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The Paradox of Benevolent Colonialism and Resistance in Arthur C. Clarke's Childhood's End (1953)

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A B S T R A C T

This study explores Arthur C. Clarke's Childhood's End (1953) as a futuristic representation of colonialism. The novel presents a speculative future, where the Overlords, an alien race, enact a benevolent form of domination that fosters global peace and prosperity on Earth. However, it results in the loss of human identity and autonomy. Clarke's narrative reflects the primary influences of the Cold War and the looming threat of a nuclear war between great powers. It examines the mechanisms used to control the masses, suggesting that a true utopia cannot be enforced without sacrificing individuality. This paper employs a postcolonial framework, particularly the works of Edward Said, Albert Memmi, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Frantz Fanon, and Robert Young. It investigates Clarke's narrative, reflecting on the traditional colonial power dynamics and arguing whether colonial domination can ever be truly benevolent or if it inherently entails the loss of autonomy and self-determinism for the colonized. Furthermore, it also examines how otherness operates as a systematic tool of control and how resistance emerges as an inevitable response to domination. This study contends that childhood's end presents a nuanced allegory for futuristic form of colonialism and demonstrate its evolution into more subtle, deceptive, or technologically advanced forms.

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مفارقة الاستعمار الخيِّر والمقاومة في رواية "نهاية الطفولة" (١٩٥٣) لآرثر تشارلز كلارك

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الملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة رواية "نهاية الطفولة" (١٩٥٣) لآرثر سي. كلارك، بوصفها تمثيلًا مستقبليًا للاستعمار. تُقدم الرواية مستقبلًا افتراضيًا، حيث يُمارس الأسياد، وهم جنس فضائي، شكلًا من أشكال الهيمنة ذات النوايا الحسنة التي تسعى إلى تعزيز السلام العالمي وتحقيق الازدهار على كوكب الأرض. إلا أن ذلك يؤدي إلى فقدان الهوية البشرية والاستقلال الذاتي. تعكس سردية كلارك التأثيرات الأساسية للحرب الباردة والتهديد الوشيك بحرب نووية بين القوى العظمى. كما تدرس الآليات المستخدمة للسيطرة على الجموع، مُشيرةً إلى أنه لا يمكن فرض يوتوبيا حقيقية دون التضحية بالهوية الذاتية. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على إطار ما بعد الاستعمار النظري، وخاصةً أعمال إدوارد سعيد، وألبرت ميمي، نغوجي وا ثيونغوو، وفرانز فانون، وروبرت يونغ. ستستكشف الدراسة سرد كلارك، متأملةً في ديناميكيات الاستعمار التقليدية، ومجادلةً فيما إذا كانت الهيمنة الاستعمارية يمكن أن تكون خيرة حقًا أم أنها تنطوي بطبيعتها على فقدان الاستقلالية وتقرير المصير للمستعمَر. علاوةً على ذلك، تدرس الدراسة كيف تعمل الآخرية او فكرة الاخر كأداة منهجية للسيطرة، وكيف تنشأ المقاومة كردّ فعل حتمي على الهيمنة. وتؤكد هذه الدراسة أن رواية "نهاية الطفولة" تمثل استعارة ذات أبعاد متعددة لشكل مستقبلي من الاستعمار، وتُظهر تطوره إلى أشكال أكثر خداعًا وتقدماً من الناحية التكنولوجية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستعمار الخيِّر، المقاومة الثقافية، الاستشراق، الآخرية، الأدب التخيّلي التأملي.

Introduction

Arthur Charles Clarke (1917-2008) was a British science fiction author, futurist[i], undersea explorer, and television series host. In 1948, Clarke secured a Bachelor of Science degree from King's College in London. His first non-fiction works were *The Exploration of Space* (1951) and *Interplanetary Flight* (1950). His first novels showed his enthusiasm for space exploration, such as *Prelude to Space* (1951), which is set in a speculative future where humans are preparing for their first flight to the Moon; *The Sands of Mars* (1951), where a science fiction author visits a struggling Martian colony and witnesses a discovery that might change its future. Additionally, Clarke's work is recognized for the existentialist reflections regarding humanity's place in the universe, the potential of technology, and the consequences of contact with progressive extraterrestrial civilizations. His known works include *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), co-written with the film's director Stanley Kubrick, and *Childhood's End* (1953), which is divided into three parts (Earth and the Overlords, the Golden Age, and the Last Generation). Each part narrates a period of the story timeline and marks a pivotal point in the narrative progress. Furthermore, the novel employs a third-person omniscient narrator, allowing readers to gain insight into the different standpoints of the Overlords and humanity (McAleer, 2013).

Childhood's End unfolds in the late twentieth century, as the USA and the USSR are manufacturing nuclear-powered spaceships. Nevertheless, as the two nations almost reach that milestone, several massive extraterrestrial spacecraft come down over every major capital. The passengers are identified as the Overlords, who control the whole world in a span of five years. Karellen, also known as the supervisor, is one of the Overlords who takes control of the Earth; Karellen uses Stormgren, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as a human liaison to achieve his objectives. However, neither Stormgren nor any other human has ever seen what an Overlord looks like. Stormgren attempts to appease the Freedom League, a resistance movement that opposes the Overlords' reign. Stormgren then meets with Karellen, who informs him that the Overlords will reveal themselves in fifty years. Fifty years later, the Earth has significantly changed. It has become a utopia, where humanity has entered, as the narrator describes, a golden age. The Overlords have transformed the world and elevated the standard of living for the whole world. At this point in time, the Overlords disclose themselves: they look almost closely like the Devil.

A few years following this revelation, George Greggson, a TV producer, and his wife, Jean Morrel, attend a party hosted by Rupert Boyce, an amateur intellectual of the paranormal, who owns the largest library, which attracts significant interest from the Overlords. Meanwhile, George and Jean run into Rashaverak, who is one of the Overlords, making use of Boyce's research library. George also meets Jan Rodricks, who is annoyed that the Overlords will not let mankind explore space. At that party, an incident happens to foreshadow a major plot twist, which reveals George and Jean's future role in humanity's evolution, in which their children serve that function; also, it uncovers the location of the Overlords' homeland. A piece of information that leads Jan to sneak aboard an Overlord vessel and uncover many of their secrets. It becomes apparent that the Overlords are governed and controlled by an entity called the Overmind, which can be best understood as a transcendent collective consciousness that evolves by assimilating the minds of advanced civilizations' children, leading to their ascension into its collective existence and, as a consequence, destroying the planet. Also, it serves as the ultimate power that guides the Overlords' actions and determines humanity's future. Furthermore, George and Jean decide to go to New Athens, an experimental colony based on an island. The members of the colony are mostly artists, and the hope is that they will safeguard the decaying imagination and autonomy in a world of abundance. Many years later, Jan eventually returns from his journey to the Overlords' homeworld to witness Earth's final moments. As the last human, he observes the Overmind, the extinction of humankind, and the destruction of the earth. The novel ends as Karellen contemplates, from afar, humanity's end and prepares for his next directive from the Overmind.

Benevolent Colonialism in Clarke's novel

In an interview with AV Club, when questioned about what interested him in the genre, Clarke (2004) stated, "Fiction is more than non-fiction, in some ways. You can create a universe of your own. You can stretch people's minds, alerting them to the possibilities of the future, which is very important in an age where things are changing rapidly" (para. 16). Therefore, the study aims to examine Clarke's novel from a colonial standpoint, as it contains

a speculative vision of an exterior race controlling all humanity regardless of its nationality or identity. As for the different representations of colonial powers and their dynamics, Clarke's novel presents a case of benevolent colonialism[ii]. Moreover, the novel conveys that even if the Overlords' rule comes with benevolent motives, ultimately it ends up with the eradication of human culture, individuality, and identity. Fundamentally, such an act bears similarity to traditional colonialism. In the actual history of colonialism, for instance, when foreign domination of a country was fulfilled, it quite often resulted in the eradication of indigenous cultures and sovereignty. In that sense, humanity's final transcendence is depicted as the assimilation of human children, indicating the end of humanity's culture, history, and autonomy. This continuing loss of independence and creativity led to its eventual submission to the Overmind.

The notion of benevolent colonialism arises from the colonizers' belief that their actions serve for the welfare and benefit of the colonized. Imperial powers, according to Edward Said in his work *Orientalism*, have historically framed their domination as morally justified and exceptional, often claiming a unique mission to educate, civilize, impose order and democracy. And when force is used, it is typically framed as a last resort. Furthermore, this type of colonialism often claims to provide education, infrastructure, and security, but in fact, it is a systematic process to strip cultural identity, power, and resources from the colonized people. Said further observes there are always intellectuals ready to defend these imperial powers, viewing them as altruistic or benevolent, even when the devastating consequences, destruction, and misery of their mission civilizatrice (the civilizing mission) are plainly observable (Said, 2003, p. xxi).

In the same sense, Clarke's novel presents the paradox of benevolent colonialism. The Overlords undeniably act as philanthropic rulers who enact peace, prosperity, and stability. Rather than permitting nuclear destruction, they ensure a utopian golden age for humanity: "it was Utopia. Ignorance, disease, poverty, and fear had virtually ceased to exist. The memory of war was fading into the past as a nightmare vanishes with the dawn; soon it would lie outside the experience of all living" (Clarke, 1953, p. 71)[iii]. Yet, at the same time, the deeper-level problem beneath this benevolence is that autonomy, creativity, and individuality have also been averted from humanity. Just as the earlier colonizers believed that what they were doing was for the greater good of the colonized, such as through the Mission Civilisatrice ideology in Europe in the nineteenth century, where Europeans enforced their cultural and political values on the colonized societies using the justification that their colonial endeavors bring advancement and enlightenment to the savage and barbaric societies (Liebersohn, 2016).

Similarly, the erosion of human identity and culture occurs with good-hearted intentions, but these intentions are imposed by the Overlords. For instance, in chapter three of the novel, Stormgren, the humanity liaison with the Overlords, and Karellen, the supervisor, have a confrontation with Alexander Wainwright[iv], the leader of the Freedom League resistance, a movement that opposes the Overlords, who explicitly expresses his concerns stating: "But they are interlopers-we never asked them to come here and turn our world upside-down, destroying ideals-yes, and nations that generations of men have fought to protect" (p. 45).

In that respect, more humans diverge into two paths; one group, represented by Stormgren and the majority, believes that the Overlords solve today's problems. The second group, a skeptical minority, like the Freedom League, considers the potential futuristic consequences of the Overlords' seemingly benevolent rule. As the narrator explains, "The world's papers had divided themselves into two sharply defined groups. The Western press, on the whole, approved of Karellen's plan to make all men citizens of the world." And in contrast, the Eastern countries "were undergoing violent but largely synthetic spasms of national pride. Some of them had been independent for little more than a generation, and felt that they had been cheated out of their gains" (pp. 30-31). Clarke's classification of humanity into West and East illustrates a hegemonic Western perspective that oversimplifies geopolitical realities, for instance, neglecting regions like Africa or vaguely positioning Europe. This binary framework mirrors an orientalist discourse, also presenting the West, embodied by the Overlords, as inherently progressive and rational that they accept the Overlords' plans, while dismissing the East's refusal as mere reactionary nationalism.

Consequently, this benevolent colonialism closely mirrored the justification the traditional colonial powers used to establish their supremacy by civilizing and developing the so-called inferior peoples. This is conveyed in the following quotation, which makes a comparison between the Overlords and the British Raj: "The Freedom League was only one of the organizations that opposed Karellen…. They felt, with good reason, much as a cultured Indian of the nineteenth century must have done as he contemplated the British Raj" (p. 29). The Overlords' imposed compliance on the colonized without violence, and through rationalism, advanced technology, psychological influence, and indirect governance. Contrarily, the British Raj dominated through military force, economic exploitation, and administrative governance. That comparison discloses the paradox at the heart of Overlords' benevolent colonialism. It also achieves stability and development, yet in both cases it dissolves cultural identity, independence, self-determinism, and the individual spirit. As the narrator continues:

> The invaders had brought peace and prosperity to Earth but who knew what the cost might be? History was not reassuring; even the most peaceable of contacts between races at very different cultural levels had often resulted in the obliteration of the more backward society (p. 29).

Robert Young, in *Postcolonialism: A Historical Introduction*, argues that the end of colonialism did not eliminate domination but rather resulted in new forms of subtle and globalized dynamics of control. As such contemporary postcolonial movements striving for sovereignty, independence, and self-determination now contend with complicated power relations embedded in a wide range of institutions and practices (Young, 2016, p. 59). This aligns with the notion that colonialism as a practice evolves[v] and continues even in a futuristic setting. In that sense, the Overlords embody such an evolution of futuristic colonialism, as noted by Karellen himself, to some extent a more sophisticated form of colonialism, as it does not rely on physical subjugation or military conquest solutions, as in the narrator's words: "That power took many forms, few of them realized by the peoples whose destinies the Overlords now ruled… All political problems," Karellen had once told Stormgren, "can be solved by the correct application of power" (p. 69). Furthermore, in

Clarke's novel, the benevolent nature of the Overlords' domination of humanity is depicted when they offer peace, technological progress to some extent, as well as the solution to many social and political problems. This mirrors how futuristic forms of colonialism might evolve into new forms that do not entail direct domination or use of violence and exploitation. This can be achieved through technological progress superiority as a means towards the Overlords' superiority. Moreover, to demonstrate such evolution, one must look at the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Clarke demonstrates such a relationship several times in the novel. For instance, in their interaction with humanity, the Overlords kept their interests, aims, and motives hidden for nearly fifty years in the novel's timeline: "The Overlords remained aloof, hiding their faces from humanity. Karellen could command respect and admiration… as he pursued his present policy. It was hard not to feel resentment against these Olympians who spoke to man only over the radioteleprinter" (p. 26).

Said (2003) stated that, "The important thing was to dignify simple conquest with an idea, to turn the appetite for more geographical space into a theory about the special relationship between geography on the one hand and civilized or uncivilized peoples on the other" (p. 216). Said's statement resonates with the Overlords' first arrival on Earth, when they took control without any violence. As presented in the novel, Karellen, the supervisor who represents the foreign power, delivered a speech through a broadcast in English that was so perfect to the point that, "the controversy it began was to rage across the Atlantic for a generation. But the context of the speech was more staggering even than its delivery by any standards," and it demonstrated that "it was a work of superlative genius, showing a complete and absolute mastery of human affairs" (p. 18).

In that speech, Karellen stated that their control over Earth and humanity is a necessary intervention for the greater good. Said's premise that the colonizers "dignify simple conquest with an idea" (Said, 2003, p. 216) finds its resonance in the Overlords conquest of the earth as an act of moral superiority that was meant to establish a new order for the greater good. The Overlords' success in their conquest relied on their supposed higher understanding of civilization against barbarism: "There could be no doubt that its scholarship and virtuosity, its tantalizing glimpses of knowledge still untapped, were deliberately designed to convince humanity that it was in the presence of overwhelming intellectual power" (p. 18). And, once Karellen finished his speech, humanity and all Earth nations realized that "their days of precarious sovereignty had ended" (p. 18).

Additionally, while the Overlords took control of human affairs, governments still existed: "Local, internal governments would still retain their powers, but in the wider field of international affairs the supreme decisions had passed from human hands. Arguments-protests-all were futile" (p. 18). Such an idea mirrors modern forms of colonialism, as in today's proxy wars or economic dominance, as the colonized governments act as a facade of local autonomy, but colonial powers have the "supreme decisions." Nonetheless, in a futuristic context, colonialism might evolve into different means, and speculative scenarios become more applicable; for instance, it is revealed at the end of the novel that the Overlords serve a greater power called the Overmind, which serves as a central symbol of the ultimate phase of evolution and represents an entity that is far beyond human understanding. As the Overlords, with all their might, serve the Overmind, they cannot join it, surpass it, or become

part of it. Karellen explains this explicitly by saying, “Again and again, we had studied the process we have been sent to foster, hoping that we might learn to escape from our own limitations. But we have glimpsed only the vague outlines of the truth” (p. 183). Even with all their power, the Overlords still have their boundaries. Karellen reveals this when saying, “You called us the Overlords, not knowing the irony of that title. Let us say that above us is the Overmind, using us as the potter uses his wheel. ‘And your race is the clay that is being shaped on that wheel’” (p. 183).

In that sense, the Overmind can be perceived as a final form of domination not through force but by assimilating and eroding the colonized people’s identity. Assimilation of human children means the end of humanity’s culture, history, and autonomy, serving as a symbolic form of ultimate submission. As Said asserts in *Culture and Imperialism,* imperialism and colonialism are not a simple act of acquiring land or resources. Instead, they are driven and sustained by influential ideological frameworks that portray certain regions and societies as needing or inviting domination, along with systems of knowledge associated with this domination (Said, 1994, p. 9). Such a perspective can be analyzed as a speculative form of colonial progression. Within a futuristic framework, where the colonized are not just controlled but integrated into a different entity, as the colonizers did with indigenous peoples. Overall, many aspects can be perceived as metaphors for cultural or technological imperialism, where the colonized are not dominated or subjugated through force but through the promise of fatal advancement, as expressed by Karellen:

> And then —what am I to do with you, the survivors, when your purpose has been fulfilled? It would be simplest, and perhaps most merciful, to destroy you —as you yourselves would destroy a mortally wounded pet you loved. But this I cannot do. Your future will be your own to choose in the years that are left to you. It is my hope that humanity will go to its rest in peace, knowing that it has not lived in vain (p. 185).

Moreover, the survival of children (but not for long) while the adults’ demise can be understood within the perspective of the cultural transformation of the colonized society, and as the original culture ceases to exist the children survive by being connected to the Overmind, as Rashaverak[vi] describes it:

> Imagine that every man’s mind is an island, surrounded by ocean. Each seems isolated, yet in reality all are linked by the bedrock from which they spring. If the ocean were to vanish, that would be the end of the islands. They would all be part of one continent, but their individuality would have gone (p. 176).

Essentially, these children are not raised within the context of their original culture but are shaped by the Overlords’ environment. These gradual shifts led to their ultimate unification with the Overmind collective consciousness, signifying the erasure of their individuality and cultural identity. This process can be metaphorically explored as mirroring traditional colonial dynamics, particularly in the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their parents, a policy that created the so-called “Stolen Generation,” where mixed settler and Aboriginal children played a central role in governmental efforts to systematically eradicate Aboriginal society (Renes, 2011, p. 35, as cited in Az-Zubaidy, 2018, p. 51). It is a colonizing

policy that is meant to cut the link between the children and their parents. Indeed, it is one of the colonizers' aims to eradicate Aboriginal race.

Accordingly, regardless of its benevolent promises, colonization remains a process that aims to exploit and whose consequences are tragic. This aligns with Albert Memmi's (1965) assertion, in his work *The Colonizer and the Colonized*: "Colonization usurps any free role in either war or peace, every decision contributing to his destiny and that of the world, and all cultural and social responsibility." (p. 135). In that sense, the Overlords' peaceful rule is like shepherding humanity to a future that cannot be evaded, a kind of cultural counterpart to how colonial powers once tried to restructure people's culture in their empires. Thus, to sum up, even the most benevolent form of colonization would cause a loss of identity and cultural erosion in a colonized region.

The Process of Otherness

To broaden the understanding of the futuristic representation of colonialism, this part of the paper examines the concept of the *Other*, or *Otherness*, which is understood as the context where the colonizer constructs his authority and enforces his power on the colonized and characterizes them as fundamentally different and intrinsically inferior. According to Hadejia (2022) in his article "The Concept of Other: A Crucial Concern in Postcolonial Studies," Otherness emerges from "a discursive process by which a dominant in-group… shapes one or many dominated outgroups … by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined - presented as a reduction of identity and thus a hope for potential discrimination and exploitation (p. 90). This process generates a binary where the colonizers position themselves as civilized, advanced, and superior while labeling the colonized as primitive, backward, and inferior. In this sense, the colonizers justify their colonial endeavors, which involve more than mere physical dominance but encompass the power to represent and define the colonized. Said (2003) elaborates on this concept in his work *Orientalism*, and argues that "The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of dominance, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (p. 5). Said believes that the Orient was not simply discovered as "Oriental" or "Other," but rather, "Orientalized" through the Western power dynamics to control and dominate and shape the East according to their interests (p. 5).

Additionally, according to Ashcroft et al., (2013) in their work, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, "The process of Othering can occur in all kinds of colonialist narrative" (p. 189). In Clarke's novel, the Overlords represent a reversed portrayal of the traditional "Orientalized" context by positioning themselves, a foreign or alien race, as colonizers over humanity without any regard for human divisions or distinctions or racial categories. They construct and control humanity's understanding of both themselves and their colonizers. In so doing, they dominate them by conquering them ideologically and technologically. Such reversal is showcased in the novel, as the Overlords first kept their identity hidden for over fifty years, knowing that their physical appearance is feared by humanity. As Clarke describes them as resembling the devil in many religious and cultural methodologies: "There was no mistake. The leathery wings, the little horns, the barbed tail —all were there. The most terrible of all legends had come to life, out of the unknown past" (p. 68).

Thus, portraying the Overlords as the Other, yet they are the dominators, requires a reassessment of how Otherness is constructed and perceived. The conventional notion that physical appearance is the primary criterion for constructing Otherness is dismantled, supporting the idea that Otherness is a systematic process employed by colonial power dynamics in order to assert dominance and control: "These things the Overlords possessed. Though their goal was hidden, their knowledge was obvious-and so was their power," (p. 69). While the Overlords' superior knowledge was apparent through their technological advancement and scientific rationalism, their ultimate goal remained concealed.

Moreover, Said (2003) notes that "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (p. 1). The colonial powers constructed the Orient as an exotic other, full of mysteries, and justified such intervention under the mask of preservation and protection. The Overlords' intervention in the novel was not a justification but a purpose to achieve human evolution to a superior entity (the Overmind). Even so, comparable to colonial dynamics that frequently took artifacts and natural resources from colonized lands, claiming to protect or study them, the Overlords collected Earth's animals. As Rupert asked Professor Sullivan, "How many animals have you sent the Overlords?" he answered, "At least fifty, though this is the biggest one. He's magnificent, isn't he? Most of the others have been quite small butterflies, snakes, monkeys, and so on. Though I did get a hippo last year" (p. 113).

Consequently, this action reflects an authoritarian approach, signifying that, in the eyes of the Overlord's rationalism, humans are unable to safeguard their culture and even their natural heritage due to their short-term thinking, self-destructive tendencies, and inability to address their flaws. As such, by treating animals (and by extension aspects of human culture) as specimens or prizes, the Overlords objectify Earth's life forms. This process is parallel to just how colonial powers regarded the colonized as subjects to be studied or categorized, emphasizing the conception of the Other as exotic or inferior. Traditionally, the concept of the Other has relied on physical appearance to define those perceived as different; however, in this novel, the Overlords occupy this role due to their alien nature, but the difference is they are the colonizers in these scenarios. Such illustration consequently supports the idea that the concept of Otherness is not about physical appearance. Within this context, Otherness can be considered as a tool of control used by the colonial power dynamics, which further reinforces Said's proposition that the Orient was not merely discovered but constructed as the Other.

Therefore, in *Childhood's End*, the figure of the Overlords embodies the archetypal other, representing a central power that rules over and directs human evolution. The Overlords, as a ruling agency, mold the destiny and status of human beings into being the Other, dependent and supported by the agendas of the Overlords' superior knowledge and power. The Overlords, who stand almost in the position of saviors to the human race, identify by situating man as a creature that requires teaching and development, hence causing the Otherness of humanity. As in Karellen's words: "Your race, in its present stage of evolution, cannot face that stupendous challenge. One of my duties has been to protect you from the powers and forces that lie among the stars —forces beyond anything that you can ever

imagine." (p. 137). That technological advancement, which dictates who is other also reinforces that Otherness is a systematic tool, as in the scene when the Overlords bring in a gadget to reveal human past and history: "The instrument he handed over on permanent loan to the World History Foundation was nothing more than a television receiver with an elaborate set of controls for determining co-ordinates in time and space" (p. 74).

Additionally, in Said's *Orientalism*, the colonizer views the Other as exotic or radically different and uses alleged superiority to dominate. This is how the Overlords apply their advanced technology not only to control human behavior but also to gradually rebrand and reshape human belief and identity. By breaking up religious systems through straightforward manifest actions, Overlords cut off humanity from its traditional beliefs, now seen not only as primitive and superstitious but also as the Other, due to the fact that they come in opposition to the Overlords' overwhelming scientific rationalism, as the narrator illustrated it:

Here was a revelation which no one could doubt or deny: here, seen by some unknown magic of Overlord science, were the true beginnings of all the world's great faiths…a few days, all humanity's multitudinous messiahs had lost their divinity. Beneath the fierce and passionless light of truth, faiths that had sustained millions for twice a thousand years vanished like morning dew (pp. 74-75).

By reversing the traditional colonial narratives, Clarke reveals how technological and ideological advancement in colonial power dynamics can and will be able to form and create Otherness as a tool of control, challenging the fact that colonial endeavour is solely about military and violent conquest. Nonetheless, this analysis broadens Said's notion of Orientalism into a speculative future, emphasizing that colonial power dynamics evolve through time to the extent that they have the ability to redefine the very essence of individuality and autonomy for those they dominate. This examination contributes to the futuristic representation of colonialism through the examination of Clarke's narrative, whose results indicate that colonial dynamics can operate through ideological, psychological, and cultural dominance or control, that convey how Otherness operates as a practical tool in speculative and real-life contexts.

Resisting Colonial Power

The third part of this paper examines resistance in *Childhood's End*, which can be defined as the act of defiance against a power dynamic or authority. Resistance can take many forms, ranging from violent physical actions to non-violent defiance, aimed at restoring independence, cultural identities, and rights, or resisting subjugation and injustice. In that sense, resistance arises in a subjugated group, which establishes a political movement, militia forces, or cultural preservation movement. Resistance can even ascend from individual acts of defiance or revolt, which occur when an individual opposes change due to their unique perceptions, experiences, and personalities. In the context of the futuristic representation of colonialism, resistance is important primarily due to the rare contexts of speculative fiction narratives signifying a means to explore the further implications of current societal trends, such as neo-colonial power dynamics, modern issues of cultural dominance, technological

control and surveillance, environmental exploitation, and the continuing struggle against systemic oppression. It allows imagination of how humanity might maintain its culture, identity, and autonomy in a rapidly changing world under threat from powers beyond human experience. Therefore, the novelist's illustration of resistance in a speculative future provides a commentary on contemporary problems while also enabling readers to contemplate and understand what it means to resist and how it is a fundamental right for every individual.

In Clarke's *Childhood's End,* resistance is depicted in multilayered forms. In the first place, the Freedom League was a non-violent religious resistance and protest led by the clergyman Alexander Wainwright, whose outlook was that humanity should reject the idea of submitting to a foreign power, even if it was peaceful or benevolent, to sustain individuality, identity, and self-determination. Second, certain military operations by some governments reject the Overlords' systems. Third, there is the cultural resistance, which is the main aim for the establishment of New Athens, a colony established by scholars and artists who wish to safeguard humanity's creativity, culture, and autonomy against the utopian golden society of the Overlords. Finally, individual or personal resistance, which is depicted by many characters in Clarke's narrative, showcases the human desire to rebel and retaliate against an overwhelming power.

According to Memmi (1965), "The colonial situation, by its own internal inevitability, brings on revolt" (p. 172). As colonialism evolves, resistance emerges alongside it, taking on various forms. In *Childhood's End*, the roles reverse as the colonizer comes with prosperity, and most of humanity stands by it except for the few. The Freedom League is considered a resistance movement, and Wainwright, its leader, represents its discourse and approach, which combine advocacy for humanity's independence and cultural preservation with a religious framework that critiques the Overlords' intervention in human beliefs and destinies. The Overlords form the world federation with the assistance of Stormgren; at the same time, Wainwright visits them, and in a confrontation with Stormgren, he "register[s] a formal protest against the Federation Scheme" because he wants "to awaken the human race to the danger that confronts it. The task has been a difficult one, for the majority of people seem content to let the Overlords run the world as they please" (p. 15). He also affirms that "more than five million patriots, in every country, have signed our petition it must come from within —not be super-imposed from without… We must work out our own destiny. There must be no more interference in human affairs!" (pp. 15-16). That is the very heart of the Freedom League resistance: an utter rejection of external control, however benevolent it might seem, in exchange for the right of humanity to determine its future.

As the relationship between colonialism and resistance becomes dialectical[vii], and with massive technological advancement, traditional forms of resistance might cease to exist. For that reason, an evolving method of resistance might appear and overwhelm previous forms. As such, knowing that they cannot overcome or vanquish the Overlords without compromising their own principles, Stormgreen and Wainwright engage in a debate. Stormgreen argues that the Overlords bring security, peace, and prosperity. Wainwright responds that it comes with a cost: "That is true. But they have taken our liberty. Freedom to control our own lives, under God's guidance" (p. 16). Stormgren remains pragmatic; he points out that "the conflict is a religious one … Last month, a hundred bishops, cardinals and

rabbis signed a joint declaration pledging their support for the Supervisor's policy. The world's religions are against you" (p. 16). Wainwright insists that these people are deceived and corrupted: "Many of the leaders are blind; they have been corrupted by the Overlords. When they realize the danger, it may be too late. Humanity will have lost its initiative and become a subject race" (p. 16).

In that sense, for Wainwright, the conflict with the Overlords is a religious and comes with the belief that as knowledge advances, faith retreats; with this in mind, such belief can be related to the relationship between colonialism of the Overlords and the retreat of the Freedom League's resistance in the novel. The Overlords' scientific rationalism has brought order, peace, and prosperity to Earth; their administration is based on knowledge and technology that are superior, and gradually Earth finds itself dependent on them for its progress and stability. This has reduced the role of movements like the Freedom League based on faith and religious beliefs: "There had also been some passive resistance to the policy of the Overlords. Usually, Karellen had been able to deal with it by letting those concerned have their own way, until they had discovered that they were only hurting themselves by their refusal to co-operate" (p. 19).

Moreover, it "was hardly to be expected that all the nations of the world would submit tamely to such a limitation of their powers" (p. 18). There were some violent attempts by other governments as they launched an atomic missile at the Overlords' ships: "Yet nothing whatsoever had happened. The great ship floated unharmed, bathed in the raw sunlight at the edge of space. Not only had the bomb failed to touch it, but no one could ever decide what had happened to the missile" (p. 19). Relying on violent resistance seems a last resort for some governments in the novel, an aspect asserted by Frantz Fanon (2004) in his work *The Wretched of the Earth,* when he notes that "to retake their place and be reintegrated. Violence can thus be understood to be the perfect mediation. The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence" (p. 44). Thus, the Overlords' peaceful practice serves two courses: humanity has never used to it yet, as they expect consequences of their violent resistance against Karellen, and as a fear tool for the Overlords: "Could they also be destroyed, leaving humanity to go its way once more? Or would Karellen wreak some frightful vengeance upon those who had attacked him?" (p. 18).

Overall, this shift in resistance is also reflected in the futility of both passive and active forms in a speculative narrative. While non-violent protests from the Freedom League prove to be pointless, to violent-resisting governments they are equally impotent. The Overlords' non-retaliation, ignoring attacks, and letting responsible governments collapse under their pressures all serve as emphases of dominance: "Karellen took no action against those responsible, or even indicated that he had known of the attack... It was a more effective, and more demoralizing, treatment than any punitive action could have been. The government responsible collapsed completely in mutual recrimination a few weeks later" (p. 19). Fanon (2004) observes that, "when a people support an armed or even political struggle against a merciless colonialism, tradition changes meaning. What was a technique of passive resistance may, in this phase, be radically doomed" (p. 160). Fanon thus implies that in the face of colonialism, tradition and passive resistance may lose their efficiency, and new methods of struggle must emerge.

However, in *Childhood's End,* humans attempt to preserve their identity through cultural and intellectual traditions; for instance, the establishment of New Athens and Sparta, a community devoted to creativity, art, and cultural preservation. On the testimony of Professor Alexander, the leader of the New Athens colony, who met George Gregson when he received an invitation to visit the colony: "Here on this island we're trying to save something of humanity's independence, its artistic traditions. We've no hostility towards the Overlords: we simply want to be left alone to go our own way" (p. 140). However, this attempt at cultural resistance is ultimately destabilized by the sheer power of the Overmind and the inevitable transformation of the children into part of its collective consciousness. The attempt to resist through tradition (represented by New Athens and other cultural efforts) ultimately collapses as the children, the next generation of humanity, are drawn into the Overmind. This process signifies the ultimate erasure of human tradition and culture, similar to Fanon's contention that colonialism extends beyond the physical and psychological subjugation of the colonized, its underlying logic systematically targets their historical narrative, with the aim of reshaping, deforming, and ultimately erasing it (Fanon, 2004, p. 149). This erasure of tradition and culture is reflected in the Overlords' dominance, leaving humanity in a state of cultural stagnation as described, "world's now placid, featureless, and culturally dead: nothing really new has been created since the Overlords came. The reason's obvious. There's nothing left to struggle for, and there are too many distractions and entertainments" (pp. 140-141).

This process of technological assimilation of the young aligns with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o premise that is explained in his work, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, (1987), where he states that: "The oppressed and the exploited of the Earth maintain their defiance: liberty from theft. But the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb" (p. 3). In traditional colonialism, where the colonizers subjugate and control the colonized by applying what Ngũgĩ calls "the cultural bomb," which includes education, language, religion, and cultural domination, making the colonized feel inferiority in its own culture and environment:

> The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves (p. 3).

Additionally, Ngugi's concept aligns with the cultural resistance in *Childhood's End,* as embodied by the New Athens and Sparta colonies, where artistic and intellectual heritage is preserved to maintain cultural authenticity in the face of the Overlords. Yet, even though the Overlords do not actively terminate human culture (as in a "cultural bomb," as Ngũgĩ describes). On the contrary, as portrayed in Clarke's narrative, only a few in New Athens truly resist this gradual erasure of cultural heritage. The Overlords' scientific rationalism is so overpowering that it renders traditional forms of resistance (like religion, cultural practices, and even artistic expression) irrelevant. As stated by Professor Chance, Dean of the University of New Athens to one of the Overlords called The Inspector[viii]: "our main purpose

is to keep the minds of our people alert, and to enable them to realize all their potentialities. Beyond this island…, I fear that the human race has lost its initiative. It has peace, it has plenty but it has no horizons"" (p. 161). The Overlords do not suppress culture directly, but their mere presence as a superior alien race unintentionally erodes human belief systems, as many humans willingly embrace the benefits the Overlords bring and abandon their cultural roots.

Moreover, individual acts can be considered as "Some forms of resistance were expressed through isolated individual actions alone; some were meaningful in small-scale settings, expressing a shared tradition transmitted informally by custom or common experience within communities" (Domingos et al., 2019, para. 4). Such forms of futile cases and overwhelming powers showcase the indomitable human spirit to defy and fight back. In Clarke's narrative, various references are made to individual actions believing in the power of the one for all, for instance, Jan Rodricks serves as a key character of individual resistance; he seeks knowledge and independence against all restrictions, and his motives are driven by curiosity and refusal to accept the boundaries imposed by the Overlords. As his acts are critical, peeling back the layers of the Overlords' mysteries, his conversation with Professor Sullivan, encapsulates his role as a character of individual resistance:

"Professor Sullivan," he began, "if you were interested in the ocean, but the Overlords refused to let you go near it, how would you feel?" "Exceedingly annoyed, no doubt." "I'm sure you would. And suppose, one day, you had a chance of achieving your goal, without them knowing, what would you do? Would you take the opportunity?" Sullivan never hesitated: "Of course. And argue later" (p. 120).

The above dialogue highlights Jan's determination to face the unknown, which was "meaningful in small-scale settings," and also the shared sentiment and defiance that characterize Sullivan's immediate agreement, illustrating the human inclination to resist and attain autonomy and individuality whenever possible, even if it means facing unknown consequences later, "probably the Overlords have their reasons for keeping us in the nursery, and probably they are excellent reasons. But even if I knew what they were, I doubt if it would make much difference to my own feelings—or my actions" (p. 123). However, this moment in the novel serves as a pivotal point for the thematic thread that shapes the novel. It implies that resistance emerges despite any form of dominance (whether subjugation or benevolence) and also asserts the notion that resistance can result from the individual acts to achieve self-determination and autonomy. For instance, when Jan wrote at the end of his letter to his sister Maia, "Even at the worst, I'll have proved that man can't be kept in quarantine forever, I'll have created a precedent that will compel Karellen to take some action" (p. 126).

Conclusion

To conclude, this paper critically explores colonialism, Otherness, and resistance in terms of the futuristic representation of colonialism. It argues that colonialism, regardless of whether its intentions are malevolent or benevolent, produces equally the same damaging consequences on the culture and community of the colonized. As depicted in this novel, speculative futures of colonialism will evolve as technology evolves through time, taking

new forms and manifestations that may no longer depend on the use of military power but instead subtly reshape the target societies through cultural and ideological domination. Furthermore, the concept of Otherness is presented as a systematic mechanism used by the colonial power to assert dominance and control over the targeted Other, and the use of exoticness and backwardness is just a mere cause to do so. The analysis conveys the fact that physical appearances or any racial discrimination are not related but serve as justification to legitimize colonial authority. Finally, resistance is presented as a universal form of human response against suppression, rooted in the pursuit of individuality, self-determinism, and autonomy. This dialectical relationship between colonialism and resistance underscores humanity's enduring struggle for freedom. Therefore, regardless of the different forms in which resistance is articulated, whether culturally, religiously, or even individually, it remains an act of defiance and resilience.

Notes

i According to Sardar (2010): "Futurists are people whose specialty or interest is futurology or the attempt to systematically explore predictions and possibilities about the future and how they can emerge from the present, whether that of human society in particular or of life on Earth in general."

ii Benevolent colonialism stands for a form of colonial domination, that portrays itself as justified dominance bringing advancement, order, or enlightenment while still sustaining control over them. The term is derived from Xóchitl Gonzalez's (2022) novel Olga Dies Dreaming, also it is discussed in the academic fields. For example, Eva Bischoff (2020) mentions this in her work *Benevolent colonizers in nineteenth-century Australia: Quaker lives and ideals* in *the Cambridge Imperial and Post Colonial Studies* book series, where she explains the ways, colonialists would justify their oppression as supposed forms of benevolent or civilized aid.

iii All further references to the novel are from this edition and will be marked in parentheses in the text.

iv There is another reference to him in the novel by the name "Old Welshman".

v The use of the term "evolved" rather than "developed" is intended to emphasize the adaptive and transformative nature of colonialism. In contrast to "developed," which implies linear progress or deliberate development, "evolved" conveys the ways in which colonial mechanisms change and continue in respond to the historical, political, and technological circumstances.

vi Rashaverak is an Overlord tasked with studying humanity, particularly its psychological and paranormal phenomena. He plays a significant role in investigating Rupert Boyce's library and monitoring Jean Morrel, whose abilities hint at humanity's impending evolution into the Overmind

viiA dialectical relationship is two opposing forces or concepts that are interdependent and mutually influence one another, leading to change or transformation.

viiiIn the novel Also goes by the name Thanthalteresco and he called the Inspector because he visited New Athens which is a crucial plot point in *Childhood's End*, reflecting the Overlords' covert agenda. While he appears to be inspecting the colony and observing its cultural preservation efforts, his true mission is far more significant: he is there to observe the evolving powers of Jeffrey and Jennifer, the first human children showing signs of the Overmind's influence.

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