirror reflected back with gleaming clarity a thin drawn face, similar to mine but more of some other woman with tidy shoulder-length braids, not in need of brushing, and a confident smile. [...] Sitting at the kitchen table, I felt self-conscious, as if my other life in Sierra Leone was still written on my face. (214, emphasis added)

She feels happy about the way things have changed for everyone, but never expected this to happen: “Not for a moment had I imagined that the rhythm of or days, the piecing together of our lives could be so satisfying” (225). Julia is finally ready to be a part of both her inherited cultures and is prepared to “see how the veil thins between one world and another” (Ibid.). The ultimate moment of acceptance for Julia takes place in a dream she has about Citizen and herself, which is the last scene of the novel. Mackey claims that the novel’s ending is rather open, because of Julia’s “undecidability” as to whether she should stay in Sierra Leone or return to England, and what future would lie ahead for Citizen when looking at both
possibilities (244-245). Indeed, Julia first has a daydream about how Moses’ house could be fixed and how they could develop a “photography archive” (Jarrett-Macauley 225) of Moses’ work. “We could do this together” (Ibid.), Julia utters. She seriously thinks about staying in Sierra Leone. However, the last scene’s dream, which Julia addresses to Adele, shows Citizen as a contestant in a swimming competition in England. This seems to acknowledge the fact that Julia does not know which country she should choose. Mackey pays attention to the image of the apples in the last scene and claims that the English apples “are contrasted” to those of Sierra Leone (244). The dream ends as followed:


Both types of apples are indeed contrasted, however, not with the function to oppose them to each other. The contrasting of the apples does not stand as a metaphor for Julia’s ‘necessary’ choice between England and Sierra Leone, because why should she choose between one of them? The contrast between the two should be seen as a possibility of an existence together and, thus, as a reconciliation of Julia with her identity. Mackey argues that because Citizen is still not very talkative at the end, the ending of the novel does not contain “closure” (245). However, when the focus is shifted from Citizen to Julia, there is. The images of the pink Sierra Leone apples and the surrendering already pops up at the beginning of the novel:

“Citizen was standing by the kitchen table, caressing the small pink apples with his little finger, and pressing his brown flesh against their soft pink. [...] There
is no need to bite this fruit – no sooner has the apple seen your teeth it will melt of its own accord and shower its thin white juices down your throat. Surrender. Wait for me: my timidity will retreat; wait for me: my courage will advance” (38).

Since italicized sentences in the novel are marked as Julia’s personal thoughts, Julia’s request to surrender is addressed to Citizen. However, she adds that she is not ready yet, that he has to wait for her. This refers to the disconnection with her Sierra Leonean origin. As Mackey already indicates, the image of the pink apple is especially of great importance, because Adele was planning on giving Citizen one on the day she got shot (244). That apple “had an odd shape, with three protruding heads like a hydra” (Jarrett-Macauley 196). The three heads likely refer to Moses, Citizen and Julia, who form three generations of the same background or basis (i.e. symbolized by the apple), but each experience it differently. At the end, the word ‘surrender’ occurs again, but without Julia’s doubts as to whether she can help build a future for Citizen, and perhaps for Sierra Leone, attached to it. Julia can only start working on the future, when she understands the past. In this way, there is some sort of closure at the end of the novel, namely Julia accepting her Sierra Leonean-British identity.

5.5. Julia: Second Generation and Postmemory

As previously mentioned, Sierra Leone’s history of slavery and of colonialism has left a profound imprint on the country on many different levels. Although the traumas of the civil war newly hover over Jarrett-Macauley’s novel, the traumatic experiences caused by the slave trade and colonialism are still present. Moreover, Julia’s struggle with accepting her identity can be an indication for the fact that she is haunted by the traumas of the past. Mackey identifies Julia as belonging to the second generation (233). First of all, she gets born when Sierra Leone is already independent, and, secondly, she gets born in England. Thus, she never
directly experiences what it feels like to be colonized. The fact that Sierra Leone was colonized by Britain, does not make it any easier for Julia, since her identity is made up of both cultures. The people of Sierra Leone were exposed “to British customs, values and institutions” (Alie 133) for almost 200 years and this must have had an impact on the people’s identity. Alie argues that Sierra Leoneans were taught more to be British than to contain their own distinctiveness (221). This “loss of [...] home, of a feeling of belonging” (Hirsch, 112), is what Julia also experiences. Therefore, Julia can be seen as a member of “The Generation of Postmemory”. In her article of the same name, Marianne Hirsch explains the term “postmemory” as “the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (103). Although she uses the Holocaust as the “historical frame of reference” in her article, she acknowledges that her analysis can be applicable to other “contexts of traumatic transfer” (108).

Thus, Julia “grow[s] up with overwhelming inherited memories” (Ibid. 107) of the past, which she gets to know better through her Uncle Moses’ stories and collection of photographs. Mackey claims that in this way the idea of “cultural memory” is significantly present in the novel (237). In England Julia almost never gets confronted with things of the past, but in Sierra Leone it is different. Julia loves “the sense of permanence” and the “stability” of Moses’ house (94). She loves how “the bone china and upright piano dated back to his parents’ time”, how the record player is, just like her, almost forty years old, and how “the crayon drawings” which she made in the 1970s are still hanging upstairs (Ibid.). In England, on the other hand, Julia and her family “had frowned upon the idea of keeping still” (Ibid.). All these elements, the photographs, the stories and even the play Juliohs Siza can be seen as “figures of memory” (Assman 129). For example, Julia making her own photographs of London is a means of preserving the past for Citizen and others to come. Moses’
photographs contain a “variety of styles and themes”, several “individual and group portraits”, land- and seascapes, and much more (215). He “attempt[s] to safeguard each phase of the city’s life” (Ibid.). With regard to postmemory, Hirsch stresses the “iconic and symbolic power” of pictures, which can transmit experiences and make them conceivable (107-108). Assman claims that “[i]n cultural formation, a collective experience crystallizes, whose meaning, when touched upon, may suddenly become accessible again across millennia” (129).

In the novel, slavery and colonialism are a part of the collective memory, which is passed on to Julia and even though she has no actual memories of her own of those periods, it keeps on haunting here. Eventually, it influences and shapes her identity. The following passage in the novel seems to allude to the passing on of memory from one generation to another:

“Repetition is the ground for the new and the same. These were the words that flashed in my mind as I lay under the night sky. It did not matter which way I looked from Freetown to England, from one generation of the family to another, scenes replayed with intimations of sameness. We were a family, with its own customs handed down from Aunt Sally’s generation to Citizen’s. Much of this familiar practice had been adhered to so tightly that two world wars, several political coups, and even civil war would not eradicate it. There were words and exchanges that signified family bond but could still resonate of an emotional terra incognita.” (138)
6. Conclusion

The chapters of this master paper have been devoted to the analysis of Delia Jarrett-Macauley’s debut novel *Moses, Citizen & Me*. Three main themes included in the novel have been discussed: the child soldier theme, the representation of trauma and the protagonist’s search for identity. Additionally, one of the chapters has also provided a synopsis of Sierra Leone’s history, which needed to be included in order to understand the several images that refer to it in the novel. Since the aftermath of Sierra Leone’s civil war is the setting of the novel, the political complexities that led to the war and its many different aspects had to be briefly enlightened. The country’s history proves to reoccur in the novel in many different forms.

*Moses, Citizen & Me* has been categorized as being a part of the child soldier literature, which has grown extensively the past decade. This is apparently a logical consequence of the growing use of children in war conflicts. This reality has gained a lot of attention in the world media, in the humanitarian discourse and, thus, in scholarly debate. Different aspects of the International Humanitarian Law (e.g. definition of ‘childhood’, law regulations concerning the age of recruitment, etc.) have been outlined in this paper. Criticisms towards the depiction of child soldiers in the humanitarian discourse, especially by David Rosen, have also been included. Together with the section on the reintegration process of child soldiers in Sierra Leone, these findings have been used to analyze the portrayal of the child soldiers which occur in Jarrett-Macauley’s novel. The conclusion of that analysis does not differ much from what David Rosen and Anne Whitehead already claimed in their writings on the novel, namely that nearly all the child soldiers are portrayed as innocent children, who lack responsibility and agency. However, whereas Rosen and Whitehead do not always confirm their arguments via indications in the novel, this master paper tries to do so extensively.
The chapter on the representation of trauma in *Moses, Citizen & Me* has shown that the language used in the novel clearly alludes to the traumatic event of the civil war. Furthermore, the fact that Sierra Leone’s history is still clearly present in the language of the novel, shows that the civil war is not the only collective trauma for Sierra Leone’s population. The focus of this chapter is also on the way in which the Gola Forest stands as a safe place where the child soldiers can deal with their traumatic experiences. Here, Whitehead’s argument on how Jarrett-Macauley seems to argue for a combination of using local traditions and help from ‘the outside’ (e.g. an international NGO) gets confirmed. Furthermore, the chapter also deals with the healing process of Citizen, who is the main child combatant figure in the novel. Here, Jarrett-Macauley included several scenes of rituals that Citizen has to undergo, in order to start coping with his personal trauma. The character of the language used in those scenes is highly symbolical. The performance of Juliohs Siza has proven to be a key moment in the healing process of Citizen, which does, however, not mean that the boy is already completely healed.

A third important theme included in Jarrett-Macauley’s novel is Julia’s search for identity. Several evidence pieces in the novel demonstrate that she is the main protagonist of the novel instead of Citizen. The novel clearly and repeatedly shows signs of Julia struggling with her identity. She has, especially, problems with giving in to her Sierra Leonean roots, although deep down, she wishes to become a part of it. This is reflected in her relationship with Uncle Moses when she is still a child. Mackey’s claim that Julia is a member of the second generation, shows that, through her, postmemory is represented in the novel. She too is haunted by the traumas of the past. This is reflected in the struggle with her identity. Given Sierra Leone’s colonial past, it is especially difficult for her to be of both British and Sierra Leonean descent. Eventually, Julia will learn how to cope with her identity.
In the analysis of Moses, Citizen & Me, this master paper tries to show that the theme of Julia’s search for identity is of equal importance in the novel as is the child soldier theme. Reviews of Jarrett-Macauley’s novel have failed to take this into consideration, by focussing only on the character of the boy soldier Citizen. Only Allison Mackey mentioned something about the possibility of this argument, but never really investigated her argument. However, it is rather difficult to discuss the theme of trauma and that of child soldiers in Moses, Citizen & Me without going into the theme of Julia’s search for identity, because all three of them form the structure of the novel and are substantially interwoven with one another.
7. Works Cited


<http://theorwellprize.co.uk/the-orwell-prize/about-the-prize/>.


