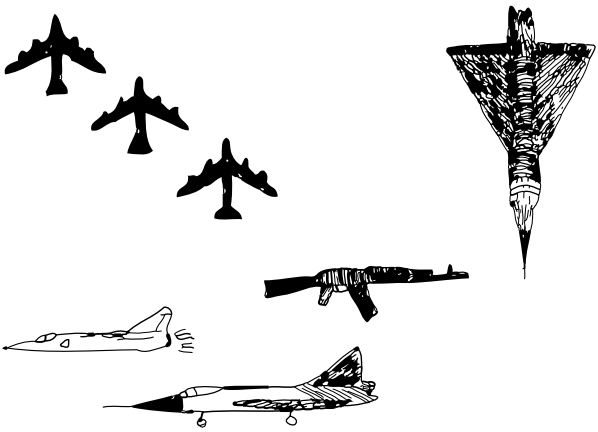

Anna Lukianowicz

A Whole War Inside One Small Body

War in Children's Literature

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Introduction

Separation, a journey, the quest for one's identity, are recurrent themes in literature. Within children's literature they become core elements in works depicting children caught in a war environment. Separation involves leaving or losing one's family and home, frequently one's own country. This may be caused by the need for evacuation, as in the early months of the Second World War, when entire schools were relocated, as well as mothers with small children and pregnant women. Even very young children living in crowded cities in Britain were evacuated to the country, far away from what were considered to be certain military targets. With a luggage label showing their names tied to their coats or hanging from their necks, their gas mask and a bag with little more than a change of clothing, boys and girls travelled mainly by train, and often for the first time, accompanied by their teachers or members of the Women's Voluntary Service, to destinations that many parents were informed of only on receipt of the stamped postcard their children were issued with.

Placements on arrival were not always well organised: «a slave market», «for auction», «picked out like sweets at Woolworths» are how some evacuees later described the experience[1]. Some billeting families might prefer girls, to help with the housework, or sturdy-looking boys to work on the farm, but this was by no means true across the board[2]. Scenes describing children

[1] Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945*, London, Headline Book Publishing, 2004, p. 29.

[2] Cfr. Ruth Inglis, *The Children's War, Evacuation 1939-1945*, London, Fontana, 1990; Martin Parsons, *Waiting to go Home*, Denton, DSM, 1999.

arriving late at night after long train journeys and being billeted or 'picked' are perfectly described by Nina Bawden in *Carrie's War* (1973), Michael Morpurgo in *Friend or Foe* (1977) and Michelle Magorian in *Goodnight Mister Tom* (1981). For older children and adolescents, especially girls, evacuation could offer a less restricted life, the chance to experience greater freedom and independence, as described by Michelle Magorian in *A Little Love Song* (1991) and Theresa Breslin in *A Homecoming for Kezzie* (1995). Older children might also run away from where they had been billeted and head for home, or what was left of it, and live as best they could, avoiding discovery, like the two young protagonists of *Fireweed* (1969) by Jill Paton Walsh, set in London at the beginning of the Second World War.

Evacuation is not the only cause of separation. War stories for and about children also describe separation from fathers who have been called up or volunteered, and mothers who are otherwise engaged in the war effort, as in *The Dolphin Crossing* (1967) by Jill Paton Walsh, *Paper Faces* (1991) by Rachel Anderson, both set in the Second World War, and *A Little Love Song*, in which two sisters are evacuated while their mother, an actress, is abroad taking shows to the troops.

More dramatically and tragically, in *The Silver Sword* (1959), by Ian Serraillier, three children in Warsaw are separated from their parents when they are taken away by Nazi troops, the father to a prison camp and the mother to a work camp. The family is eventually reunited; others are not so lucky. In *The War Orphan* (1984), by Rachel Anderson, and *Little Soldier* (1999), by Bernard Ashley, the young protagonists witness the shooting of their parents, a fate they very narrowly escape themselves. Many of these young war victims undertake long journeys to look for their parents, to go back home or to escape danger, deportation or death. The children in *The Silver Sword* trek across Poland and Germany to reach their parents in Switzerland. In *Tug of War* (1989) Joan Lingard describes the long journey across northern Europe made by two young Latvians and their family to escape

Russian occupation in 1944. Judith Kerr tells the story of her own family's escape from Nazi Germany to Paris and then London in *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (1971).

Journeys are not only physical and geographically contained, they are also inward journeys of healing, self discovery and self construction. These are made by children who have experienced the trauma of war, seen their loved ones killed and at times have been forced themselves to take part in fighting and killing. In *Little Soldier*, Kaninda travels from his warring African country to London, where he begins a long inward journey that leads him to confront his feelings for the loss of his family, his guilt for having survived and his seemingly implacable need for revenge. In Rachel Anderson's *The War Orphan*, Ha is evacuated from Saigon to England, a remnant of his former self: he journeys back through the recollections of his suffering and harrowing experiences and is helped to recover some sense of self-awareness. Identities are recovered and formed in relation to new surroundings, families, friends, schools, but also in relation to old enemies – and allies – who become less clear-cut from a distance, and who can be viewed differently from a new standpoint and on the basis of experience.

The present study examines four war novels by major writers for children: *The War Orphan* by Rachel Anderson, *AK* (1990) by Peter Dickinson, *Gulf* (1992) by Robert Westall and *Little Soldier* by Bernard Ashley. These are stories that have different wars as their settings, in different countries and periods in history. Causes are explained or suggested, but it is essentially upon the far-reaching effects of war, in time and place, on children, on ordinary people, the civilian population, that the authors turn their attention. The geographical locations, the political, social or cultural contexts are ultimately irrelevant, or they become relevant only in so far as they show that the consequences of war draw different locations and contexts together for the devastation they suffer in common. War, not wars, is the theme these novels share.

The War Orphan is set in Vietnam and England; *A.K.* in Nagala, a fictitious African country; *Gulf* refers to the Gulf War of 1991, but is set in England and only telepathically in Iraq; *Little Soldier* is set in another warring country in Africa and in England. Rachel Anderson introduces the conflicting ideologies that are put forward to justify the devastation of the daily lives of ordinary village people, literally destroying a traditional way of life. Peter Dickinson and Bernard Ashley refer to African clan rivalry and deeply-rooted ('historical') antagonism, hinting at how they have been exasperated and exploited by colonial occupiers to further their own commercial interests. Ashley sets two conflicts side by side, national and local, civil war in an African nation and London gang warfare. Robert Westall draws attention to the influence of the media presentation of war events, 'live' coverage on television that is hard to distinguish from a computer game, and guides his protagonist from an exclusive, restricted standpoint to a position that allows a wider view, casting off prejudice in favour of a broader, comprehensive outlook.

This research is arranged in two parts: Part One is a close reading of each work individually; in Part Two the four novels are considered in relation to one another, with a closer look at the aspects that draw them together or set them apart. The quotation in the title is taken from *Gulf*, by Robert Westall. The map of Nagala on page 39 comes from *AK*, by Peter Dickinson.

Part One

The War Orphan

The War Orphan (1984), by Rachel Anderson, is about the immediate and longterm effects of war on the civilian population, and in particular upon a small Vietnamese boy called Ha; parallel to Ha's story is the one of the effects of his adoption, in England, on his adoptive brother, Simon. The novel is divided into four Parts, 'Simon', 'Ha', 'Simon and Ha', 'Brothers', of roughly equal lengths excepting Part Four, which is much shorter. The headings perfectly reflect the movement from singular (name, person, experience) to plural, or more exactly, firstly two singulars linked by a conjunction, then to a plural that embraces both characters in a host of meanings and connotations. The work is rendered more complex than the apparently clear-cut division into parts with linear headings might suggest by the constant use of shifts in time, location and narrative voice. There are two first-person narrating voices: through his memories, Ha intrudes upon Simon's narrative in Part One, as Simon intrudes upon Ha's in Part Two. The two come together to form a dialogue in Parts Three and Four.

Anderson achieves a truly polyphonic effect not only through the characters that are physically present in the story, but also through the medium of Ha's vivid verbal recollections of dialogue. In this way, American soldiers in Vietnam come alive on the page as the reader hears them talking about their presence in the war, questioning or defending their roles, tactics and strategies, and social workers are heard describing the appalling conditions of

the orphanage in Saigon to which Ha is taken. These 'intrusions' are mainly, but not exclusively, analeptic, and function like windows through which the reader sees and hears voices and events that are strongly linked with those described in the main narrative frame, but belong to a different time and place. They are structural, and stand out in the visual layout of the text for being differently indented, but they also function at a very emotional level for their immediacy and for often being physically dramatic, and introducing fear that contrasts sharply with the context into which they are placed.

They are also telepathic: as the story unfolds the reader becomes aware that Simon subliminally experiences, and so shares, Ha's thoughts and memories. He is at first an involuntary recipient of these recollections, but the more he learns about his adoptive brother's experience of war the more he wants and needs to know what Ha has been through and how he has come to be what he is: an orphan, evacuee, seemingly mentally deficient, unable to feed, wash or dress himself, with little or no control of his body or bodily functions. *The War Orphan* is a painful story about intense and prolonged physical, spiritual and mental suffering, of terrible anguish, but also of resilience, determination and trust in the value of truth – as viewed with the clear, unmitigated vision of adolescence. Furthermore, while one of the overriding concerns of the novel is the recovery of the past in the hope of gaining an accurate and honest picture of the present, the last few pages also offer hope for the future.

Part one Simon

The opening scene describes an act of aggression: Simon is attacked on the way home from school by four bullies. Unprovoked and unjustifiable, it anticipates on an infinitely minor scale the aggressive dominance, depicted later, exerted by occupying soldiers over unarmed civilians. It sets the scene in other ways, too: in suggesting the victim's acknowledgement,

even acceptance, that he is somehow to blame, and in drawing attention to the blindness or indifference to such acts on behalf of the community – local here, international in the case of Ha's country – for on reaching the end of the path, Simon believes he has escaped attack: «I was safe, surrounded by humanity, living people behind windows, who could see me. That's exactly when they pounced, from behind a fuchsia bush»[3]. Simon rationalises what he refers to as a «small incident»; «I knew I'd made the wrong decision. […] I couldn't blame anybody but myself for making the first wrong decision» (p. 2). Ha, too, will refer to «our fault» when he is put in front of a firing squad with his mother: «As a group, of women, children, old men and babies, we were too docile, or too proud. We handled it all wrong». (p. 140) Shortly later, when the platoon that has found him alone in the forest is airlifted out and leaves him behind, he comments, «I had mishandled the rescue» (p. 170). The act of aggression on Simon also calls attention, by contrast, to the security of home, of family, to the stability afforded by the ordered repetition of daily life, «of the calm and perfect routine» (p. 4). Ha also once enjoyed the security and stability of home and village life, until its disintegration following the outbreak of war.

Simon is a highly rational and articulate adolescent, well organised, confident about his abilities and his relationship with his parents. Although slightly taken aback by the news that he is going to have an adopted brother at short notice, he embraces his parents' decision and is determined to measure up to the role of elder brother. Life begins to change even before Ha's arrival. Firstly, with a visit from a social worker, whose presence Simon strongly resents because she invades the privacy of his room, «spoiling the perfect symmetry» (p.10) of his books and fiddling with his pencils, and particularly because she implies knowledge and information about potential problems that Simon has not

[3] Rachel Anderson, *The War Orphan*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 3. From now on, page numbers are shown in brackets in the text.

been told or made fully aware of («placements of older children can be tricky, unexpected things», p. 12). On the same day, Simon's room is metaphorically invaded by Ha's presence as preparations are made for his coming; the bunk-bed is made up, picture books brought down from the attic, a drawer is freed in the chest of drawers. It is at this point, chronologically the night before the family goes to fetch Ha from the children's home, that Anderson inserts the first 'window', introducing other voices, another place, another 'I' narrating:

> I heard their voices keeping yapping at each other, on and on, one distant and crackling, coming in on radio waves, the other quite nearby, only a few yards away. […] I heard the whirling of the rotorblades overhead. […] I knew I was in danger. They were going to get me if they could. I wanted to escape, but I seemed unable to move. My legs were moving but I made no progress (p. 15).

The voices are of US soldiers, the place is not clearly identifiable and it is uncertain if this is a flashback or –forward, or a nightmare, as is suggested by the similarity in the description of the paths down which the 'I' speaking is running away from the soldiers and along which Simon was attacked by bullies. It is later that the reader becomes aware that this 'I' is Ha and these are his memories of dialogue and events, now rendered clearly and articulately as they surface through the medium of Simon's dreams. The scene is vivid, the exchanges dramatic and urgent, and apparently out of place, in such stark contrast with the narrative so far. Anderson expertly makes use of the intrusion to supply information and details with immediacy in the form of dialogue, rendered all the more intense by the reader's uncertainty of the situation. It is information, furthermore, that might otherwise prove tricky (and less effective) to render; for example, the doubt voiced by one soldier about the hollow rhetoric and false premise for armed intervention:

> 'Why are we here, sir?'
> 'To uphold all that is right. To get rid of the gooks. To stop the flood of all that is evil, sweeping across the continent. If we don't, it'll conquer the whole world.'

'But sir, how are we stopping it? Every time we snake down this path, they zap us and how. So then we zap them back. How's that supposed to stop anything?'

'We are here to win their hearts and minds. And if we can't do that, we eliminate them. Either way, we win' (p. 16).

The 'window' closes and the narrative picks up where it had been left, with the family fetching Ha from the children's home. While there, Simon feels unwell, sick and dizzy; the sensation passes quickly and his father puts it down to their lunch, although the boy is not so sure. During the first night with Ha sleeping in the bunk-bed underneath his, Simon wakes up feeling ill again, as though the earth were swaying. He describes it as seasickness; «I was nauseated, submerged in a sickness and a hopelessness which nothing could shift» (p. 26). These sudden, brief bouts of nausea and dizziness signal a sort of subliminal interaction between the boys, as Simon becomes the medium through which Ha's suffering finds a means of expression which the circumstances of war have denied him. In fact, Simon wakes up a second time «unaccountably afraid», as another dramatic event intrudes upon his mind and he 'sees' and 'hears' three fighter planes pass overhead, nearly touching the roof. Of the first he sees the «wide, swept-back wings», the «sharp, needle-pointed nose. Red lights sparkling at its wing-tips and underbelly» (p.27). The description anticipates a picture Ha draws a few days later, with matching details, of an enormous plane with a «sharp, needle nose», «wide, swept-back wings» and red lights «scribbled […] on the underside of the plane and at the tips of the wings» (p.56).

Altogether, Simon adopts a paternal attitude towards Ha and his intentions are very positive; he feels the new home situation as a sort of enchantment and is impatient to get home from school, but he becomes discouraged by his adopted brother's inability to talk or play normally, and even more so by his mother's evident reticence in answering his questions about where Ha comes from, his age and his learning disabilities. She finally replies that «He was born in a war». (p.33) as though this were self-explanatory and conclusive, but the effect on Simon is quite the opposite, he

wants to know more; which war, why was he not told, does Ha himself know?

Simon finds he cannot accept his parents' evasive answers about collective guilt for a war they were not involved in, or that all that can be done for Ha now is to love and care for him, the «therapy of love». As he continues to have nightmares and is forced to come to terms with Ha's unpredictable behaviour (his apparent enjoyment of violence on television; his «creepy» drawings of enormous black planes; his killing of the family pet), Simon becomes increasingly convinced that the only way to help Ha is to enable him to learn about himself, to recover his past, to know the truth, and he feels that it is his responsibility to bring this about.

Part two Ha

This is Ha's story, in first person narrative, from before the occupation of his village to his escape after surviving the collective execution of old men, women, including his mother, and children. It is the story of a small farming village that is hard-working and self sufficient.

> Our village lay inside a small loop in the river, and was rich, fertile land. The soil was dark-red so that, during the dry season, red dust clung to the grass and the leaves, and the air was close and still. But after the rainy season, everything grew new and green.
>
> Beside the river we had rice paddies, and on the higher land we had fruit orchards and vegetable plots where we grew mangoes, bread-fruit, grapefruit and pineapples. Beyond the village we had plantations of bananas, and groves of bamboo. And beyond the bamboo came the forest.
>
> Some families kept water-buffalo who did the work for them. In my family, we had a cow for milk, some hens and a goat. We harvested enough rice and vegetables for our family and the rest my mother sent downriver to market in the city. But we had to keep some rice back to pay our taxes to the men from the North, and a few vegetables to give as presents to the men from the South (p. 75).

The men from the North, the People's Army, are fighting against imperialism; the men from the South are government troops who, with their foreign allies, are fighting against communism. The village is on the borderline and claimed by both sides in a conflict of ideologies in which the civilian population becomes the first victim and casualty. The People's Army wants to reclaim the value of the national language, which has been subjugated by former Chinese and French invaders in the country's long history of colonial occupation. The purpose of the current 'imperialists', the government's American allies, sounds tragically contemporary: «To uphold all that is right. To get rid of the gooks. To stop the flood of all that is evil, sweeping across the continent. If we don't, it'll conquer the whole world» (p. 16).

Anderson makes very effective use of dialogue to convey information and contrasting attitudes between young recruits and more experienced officers, hinting, too, that war will soon harden the young. The inexperienced soldiers' doubts and questions about their presence in the conflict receive replies that go from the regurgitation of official rhetoric («We are here to win their hearts and minds» p. 17), to unveiling covert military practice that involves targeting civilians («"Why do we have to do this, sir? That jungle ain't doing nobody any harm, sir." […] "We gotta deprive them of lodging and food throughout this area. You ask too many questions, sonny. We have to prevent Charlie moving about any place. We evacuate civilians, then anything else in there that moves is hostile"» p. 57). Torture is commonplace (« "We can't do it this way, sir. What about the Geneva Convention?" "I don't give a rat's ass about no Geneva nothing. This is war, sonny." "It's daft making these old duffers dangle. They aren't going to say nothing" "OK. Cut them down"» p. 44), and execution is seen as a quick and permissible solution («"I got a wife and two kids back home. And right now, I'm on short timer's stick and I'm going to see them again and I don't care how I get to it." "You mean you'd zap'em? Waste 'em?" "What do you think I mean? You think killing in war's something new?" "We can't do that." "Aw come on, buddy. This is a Free Strike Zone. You can

do anything in Free Strike Zone. That's what it's all about"». p. 139) The narrative also describes the soldiers' confusion and fear in situations where military action seems ill conceived and badly planned, resulting in the troops' striking civilians in the absence of a visible enemy: «How can we fight a war if we never make contact with an enemy? When we don't even know who the enemy is, let alone where?» (p. 99).

These are actions that Ha witnesses and verbal exchanges he overhears and remembers, for when the US troops occupy his village he finds that he, alone among the villagers, can understand their foreign tongue. Anderson gives a subtle justification for this in a reference to *déjà vu* explained by Simon's French teacher, extending its range from already *seen* to already *heard*, which fits comfortably in the realm of potential experience that encompasses Simon's telepathic communication with Ha and sharing his painful recollections.

Ha remembers the whine of fighter planes in the morning air raids that smash the rice paddies and vegetable fields; the threatening leaflets dropped by the Army Psychological Warfare units; the helicopters, «huge black shapes», bringing troops landing on what is left of vegetable patches, heavy boots trampling on anything that has survived the shelling. The juxtaposition of quiet domesticity, of melons, beans and celery in kitchen gardens with their mindless destruction highlights the villagers' overwhelming sense of alienation: these could be men from outer space, they were «as unlike human beings as the helicopters they had arrived in. They were like flying snakes, dangerous and unreliable» (p. 96). Ha remembers the soldiers always shouting their orders at the villagers, as though this could overcome the obstacle of speaking a language the people do not understand, and witnessing the shooting of a deaf old neighbour for not obeying an order to stop that he would not have understood even if he had heard it.

Ha describes life at the Reception Centre, where the entire village population is taken to live in tents: the lack of space, food, water, hygiene; no washing facilities for people who used to wash three times a day in the river; the onset of malaria, which was

unknown in the village; being fed 'pig rice' of no nutritious value. He recalls the re-education programme blasted out repeatedly from loudspeakers; the boredom, cut off from daily activities, with nothing to do all day, and no fields to have to work in from morning to night. This is the relentless disintegration of traditional life. Ha's only relief is in his grandmother's stories, one of which he will particularly remember: the story of Tu Thuc, who lives happily in the Land of Bliss for a hundred days, but becomes homesick and returns home, only to find that everything has changed since he left and nobody knows him. So he tries to find the Land of Bliss again, but fails. After the death of his baby sister, Ha and his mother escape from the camp. On their journey home they stop to rest in a village, where they are rounded up with the villagers and placed before a firing squad. Part Two ends with Ha running away after surviving the massacre.

As in Part One, the narrative flow is interrupted by frequent changes of voice and setting. In this case it is Simon's voice that intrudes, asking direct questions, urging Ha to tell him more about what happened, as the two boys continue to interact at a subliminal level. Anderson fully exploits this narrative strategy which allows her to introduce additional information that sometimes prompts a possible comparison with the reader's own school context. For example, when Ha recalls the People's Army warning the villagers not to let the 'imperialists' invade their speech with foreign words the way previous colonial occupiers had done, in particular during former French domination, when students were prevented from studying in their mother tongue on the grounds that it was unsuitable for conveying «complex scientific information» (p. 79). Such a use of language as a form of cultural subjection is drawn attention to when it is compared to the study of a foreign language as a means not of cultural domination but of enrichment. In the brief exchanges between a schoolboy and a French teacher in an English school (the use of 'sir' and the name 'Bodger' are indicators), Bodger's question, «Why do the French want other countries to use their words for

things when we've got a jolly good language of our own?», (p. 90) highlights the importance of choice over imposition.

The knowledge that Simon is gaining about the war has several consequences. The night on which he shares Ha's memories of the execution of his mother he wets his bed out of sheer terror. This is something Ha does every night (does he relive the atrocity again and again, too?), so the 'accident' is attributed to him and the boys' parents continue to be unaware of the shocking learning process Simon is going through. He is so horrified by the experience, and the bad dreams that ensue, that on the one hand he tries to avoid falling asleep («I must stay awake in class, and I must stay awake in the night: I don't want to go back to that heap in the ditch» p.141), and on the other hand he begins to feel a strong revulsion towards Ha, his smell, «rotten, like decay», his presence, the way he eats, anything he comes into contact with: «Now that I knew where he'd been and what he'd seen, he revolted me» (p. 144).

Part Three Simon and Ha

In Part Three the structure follows the same pattern as in Parts One and Two, with the boys' voices alternating. Simon tries to tell his parents about his dread of sleeping and of touching anything Ha has touched, of his fear of dying and the images that fill his mind, but he no longer feels in tune with them and gives up. His mind returns obsessively to the «wasting»: «Toothpaste foam dribbled from his mouth. After two brief scrubs he spat everywhere, on the taps, on the cuffs of his pyjamas, some flecks down on his bare feet, the same bare brown feet which had run, shoeless, away from that pit» (p. 150).

Ha's recollections are a catalogue of horrendous events. After the massacre he escapes into the forest. He manages to get back near his village and finds his father guarding an ammunition cache: as he runs toward him, unheeding the warning to wait because booby traps have been set in the path, his father is blown

up by his own bomb, trying to prevent Ha from setting it off. The boy is found by a patrol of US infantrymen, who are uncertain what to do with him, for taking him prisoner means giving him a bed, a blanket and three meals a day: «Our directive is systematic elimination, not prisoners» (p. 163). When the men are air-lifted out of the jungle, Ha is left behind; he wonders off, exhausted and hungry and finally gives up: «I sat down on the dirt road, and that was the end. I died. I never lived again. There was no way back to the Land of Bliss» (p. 177).

The Ha who 'dies' is the boy from the farming village who had a sister, a grandmother, a father and a mother, all of whose deaths, save his grandmother's, he has witnessed. This boy is replaced by a 'war orphan', and it is to an orphanage in Saigon that he is taken, where he progressively loses the ability to walk, to speak, to control his bodily functions, to remember who he is.

> No, I was too tired to be afraid.
>
> I stayed sitting by the wall, watching. A cauldron of rice was cooked and the children ran to it, and lined up, each with a tin bowl. I watched them, but I didn't join in. My legs didn't want to move. They didn't want to carry me any further. I looked at them stretched out in front of me on the dusty ground. They'd carried me far enough. I wasn't surprised when I found they didn't work any more.
>
> When the women saw that I couldn't walk they propped me on a bench and brought a bowl of rice and put it in my lap. But the other children discovered they could take the rice from me. They could push me and topple me from my perch. So one of the women carried me over her shoulder out of their reach, up a flight of steps to a room on the first floor.
>
> She placed me in a cot with wooden sides. It was built for a baby and my legs buckled up. But it didn't matter because I didn't need them any more […] I will stay here for weeks, or years, or for the rest of my life and I don't need ever to walk, or crawl, or talk again. They've given me food and a place to lie down, just as hens and goats and buffaloes are given food and a place to lie down (p. 207).

He remembers his grandmother's story about Tu Thuc, who found the Land of Bliss, of eternal youth, and then left it because he longed for his own home; but his home no longer existed and he never found the Land of Bliss again. Ha will not make the

same mistake; he will stay where he is, like a baby, unable, and no longer willing to do anything for himself.

In the same way as the reader has had access to dialogue between US soldiers in Parts One and Two through Ha's recollections, she/he now overhears exchanges between volunteer workers in the Saigon orphanage. Their comments add further details regarding the conditions of the institution as well as Ha's: «It's the stench that got me. The first time I came in here, I was actually sick, just from the smell, but you get used to it.» (p. 215); «"And this one?". "We don't know. Anything between nine and thirteen. As you see, he has no teeth"» (p. 225).

In the orphanage Ha's memories of his mother, his family and the village begin to fade, and with them, his sense of identity, which becomes ever more fragile as other names and identities are piled upon him. Thus, when the little girl in the cot beside his dies and another child is put in the cot and given the same name, he wonders if it is the cot that identifies the child, and he is Ha because his cot is called Ha. Few children in his room have a name at all, and this tends to be administrative rather than personal, most of them having been given names at random on arrival. An American soldier who visits the orphanage takes a liking to him and calls him 'Harvey', after his own son; a Christian nun baptises him 'Anthony', after her brother; in the orphanage in England the housemother will call him 'Robert' («a more natural sounding name» p. 22). Ha is included in the group of children who are evacuated from Saigon because an ID card is found which «might even be his». It identifies him as Nguyen Thanh Ha, from a village near Mi Hung that no longer exists: «"Are you sure it's his?" "Why not? Does it really matter? I mean, so long as he has a genuine card, that's all that counts. Then we can set about the emigration papers. Nguyen Than Ha. Sounds OK"» (p. 227).

It is as the airplane ascends and he sees trees and water, green and white, and water buffalo, that he suddenly knows that that is where he belongs. He remembers his home, the cow, the hencoop, and his mother's face, but «I'd remembered it all when it was too late. I scratched my head, and tugged at my hair till it hurt,

to make pain so that I would remember where I used to live and who I lived with. I rocked my whole body from side to side. I must remember» (p. 232). Rocking is something he has begun to do in the orphanage, swaying his body to sway his cot, a movement that is comforting and helps to call back a memory, or to remove one. Pain has a similar effect; it is a sentient experience in an environment of apathy and blankness, where no interest or emotion is felt or favoured and touch is related to being washed or 'hosed'. So being examined by a doctor, having his legs and arms moved, is a good sensation, and a slap is experienced as a form of physical contact: «I liked her hand touching my head. I liked the feeling of being touched and slapped, and the ringing in my ears. I called out so that she'd hit me again» (p. 211).

The rocking movement is something Simon feels too, every night, with Ha sleeping in the bunk bed below him, and it signals his entry into Ha's dreams. After witnessing the atrocity, however, he is afraid of sleeping, and his trying to stay awake at night leads to his falling asleep at school. Simon cannot in any way come to terms with the knowledge of war he now possesses. Thus his angered reaction at school assembly one morning when the Head gives a talk about war as a necessary evil, about the use of aggression to deter other ideologies. Prompted by the presence in the school of a Peace Group he has neither authorised nor approves of, the Head himself makes use of verbal aggression to stamp on any alternative ideology among his pupils. What he delivers is effectively political indoctrination similar to the kind the evacuees at the 'Reception Centre' near Ha's village were subjected to by the government forces and their allies.

As has already been seen, Rachel Anderson draws Ha and Simon together through the formal structure of the novel in the way their voices alternate and mingle and in the chapter headings. The impression of unity is strongly reinforced also by the experiences they have in common, not only at night through their dreams. For example, the events that occur after Simon walks out of school following his confrontation with the Head contain reflections and echoes, on a different scale, of what Ha

has lived through for their sense of loneliness and exclusion, of responsibility (somehow 'deserving' their fate), for their 'dying' or wishing to die. So, on walking out of school, Simon does not go home: «I'd sometimes wondered what I'd do if I bunked off school. Before, I'd supposed I could go home. Home was the haven, the nest, the security, the primeval cave. The lair which every bear needs. But now, no cave. It wasn't my cave any more. It was Ha's» (p. 178).

He makes his way through town and finds himself in front of a church, where he is unable to communicate either with the old man tending the grass outside or the people praying inside. He reaches the conclusion that it is a special church for «dappy people», for «dum-dums», a word he has used referring to Ha, and feels left out and unwanted. The episode is reminiscent of Ha's encounter with an old woman winnowing rice by the roadside, after he has been left behind by the American infantrymen. Here, too, communication fails as the woman appears not to see or hear him at all, and it is at this point that he sits down on the road and 'dies', spiritually and metaphorically.

Simon's reaction to the situation that has evolved around him is a reasoned desire for death: «I left the church quickly. It was no refuge for me. I didn't belong anywhere. Even the dum-dums had a place in church. I was a bright High School boy who had no place at all. I wished I was dead, then it would all be so much easier for everybody» (p. 179). As Ha sat down on the road and died, so Simon heads for the ring road, where he is hit by an oncoming car and falls backwards, imagining he can see helicopters in formation coming over the horizon. Simon is hurt in his attempted suicide, but not seriously; like Ha, he encounters a metaphorical death and the boy that emerges can perceive very clearly. On the one hand, he feels he has 'mishandled' the whole situation (just as Ha felt he had 'mishandled' the rescue). On the other, his acute awareness becomes the cornerstone of his new outlook on his and Ha's future: it is not a question of either/or, Simon/Ha; neither must leave or be «got rid of», on the contrary, «We both had to stay». This is not simply an aim but

a resolution, with the full realisation that it will not just happen but will require effort and determination: «I had to work out a way of living in the same house without being repelled by his presence»(p. 191).

Simon's idea that what happens to Ha also happens to him re-enforces his conviction that the way forward is not his mother's «therapy of love», but the therapy of truth: Ha must be helped to remember and regain his identity, personal and national, which may contribute to exorcise, if only partially, the horrendous events he has experienced. Simon feels that because he has subliminally shared so many memories, he alone can be instrumental in enabling Ha to remember who he was before becoming a war orphan. There is also another, more complex, reason pushing Simon to find the truth: he needs it for himself, to satisfy his own hunger for knowledge. This is referred to as a sort of «addiction» to war, not any war but «his war». Without Ha, Simon does not have access to the knowledge and experience he needs and wants because books are not the same: «Only with Ha could I remember the violence, the fear, the smell of rotting flesh, the leeches, as they really were» (p. 194).

On returning home after the accident, however, he finds that Ha has gone, sent to be cared for by a professional foster-mother, but by now his absence is more devastating than his presence for Simon, because without him there is no rocking, there are no dreams, no means to find the truth, nor any truth to be found. On Ha's return, the two boys begin to interact in a new way, albeit still in their dreams, addressing each other directly between recollected events in an on-going dialogue: «"Some days I remembered things and wanted to tell somebody". "I'm listening, Ha. You can tell me"» (p. 212). At times Simon fills in details, explaining the reason behind unusual behaviour that Ha describes but does not understand, as in the case of the search for special children in the orphanage in Saigon, children «with black blood» to be flown out of the country in order not to leave «signs of occupation» after the troops pull out.

Part Four Brothers

This is the shortest section of the novel. It describes Ha's stay at The Chestnuts Children's Home in England after his evacuation from Saigon, and his moving from there to Simon's home. It also throws more light on the work's narrative construction, using Simon's voice to supply details that make the boys' interaction clear and explicit.

When the family collect Ha from The Chestnuts, his reaction to Simon is intuitively negative; he does not like him and is afraid of him because this boy had «memory and knowledge» and the ability to «find out about all the things which you were most afraid of. You knew he would find out everything which you didn't want to remember» (p. 244). On arriving at his new home («it wasn't the home you expected» (p. 245), Ha begins to dream about his other homes: a cot in a long room (the orphanage in Saigon); his house in the village, now deserted. Slowly more details are filled in, but the faces of his family continue to escape him while other images, of soldiers, fear and noise, take their place: «The boy Simon had made them come back because he had knowledge and memory».

The closing part of the book, however, is not only a reconsideration of Ha's past. An 'accident' in the family home is depicted which Simon resolves on his own, and the concluding lines mark an important change in narrative tense, moving from the (descriptive) past to the present and (intentional) future. The accident is a case of Ha's soiling his pants, used by Anderson to present a model of courage of another sort as Simon refers to his decision not to call his mother to tend to Ha as the «bravest» thing in his life; the «second bravest» is actually washing Ha himself. A link to war is established not only in the repeated references to 'bravery' but also through the explanation Simon gives for the 'accident', placed firmly in a war context, for such things happen even to grown men when they are afraid, «When they are about to go into battle, or when they are about to be hanged. But what was there for Ha to be afraid of now?» Simon

answers his own question; it is the long-term effects of war, for «perhaps if a person has once been afraid, he goes on being afraid for a long time» (p. 249).

The change of tense in the last few lines signals a crescendo of emphasis on unity, to which the novel as a whole has steadily moved and which is reflected semantically and symbolically in the headings of the four parts. The first person plural 'we' is looking forward to the future, making plans: «One day, we'll go back to his country for real. I'm going to become a botanist, specializing in the tree-ferns of south-East Asia. That way, my fare will be paid. Ha will always be my assistant. We'll try and look for Ha's mother while we're there. "Won't we, Ha?" "Yeah"» (p. 255). Their hope is that she might be alive for if Ha survived, perhaps she did too. But this is a false hypothesis, for Ha *has* survived; therefore, the closing sentence moves towards certainty, guaranteed by 'when' in place of 'if', and draws attention to the solidity of unity and brotherhood through the use of the future tense and the lexical items 'we', 'us', 'sons', 'belong', 'together': «And when we do find her, she will have to accept us as her sons because we belong together now».

AK

AK (1990), by Peter Dickinson, is a novel about children and war in its many facets, set in an African country, Nagala, formerly occupied and exploited by Britain. The novel is divided into eleven chapters preceded by a 'Map of Nagala' and a short introduction, 'About Nagala', and followed by two projections of the country's possible development or regression: 'Twenty years on, Perhaps: A' and 'Twenty years on, Perhaps: B'. The map anticipates the strong visual appeal of the narrative, which uses metaphor and symbolism extensively and to great effect.

The map, short introduction and two projections together form a frame that serves more than one purpose. The map suggests documentation and authenticity, not of the country itself («It is in no map of Africa»[4]), but of the story, the circumstances and situation. The events are real within the context of African history, which is suffering the disastrous consequences of western imperialism, a European legacy of exploitation, militarisation and corruption, compounded by abandonment, leading to a cycle of coups, assassinations and war. Authorial comment is implicit throughout, for instance in Dickinson's insertion of 'doublespeak'[5], offering a tangible example of the occupiers' duplicity: «The British came to Nagaland and stopped the slave raids, and had forced labour instead. They stopped the massacres, and had punitive expeditions with bullets instead of spears» (p. 1). The projections of Nagala's possible future are an invitation

[4] Peter Dickinson, *AK*, London, Macmillan's Children's Books, 2001, p.1. From now on, page numbers are shown in brackets in the text.

[5] Cfr. William Lutz, *Doublespeak*, New York, Harper and Row, 1989.

to the reader to participate by selecting how the story continues; a choice between a future marked by peace, development and progress, or the continuation of civil war with all its consequences. The invitation might seem rhetorical, but the conclusion cannot really be taken for granted in the light of the narrated events.

The main character is Paul, a child Warrior in the Nagala Liberation army. With the end of the armed conflict, Paul's adoptive father, Michael Kagomi, is called to work on numerous governmental committees and commissions because he is known to be honest, reliable and hard-working, while Paul is sent to school, as Michael believes that the boy's future, like the country's, is dependent on education. However, the end of the war is official but only apparent: massacres continue, corruption is rife and the civil population, already reduced to poverty by years of civil war, continues to pay for the bids to power of rival clans and armed factions. There is another coup and Michael disappears; at first he is believed to have been assassinated, but Paul finds out that he is imprisoned in one of the infamous underground cells in the presidential palace, and is instrumental in his release.

AK is a novel that forces the reader to reconsider words and ideas whose frequency in common usage makes them seem familiar, understood and unquestioned. The opening phrase of the first chapter is arresting: «The day the war ended». (p. 5) It leads on from the end of the introduction, 'About Nagala', and encompasses a conclusion and, formally and implicitly, a beginning. As a sentence, however, it is incomplete: it needs something more both from a grammatical point of view and in order to make sense, to have a clear meaning. Peter Dickinson very ably creates an impression of incompleteness which raises doubts and generates questions. That the war is over is repeated in the course of the novel, but often indirectly, suggesting hearsay, uncertainty, doubt, that people need convincing: «The men decided that the war was over» (p. 6); «He says the war's over» (p. 11); «He's telling you the war is over» (p. 13); or as a kind of concession in the face of apparent contradiction: «During the war

it was the sort of episode he would have reported automatically […], but Michael didn't get home till after midnight, and anyway the war was over» (p. 52).

So what does the end of war actually mean, especially in a country that has experienced a succession of wars? What are the conditions that confirm and give substance to the non-continuation of war? What is the meaning of peace and how is it defined and measured? As a kind of interval between conflicts, an absence of open hostilities, the construction of a durable situation based on justice, equity and social welfare?[6] What do enemies become when fighting is over? It is around these concepts that Peter Dickinson constructs a very thought-provoking story.

The war that ends at the beginning of the novel is the armed conflict between the Nagala Liberation Army and the Nagala Democratic Republicans, while the war that continues is against corruption, injustice and poverty. For Paul, a twelve-year-old Warrior in the Fifth Special Commando of the NLA, war is a way of life, a form of companionship and a family. The Warriors are boys who are picked up by the Commando during the conflict and trained to be soldiers. Each boy is assigned to an 'uncle', one of the older men, for whom he does small chores, cooking and washing, in exchange for protection and teaching in the craft of war: Paul's 'uncle' is Michael Kagomi, the leader of the Commando.

Unlike Kaninda in *Little Soldier*, he does not remember his family or life before the war except in vague dreams and memories. Nor does he know his real name; it is Michael who calls him Paul (a Christian name, as most of the Commando are Christian), so that in effect the boy is reborn in the war, and his name and role are defined by it: «Paul. Warrior. A boy with his own gun» (p. 5) When, at the end of the conflict, Michael adopts Paul, saying that should he later marry and have other children,

[6] Cfr. Anita L. Wenden, "Defining Peace: Perspectives from Peace Research", in Christina Schäffner and Anita L. Wenden (editors), *Language and Peace*, Amsterdam, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999, pp. 3-15.

Paul will always be his eldest son by his first wife, the war, Paul is made to reflect and forms a logical association: «My mother was the war, he thought. She was a witch, a terrible demon, an eater of people, but she looked after me. It's not my fault that I loved her» (p. 23).

The startling personification is returned to later and used to measure stages in Paul's development. For example, after the Commando has disbanded and he is at school, he is often homesick for life in the bush, for the old companionship, for what he identifies as home; he is «homesick for the war». (p. 39) Later still, during the battle for free access to water in which he becomes involved, Paul is tempted to use his AK gun because he can hear «Her voice [as it] whispered in his mind. *I love you, my son. Love me. Bring me alive with your beautiful gun*». (p. 173), but he resists the urge, knowing that were he to use the gun to kill, the action would lead to widespread bloodshed. It is when his friend and Warrior companion Jilli is left for dead on a rubbish mound that the nostalgia he had felt before turns to bitter realisation, as he becomes personally conscious of the devastating consequences of war.

The AK gun of the title fits into the same metaphorical framework that Dickinson constructs for the war, of which it is both an instrument and a symbol. As seen above, it defines Paul's identity and replaces his uncertain dreams and memories of life prior to the conflict. Its presence throughout the novel mirrors its ubiquity in the war-torn country, in the hands of rebel factions, government soldiers, insurgents and peasants. It is tough, resistant, reliable, practically indestructible. Its constant presence also reflects Paul's continued attachment to it both emotionally, as part of the bush life for which he is homesick, and instrumentally, because he feels he needs it as a weapon after the coup.

The gun is buried three times in the course of the novel, each with strong symbolic overtones. The first is at the end of the war when, knowing he will not be allowed to keep it, Paul must choose between surrendering it, destroying or selling it «to someone else in Africa whose war was still going on» (p. 18). He decides to

hide it instead, and buries it, for «Hadn't it fought for Nagala every bit as much as he had, every step of the way, three whole years in the bush […] it was a good gun, a hero too» (p. 18).

After the coup in which Michael disappears, Paul retrieves the AK and uses it during the market battle for free access to water in which stallholders unite against a band of (government supported) thugs, the 'Deathsingers', who want to force the market people to pay fees for water that should be free. This is a new kind of battle for the boy, in a different kind of war, not in the bush against armed forces but in the heart of the capital city, Dangoum, against aggressive men, «punks, bullies, beaters of women» (p. 158), in a war against corruption and injustice. The use he makes of the gun corresponds to the nature of the circumstances, for he does not shoot the leader of the thugs, although he has him within easy firing distance and can hear a voice whispering, «*I love you my son. Love me. Bring me alive with your beautiful gun*» (p. 173). Instead, in a gesture that is also highly symbolic, he uses the AK to silence the Deathsingers' 'voice', the haunting deathsong they use to intimidate the market people and to work themselves into a frenzy of aggression. Paul fires a shot and destroys the tape-deck from which the «ghost wail» has been blasted out all over the market, thus throwing the gang into confusion and hastening their defeat. He also uses the gun in a visual stand-off, without firing it, to capture the leader of the Deathsingers.

After this the AK is not used again. The market people organise a massive protest march to demand the right to free water and justice, and Paul discovers another means of continuing the struggle – using banners instead of guns. He first prepares one, then several more demanding «FREE MICHAEL KAGOMI», (p. 192) and he buries the AK once again, this time signalling not the end of war but the end of his own use of weapons and of his moving to another form of fighting that excludes the use of arms.

The final burial of the AK is in the first of the alternative conclusions to the novel, 'Twenty years on, Perhaps: A'. The occasion is a memorial ceremony for Michael Kagomi held at

the Nagala National Park, where Paul is the Warden. His friend Francis, who was in the same platoon when they were children and whose life Paul saved in the bush, is Deputy Prime Minister. The AK is beneath the monument in memory of Kagomi, which also corresponds to the place where Paul had first buried it two decades before. It is harmless where it is now (it is people who are dangerous) and Paul still thinks of it in terms of companionship, of camaraderie; it was a «good gun», a «hero» and an «old friend»: «*Lie in peace, old friend. Don't need you any more*» (p. 227).

In the second of the alternatives, the AK outlives its owner and passes on to a child soldier of a new generation in a scene which repeats, as in a rerun, an incident depicted in the opening pages of the novel, when Paul, a child of about nine and newly found by the commando, is used to test the reaction of two strangers coming along a path in the bush: «even a government soldier would hesitate a half-second before shooting a child» (p. 9). The half-second is enough for the child to fling himself out of the strangers' firing range and for the strangers themselves to be targeted by the older Warrior hiding in the bush; one is killed and the other escapes. In 'Twenty years on, Perhaps: B', the scene repeats itself, as does the war, from one generation to the next, in repetitive inertia: the mother is alive and insatiable: «My mother, the eater of people, hungry for ever. One day she will eat me» (p. 229). This time it is Paul, now a tired old Warrior, who hesitates on encountering a child along his path, and is shot before he has time to avoid the gunfire coming from the roadside. The mother has indeed devoured her son, sacrificed, in a cruel twist of the metaphor, by his own brothers, by younger soldiers belonging to the same rebel faction who fail to recognise him in time. Nobody takes responsibility for the pointless death: «Can't be helped. […] Don't worry, Doso – not your fault. He shouldn't have been here without clearing it through HQ, and like you said he shouldn't have gone for his gun» (p. 231). The AK outlives Paul, and in the hands of a new child soldier will serve to perpetuate the war.

Throughout the novel, Peter Dickinson lays great stress on the importance of unity and education; strength lies in the union of different tribes, clans, ideas and ideals, producing energy, synergy and harmony from which all will benefit. This is metaphorically represented by the marshes and Dangoum market, and physically embodied by the four children, Paul, Francis, Jilli and Kashka, who come from different areas and tribal clans and speak different languages but are brought together by the school project that takes off after the end of the war, and of which one of the main aims is reconciliation and unification through learning, especially about one another, which can be achieved by being and talking together, and learning to speak each other's languages.

Paul is the only one whose family and cultural background are unknown, and following Michael Kagomi's example he repeatedly insists he is 'Nagala' (the nation) rather than 'Naga' (the ethnic tribe). Francis, who is eight, is in the same platoon at the beginning of the novel and remembers the horrors he has witnessed. He is a very gifted, quietly intelligent child, whose language is Naga, from the territory in the south west. At the school at Tsheba, in Fulu territory in the north west of the country, Paul and Francis meet Kashka, a Baroba, an ancient warrior tribe from the east. He is fourteen, «two years older than Paul, with the very black skin-colour and narrow face most Baroba seemed to have. He never smiled» (p. 34). Like Paul, he has fought in the war.

The fourth member of the group is Jilli: a little younger than Paul and the only girl, she represents the woman of Nagala's future. At about twelve, she has already decided she does not want to be shackled by traditions that see young women treated «like buffalo, like basket» (p. 37), merchandise for exchange in a marriage contract; before that happens she plans to run away to Dangoum and find work in a hotel. She is a striking and endearing character; resilient, reliable and brave, with numerous skills that are very useful when the group make their escape. She is not at school with the three boys, but her father is paid by the school for her to stay at home to talk with the boys so they can learn the Fulu language.

In fact, it is Jilli who does most of the language learning, both Naga and English, to further her plan to run away before her father chooses a husband for her. Fulu is a difficult tongue, «all coolings and twitterings», and a «yodelling note» (p. 34), while Naga and Baroba share similar sounding words and sentences. The only one who wants to learn Fulu is little Francis, but he is «overruled» by the two older boys, a choice of vocabulary that suggests they represent a future for Nagala in which the rule of law prevails instead of force.

When news of the coup comes through, Paul immediately understands how dangerous the situation is for his adoptive father, Michael, and for himself, and that he must escape immediately from Tsheba. Kashka, too, realises he is in danger given the long-standing enmity between his own tribe, the Barobas, and the Gogus, to which the new military leader belongs, and the recent history of tribal massacres. It is with Jilli's help that they are able to escape, just in time, as news comes through of shooting and explosions in the town. Firstly, she has her grandmother smear the boys with the gray paste Fulus use to protect their skin, so that they look like Fulus themselves; she quickly prepares baskets of food supplies and strikes a bargain with Paul for the use of her father's motor boat to get them across the marshes.

It is while she is directing them away from the village that they hear shooting and the first Fulu houses go up in flames. This is a familiar experience for Paul and Kashka, who assess the situation as soldiers, in military terms, realising they can still make their getaway because the shooting is not directed at them. Jilli has never seen anything so devastating, as the previous war had not reached Fulu territory; she is shocked and sits in the boat shaking. But the boys need her to fit the motor on the boat and she immediately responds: «She straightened her spine. He could sense her effort of will as she heaved herself out of her grief and shock» (p. 74). She directs the boat to where her brothers are herding water buffalo and persuades the eldest to weave a reed mat that is something between a map and a code, and will guide them across the marshes. Jilli herself weaves a fish trap

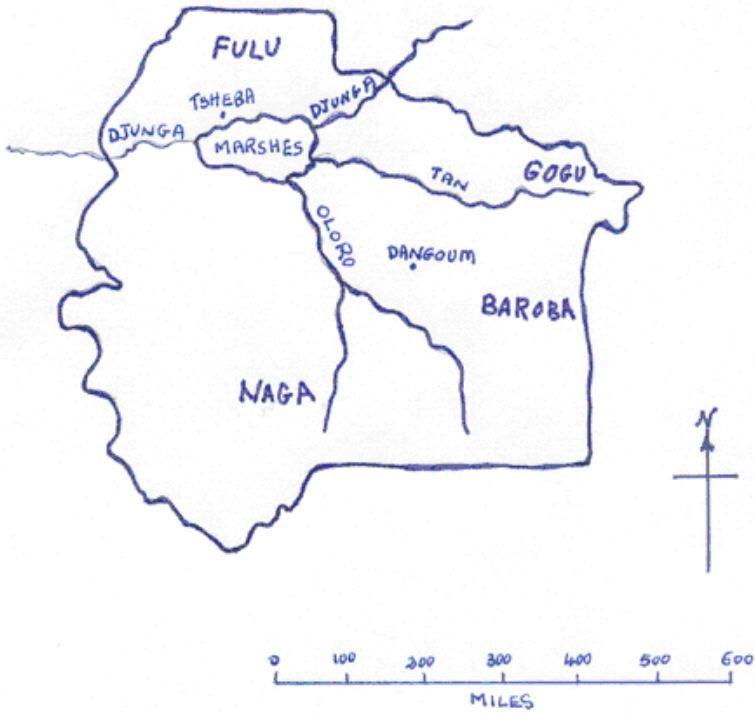
and catches several fish, which supplement their food supplies while they are escaping through the marshes. When they reach dry ground, Kashka leaves the group to head east for Baroba territory, while the other three go south to leave Francis in the care of his 'uncle'; then Paul and Jilli head for Dangoum, hoping to find some trace of Michael Kagomi.

Paul's organisational skills are fundamental throughout the journey after the escape. Having been urged always to be ready in case the political situation deteriorated, he has planned and prepared with a soldier's precision, taking into account that the most likely route in the event of an escape would have to be through the marshes, considering the geographical location of Tsheba, with desert to the north, marshes to the south, while east or west «you'd stand out like a zebra among buck»(p. 62). So he has stored cloroquin, repellent, sterilising tablets, matches, cord, a water flask, a cooking pot, and a map of the area. On the day of the escape he collects extra lunch packs and takes the money his father has given him. He distributes the cloroquin to the others and forces Francis, who has fallen ill along the journey, to swallow his rations, probably saving his friend's life.

Francis, too, when he recovers, makes important contributions to the group's survival in the bush. His «schoolbook cleverness» is of no use now, but he exhibits another sort of schooling – the survival skills he learnt from his 'uncle' during the war; he spots the «wizened stems of a gourd twisting across a patch of bare ground» (p. 91), from which they suck and squeeze plenty of water, and teaches the others to make traps with which they catch ground squirrels. He studies the map and remembers where some water holes are that turn out to be vital for their survival. Kashka plays a role in the escape as well, though less obviously and only in the initial part: he steers and paddles the boat through the marshes, and Paul relies on his physical presence and his awareness and experience as a boy soldier. The group's escape and survival are determined by the union of their individual efforts, qualities and abilities: Baroba, Fulu and Nagai not at war but united against war.

The damaging effects to the country of Nagala's lack of unity are highlighted with considerable effect by Dickinson through the use of metaphor, combining visual and geographical detail applied to the Tsheba marshes and the urban landscape of the capital, Dangoum. The marshes just south of Tsheba, which the children escape through after the coup, are depicted in the rough map of Nagala with which the novel opens, and the marsh basin is referred to again when Paul and Francis start school at Tsheba. The Oloro river flows into the basin from the south, bringing together two sources of water, one from Naga territory and the other from where Baroba and Naga territories meet; the Tan flows from the east, the land of the Gogu tribes; the Djunga from the north east, between Fulu and Gogu territories. The basin is the meeting point of these rivers and, metaphorically, of the tribes from whose territories they spring and flow: but instead of coming together to form a great, powerful river, their waters stagnate and lose their energy and potential. The basin represents and reflects the inability of the tribes to join forces and form a strong, united nation; their resources and potential are wasted in warfare:

> there their waters lay and mingled and steamed among the reed-beds and then somehow, imperceptibly, found their way west and became a river again, still called the Djunga, which flowed towards the ocean. At its point of outflow it was half the size of any of the three rivers where they flowed in. All the rest of the water, eighty-five per cent of it Sister Mercy said, had gone up in steam (p. 31).



The urban landscape of Dangoum is a more elaborate concept, whose richness is reflected in visual and metaphorical terms. The capital city is a colonial legacy: its choice of location decided by the British for commercial reasons, clothed in impartiality towards the tribes and disregarding the unsuitable geographical features. Just as the location of the city looked good only to people far away in London looking at a map, its layout works well mainly at a drawing board level. This, too, is the result of British planning and is based on circles: twelve wide roads radiating from a central raised area, linked to each other by smaller circling roads. The plan was left unfinished when the British pulled out and the pattern has consequently kept breaking down, although

most of the wide avenues do reach the central raised area. Upon this mound the first president/dictator of Nagala built his palace, an unusual and very imposing building that is in keeping with the foreignness of the city's location and layout, as it is the work of an American architect and the copy of a palace in Europe.

The city is first seen by night as Paul approaches it by car, and the impression that is created is visual especially in terms of light, of its changing quality, intensity and source: a distant glow in the darkness; the intermittent reflection of headlights on trees; vague lights further away; then glaring butane lamps, and glass-faced buildings that reflect light; lit shop windows and neon signs. Finally, the long, white, floodlit palace standing on a low mound, with a ring of water that reflects the gleam and glitter above. The effect is also marked by a sense of movement, 'then' indicating succession both in time and space, and the scene which initially appears at a horizontal level rapidly becomes three dimensional with the description of the breadth of the road and the height of the palm trees and buildings on either side. The initial powerfully physical sense of smell, combining human, animal and mechanical smells, is a feature that is drawn attention to frequently as a product, and representative, of urban poverty.

> Dangoum was a glow in the dark ahead. Then it was a smell, a sour mixed reek of fumes and dung and rotting food. Then it was a wide double road lined on either side with palms, the grey trunks blip-blip-blipping past in the headlights, with scattered vague lights beyond. Then there were dim wide-spaced street lights with two- and three-storey flat-roofed buildings behind the palms, their walls plastered with peeling posters, and food-stalls lit by glaring butane lamps, and the blare and flicker of a disco. Then tall glass-faced buildings and lit shop-windows and neon signs. And then at the very top of the avenue, so different that it made Paul's mouth open in a silent gasp, the palace Boyo had built, a long white floodlit building with a tower at the centre standing on a low mound, with fountains playing and a ring of water below reflecting the gleam and glitter above (p. 43).

While strikingly real, viewed in these terms the city also becomes a metaphor for Nagala, its colonial past and unclear future, measured and imposed by Western standards. The glow

in the dark suggests a future that is as yet hard to distinguish; the strong smell is associated repeatedly with the poor and the destitute living in the shanties on the outskirts of the city. The scattered vague lights hint at life and activities beyond what is immediately visible. The dim wide-spaced street lights suggest urban progress and modernity of a sort measured in Western terms, while the peeling posters diminish this effect. The blare and flicker of a disco again refers to the influence of the west, its excesses and intermittence.

By contrast, the food-stalls are fuelled by butane gas, which is hard to regulate, hence their glare; they are not connected to the electricity supply, suggesting some measure of independence and mobility, though not necessarily impermanence. The glass-faced buildings, illuminated shop-windows and neon signs create a crescendo of light, both as a source and in reflection, and of Western influence, culminating in the opulence of the flood-lit palace (which is also a prison, a house and symbol of tyranny), where the playing fountains contain an idea of waste, while the gleam and glitter reflected in the ring of water connote false appearances.

The market place, on the other hand, is an expression of the people's genuine history and potential, as it reaches out to a past that outdates Dangoum and Western influence, already existing before the British built the city. It brings together the craftswomen and craftsmen who represent the variety of Nagala culture, and traders and goods from various areas and tribes. The stall holders are hard-working people who refuse to be exploited by the gangs that try to impose fees on water, and are prepared to fight for their rights. They also have the depth of understanding and the broadness of vision to see that their power lies in unity, and to invoke cooperation and to rise above the petty logic of rival gangs.

The water war that takes place in the market is a *mise-en-abîme* of the civil war that has devastated the whole nation, and has officially 'ended'. It is on a reduced scale but fought for the same basic ideals and principles: the market people's claim to

their right to free water also expresses their right to live and work free from exploitation, corruption and tyranny, and to have a say in determining their lives and future. It mirrors the national conflict in another significant way too, by focusing on a not so obviously identifiable entity: the enemy. As new and unexpected alliances are formed, the question becomes necessary – who is the enemy, and why? In the opening chapter, when Paul's commando first learns that the civil war is over, the men are shocked to hear that their military commander, Colonel Malani, has come to terms with the NDR (Nagala Democratic Republicans) to form a government of national unity: «Even the Warriors felt a kick of shock. The Nagala Democratic Republicans were supporters of the government. They were the enemy» (p. 13). Michael Kagomi, whose vision of Nagala goes beyond tribal factions, explains that power, unity and compromise must go together; the alternative to cooperation is the continuance of war.

The market people's strong, charismatic leader is Madam Ga, and like Michael Kagomi she invokes unity and cooperation within the contained context of the Dangoum market, first and foremost among the stall holders themselves: «There's only one way we can fight people like this, and that's if we all stick together. As soon as a Deathsinger shows his face at your neighbour's stall, you go and stand by him, or her» (p. 155). Then, amid scepticism, she forcefully seeks the help of the smaller gangs who have fought among themselves to control the standpipes, in order to defeat the common and more powerful enemy. So the Scorpions (Baroba), the Oni-oni (Fulu) and the Jackals and Soccer Boys (Naga) ally themselves with the market people to drive the Deathsingers out, after which, together, they organise a protest march to the President's palace to demand their rights and draw attention to their plight.

The Deathsingers attack three times in order to establish their control of the standpipes in the market area. Paul assesses the events as a soldier, in military terms; the approach is a «well-planned operation» (p. 172); «battles were like this» (p. 174); he picks out the leader of the «enemy» (p. 173) and uses his AK

to capture him. It is the third attack that marks a turning point, not only because the Deathsingers are defeated but because it is the operation for which the stall holders and smaller gangs join forces, and consequently come to realise that their unity gives them the strength to demand their rights using other means than physically fighting: a protest march. Paul reaches this awareness too, when, after the battle, he buries the AK; he does not want it for the march the next day, it will be replaced by banners.

When the march reaches the palace, which is well guarded by armed troops, tanks and mines, Paul remembers that on his previous visit, when he had been beaten up by the guards for going too close, he had promised himself he would go back «with friends», meaning at the time with other warriors and guns and mortars to blow up the palace defences. He has really come back with friends, over a thousand marchers, but with banners in place of weapons and shouting voices instead of the sound of shots.

On the second and decisive day of the march, the protesters are joined by the people living in the shanties on the outskirts of town. Both the shacks and the people who live there are characterised by smell; a sour mixture of human and animal, cooking and decay, food and dung. It is the pungent smell that assails Paul on the evening he first arrives at Dangoum and the following day when he visits the shanties. When he goes back after the coup nothing has changed: «The burning air was filled with the stenches of cooking and rot and dung, though the downright sun dried any filth it could reach hard and harmless in a couple of hours, and the kites carried away whatever they could eat» (p. 125).

The people living here are themselves characterised by the rubbish that surrounds them, which they use to put up their shacks and shelters, and amongst which they search for anything remotely useful to support a living and for food. To some, the people themselves are rubbish: «Can't think why the boss wants you to see the rubbish," said Peter. "All just dead-beats and no-goods from now on» (p. 50). Paul is dismayed when he notices how everything, including the people, appears to be covered with a thin grey film of dust, like the ash with which dying Naga are

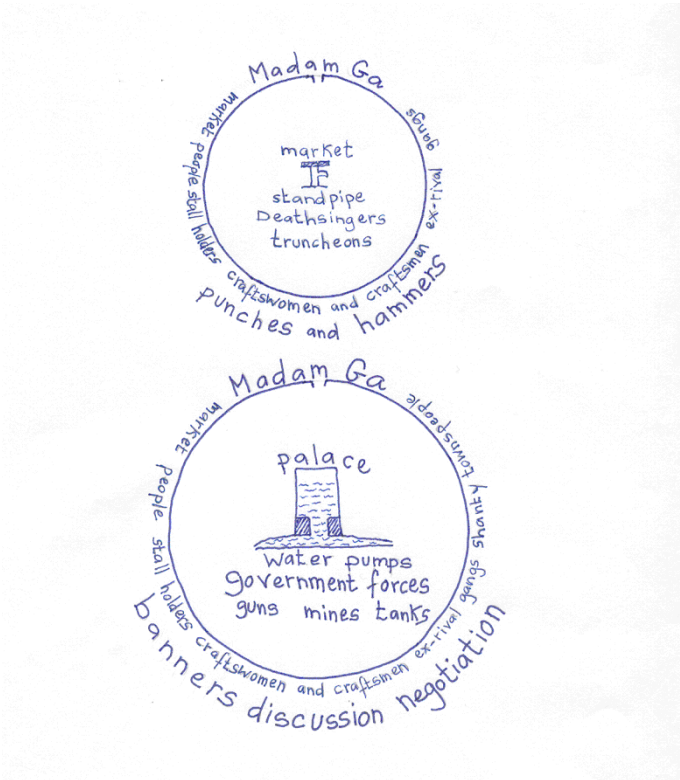
covered by witchdoctors, so that to Paul the thousands of shanty people seem to be «just waiting to die» (p. 50).

Yet, when these people join the march they bring new life to it just as it is beginning to flag, so that the marchers metaphorically turn into the element they are demanding: «a flood of people bursting from their dam, a river of freedom, not like the foaming turbulent rush of water through dead bush gullies after a thunderstorm, but a calm huge onward movement stretching all the way back through the dust cloud down to the shanties» (p. 213). This water is neither turbulent nor stagnant like in the marshes, where eighty-five per cent of it is lost, «gone up in steam».

The flood of marchers, led by Madam Ga, reaches the palace and, unable to go forward, it goes round the building in a circular movement, encircling it, surrounding it, drawing it into its circle, at its centre, as its object. Dickinson uses the circle as a recurrent image and a clear symbol representing a process towards peace based on inclusion, sharing and unity, as opposed to force, exclusion and violence. The pattern can break down, as is the case of the Dangoum city planning based on ring roads, or become empowering, as in the protest march and the events that lead up to it[7]. The final move in the battle for water, in which the protesters surround the palace, is a convex reflection of the opening move. The palace building is both symbolic and functional, as it contains the water pumps that bring water up from the aquifer over which Dangoum was built, to be distributed to the city. When the Deathsingers first attempt to take over the market standpipe by force they are surrounded by a wide ring of stall holders and attacked. Madam Ga steps into the ring, bringing the first skirmish to an end, and begins to advocate unity in an unarmed fight in order to maintain the market's freedom. The symbolic encircling of the palace is the culmination of the process advocated by Madam Ga: stall holders from all areas of Nagala,

[7] Cfr. Kay Pranis, *The Little Book of Circe Processes, A New/Old Approach to Peacmeking*, Intercorse PA, Good Books, 2005.

people from the shanties, city dwellers and minor gangs are united in the protest march; banners, discussion and negotiation replace arms and the use of violence.



The opponents of this united front, at the centre of the circles, have not made any progress. In the smaller circle the Deathsingers are a secret police connected to the government, they are armed and aim to control the city's water supply; in the larger ring the government forces are heavily armed and their control of the city's water supply is symbolic of their control over the people's rights and freedom. In both cases Madam Ga is the link between the ring and what it contains. At other times she is herself at the

centre: when she calls for cooperation among the stall holders she is at the centre of a ring of traders; when she meets leaders of the major tribes to plan their strategy against the Deathsingers, Madam Ga and her council sit «in a circle under a canopy» (p. 164). Finally, when she is interviewed by a foreign film crew during the march, she is at the centre of a ring of people who look on while she extends the marchers' demands from the centre to well beyond the circle's boundaries, turning a local message into global news.

The protest march itself goes round the palace gaining strength, «round and round again» (p. 207), «round and round they went» and «at each circuit the march became more organised» (p. 209). The road that rings the palace along which the march proceeds is called The Circus and is the first of several ring roads that according to British urban planning were to link the twelve wide avenues radiating from the palace. But the plan was never completed, so the circular pattern breaks down and the rings are interrupted, not least by the frequent road blocks set up by government troops with the very aim of preventing easy movement.

Dickinson makes it clear that it is not owing exclusively to the protest march that the people of Dangoum make themselves heard: the positive coincidence that on the same day OAU (Organisation of African Unity) observers are in the capital puts the president and government troops on their best conciliatory behaviour. But he strongly draws attention to the value of, and need for, unity and cooperation: the same unity that determines the children's survival in the marshes and the bush, and that Dickinson places at the heart of the not-so-rhetorical question he poses in the alternative concluding chapters.

Gulf

Gulf (1992), by Robert Westall, is a richly crafted novel, although its apparent linearity might suggest otherwise. War is literally, even geographically brought home to within an English house and family by a boy's capacity for empathy with people who are suffering. The gulf of the title refers directly to the Gulf War of 1991, but it also represents other and different kinds of gulfs and wars, for example, on poverty and starvation, and the distance that a particular kind of television coverage can create between the viewer and the actualities of armed conflict in terms of human involvement and suffering. The story is told by Tom about the unusual events that have occurred in the course of several years since he and his younger brother, Andy, were small, and came to a dramatic climax 'last year' when they were fourteen and twelve respectively.

The novel develops over sixteen chapters with seemingly simple headings ('Gulf', 'Victory', 'Nightgame', and so forth) that often contain symbolic references and connotations. Robert Westall presents settings and circumstances that are familiar: an English middle class family, the Higginses; Elmborough Grammar School, «fee-paying, all blazers and white shirts and school ties»[8]; rugby matches and a passion for the game that unites father and son; two boys, one who takes after his father and the other very much like his mother. It is into this 'normal' context that Andy's experience of suffering erupts, introducing a kind of otherness, a foreignness

[8] Robert Westall, *Gulf*, London, Methuen Children's Books, 2002, p. 38. From now on, page numbers are shown in brackets in the text.

and seeming madness and ultimately, if indirectly, war. These are strong themes around which Westall weaves numerous narrative threads, creating juxtapositions that pose questions and prompt reflection, examining attitudes to sport, war and racial prejudice, calling into question the idea of normality and subtly inducing and encouraging the reader to go beyond what is immediately visible.

The story, in outline, is about how Andy, or better, Figgis, as Tom calls him, somehow (telepathically) communicates with people in distant areas of the world and feels their suffering, culminating in his sharing the dentity of Latif, a young Iraqi boy during the Gulf War of 1991. It is at first mainly at night that Figgis becomes Latif, walking and talking or quietly singing in his sleep in a strange language. Tom is uncertain whether his brother is playacting and encourages what he thinks is a game, hoping to catch him out. Things come to a head when Andy/Figgis turns into Latif by day, too, in public. The boy is taken to hospital and from there to a psychiatric clinic where, aided by details provided by Tom, Dr Rashid intuits what is happening: «Your brother is not mad, Tom. He suffers from a mystery of nature» (p. 89) Andy is not treated with drugs but kept calm and safe and allowed to live out his other identity. The crisis is reached the night on which Latif is killed; but Andy survives and the story ends on a positive but thought-provoking note.

The theme at the heart of the novel is war, and in particular the different ways it is experienced. For example, Andy's parents do not know of his shared identity with Latif for they are not informed of what Tom and Dr Rashid consider would be beyond their comprehension. Tom thinks his father would «go bonkers if you told him that […] He'd take Figgis … Andy… away from you. To another hospital» (p. 88). So they are unaware of the connection between their son's illness and the Gulf War, unaware that, in fact, their son's condition is a consequence of war. In this way, Robert Westall creates a strong juxtaposition, as the father's attitude to the conflict («We'll bomb them to bits…» p. 57) continues to be unaffected by his son's experience of it.

The abyss between the father's and son's response to war is one of the metaphorical 'gulfs' Westall introduces to great effect at a thematic level and which is maintained until the end of the novel.

The author also uses 'gulfs' as a structuring device in terms of different aspects of opposition; from opposite in the sense of absolutely different, to opposing as in sporting teams and fighting armies, 'us' and 'them'. This is developed within the Higgins family, too, where opposition signifies contrast in complementary terms. Horsie Higgins, the boys' father, is presented in a highly physical way, both because this is how he is seen by Tom, the narrator, as a child («My father was the big one. Big in body and big in spirit. As a kid, I never had any bother about believing in giants. I had my own giant. He seems pretty big to me even now; six feet two and as broad as a house» p. 1), and because he reacts physically to the world around him, unable to handle circumstances or solve problems in any other way. Tom remarks on this feature, which appears dramatically during the family's first visit to the psychiatric clinic to see Andy. On seeing his son in the ward, oblivious to his surroundings and showing no recognition of his family, the father's reaction is to shake him and shout at him until, realising this has no effect, he pushes him away.

The boys' mother, on the other hand, is little and dark and a carer and mediator, both naturally and professionally, a county councillor, «always on the phone even while she was cooking supper, looking worried, concerned» and sought after by «desperate people» (p. 5). Her effect on her husband has been soothing, inducing him, for example, to take more interest in the environmental impact of his building enterprise, while her attitude to war contrasts his cynical superficiality and jingoism. Their shared experience of intense suffering for their son's condition draws them very closely together, rendering their differences almost unnoticeable and irrelevant. The same opposition is reflected in the couple's two sons, as Tom remarks more than once, «Figgis was more like her, whereas I take after Dad» (p. 81).

Mr Figgis is the name of the invisible friend Tom invents for himself as a small child; when Andy is born, he replaces this imaginary character and it is as Figgis that Andy telepathically communicates with an African witch doctor whose photo he sees in a newspaper, and empathically suffers with a starving Ethiopian child whose face is in a front-page photo. It is also as Figgis that he becomes Latif and dies with him, while Andy survives and grows to be «More a chip off the old block than I am» (p. 112). He is similar more to his father than his mother at the end of the novel, while Tom begins to exhibit some of Figgis's sensitive and altruistic characteristics, in this way metaphorically bridging another gulf.

The strongly physical nature of the boys' father is also highlighted by the sport he loves to play: rugby. Robert Westall uses this to signify in different ways: as a sport, it exemplifies another aspect of opposition and is representative of 'Englishness', and by extension, of nationhood. It has a binding effect between father and elder son, Tom, while it creates a contrast between him and Andy, and it marks a rite of passage for Tom when he plays in the same team as his father for the first time. Within the structural framework of the novel, it occupies a central position, as the seventh chapter, headed 'Victory', is devoted virtually entirely to the rugby match in which Tom plays in his father's team, marking the culmination of the boy's hopes, and the family's last happy day before Andy's crisis. The rugby match is described in some detail in terms of strategy and employing language in a subtle way, combining and confusing the codes of sport and war, making them hard to distinguish[9]. The reader witnesses two teams metaphorically enacting a battle; Tom's opposite, the «enemy» scrum half (repeated five times), «used his elbows on me […] I got the ball away each time, well before he hit me. But he still went on hitting me with his elbow, in my ribs where it hurt most» (p. 47). As he is running for the touchline, Tom can hear a

[9] Cfr. Adrian Beard, *The Language of Sport*, London, Routledge, 2005, pp. 33-46.

kind of «Anglo-Saxon war chant», and he can smell his father's «warhorse» sweat. «You'll live», his father comments after the winning goal is scored, adding «He's too young to die» (p. 50); and in the changing room, father and son are nearly «mauled […] to death» (p. 51). A confusion of codes also marks the father's response to the Gulf War, to which he applies a mistaken set of rules: where sport is described in terms of battle, it becomes dangerously easy to interpret war in terms of a game, so that the actual meaning and consequences are not envisioned clearly. The risk is increased by television coverage of the conflict in which the war appears like a computer game, coded in colour and military jargon, complete with 'doublespeak'[10]:

> 'It's started,' said Dad, all gloating.
>
> 'What has?'
>
> 'The air war against Iraq. That'll wipe the grin off Saddam's face. He'll soon change his tune now.'
>
> Mum looked wearily at the glowing message on the telly. 'It just says they're practising night air manoeuvres.'
>
> 'That's just a cover-up. It's *started*.' […] 'Saddam's made a very bad mistake,' said Dad, not at all put out by our lack of interest. 'With the end of the Cold War, the Yanks will use every weapon they've got against him. Everything they had to stop the Ruskis. I wonder if all their gadgets will work. If they do, God help him' (p. 70).

His reference to «the Yanks», «Ruskis» and «gadgets» suggests that Higgins is interpreting what he sees on the television in terms of war and spy films far removed from reality[11].

War and sport are woven together, too, in the description Tom gives of his brother's face the first time he sees him as Latif, yelling in a «weird, harsh language», later identified as Arabic. At first he thinks Figgis is playacting, until he sees his face; «it

[10] Cfr. Lutz, *Doublespeak*, cit.; Steven Poole, *Unspeak, Words Are Weapons*, London, Abacus, 2007.

[11] Cfr. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003, pp. 115-125; Andreas Musolff, "Promising to End a War = Language of Peace? The Rhetoric of Allied News Management in the Gulf War 1991", in Schäffner, cit. p. 94.

was convulsed. Fanatical. Creased up with his yelling. I'll tell you what he looked like. Like the guy who's just scored a goal, in a big FA cup game; the guy who leaps in the air and punches with one fist, before everybody else jumps on to his back and starts thumping him. And he was screaming with triumph like a crowd do when a goal is scored» (p. 34).

Westall builds an extended metaphorical framework around different aspects and applications of the word 'game', in sport and otherwise. As seen above, the semantic field of sport of which it is a part easily encompasses and is confused with the language of war. Chapter 7, 'Victory', focuses almost entirely on rugby, the 'day-time' game in which Andy/Figgis does not take part. In apparent opposition to this, the short chapter 9, 'Nightgame', describes what Tom calls «that night-time game of ours» in which the «Latif Thing» was «like a new toy» (p. 59). When Andy is taken to the psychiatric clinic Tom will regret this, wondering «Why had I played those games with Figgis's mind? [..] I'd played with his mind as if it was some cheap plastic toy» (p. 82)

In fact, this is not a game at all but refers to the times when Andy/Figgis becomes Latif and talks and sings in a mysterious language. He is neither playing nor playacting, as Tom initially suspects, and it is through Figgis/Latif that Westall opens a window from which Tom, and the reader, is forced to consider other aspects of war than bombing and killing. A lexical and thematic thread linking war with sport is subtly maintained, for while Tom has been reading up on «big military stuff» the «Latif character […] went on about playing football, 'til the old ball burst and they couldn't repair it» (p. 60). In this very different war context he also talks about

> the little creatures of the desert; and how the men caught and ate them, because they never had enough to eat. About having his mess-tins stolen, and being in trouble with the major; until his mate Akbar, who was a shepherd and could move silently, stole some new ones for him, from the new crowd further along the line.
>
> And about never getting letters from his mum. And those lice again. He was always trying to get rid of lice; either with a bar of wet soap, or by running a match along the seams of his uniform. Only one thing worried him more

than lice. A different major, who had a taste for young boys, if he could corner them alone… (p. 60).

The enemy as an abstract, impersonal, unclear entity (the Iraqis, 'his' army, 'them') is gradually replaced by human beings with names, physical needs and emotions, who like playing football and miss their families, who are not soldiers but shepherds and young boys, worried about lice and afraid of the «different», paedophile major. Figgis, the reader is told, «wasn't a warlike character» (p. 36), a description that prompts a question about Latif; is he too caught up in a war against his will and nature? Seen from Latif's point of view, «Bloody Saddam», as Mr Higgins refers to him, is a hero because he is the only Arab who is not afraid of the Americans and «will not be bribed by them» (p. 53).

The theme of opposition which has been foregrounded repeatedly and in various ways ('us' and 'them' in rugby and war; the US and Iraq; Schwarzkopf and Saddam; the father's and mother's different attitudes to war) is focused upon from a new standpoint and is recontextualised when Tom gets to know Dr Rashid, the consultant psychiatrist to whom Andy/Figgis is referred. The very name prompts prejudiced reactions from the boys' parents, the father remarking «bitterly» that the NHS can no longer afford English doctors and the mother wondering if foreign doctors can be expected to understand the «English mind». Realising what his parents are going through, Tom tries to play down the prejudiced attitude and tension that emerge during the family's first interview with the doctor, but he soon becomes aware that his father is «suspicious of all foreigners; suspicious of being taken for a ride» (p. 76), and even suspects that his father might hit the doctor when the latter asks him where Andy/Figgis has learnt to speak Arabic, «As if speaking Arabic was even worse than being mad» (p. 76). Mrs Higgins shows greater flexibility and capacity for comprehension; she listens attentively and announces her trust in the doctor's judgement. When she shakes his hand, she does so looking him in the eye, something her husband is unable to do. Tom's assessment is positive: the

doctor's face is «kind», «keen», and «intelligent»; he has a «nice smile», a smile «you could tell anything to» (p. 83); above all, he «was no fool» (p. 77).

Dr Rashid plays a pivotal role in providing Andy/Figgis with the favourable conditions for his recovery. His function in the framework of the novel is similar to Figgis's, for he is placed in a position from which he can see, and lead Tom and the reader to see, the 'other side'. Figgis has opened a window upon Latif that enables a view of Iraqis as people, not as an abstract enemy entity, showing the boy's immediate circumstances, his condition, his friends, his terror of air strikes, as well as his reasons and national pride. Dr Rashid supplies a wider social and political context for Latif's claims. One afternoon, when he collects Tom outside school in order to talk with him and form a clearer picture of Andy/Figgis's background, he is verbally, racially abused by a passing schoolboy. The insult includes Tom: «Getting off with a Wog poofter, Higgins?» (p. 86), who discovers he wants to react physically and violently, to «knock» the boy down, «hammer» his head against the pavement and «crack» it open. As it is, he is verbally violent, shouting «I'll kill you […] I'll kill him» (p. 86).

Dr Rashid's reaction, instead, is to widen the picture, to show Tom that the episode that has sparked such a visceral response within him is not unusual but, rather, reflects the nation and society as a whole and at all levels: «I am a member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. I give them lectures. I have a big car and make much money. But I am still a Wog poofter. There is no exam I can pass that exempts me from being a Wog poofter» (p. 87). He exhibits a degree of understanding, patience and tolerance that places him in a strong position to give an impartial assessment and show comprehension of the 'other side's' reasons for fighting, something Mr Higgins has markedly displayed his inability to do.

From this position he can answer questions Tom would otherwise find no context in which to ask: why does Latif hate the Americans so much and how do he and his companions view the British? In his answer, Dr Rashid refers to US needs for oil and raw materials, Latif's view of the Americans as greedy monsters who want to «eat up the whole world» (p. 89), and there are passing references to Nicaragua and San Salvador. He explains that Saddam is admired because he has challenged a great power and the comparison is made with Britain defying Hitler in 1940.

The contextualisation enables Tom and the reader to think in more comprehensive terms, as a frame of reference is provided which Mr Higgins and the media coverage have not supplied or explored and which reinforces the alternative position that Figgis/Latif has already introduced the reader to. In this way, the field is no longer perceived only in terms of 'us' and 'them' (as in the rugby match) but from a middle position: Dr Rashid refers to «your» Elmborough Grammar School, «you» British, «your» maths from the same neutral position from which he perceives how «they» feel: «They are tired of the world calling them Wog poofters. Suddenly, it is better to be dead, than to go on being a Wog poofter»[12] (p. 90).

The talk with Dr Rashid marks a turning point for Tom, who begins to view Western allied forces and the media coverage with a more critical eye and is able to consider Latif's point of view. He is struck and frightened by what he describes as «strange military jargon» used by the «expressionless faces» of the allied military spokesmen: «'Friendly fire'. 'Ground and aerial assets.' 'Tactical penetration'» (p. 93); coded terminology used to mystify, justify and conceal[13]. By contrast, Saddam Hussein now appears «a bully, a braggart, a killer, a mass murderer. An utterly evil man. And yet he didn't really look like that. He looked… human». Westall makes a plea not to redeem Saddam Hussein but to try

12 Cfr. Steve Thorne, *The Language of War*, London, Routledge, 2006, pp. 29-39; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London, Penguin Books, 2003, passim.

13 Cfr. Thorne, cit., pp. 15-29.

and look at either side, their actions and aims, using the same lens.

Tom comes to share the middle position held by Dr Rashid (for his cultural, social and experiential background) and Figgis (who is suffering from a «mystery of nature») and which contrasts with the official and media stance that his father seems unable to question. This position if reinforced on the evening before the crisis leading to Figgis/Latif's death, coinciding with the carpet bombing of the Iraqi front line and the fulfilment of General Schwarzkop's promise to cut of Saddam's army and «kill it» (p. 92).

In his locked hospital room Figgis/Latif has built defences using broken chairs, old mattresses and pillows, «piled up like sandbags» (p. 95). While Tom is with him the last evening he is never still, greeting invisible people in Arabic, waving at invisible passers-by while all the time he scrutinises an imaginary sky, in dread of the next air strike. While the Latif side of his personality is sleeping, Figgis is able to return briefly. He describes the men in the group he is with, introducing them individually, by name; Akbar is «a good bloke, like Dad. […] then there's Rez – he's a clown. […] Makes us laugh. Then there's Ali – he's got a wife and two little girls. Spends hours writing to them, only there's no way to post the letters…» (p. 98). He also explains to Tom the reason why this is happening, his presence there: to bear witness, to tell about the human side of the people who are being fought against: «I'm meant to be here, to see it all. To make up for all those who're watching on TV as if it was a soap […] I *want* people to know what it was like. Latif and Akbar and Ali are people too …» (p. 99).

He is there, then, especially for his own father, who continues to be unable or unwilling to make a connection between the events he watches on the television screen and the real world and human beings. Mr Higgins's cynical forecast that «We'll bomb them to bits…» (p. 57), is tragically realised in the carpet bombing witnessed by Figgis: «Everyone is dead back there. They are all in pieces; arms, legs, heads still inside steel helmets. Hands. How

can they bury them, if they are all in pieces . . . hundreds of them? Thousands . . . How are they going to *bury* them?» (p. 104).

After Latif's death, Andy recovers from the «mystery of nature». He loses the Figgis traits of his personality, as well as all memory of his apparent illness, and becomes more like his father day by day. The family is drawn more closely together, to the extent that Tom is concerned that without Figgis to build bridges over 'gulfs' between people, the family is becoming entirely inward-looking and nobody seems to care about anything «outside our house» (p. 113). The other gulf, the war, is soon forgotten, save by those who are hoping that Saddam will do something to justify further intervention, «so we can bomb him to hell again; for good» (p. 113). First published in 1992, Westall's foreboding was starkly premonitory.

In terms of a learning process, who benefits most from this experience? Tom and the reader make the greatest progress. Andy/Figgis prepares the context for a change of focus, but his amnesia after the event underlines the functional nature of his role while it prevents him from growing through it. Once the point of view has been widened, Figgis/Latif and Dr Rashid enable Tom and the reader to perceive differently and reflect upon what is before them. The boys' parents remain unaware of their experience of war, as of Dr Rashid's example of racial and cultural tolerance. Mr Higgins's single step forward appears to be his looking the doctor in the eye when he shakes his hand on learning of his son's recovery. His attitude to the war is unaltered and his joy is due to two concomitant events in which he sees no connection: «A day of god news […] My lad on the mend, and Saddam Hussein on the run…» (p. 110).

Little Soldier

Kaninda Bulumba is a young Kibu refugee brought to London from a war-torn East African region. His parents and younger sister have been massacred by Yusulu soldiers and Kaninda himself left for dead, lying amidst the lifeless bodies of his family, soaked in their blood and with a bullet wound in his arm. No one and nothing is left alive; even the dogs and goat are shot. Kaninda witnesses the atrocity and is conscious that his only hope of survival is to pretend he is dead: «[He] had to lie as still as a corpse, share the wet mud of his family's blood on the floor, pant in mosquito breaths, take no notice of the burning in his arm where he'd been hit by a bullet coming though his mother's belly»[14]. After the carnage, at first he lives as a street kid, stealing food and anything else useful for survival, but his single aim is revenge for the deaths of his parents and sister Gifty.

One night he climbs into the jeep of a platoon of the Kibu rebel army and is allowed to stay: something in his eyes persuades the officer, Sergeant Matu, that this boy is brave and will prove useful. He passes the required initiation test, after which he becomes a Kibu soldier, takes part in a number of operations, one of which culminates in his shooting and killing a Yusulu enemy. It is during an unsuccessful raid that Kaninda is separated from the rest of the platoon, is picked up by the Red Cross and flown to London with several other young refugees. The person who has helped to coordinate the evacuation and is going to

14 Bernard Ashley, *Little Soldier*, London, Orchard Books, 1999, p. 7. From now on, page numbers are shown in brackets in the text.

foster Kaninda is Captain Betty Rose of God's Force, «a kind of Salvation Army without the good works»[15]. She is of Seychelles origin; her husband is white English; their daughter, Laura Rose, thirteen, is Kaninda's new sister.

However, Kaninda does not consider himself a refugee but a captive soldier: his sole aim is to escape back to Lasai, join up with the Kibu rebels again and kill as many Yusulus as he can. The first Yusulu he plans to eliminate, however, is neither a soldier nor in Africa; Faustin N'gensi is a young refugee like himself, and enrolled at the same school. Kaninda attacks Faustin inside the school and is held back by a strong teacher who tells him to «leave your war in Africa!» (p. 101). But he is undeterred.

Against his will, he becomes involved in another kind of conflict; the local gang war between the Crew and the Federation, and it is this experience that leads him through a process of reflection and reassessment, so that when he has Faustin at knife point, while one part of his mind incites him to «Do it now!», Kaninda hesitates, listens to N'gensi, processes previous experience on the basis of the present situation and is thus able to see the present in a different light. He does not kill Faustin N'gensi, nor does he cut the rope holding the dinghy with which he had planned to board a ship sailing for Africa. He will return the knife, no longer a weapon, to the kitchen where he got it from in his new home.

This, in outline, is the story content of *Little Soldier* (1999). Bernard Ashley tells a powerful story that is involving, stimulating and enriching. The brutality of Kaninda's recent African past and life as a soldier is skilfully mirrored in the violence that characterises the London gangs, particularly the Federation and its leaders: violence that is born of hatred, nurtured by boredom and gratuitously expressed in bullying, vandalism and gang warfare. It is also in the telling of the story, the use he makes of parallel structures and by interweaving various narrative strands, that Bernard Ashley creates a richly layered texture, a mirror and

[15] Kate Agnew and Geoff Fox, *Children At War*, London, Continuum, 2001, p. 51.

echo effect, reinforcing visual and sound impressions, through repetition, association and contrast. The novel is divided into sixteen chapters without headings and the story is told by an omniscient, third person narrating voice.

The narrative opens in the present in the school yard of 'Thames Reach Comprehensive': Theo Julien is unsuccessfully trying to arouse interest in Kaninda's bullet wound and equally unsuccessfully trying to persuade Kaninda to show it. He calls him Ken; a new English name to go with the new home, new English school and environment. Immediately following the opening paragraph in the present, however, the reader is taken back to two distinct past times: the first, in italics and clearly distinguished from the rest of the narrative, tells the story of Kaninda's life in Africa, here describing the killing of his family; the second, to the beginning of Kaninda's life in England on his arrival at Heathrow with Captain Betty Rose.

With this pattern, in the first chapter the reader effectively follows three narrative strands which interweave through association at a lexical and visual level, and because Kaninda is the common denominator. For example, the words blood, bloody, bleed, bleeding are recurrent, used both metaphorically and literally, linking different times and contexts. Theo Julien uses them loosely, trying to draw sympathy for 'Ken': «only trying to make 'em feel sorry, man. Bleed for you». But Kaninda's reply is literal: «Don't want bleeding, you get me?» (p. 6), because his experience is factual; he had to lie in his family's blood when they were shot and has taken part in armed attacks against Yusula forces. The clouds he sees in the early morning as the plane taking him to London begins its descent are pink, «the colour of blood wetting a dress» (p. 8), and when he arrives at his new home he finds it «grey, dull and dingy» in contrast to his own home in Lasai, painted white, «all bright in the sun» until it was suddenly «death bright with blood all over it where the goat and the dogs were shot» (p. 14). At the end of the first chapter, the adjective is used incongruously by Laura Rose, his new sister, «*Hallej-bloody-luyah!*» (p. 17). The different uses, literal in Kaninda's case and

metaphorical in Theo's, mark the difference in their experience of conflict; while Laura's subdued exclamation is an indication of her rebellious mood towards God's Force.

In the rest of the novel, the structural division between the boy's African past (in italics) and his English present visually reflects his struggle to make sense of the present in the light of a constantly emerging – literally, on every page - and powerful past. The use of two temporal narrative strands implicitly involves comparisons between Kaninda's previous life, in Africa, as a street kid and then as a soldier, and his present life in England, as a school kid and, privately, emotionally, still as a soldier, a «captured Kibu soldier» (p. 88), awaiting his chance to «kill N'gensi, and return to Lasai and kill all the other Yusulu he could» (p. 116). The comparisons are at first seen only in terms of contrast by Kaninda, but they finally become a source of reconciliation, made possible because he goes through a process of listening to and reflecting upon the experience of his young Yusulu enemy: in the light of that experience, he realises how much they have in common and that Sergeant Matu, too, was a perpetrator of atrocities.

By using it in different contexts, Bernard Ashley very effectively draws attention to the vocabulary of conflict, showing it to be widespread and surreptitious, to the extent that it can become barely perceptible. The first is the context of real war, in Africa; then London gang warfare; and, finally, the God's Force organisation. Military titles, vocabulary and jargon are frequent in the parts depicting the war between the Yusulu government forces and the Kibu rebel army. Kaninda takes his orders from Colonel Munyankindi and Sergeant Matu; there are soldiers, platoons, forces, squads; guerrilla attacks, assaults, ambushes, raids; guns, bullets, shooting, grenades, mines, M16s. People are left dead, there are tortured prisoners, refugees, jeeps, helicopters; the smell of gun oil, detonation, explosion; and there is initiation. In the African war, Kaninda becomes a soldier by passing

> the test – set up in a clearing with a Yusulu prisoner tied to a post with a sack over his head. You were given the gun, and you had to shoot him dead – fast. From the second you saw him and were given the order you were timed;

and if you waited more than five seconds you were useless. Such kids were beaten, thrown out or abused (p. 79).

It is, in fact, a rite of passage: the bullets are blanks.

Kaninda's military background is described especially in the paragraphs referring to his life in Africa, but it is also constantly present in the recollections that surface repeatedly and which influence his perspective and reactions; commands, regulations, advice, mottoes. In particular, Sergeant Matu hovers continuously on the boy's mind, strongly suggesting the extent of the brainwashing to which he has been subjected. Kaninda's every decision and action appear conditioned by memories of Matu. On his arrival at what is to be his new home in London he does not feel he is entering a family but a prison; he sees himself as a captive soldier who has been separated from the rebel army and has «fallen into the hands» of the Red Cross. He remembers Sergeant Matu's orders: «*If you're taken, lie low, submissive as a cringing dog, an' wait the chance, an' when you can, run! run! You got me?*» (p. 16). He eats the food in his new home because he remembers his training as a soldier; you were not allowed to leave food, the Sergeant «cuffed you» for it, «*Your lackin' of strength could be paid up in my blood, you got me?*» (p. 90). Kaninda takes care in preparing his attack on N'gensi, remembering Matu's motto, «*Take time, take time. Too quick in, never come out!*» (p. 241). Military references find their way into Kaninda's thoughts metaphorically, too. Forced to wait until he can escape back to Lasai: «Somehow he kept the pin in his grenade» (p. 16); while the waiting itself is seen in terms of «the war waiting»; he must «fight the long battle, the wait» (p. 116).

The vocabulary of conflict is also markedly present in connection with the two London gangs that confront each other, the Ropeyard Federation from the «solid backstreets of Thames Reach», led by Queen Max, and the Barrier Crew from the new Barrier Housing Estate, led by Baz Rosso. It is apparently in revenge for a hit-and-run accident involving a little girl from Federation territory that Queen max promises and looks forward

to «the biggest war since Hitler» (p. 52). The word is used repeatedly by both sides: it is a «private war» (p. 107); a «revenge war» (p. 194); «this is Federation war!» (p. 211); «Baz Rosso wants a war» (p. 156). Kaninda is said to be «starting the war» (p. 112) and finds himself forced to take part in the «London tribal war» (p. 202). Both Laura and Kaninda are a «target». Queen Max and her cronies go «striding like combat troops on an operation» (p. 51); «strutting […] like conquerors» (p. 110); advance «Like a Roman legion» (p. 217), but looking more like «tribal warriors» (p. 222). Their war chant is radical: «Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill!», (p. 218) and their emblem an 'F' tattoo; they take no prisoners and, like the Kibu rebel army, they, too, use children, the «Federation's little soldiers» (p. 219).

Baz Rosso, the Barrier Crew leader, is «the great leader» (p. 213), «*Il Duce* of wind-ups». When he leaves a Barrier Crew meeting it is «as if generals didn't wait listening to foot soldiers' talk […] "Tomorrow, when I find out more what I need to know, we talk tactics and strategy"» (p. 151). The gang carry out his «orders», and when he wants Kaninda to join the Crew he threatens to use Mafia tactics, next-of-kin suffering, if the boy refuses to cooperate. The Crew, too, have a symbol of their clan; wearing their belt buckles to the right, and a war chant to match the Federation's: «Mu-ti-late! Mu-ti-late! Mu-ti-late!» (p. 219).

In order to become a member of the gang, Kaninda is forced to take the Crew test, which is run, emblematically, in a children's playground («it's squared ropes and swinging knot-ends like a small Kibu training ground» p. 83), highlighting, on the one hand, the contrast between the nature of the two initiations Kaninda undergoes, but on the other hand, paradoxically, the closeness of the two kinds of war in which the 'soldiers' are very young and have slipped from 'playing' war to real conflicts. Equally emblematically, the final briefing before the attack takes place in a 'Mega Arcade', where two gang leaders are playing a virtual war with guns on a play station.

But the war, when it takes place, is far from virtual: the gangs fight violently:

> It was toe-to-toe violence, and the buzz and bubble of it showed on the thugs' eager faces. For them nothing hurt right now, blood and snot and spit was just stuff to be got off the face out of the way. If they lost their footing they'd be kicked into unconsciousness unless someone got them up, but they knew that – this was all about risk and the thrill of it, where hatred and violence gave some purpose to their lives. It was for that – and for the pride of the tribe (p. 224).

The third context in which Bernard Ashley introduces military terms is in stark contrast with the other two. God's Force also has its hierarchical titles: Kaninda's foster mother is Mrs Captain Betty Rose, the title slightly watered down, coming after the familiar and domestic 'Mrs'; her husband is Lieutenant Peter. Meetings take place at the G.F. «headquarters»; uniforms are worn, with embroidered symbols and banners as a sign of rank; bronze, silver and gold swords, platinum Shield (of Faith). There is a section for children, the «Junior Soldiers», who «parade», sing hymns and halleluya instead of war chants, and march to a band playing the «Soldiers' March». While preparing dinner, Captain Betty Rose throws a «tuna grenade».

The Junior G.F. is Laura Rose's section; Laura herself is a God's Force Little Soldier, but at thirteen she is guilt ridden because she believes the 'rebel' thoughts she has indulged in have led to her being responsible for a hit-and-run accident. By making her a little soldier, a rebel (of sorts) and oppressed by guilt, Bernard Ashley draws a powerful parallel between Laura and Kaninda. Her 'rebellious' attitude is repeatedly drawn attention to: «she took the rebel route» (p. 94); «her stupid rebellion» (p. 123); «she'd changed back from being a rebel» (p. 159); «Laura's new rebellion» (p. 181); «She hadn't meant to do anything bad – just be a bit rebellious» (p. 203). Her overpowering sense of guilt is equally highlighted: «she had no measure of the size of her sin. It was big» (p. 123); «God and her own mother would wreak the greatest punishment on this wicked sinner» (p. 158); «And all through her telling ran a mix of guilt for the little girl» (p. 185); «So now all alone she was carrying a guilt so strong it was going to take her away from here» (p. 204).

Given the circumstances of her God's Force family upbringing, Laura interprets what she believes is her responsibility in the road accident in terms of sin and God's punishment for her having indulged in rebellious dreams, moods and actions, in the form of wearing fashionable skimpy underwear and having a boyfriend her mother disapproves of. While the little girl who is the victim of the accident lies unconscious in hospital, Laura feels the 'sin' she has committed is «getting bigger» (p. 157). It is only when she learns that although she drove a car she had no business driving, she was not, in fact, responsible for the accident that she begins to feel «the guilt being lifted. She wanted to smile at people, bless little children. She'd been stupid – a rebel, a sinner, if not as wicked as she'd thought» (p. 235). Like Kaninda, Laura, too, is tested; not a physical test, nor one of nerve, but her «faith in the Lord suddenly had to face up to its first big test» (p. 125).

Like Laura, Kaninda, the (African) little soldier, the (Kibu) rebel, is overwhelmed by a sense of guilt for having survived the massacre of his family; he is «Dried by the guilt of being alive.» (p. 39); he carries «the guilty weight of still being alive» (p. 98). The gun wound he received when his parents and sister were killed is like «a guilty medal» (p. 69), and when he awakes one morning «without the run of his own sweat and fear soaking and screwing the sheets […] he felt guilty about that, too» (p. 59).

Laura and Kaninda are drawn together when she saves his life after he successfully completes the Barrier Crew initiation test. The boy slips and is saved from falling by the sharpness of Laura's reaction, by her «saving hands». They become comrades, and while Kaninda accepts to fight in the gang war to save Laura from Baz Rosso's threat of next-of-kin suffering, she decides to run away to fight with him in Africa. They both undergo a process of healing and reconciliation in which each is instrumental in helping the other. When she tells Kaninda about what she believes is her responsibility in the accident, he holds the hands that have saved him and comforts her, and this time it is Laura who finds safety in Kaninda's hands, they «could have been the hands of some sort of healer» (p. 185).

Kaninda's process of reconciliation is more complex and, as suggested above, is the result of the comparison he is forced to make between the life he led in Africa after his family's death and the physical, emotional and, finally, rational upheaval he experiences in London. The catalyst in this situation is the gang war, which replicates the African war of which he is a victim and involves representatives of all the armies in the novel – Kibu, Federation and Crew, and God's Force. He looks down on the Crew («Kids! School yard gangs!» p. 77), and their initiation («All the platoon in the real war could have done this» p. 78), but he recognises the spirit that is driving them, fighting for their «clan pride», but this is «their war», «their army». He agrees to undergo the test only because he has been promised easy access to Faustin N'gensi and is forced to take part in the London tribal war only for the sake of Laura, to whom he feels he owes his life.

However, there are two events that force him to reconsider his position, his status and his role as a trained soldier: he is saved twice when in imminent physical danger, the first time by Laura after his initiation, the second time, on being cornered and overpowered by Federation thugs, by Laura's mother, Captain Betty Rose, who does not hesitate to move in, delivering punches, slaps and «a good kick […] this was God's Force speaking, this uniform was Mrs Captain Betty Rose, backed by her husband and two or three 'Silver Bells'» (p. 228). Kaninda is very strongly impressed by the courage of mother and daughter, comparing both, in different ways, to Sergeant Matu; Laura for her sharpness, Captain Betty for her «guts». So much so that Captain Betty's calling him Kaninda Rose, which in any other context would have aroused his indignation, contempt and a verbal retort, is instead accepted, even welcome, and Kaninda implicitly becomes a member of the Rose family because «She'd done what no one else had done. She'd gone for them as if she really had been his mother» (p. 229). Moreover, after Laura is seriously hurt in the last moments of the gang war, Kaninda recognises the suffering of Captain and Lieutenant Rose:

> Kaninda knew the tearing in the stomach, the shrinking in the throat, the tightness in the brain, of such tragedy. When the Yusulu soldiers had left his house he had stood in shock for maybe half a day, there in the bullet riddled living room of number 14 Bulunda Road. That was what Lieutenant Peter was doing now; standing, staring, his eyes big and his face as white as that wall (p. 238).

He is able, too, to see the pointlessness of the situation, of the pain: «For what? Because there were tribes in London, gangs who wanted to fight, kids who wanted to pretend at wars: just as there are real wars that need never ever start» (p. 239). Yet he is still unable to disconnect «his own» war from this context and is consequently still intent upon killing N'gensi before escaping back to Africa.

Faustin N'gensi, on the other hand, refuses to engage in violence and teaches Kaninda another kind of courage, that of reasoning and argument, reminding Kaninda of his own father. Faustin's physical appearance itself contradicts bodily power and military attributes: «He was a wiry, quiet boy, Faustin, who wore his school uniform like a city clerk's, not like a soldier's on manoeuvres. His long fingers were more the pianist's than the commando's and in Lasai he carried a briefcase, not a gun» (p. 172). N'gensi's strength is his ability to process his experience and look ahead, to see further than clan hatred; it is in his awareness of a larger vision than clan revenge. He tells Kaninda that his family too has been killed «the worst way. Atrocity» (p. 244), but he does not hold Kaninda responsible, nor hate him. Aware that the Kibu is hiding a knife, the boy does not run away but calls what Kaninda is intending to do by its proper name: atrocity.

Kaninda is forced to reappraise his position and intentions, and in the comparison he makes he is able to see that Sergeant Matu, a Kibu and «on the just side» (p. 246), was himself a perpetrator of atrocities. N'gensi's reasoning replaces Matu's conditioning and opens the door to connections and to memories: Kaninda's father, too, used reasoning and argument, not weapons. He was a Kibu manager working for a Yusulu mining company, he stood for a vision of a new world, a future that is unifying and embracing,

not dividing and exclusive. Laura represents the same vision, bringing together the Seychelles of her mother and the England of her father, black and white: «she was the coming together of the clans, the integration» (p. 248), and because he is now able to envision this new world, Kaninda is part of it too.

Part Two

Other wars and the media

«Rigid, he was. They carried him out, rigid, curled-up. I've only ever seen that once before in my life. In France, in the Great War. Happened to a mate of mine. We called it shell shock» (*Gulf* p. 72) This is the brief account given to Andy's family of how he has been taken away from the hospital room during the night. It is made by the ninety-two year-old man with whom he has shared the room, «a good bloke», according to Andy, «the oldest man I'd ever seen», according to his brother Tom. He seems a timeless figure, an old Father Time lucidly recalling events from the first decades of the century (*Gulf* is set in 1990/91); another time, another war. Like others that have followed, the Great War was to be «the war to end war»[16], something it manifestly failed to do, as the ordinal number in its other, subsequent appellation, First World War, signals retrospectively[17].

Other wars and kinds of conflict are named and referred to directly or indirectly in *Gulf*: World War II, the Cold War, Korea, Vietnam, Nicaragua. However, the comparison made by the Great War veteran between his shell-shocked friend and Andy has a strongly binding, containing effect; these are different wars, with other weapons, applying new military technology and new terms

16 Gardiner, cit., p. ix.

17 J.M. Roberts, *The Penguin History of the World*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1998, Book Seven.

for the consequences, but the actual effects on the soldiers remain shockingly similar («rigid», «curled up»). For Andy, when he telepathically shares Latif's identity, is to all effects and purposes a soldier, a thirteen year-old soldier in an armoured brigade of the Iraqi army. In his analysis of military name changes, Steve Thorne remarks on the progressive disconnection of naming conventions from the horrors of war. The term 'shell-shocked' used in the First World War vividly conveyed the terrible effects of warfare; the same condition was termed 'combat fatigue' after the Second World War, acknowledging the cause but reducing the effect; traumatised veterans of the Falklands War were diagnosed as suffering from 'post-traumatic stress disorder', a term that seems quite disconnected from war (and is still applied to traumatised veterans of more recent conflicts)[18]. Andy/Latif's status as a boy soldier further links him with the First World War (as well as to the child protagonists of *AK* and *Little Soldier*), when too much attention was not paid to the underage recruits who were keen to sign on.

Robert Westall draws another revealing comparison between different wars. When Tom remarks that the Iraqis «haven't got a prayer» (p. 90) against the might of the Western Allied Forces, Dr Rashid finds an analogy between the current Iraqi resistance to the advance of Allied troops and British defiance of Hitler in 1940. The comparison is thought-provoking because it implies an exchange of roles: the British and the Iraqis are likened for challenging powerful advancing armies, the former in 1940 and the latter in 1991, but the powerful army the Iraqis are now resisting is made up of US and British allied troops, which signals a radical change of roles for the British. There is a further twist in the turnabout given by the fact that during the 1991 Gulf War the Western Allied Military often depicted Saddam Hussein as the modern incarnation of Hitler, thus casting the Iraqis, this time, in the aggressive instead of the resisting role[19].

[18] Thorne, cit., p. 24.
[19] Mussolf, cit., p. 95

Westall chooses Dr Rashid to draw the analogy between the British in 1940 and the Iraqis in 1991, confirming his function as the character who thinks in different terms and views from a standpoint from which he is able to understand the motivations of 'the other side'. For sides and conditions change, old allies become new enemies, old resistance fighters can be new oppressors, and vice versa. The point the author brings home is simply that there *are* other sides, outlooks and voices, with their different ways of viewing, seeing and feeling. Andy's suffering empathically with the starving Ethiopian child is an example of this, as is his telepathic sharing of Latif's life as a boy soldier. Similarly, his use of Arabic is a clear, vocal expression of another 'voice'. On a less instinctive note, Dr Rashid's position is based on experience – of British racial prejudice, towards which he exhibits weary resignation and tolerance. From the doctor Tom learns to use reasoned consideration, which leads him to be critical of the television presentation of the Gulf conflict which his father endorses unquestioningly, and to gain a much more comprehensive outlook on the war.

> Of course, we watched the never-ending newscasts while we ate. The land war had started. Endless shots of pink tanks flowing through orange sand berms and streaming out across the empty puce desert with their pennants fluttering. Any other time, I'd have felt like cheering. It looked like the end of that film *Stagecach*, where the Red Indians have surrounded the stagecoach, and the whites have run out of ammunition, and even John Wayne doesn't know what to do. Then there's a distant note of a bugle among the war-whoops of the Redskins, and there's the U.S. Seventh Cavalry streaming to the rescue, with all the pennants flying and the bugler puffing out his cheeks on horseback, fit to bust (p. 104).

Mrs Higgins initially blames the television for Andy's extraordinary behaviour («It's all that telly […] They have nothing new to say. But they go on saying it. Night after night after night…», p. 55). Shortly before the crisis and Latif's death, Andy himself tells his brother he believes there is a reason for everything that has happened, for his witnessing the devastation

in Iraq through Latif's eyes: «To make up for all those who're watching on the TV as if it was a soap…» (p. 99).

The 1991 Gulf War received media attention in a way previous conflicts had not: live television coverage likened it to a reality show for which viewers were unprepared and ill-equipped. At the same time, it was tightly monitored coverage, as Andreas Musolff observes: «Once the ground campaign had started, the challenge to the Allies' official version of events by the reporting and broadcasting of Western journalists from inside Iraq was greatly reduced. A news blackout was imposed in the first few hours, afterwards a system of tight military control over most of the media reporting on the war was put into operation»[20]. Mr Higgins's reaction to television broadcasts about the conflict, as exemplified in his reference to the «Yanks», the «Ruskis» and «gadgets» for weapons (p. 70), suggests he is interpreting the reports he sees on the screen through stereotypes of TV culture, in terms of metaphor, trying to grasp concepts that are not clearly 'delineated' by his experience by means of others with which he is familiar[21].

The role and influence of the media in their coverage of armed conflicts are not examined in *The War Orphan*, *AK* and *Little Soldier*, but Rachel Anderson, Peter Dickinson and Bernard Ashley all make references to other wars[22]. In *The War Orphan*, Simon is not satisfied with his mother's explanation that Ha «was born in a war» (p. 33), and is insistent in wanting to know «which war?» Her reply, despite its summary nature, amply justifies Simon's demand for clarification: «A civil war. A complicated war, messy and long drawn-out. In a small, thin country. In South-East Asia.

20 *Ibidem*, p. 99.

21 Cfr. Lakoff and Johnson, cit., p. 115.

22 Linda Newbery makes a brief but significant reference to the televised Gulf War in the opening pages of *The Shouting Wind*: «A loud-voiced boy of about twelve elbowed past Tamsin, wearing a T-shirt with the slogan *Desert Storm Victory*, as if claiming some personal credit. The Gulf War had been uncomfortably like an adventure watched on TV, she remembered; a computer game, with smart weapons and surgical strikes and state-of-the-art military technology. Not like Nan's war, the ordinary people's war…»: *The Shouting Wind*, London, CollinsChildren'sBooks, 1995, p. 12.

First against the Chinese, then the Japanese, then the French, then the Americans» (p. 34). The headmaster of Simon's school refers to Hungary, Romania and Albania in his talk about «defence» and «détente», the need for adequate deterrent to prevent the advance of «World Communism» (p. 73). Like Mr Higgins, in *Gulf*, he too refers to «the Russkies», suggesting that he is identifying what he perceives as an enemy in terms of social-political ideology and spy fiction.

References to other wars in *The War Orphan* and *Gulf* achieve counterbalancing effects. By making or implying comparisons, they pinpoint the armed conflict in question: «Ha's war» is the war in Vietnam involving the U.S., not China, Japan or France, and *Gulf* describes the war between Iraq, personally and symbolically led by Saddam Hussein, and Western Allied Forces commanded by Norman («Stormin'») Schwarzkopf. At the same time, though, the other conflicts widen the picture; they serve to decontextualise and in this way they show how war is universal and ubiquitous.

In *AK* as in *Little Soldier*, Africa is the larger context of civil wars that have ravaged two countries, making the young protagonists of the stories, Paul and Kaninda, war orphans before turning them into boy soldiers. The countries are made unstable and vulnerable by tribal rivalry, clan antagonism and ethnic hatred, which have been exasperated and even exploited by colonial rule. In both novels, the national, civil conflict is reflected in one that is local and geographically contained – the 'other' war is city, gang warfare, taking place in the capital city Dangoum in *AK*, and London in *Little Soldier*. Dickinson and Ashley develop the theme differently but deliver the same message: war is devastating and does not solve problems. The young soldiers, Paul and Kaninda, are involved in both the national conflict and the local one. In *AK*, though, the factions in Dangoum are shown to overcome their short-sighted rivalry and hostility in the realisation that allied and united they can make themselves heard and achieve their goals through peaceful demonstrations, discussion and negotiation. Weapons (notably Paul's AK itself)

are replaced by banners, and the casualties are victims of fatigue, heat-stroke and dehydration. In *Little Soldier* the city warfare reaches its inevitable climax in the High Street battle:

> And straight off, from doorways, behind tubbed trees, the back of the ice cream van and off the Galloping Horses itself the Crew came fighting – direct at the enemy, not giving anyone time to swing what they had in their hands, getting in for close combat with fists and chops and kicks and head-butts, hand-to-hand street fighting.
>
> There were screams and shouts and swearing. Parents yanked children back behind them, adults scattered, disorganised, had no way to stop this riot. The man on the Galloping Horses got on his mobile phone, the ice cream van was switched off, Captain Rose ordered the band to push their instruments into their cases and get into shops (p. 223).

Forced to fight for one of the gangs, Kaninda compares this to «his own war» (p. 239), in Africa. He compares, too, the suffering of his foster-family for Laura's condition after being attacked to the pain he has experienced himself: «Kaninda knew the tearing in the stomach, the shrinking in the throat, the tightness in the brain, of such tragedy» (p. 237). Through the lens of gang warfare Kaninda is able to see the war in Africa in a different light, and to perceive the behaviour of N'gensi, the Yuslulu boy who embodies his enemy, everything he hates and upon which he is so determined to take revenge, as brave, and N'gensi himself as worthy of being listened to. By listening, Kaninda discovers that N'gensi, too, has suffered the murder of his family. Although he knows that Kaninda is there to kill him, N'gensi does not fight or run away, but stands his ground and argues, teaching Kaninda to notice analogies and not only differences. «There were braveries other than fighting». Kaninda's father had been brave in a similar way to N'gensi; a Kibu manager working for a Yusulu mining company, arguing that what he was doing was right. Kaninda, too, had shown courage when he did not join the fleeing Kibu as they passed his house, and in surviving as a runaway in Lasai before becoming a boy soldier. Also in *The War Orphan* another sort of bravery than fighting is proposed: the courage required for the demands of everyday life. Simon describes his decision

to wash Ha himself after an accident in his pants as the ‘bravest’ thing in his life.

The enemy

On discovering that the boy he has thought of as the enemy, with hatred and revenge, has shared his own experience of loss and suffering, Kaninda is forced to reconsider another seemingly evident identity, that of Sergeant Matu, who commanded the group of rebel soldiers to which Kaninda became attached, and he finds that the line between 'us' and 'them' is not so clearly defined. He remembers seeing the decapitated body of a boatman and thinking at the time that such a brutal killing had not been called for as the boatman would easily have surrendered his boat. Sergeant Matu had been responsible for the atrocity, «And Sergeant Matu was Kibu, on the just side – while the boatman had not even been Yusulu» (p. 246).

As seen above, Robert Westall also draws attention to the identification of the enemy, of sides, 'us' and 'them', and of the influence of the media, in particular of television news broadcasts, in constructing and portraying the enemy. Mr Higgins shows no hesitation or trace of doubt, seeming almost to bear a personal grudge against «Bloody Saddam», that «fat-gutted bastard» (p. 36), whose army must be destroyed. On the other hand, «that Schwarzkopf knows what he's doing» (p. 57). For his son Andy, when he becomes Latif, Saddam Hussein is a great leader, a hero who defies the might of the Western Allies. Tom, who sees Iraqi soldiers, Latif's companions, through Andy's eyes and later witnesses the effects of Schwarzkopf's strategy, is not prepared to accept his father's vision or the media-constructed portrait of the enemy without critical scrutiny. This leads him to view both sides in a different light, not in terms of 'us' and 'them', but

of people: the Iraqis, ill-equipped boys and young men fighting against impossible odds for what they believe is their country's survival and honour, and the Western Allies, whose military spokesmen «talked coolly and humbly in their strange military jargon. 'Friendly fire.' 'Ground and aerial assets.' 'Tactical penetration.' They might have been talking about Holy Unction or transcendental meditation» (p. 93). It is of the latter that he is most afraid.

Peter Dickinson also develops the theme of the unclear distinction between enemies and allies. This is first seen in the opening chapter of *AK* when, following the official announcement that the war is over, the rebel troops are stunned to hear that old enemies have become new allies:

> 'Colonel Malani spoke on the radio this morning,' said Michael. 'He has come to terms with the NDR to form a government of national unity.'
>
> Even the Warriors felt the kick of shock. The Nagala Democratic Republicans were supporters of the government. They were the enemy.
>
> 'It's a sell-out,' said Fodo (p. 13).

Similarly, in the capital city, rival gangs that were formerly in conflict amongst themselves and aggressive towards the market people over their rights to free water, now form a coalition in order to overcome their common enemy. More poignantly, in the closing section of the novel, 'Twenty Years On, Perhaps: B', it is a new generation of warriors who fail to distinguish between friend and foe and shoot the protagonist, Paul, now an old soldier, in a case of 'friendly fire', referred to above by Westall.

The vagueness, relativity and impermanence that attach themselves to the term enemy become especially evident in *The War Orphan*, in which Rachel Anderson introduces the concept from a different angle. As seen above, Simon's mother summarily refers to the war in Vietnam as «complicated» and «long drawn-out»: «First against the Chinese, then the Japanese, then the French, then the Americans» (p. 34). The foreign enemy has changed over time, but this is also a civil war between the 'men from the north' and the 'men from the south' with their foreign

allies. The farmers in Ha's village, living in a contended area along the borderline, are, with few exceptions, on neither side, but they are perceived as the enemy by the men from the south and are to all effects treated as such. Entire villages 'become' the enemy, are held prisoners in 'Reception Centres' and are victims of atrocities and mass murders. For the foreign allies the enemy is a wholly elusive entity, whose absence is in some measure paid for by the civilian population: «Every peasant we question has never known anybody who's VC, has never seen any VC close up. Don't they know there's a war going on all round them? How can we fight a war if we never make contact with an enemy? When we don't even know who the enemy is, let alone where?» (p. 99).

Separation and a journey

Rachel Anderson, Peter Dickinson, Robert Westall and Bernard Ashley all develop the themes of separation and a journey, and share a similar narrative approach in presenting two main characters that reflect, and in some measure complement, each other. In their turn, these characters share a similar relationship: adoptive brothers, Ha and Simon in *The War Orphan*; adoptive brother and sister, Kaninda and Laura in *Little Soldier*; brothers, Tom and Andy in *Gulf*; and virtual brother and sister, Paul and Jilli in *AK*. Separation may be from parents and family, home, daily life, country, leading in Ha's case to separation from his own identity. It may also be psychological and spiritual, as experienced by Laura and Simon. Journeys, too, may be physical and geographical, across jungles, marshlands or the bush, from one country to another, or an inward journey of healing, formation, and spiritual growth. The themes are very closely linked.

Death severs many of the characters from their parents. Ha and Kaninda both witness and only narrowly escape the massacres of their families; Paul has the faintest of memories of a singing voice that was probably his mother, and does not remember his real name. Jilli learns that her entire family has been wiped out after her escape from Tsheba. The initial separation from her family is, for Jilli, a matter of choice: she decides to go with Paul, Francis and Kashka when they run away from Tsheba in order to escape the fate of young female Fulus – forced marriage: «Long back she father giving she to stupid man. Now me father doing same. Women be like buffalo, like basket, uh?» (p. 37). Her rejection of what would be her conventional role is manifested in the

highly symbolic gesture in which she removes her traditional Fulu clothing, dropping it at her brother's feet, and puts on the Western clothes (purple blouse and shoes, jeans and wide gold belt) that Paul has given her. This determination to change her future saves her life, for had she stayed behind, she would have been massacred with her family. It is after being given the cruel news that Jilli announces to Paul, «I'm a Warrior […] Now I know what that means. I know why I'm a Warrior. Same as you, Paul» (p. 137). She becomes his 'sister in arms' after sharing the risks and hardships of the trek from Tsheba with Paul, and becoming a war orphan like him.

Andy is psychically severed from his family by his 'illness/mystery of nature': when he becomes Latif, he is also severed from himself. This separation is also physical during the time he is in the psychiatric ward, where he does not perceive his family, as well as geographical, for as Latif, Andy is in Iraq, where he waves to and, in Arabic, greets friends he alone can see.

Simon, Laura and Tom are not physically separated from their families but reach a point where, for different reasons, they feel cut off. Simon believes he has been replaced by Ha in his parents' affection; his room has been taken over; he feels out of place at school, where he is completely at odds with the pro-war ideology expressed by the headmaster, and excluded from the church he visits, where communication appears impossible. Even the family pet has moved from sleeping on his bed to curling up on Ha's.

> «Before, I'd supposed I could go home. Home was the haven, the nest, the security, the primeval cave. The lair which every bear needs. But now, no cave. It wasn't my cave any more. It was Ha's. After the cat, I'd thought to rid our family of Ha. I'd failed. I'd got it all wrong. It wasn't Ha who had to be got rid of. It was myself who had to go» (p. 178).

Owing to her God's Force upbringing, Laura interprets her malaise in terms of sin, for which she is being punished. She has been 'rebellious' in choosing a boyfriend her parents would not approve of, buying underwear she does not want her mother to see, and most of all, she believes she is responsible for a hit-and-

run accident while driving a car she should not have been driving. Laura is convinced that she has failed her mother and sinned against God: «The Pope could excommunicate, and so could Captain Betty Rose: being a daughter wouldn't come into it against being a sinner. There was no way Laura could turn, nowhere to go» (p. 158).

Tom is physically separated from his parents only when he visits Andy in the psychiatric clinic and spends the night of the carpet-bombing of the Iraqi front line, and Latif's death, with him. It is, however, a very significant separation, for it signals and represents the experience and understanding Tom has acquired of war, of (and through) Andy/Figgis's participation in it. This is experience and understanding that Tom shares with Dr Rashid, but that sets him apart from his parents, which whom he cannot share it. The separation is also representative of Tom's inward journey away from his parents and boyhood and the conventional passage rites he has experienced in his father's shadow – playing a rugby match in the same team; drinking his first beer with him on holiday. The experience and understanding he has gained mark his journey towards a construction of himself as an independent thinker, critical of accepted ideas and with a comprehensive and tolerant point of view that his father is shown to lack. It is a learning process through which he has been led by his brother and guided by Dr Rashid, and which enables him to see not only the war in different terms, but his own parents, too. His love for them does not alter, but his perception is clearer. The father who is seen as a giant at the beginning of the novel appears «ashamed, humiliated, a beaten man» during the interview with Dr Rashid: «He suddenly looked so *old*. They both looked so old…» (p. 82). Tom's growth is emotional and rational; Andy is not developed as a character in the same way, for his amnesia after the event effectively prevents him from learning through his war experience as Latif.

Simon's, too, is an inward journey of self-formation which at certain points reflects Ha's real one through the jungle trying to get back to the home he remembers, and anticipates the boys'

planned journey together «for real» - following the many virtual journeys made through dreams and recollections when «we walked back through the village together in our minds» (p. 255). It is a learning process that leads him, like Tom in *Gulf*, to perceive his parents with undiminished love but differently; imperfect and vulnerable, but whose good intentions are unquestioned. Through Ha's recollections Simon gains knowledge of war, loss, pain and suffering; through Ha's presence he acquires understanding and acceptance and learns to share; his parents' love, his room and home and his own love.

Ha makes many journeys: he tries to find his way back home through jungle and swamp when he escapes with his mother from the 'Reception Centre', but it no longer exists; he attempts to reach the Land of Bliss, but this does not exist either. At the outset of his flight to England, as the plane gains height, in a flash of lucid memory, he recognises the landscape where he belongs. In England he is taken first to «The Chestnuts Children's Home» and then to Simon's home, neither of which is the home he knows. In the last of these 'homes', prompted and helped by Simon, Ha, too, begins an excruciating inward journey through his recollections to retrieve his identity. This has been partially recovered at the end of the novel, and the journey to Vietnam that has been planned makes it possible to imagine a greater recovery, not only of Ha's personal and national identity and sense of awareness, but, perhaps, even of his mother.

Like Ha, Kaninda, in *Little Soldier*, travels to England as an orphan and refugee, but he does not think of himself in these terms but rather as a prisoner, with the sole aim of making his way back to his army unit to kill as many Yusulus as he can. While he is in England he will be a «give-no-trouble captive» (p. 91) and follow Sergeant Matu's orders «If you're taken, lie low, submissive as a cringing dog, an' wait the chance, an' when you can, run! run!» (p. 16) In the meantime he plans and prepares for his journey back. He borrows Laura's atlas to check distances and connections, for he will travel back by sea; the rivers of the world join up with the seas, so water will be his means of returning to Africa. Kaninda is

at first only marginally distracted from this longed-for journey by the gang war he becomes embroiled in, but when Laura saves his life he embarks on a different sort of journey which will lead him to perceive his enemy and war in a different way.

This initial impetus is reinforced by three more significant events. Kaninda is saved a second time, on this occasion by his adoptive mother, Captain Betty Rose; Laura is brutally attacked following the High Street battle, and in her parents' mute suffering Kaninda sees a reflection of his own; N'gensi's bravery and reasoning remind Kaninda of his father, who was brave and argued in a similar way. Kaninda is able to see that Laura, his own father and, ultimately, N'gensi, all represent «the coming together of the clans, the integration. […] *This* new world» (p. 248). Laura, daughter of a Seychelles mother and English father, stands on «both black and white ground»; Kaninda's father, a Kibu manager of a Yusulu company, also stood on two grounds, Kibu and Yusulu. N'gensi has suffered just like Kaninda has but at the hands of Kibu fighters, «My family was killed the worst way. Atrocity. No mistake, boy, I hate, too – but I don't hate you. You are three hundred miles from me. Tribal war did it. War takes us all in its hand and smashes us on the rocks» (p. 244). Again, Kaninda recognises his own suffering, this time in the person he has thought of as his worst enemy, and this helps him to go beyond, to see that the 'new world' and hope lie in integration, not in war and its logic of revenge, destruction and suffering.

Paul makes a long physical journey: the escape from Tsheba to Dangoum is dangerous and marked significantly firstly by the retrieval of the AK gun that Paul has buried after the formal end of the civil war, and subsequently by its renewed burial and repudiation. Paul moves beyond the logic of war after he sees its effects on Jilli, who, like Laura in *Little Soldier*, has been brutally attacked. He feels responsible: this is his mother's doing, his mother the war. Paul moves from thinking of war in terms of nostalgia and camaraderie, of the mother and family he can no longer remember, to the realisation that its effects are devastating

and indiscriminate. The second burial of the gun, following on Jilli's attack, signals Paul's adoption of other means than weapons to fight for what he believes in.

In the first of the two alternative conclusions, 'Twenty Years On, Perhaps: A', Paul has fulfilled his dream of becoming a national park warden. The country is at peace and the AK lies safely buried beneath the monument to Michael Kagomi. In the second alternative, war is still ravaging the country and Paul, an old warrior, is still travelling. He has not completed his journey and will never do so as he becomes a victim of 'friendly fire', shot by his own comrades.

The two young female protagonists of *AK* and *Little Soldier* share the same cruel fate. Both are lying in hospital beds at the close of the novels; following the savage attacks of which they have been victims, both have been instrumental in their male counterpart's rejection of war. As characters, the two girls are developed differently by their authors. The readers sees Jilli doing things, constantly active, brave and reliable: involved in the escape, organising supplies, catching fish, hiding with Paul and helping him on the train journey and in the market. In Laura's case, the reader witnesses her inner torment and struggle, her sense of guilt and impression of being punished. Laura's is a troubled inward journey which reflects Kaninda's; her relief when she learns she is not responsible for the car crash is short lived, and is sacrificed to her more immediate function in the narrative of swaying Kaninda away from revenge and bloodshed.

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Anna Lukianowicz
A Whole War Inside One Small Body
War in Children's Literature

Anna Lukianowicz is a researcher in English at Macerata University. She has taught numerous courses on English literature and is now involved principally in teaching language and translation. Her main research interests are in the field of children's literature. She has published a study of Susan Cooper's fantasy sequence, *The Dark is Rising,* and has recently focused her attention on the depiction of war and conflict in literature for children and young adult readers.

Separation – from your family, your home, your country; a journey – to escape, to return, or an inward journey of healing, self discovery and self construction: these are recurrent themes in the four novels about children and war that are examined in this study of works by critically acclaimed authors Rachel Anderson, Bernard Ashley, Peter Dickinson and Robert Westall. These stories have different wars as their contexts, in different countries and historical periods: Vietnam, the Gulf, civil conflicts in African countries and London gang warfare, but while varying in their approaches, the novels share a richness of setting, characterisation and narrative structure, and a powerful capacity to involve readers emotionally and intellectually. Causes are explained or suggested, but it is essentially upon the far-reaching effects of war in time and place, on ordinary people, the civilian population and children, especially, that the authors turn their attention.

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