

= Childhood 's End =

Childhood 's End is a 1953 science fiction novel by the British author Arthur C. Clarke . The story follows the peaceful alien invasion of Earth by the mysterious Overlords , whose arrival begins decades of apparent utopia under indirect alien rule , at the cost of human identity and culture .

Clarke 's idea for the book began with his short story " Guardian Angel " (1946) , which he expanded into a novel in 1952 , incorporating it as the first part of the book , " Earth and the Overlords " . Completed and published in 1953 , Childhood 's End sold out its first printing , received good reviews , and became Clarke 's first successful novel . The book is often regarded by both readers and critics as Clarke 's best novel , and is described as " a classic of alien literature " . Along with The Songs of Distant Earth (1986) , Clarke considered Childhood 's End one of his favourite own novels . The novel was nominated for the Retro Hugo Award for Best Novel in 2004 .

Several attempts to adapt the novel into a film or miniseries have been made with varying levels of success . Director Stanley Kubrick expressed interest in the 1960s , but collaborated with Clarke on 2001 : A Space Odyssey (1968) instead . The novel 's theme of transcendent evolution also appears in Clarke 's Space Odyssey series . In 1997 , the BBC produced a two @-@ hour radio dramatization of Childhood 's End that was adapted by Tony Mulholland . The Syfy Channel produced a three @-@ part , four @-@ hour television mini @-@ series of Childhood 's End , which was broadcast on December 14 ? 16 , 2015 .

= = Plot summary = =

The novel is divided into three parts , following a third @-@ person omniscient narrative with no main character .

= = = Earth and the Overlords = = =

In the late 20th century , the United States and the Soviet Union are competing to launch the first spaceship into orbit , for military purposes . When vast alien spaceships suddenly position themselves above Earth 's principal cities , the space race ceases . After one week , the aliens announce they are assuming supervision of international affairs , to prevent humanity 's extinction , under the name of Overlords . They interfere only twice : in South Africa , where sometime before their arrival Apartheid had collapsed and was replaced with savage persecution of the white minority ; and in Spain , where they put an end to bull fighting . Some humans are suspicious of the Overlords ' benign intent , as they never visibly appear . Overlord Karellen , the " Supervisor for Earth , " who speaks directly only to Rikki Stormgren , the UN Secretary @-@ General , tells Stormgren that the Overlords will reveal themselves in 50 years , when humanity will have become used to their presence . Stormgren smuggles a device onto Karellen 's ship in an attempt to see Karellen 's true form . He succeeds , is shocked , and chooses to keep silent .

= = = The Golden Age = = =

Humankind enters a golden age of prosperity at the expense of creativity . Five decades after their arrival the Overlords reveal their appearance , resembling the traditional Christian folk images of demons : large bipeds with cloven hooves , leathery wings , horns , and tails . The Overlords are interested in psychic research , which humans suppose is part of their anthropological study . Rupert Boyce , a prolific book collector on the subject , allows one Overlord , Rashaverak , to study these books at his home . To impress his friends with Rashaverak 's presence , Boyce holds a party , during which he makes use of a Ouija board . An astrophysicist and Rupert 's brother @-@ in @-@ law , Jan Rodricks , asks the identity of the Overlords ' home star . George Greggson 's future wife Jean faints as the Ouija board reveals a star @-@ catalog number consistent with the direction in which Overlord supply ships appear and disappear . With the help of an oceanographer friend Jan Rodricks stows away on an Overlord supply ship and travels 40 light @-@ years to their home

planet . Due to the time dilation of special relativity at near @-@ light speeds , the elapsed time on the ship is only a few weeks , and he arranges to endure it in drug @-@ induced hibernation .

= = = The Last Generation = = =

Although humanity and the Overlords have peaceful relations , some believe human innovation is being suppressed and that culture is becoming stagnant . One of these groups establishes New Athens , an island colony in the middle of the Pacific Ocean devoted to the creative arts , which George and Jean Greggson join . The Overlords conceal a special interest in the Greggsons ' children , Jeffrey and Jennifer Anne , and intervene to save Jeffrey 's life when a tsunami strikes the island . The Overlords have been watching them since the incident with the Ouija board , which revealed the seed of the coming transformation hidden within Jean .

Sixty years after the Overlords ' arrival , human children , beginning with the Greggsons ' , begin to display clairvoyance and telekinetic powers . Karellen reveals the Overlords ' purpose ; they serve the Overmind , a vast cosmic intelligence , born of amalgamated ancient civilizations , and freed from the limitations of material existence . The Overlords themselves are unable to join the Overmind , but serve it as a bridge species , fostering other races ' eventual union with it . For the transformed children 's safety , they are segregated on a continent of their own . No more human children are born , and many parents die or commit suicide . The members of New Athens destroy themselves with a nuclear bomb .

Jan Rodricks emerges from hibernation on the Overlord supply ship and arrives on their planet . The Overlords permit him a glimpse of how the Overmind communicates with them . When Jan returns to Earth (approximately 80 years after his departure by Earth time) he finds an unexpectedly altered planet . Humanity has effectively become extinct , and he is now the last man alive . Hundreds of millions of children ? no longer fitting what Rodricks defines as " human " ? remain on the quarantined continent , having become a single intelligence readying themselves to join the Overmind .

Some Overlords remain on Earth to study the children from a safe distance . When the evolved children mentally alter the Moon 's rotation and make other planetary manipulations , it becomes too dangerous to remain . The departing Overlords offer to take Rodricks with them , but he chooses to stay to witness Earth 's end , and transmit a report of what he sees .

Before they depart , Rodricks asks Rashaverak what encounter the Overlords had with humanity in the past , according to an assumption that the fear that humans had of their " demonic " form was due to a traumatic encounter with them in the distant past ; but Rashaverak explains that the primal fear experienced by humans was not due to a racial memory , but a racial premonition of the Overlords ' role in their metamorphosis .

The Overlords are eager to escape from their own evolutionary dead end by studying the Overmind , so Rodricks 's information is potentially of great value to them . By radio , Rodricks describes a vast burning column ascending from the planet . As the column disappears , Rodricks experiences a profound sense of emptiness when the Overlords have gone . Then material objects and the Earth itself begin to dissolve into transparency . Jan reports no fear , but a powerful sense of fulfillment . The Earth evaporates in a flash of light . Karellen looks back at the receding Solar System and gives a final salute to the human species .

= = Publication history = =

= = Development = =

The novel first took shape in July 1946 , when Clarke wrote " Guardian Angel " , a short story that would eventually become Part I of Childhood 's End . Clarke 's portrayal of the Overlords as devils was influenced by John W. Campbell 's depiction of the devilish Teff @-@ Hellani species in The Mightiest Machine , first serialized in Astounding Stories in 1934 . After finishing " Guardian Angel " ,

Clarke enrolled at King 's College London and served as the chairman of the British Interplanetary Society from 1946 to 1947 , and later from 1951 to 1953 . He earned a first @-@ class degree in mathematics and physics from King 's in 1948 , after which he worked as an assistant editor for Science Abstracts . " Guardian Angel " was submitted for publication but was rejected by several editors , including Campbell . At the request of Clarke 's agent and unbeknown to Clarke , the story was edited by James Blish , who rewrote the ending . Blish 's version of the story was accepted for publication in April 1950 by Famous Fantastic Mysteries magazine . Clarke 's original version of " Guardian Angel " was later published in the Winter 1950 issue of New Worlds magazine . The latter version published in New Worlds more closely resembles Part I of the novel , " Earth and the Overlords " .

After Clarke 's nonfiction science book The Exploration of Space (1951) was successfully received , he began to focus on his writing career . In February 1952 , Clarke started working on the novelization of " Guardian Angel " ; he completed a first draft of the novel Childhood 's End in December , and a final revision in January 1953 . Clarke travelled to New York in April 1953 with the novel and several of his other works . Literary agent Bernard Shir @-@ Cliff convinced Ballantine Books to buy everything Clarke had , including Childhood 's End , " Encounter in the Dawn " (1953) , (which Ballantine retitled Expedition to Earth) , and Prelude to Space (1951) . However , Clarke had composed two different endings for the novel , and the last chapter of Childhood 's End was still not finished . Clarke proceeded to Tampa Bay , Florida , to go scuba diving with George Grisinger , and on his way there visited his friend Frederick C. Durant - President of the International Astronautical Federation from 1953 to 1956 - and his family in the Washington Metropolitan Area , whilst he continued working on the last chapter . He then travelled to Atlanta , Georgia , where he visited Ian Macauley , a friend who was active in the anti @-@ segregation movement . Clarke finished the final chapter in Atlanta while Clarke and Macauley discussed racial issues ; these conversations may have influenced the development of the last chapter , particularly Clarke 's choice to make the character of Jan Rodricks ? the last surviving member of the human species ? a black man .

Clarke arrived in Florida at the end of April . The short story , " The Man Who Ploughed the Sea " , included in the Tales from the White Hart (1957) collection , was influenced by his time in Florida . While in Key Largo in late May , Clarke met Marilyn Mayfield , and after a romance lasting less than three weeks , they travelled to Manhattan and married at New York City Hall . The couple spent their honeymoon in the Pocono Mountains in Pennsylvania , where Clarke proofread Childhood 's End . In July , Clarke returned to England with Mayfield , but it quickly became clear that the marriage would not last as Clarke spent most of his time reading and writing , and talking about his work . Further , Clarke wanted to be a father , and Marilyn , who had a son from a previous marriage , informed Clarke after their marriage that she could no longer have children . When Childhood 's End was published the following month , it appeared with a dedication : " To Marilyn , For letting me read the proofs on our honeymoon . " The couple separated after a few months together , but remained married for the next decade .

= = = Publication = = =

Ballantine wanted to publish Childhood 's End before Expedition to Earth and Prelude to Space , but Clarke wanted to wait . He felt that it was a difficult book to release . He had written two different endings for the novel and was unsure of which to use . According to biographer Neil McAleer , Clarke 's uncertainty may have been because of its thematic focus on the paranormal and transcendence with the alien Overmind . While the theme was used effectively by Clarke in the novel , McAleer wrote that " it was not science fiction based on science , which he came to advocate and represent " . When he wrote Childhood 's End , Clarke was interested in the paranormal , and did not become a sceptic until much later in his life . Ballantine convinced Clarke to let them publish Childhood 's End first , and it was published on August 24 , 1953 , with a cover designed by American science fiction illustrator Richard M. Powers . Childhood 's End first appeared in paperback and hardcover editions , with the paperback as the primary edition , an unusual approach

for the 1950s . For the first time in his career , Clarke became known as a novelist .

Decades later , Clarke was preparing a new edition of *Childhood 's End* after the story had become dated . After the book was first published , the Apollo missions landed humans on the Moon in 1969 , and in 1989 US President George H. W. Bush announced the Space Exploration Initiative (SEI) , calling for astronauts to eventually explore Mars . In 1990 , Clarke added a new foreword and revised the first chapter , changing the venue for the space race from the Moon to Mars . Editions since have appeared with the original opening or have included both versions . " *Guardian Angel* " has also appeared in two short story collections : *The Sentinel* (1983) , and *The Collected Stories of Arthur C. Clarke* (2001) .

= = Reception = =

The novel was well received by most readers and critics . Two months after publication , all 210 @, @ 000 copies of the first printing had been sold . The New York Times published two positive reviews of the book : Basil Davenport compared Clarke to Olaf Stapledon , C. S. Lewis , and H. G. Wells , a " very small group of writers who have used science fiction as the vehicle of philosophic ideas . " William DuBois called the book " a first rate tour de force that is well worth the attention of every thoughtful citizen in this age of anxiety . " Don Guzman of the Los Angeles Times admired the novel for its suspense , wisdom , and beauty . He compared Clarke 's role as a writer to that of an artist , " a master of sonorous language , a painter of pictures in futuristic colors , a Chesley Bonestell with words " . Galaxy reviewer Groff Conklin called the novel " a formidably impressive job ... a continuous kaleidoscope of the unexpected . "

Anthony Boucher and J. Francis McComas were more sceptical , and faulted the novel 's " curious imbalance between its large @-@ scale history and a number of episodic small @-@ scale stories . " While praising Clarke 's work as " Stapledonian [for] its historic concepts and also for the quality of its prose and thinking , " they concluded that *Childhood 's End* was " an awkward and imperfect book . " P. Schuyler Miller said the novel was " all imagination and poetry , " but concluded it was " not up to some of Clarke 's other writing " due to weakness in its " episodic structure . "

Brian W. Aldiss and David Wingrove wrote that *Childhood 's End* rested on " a rather banal philosophical idea , " but that Clarke " expressed [it] in simple but aspiring language that vaguely recalls the Psalms [and] combined [it] with a dramatized sense of loss [for] undeniable effect . "

In 2004 *Childhood 's End* was nominated for a retroactive Hugo Award for Best Novel for 1954 .

= = Adaptations , and media inspired by the novel = =

In the 1960s , director Stanley Kubrick was interested in making a film adaptation of the novel , but blacklisted director Abraham Polonsky had already optioned it . Instead , Kubrick collaborated with Clarke on adapting the short story " *The Sentinel* " into what eventually became *2001 : A Space Odyssey* (1968) . Months before his performance at Woodstock in 1969 , folk singer and guitarist Richie Havens told *Ebony* magazine about his appreciation of Clarke 's story and expressed his interest in working on a future film adaptation of *Childhood 's End* . Screenplays by Polonsky and Howard Koch were never made into films .

Two British progressive rock bands coincidentally released songs based on the book in 1972 . The first was Pink Floyd , with their song " *Childhood 's End* " on the album *Obscured by Clouds* . Later in that same year , Genesis adapted part of the story into lyrics for their single " *Watcher of the Skies* " . A third progressive rock band , Van der Graaf Generator , included the song " *Childlike Faith in Childhood 's End* " on their 1976 album *Still Life* .

David Elgood first proposed a radio adaptation of the novel in 1974 , but nothing came of it in that decade .

Philip DeGuere , whose credits include the TV series *Alias Smith and Jones* , developed a script in the late 1970s for Universal , who planned to film it initially as a six @-@ hour mini @-@ series for CBS Television , and later as a two- or three @-@ hour telemovie for ABC . However , Universal discovered that its contracts with Arthur C. Clarke - some of which dated back to 1957 - were out of

date . These contractual difficulties were resolved in 1979 and DeGuere worked with legendary comic book artist Neal Adams on preproduction drawings and other material . The project had Clarke 's approval . However Universal decided that the budget required would be nearly \$ 40 million and they were only prepared to spend \$ 10 million , so the movie was not made .

Director Brian Lighthill revisited the radio adaptation proposal and obtained the rights in 1995 . After Lighthill received a go @-@ ahead from BBC Radio in 1996 , he commissioned a script from Tony Mulholland , resulting in a new , two @-@ part adaptation . The BBC produced the two @-@ hour radio dramatization of the novel , and broadcast it on BBC Radio 4 in November 1997 . The recording was released on cassette by BBC Audiobooks in 1998 and on CD in 2007 .

As of 2002 , film rights to the novel were held by Universal Pictures , with director Kimberly Peirce attached to a project .

On October 28 , 2008 , Audible.com released a 7 @-@ hour 47 minute unabridged audiobook version of Childhood 's End , narrated by Eric Michael Summerer , under its Audible Frontiers imprint . An AudioFile review commended Summerer 's narration as " smoothly presented and fully credible " . An audio introduction and commentary is provided by Canadian science fiction author Robert J. Sawyer . The Japanese anime film , Kidou Senshi Gundam 00 : A Wakening of the Trailblazer , is loosely inspired by Childhood 's End

On April 10 , 2013 , the Syfy Channel announced its plans to develop a Childhood 's End TV miniseries . The three @-@ episode , four @-@ hour production premiered December 14 , 2015 . Charles Dance portrays the Supervisor Karellen .